



**Third World Underdevelopment, Foreign Aid and AIDS Policies
as a Legacy of Colonialism: Challenges and Opportunities**
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Introduction

One could start by considering where the name “Third World” comes from and how it has been constructed through theories that consider the economically underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa, Oceania, and Latin America as one entity with common characteristics, such as poverty, high birthrates, and economic dependence on the advanced countries. In 1952, French demographer, Alfred Sauvy, coined the expression (“tiers monde” in French) by analogy to the “Third Estate,” (the name given to the group of “commoners” during the French Revolution) as opposed to the “First” and “Second Estates” which was largely made up of priests and nobles. Like the Third Estate, Sauvy wrote, the Third World is nothing, and it “wants to be something”. The term therefore implies that the Third World is exploited in a similar way that the Third Estate was and that its destiny is also a revolutionary one. It conveys as well a second idea, also discussed by Sauvy: that of non-alignment. For the Third World belongs neither to the industrialized capitalist world nor to the industrialized communist bloc. The expression “Third World” was used at the 1955 conference of Afro-Asian countries held in Bandung, Indonesia. In 1956, a group of social scientists associated with Sauvy’s National Institute of Demographic Studies in Paris, published a book called *Le Tiers-Monde*. Three years later, French economist Francois Perroux launched a new journal with the same title, focusing on the problems of underdevelopment. By the end of the 1950s the term was frequently employed in the French media to refer to the underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa, Oceania, and Latin America.¹

The underdevelopment of the Third World is marked by a number of common traits including distorted and highly dependent economies devoted to producing primary products for the developed world and providing markets for their finished goods, traditional, rural social structures, high population growth, and widespread poverty². Nevertheless, the Third World is sharply differentiated, for

it includes countries on various levels of economic development. And despite the poverty of the countryside and the urban shantytowns, the ruling elites of most Third World countries are wealthy. This combination of conditions in Asia, Africa, Oceania and Latin America is linked to the absorption of the Third World into the international capitalist economy, by way of conquest or indirect domination.

The main economic consequence of Western domination was the creation, for the first time in history, of a world market. By setting up and introducing sub-economies and other modern institutions throughout the Third World that are linked to the West, industrial capitalism was able to disrupt traditional economies and, indeed, traditional societies. This disruption led to underdevelopment. Since the economies of underdeveloped countries have been geared to the needs of industrialized countries, they often comprise only a few modern economic activities, such as mining or the cultivation of plantation crops. Control over these activities has often remained in the hands of large foreign firms. The price of Third World products is usually determined by large buyers in the economically dominant countries of the West. Trade with the West provides almost all the Third World's income. Throughout the colonial period, outright exploitation severely limited the accumulation of capital within the foreign-dominated countries. Even after decolonization (in the 1950s – 70s), the economies of the Third World developed slowly, or not at all, owing largely to the deterioration of the "terms of trade" – the relation between the cost of the goods a nation must import from abroad and its income from the exports it sends to foreign countries. Terms of trade are said to deteriorate when the cost of imports rises faster than income from exports. Since buyers in the industrialized countries have determined the prices of most products involved in international trade, the worsening position of the Third World has hardly come as a surprise.

Only the oil-producing countries (after 1973) succeeded in escaping the effects of Western domination of the world economy. No study of the Third World could hope to assess its future prospects without taking into account population growth. In 1980, the earth's population was estimated at 4.4 billion, 72% of it in the Third World, and it was 6.2 billion, with 80% of it in the Third World, at the close of the century. This population explosion in the Third World will surely prevent any substantial improvements in living standards there, as well as threaten people in stagnant economies with worsening poverty.

Background

“The developing world” is a very common term in the development arena. One could reason that in the world of emerging globalization we should try to realize a global village where resources and opportunities equally shared amongst the inhabitants of this village. Why is it then, that as we quickly approach the globalization vessel, some of the players are not equipped or do not qualify for entry aboard? The global economic crisis and specifically the developing countries’ economy seem to be suspended in a position where everything is fully controlled.

It has been said, that the social, economic and political problems in the Third World countries have been intentionally developed or fueled by the developed nations. This has led to a number of scholars spending time researching the possible causes of economic and political crisis in the Third World countries. Some have gone as far as to say that Third World underdevelopment, economic crisis, foreign aid and AIDS policies are all a legacy of colonialism. The defendants of this school of thought have gone further in explaining not only the impacts of colonialism but also the whole plot of colonizing places such as Africa in the 19th century. Nowhere in Africa were positive contributions made to any substantial extent by colonialism. Countries like Nigeria and Ghana, which were among the better-endowed colonies, were left with only a few rail lines, rudimentary infrastructure and a few thousand graduates. This was better than in other places. The Portuguese, for instance, left their colonies with very little. At independence in 1975, Mozambique had only three dozen graduates. The historians went further in explaining the main goals of colonialism: after scrambling for Africa and other colonized regions, colonialism’s aim was very clearly to extract as many economically profitable resources as possible, which could either be shipped back to Europe and America for processing or sold on the international market to prospective buyers exploiting cheap labor and markets for production.

And the system of brainwashing that they employed in order to penetrate the strong bonds of the African societies was religion!

One scholar went further by saying, “When the Europeans came to Africa they had a Bible and the Africans had the land, then they (the Europeans) said, ‘Let us close our eyes and pray’, and when they opened their eyes again, the Africans had the Bible in their hands and the Europeans had the land!”. The devastating impacts of slave trade meant that Africa lost a work force of almost

15 million people that would have driven the continent to a very promising future. Lastly, the handing over of administration from the colonial rulers to the colonies was not intended to see the independent national governments prosper, but rather to keep them dependent, having left them with poor social, economic and political infrastructures, just to mention a few aspects. By re-drawing the map of Africa, throwing diverse people together without considering the established borders, ethnic conflicts were created that are still destabilizing the continent today. We still have so many challenges ahead, but also so many opportunities that, if addressed properly, we could still see the Third World countries make a U-turn to prosperity!

The Concept Behind Developing and Under-Developing Countries

Development in human society is a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. Some of these are virtually moral categories and are difficult to evaluate – depending as they do on the age in which one lives, one’s class origins, and one’s personal code of what is right and what is wrong, etc. However, what is indisputable, is that the achievement of any of those aspects of personal development is very much tied in with the state of the society as a whole. More often than not, the term “development” is used exclusively in an economic sense – the justification being that the economy is itself an index of other social features. What then is economic development? A society develops economically as its members jointly increase their capacity for dealing with the environment.

Underdevelopment makes sense only as a means of comparing levels of development. At all times, therefore, one of the ideas behind underdevelopment is a *comparative* one. It is possible to compare the economic conditions at two different periods for the same country and determine whether or not it had developed; and (more importantly) it is possible to compare the economies of any two countries or sets of countries at any given period in time.

A second and even more indispensable component of modern underdevelopment is that it expresses a particular pattern of *exploitation*: namely, the exploitation of one country by another. All of the countries named as “underdeveloped” in the world are exploited by others, and the underdevelopment with which the world is now pre-occupied is a product of capitalist, imperialist and colonialist exploitation. African and Asian societies were developing independently until they were taken over directly or indirectly by the capitalist powers. When that happened,

exploitation increased and *the export of surplus was guaranteed*, depriving the societies of the benefits of their natural resources and labor. That is an integral part of underdevelopment in the contemporary sense.

Many African scholars and activists believe that the Europeans, when they were leaving the colonies, had something in their minds. Africa, Southeast Asia, the small island states and Latin America were still in the middle of their hearts. They gave out independencies in some places and got kicked out by force in other places, yet that was not the end of their exploitation and extraction of natural resources from their now former colonies. An economic rescue plan was imperative to them otherwise they would have run out of stock in their markets as the stock was mainly coming from the colonies at no cost at all. This rescue plan was to ensure that the newly formed states (former colonies) remained dependent in almost every way, economically and politically, just to mention two examples. Since the countries were just establishing themselves, the need for finances to improve the physical and social infrastructures was inevitable and that was the hook that trapped most political figures of those times in the post-colonial era. While infrastructure development was significant for economic development, the cultural aspect of the newly independent states was also very volatile, therefore the people in power had to spend a lot of resources trying to restructure the social bonds that were imperative for development and maintaining order and social security. Therefore the political leaders had again to turn to the trap (loans) for help, which was meant for restructuring the socio-economic infrastructures, substantial parts of which went to maintaining the social bonds and needs on the ground. At the end of the day, the loan money would never reach its intended aims. The result was that money got invested in non-income generating projects, as social projects were at that time more important investment areas. But this would eventually leave the states with accumulating debts.

Economic and Political Crisis and Why Third World Countries Especially Those in Africa Will Go No-Where! (Trade Liberalization, Free Markets, Tax Holidays etc)

One could ask: why would those who were giving money never realize that their money was being misused? Does this not point to the fact that the money was given on purpose to serve the interests of the West? Some rulers and dictators got trapped in the plan and they were acting as puppets for the West. Debt has crippled many developing countries. Often as a result of loans taken out by previous rulers and dictators (many of whom various Western nations put into power to suit their interests), millions face poorer and poorer living standards as

precious resources are diverted into debt repayment. The causes of debt are a result of many factors, including:

- The legacy of colonialism – the developing countries' debt is partly the result of the unjust transfer to them of the debts of the colonizing states, (billions of dollars), at very high interest rates.
- *Odious* debt – unjust debt is incurred as rich countries lend dictators or other corrupt leaders money knowing that the money would be wasted. South Africa, for example, had to pay debts incurred by the Apartheid regime after the country was freed. In effect, South Africans are paying for their own oppression.
- Mismanaged spending and lending by the West in the 1960s and 70s. In effect, due to enormous debt repayments, the poor are subsidizing the rich. When we talk of economic development in the underdeveloped countries we cannot avoid talking about the growing burden of debts as they pay billions of dollars every year while diverting the resources from the priority sectors such as health and education. "The Progress of Nations", a report by the UNICEF (1999), suggests that debt is killing children. It is pointed out that as countries are diverting resources away from social provisions to repay debt, those most affected are the poor, especially women and children. UNICEF's 2000 report says that 30,000 children die each day, due to poverty. That is just under 11 million children each year.

One can see that besides tentative efforts directed towards improving the livelihood of the people in the Third World countries, the amount of money paid in debts is enormous compared to the local public expenditures. Another concern is that most developing nations complain that the Western nations themselves are very protectionist, whilst wanting the developing countries to completely remove barriers to free trade, which would cause an imbalance in the favour of the industrialized countries. While there have been recent statements to address such concerns, nothing has really happened. This further suggests that the current world system that is at work is not characterized by "free trade" in the common sense. For example:

- Europe and North America have long been criticized for subsidizing their farmers billions of dollars and making it harder for poorer countries to export to these markets.

- Aid to poor countries is dwarfed by the effects of First World subsidies, Third World debt, and Unequal Trade.
- Recently in the IT industry in the US and some parts of Europe, there has been a growing trend to “outsource” development efforts to poorer countries and have a well-educated, high-technology, work force, in places such as India and China. On the one hand, this is due to the rich countries having pressured the poor countries in past decades as well as recent years to open up their markets and liberalize further. But then protectionist policies result from the backlash in the wealthier countries. For the poor countries this is hypocrisy, and for the ordinary workers in the First World, their livelihoods are at risk. Meanwhile, although companies point out they need to outsource to remain competitive, in some circumstances, they benefit either way, because higher costs of First World workers could be passed on to consumers if all companies face the same regulations and are forced to employ First World workers under certain conditions.

International instruments of trade and finance oversee a complex system of multilateral trade laws and financial agreements that keep the poor in their Bantustans anyway. Its whole purpose is to institutionalize inequity. Why else would it be that the US taxes a garment made by a Bangladeshi manufacturer twenty times more than it taxes a garment made in the UK? Why else would it be that countries that grow 90% of the world’s cocoa beans produce only 5% of the world’s chocolate? Why else would it be that countries that grow cocoa beans, like the Ivory Coast and Ghana, are taxed out of the market if they try and turn it into chocolate? Why else would it be that rich countries that spend over a billion dollars a day on subsidies to farmers demand that poor countries, like India, withdraw all agricultural subsidies, including subsidized electricity? Why else would it be that, after having been plundered by colonizing regimes for more than half a century, former colonies are steeped in debt to those same regimes, and repay them some \$ 382 billion a year?³ It is such a pity, when you realize that a cow in Europe gets paid two dollars per day as a subsidy, while human beings are dying of hunger, malnutrition and absolute poverty in the underdeveloped countries, obtaining under a dollar per day!!! Where is the human dignity?

Many argue that only the wealthy nations will benefit, while the poorer ones will suffer the most. These are not just poor people from developing nations, but

poor people in industrialized countries too (however, they at least have the safety of proper social security systems). For example, corporations will be freer to move around and avoid substantial taxes. And it is these corporations that are now outpouring in the underdeveloped world with the shield of investments and privatization and opening of markets. It is the same institutions that drain resources of the poor and almost pay nothing as they enjoy the tax holidays in the poor host countries. What they do is to go to the underdeveloped countries while already having incentive lay-down investments – super projects that really pay back the capital and brings enormous profits while they are testing the so-called “business environment/atmosphere”. After ten years of tax holidays, a company gets sold to another investor and the circle begins again.

Another aspect related to the above mentioned is how Western nations want their multinational firms to be treated the same as domestic firms in the foreign countries, which they may enter. At first thought, this sounds fair and equitable. However, when considered from another point of view, namely that this would mean that a much more established multinational corporation would be able to get treatment allowing it to outsmart the smaller domestic firms in the first place. This sounds less fair and equitable.

Developed countries grow rich by selling capital-intensive (thus cheap) products for a high price and buying labor-intensive (thus expensive) products for a low price. This imbalance of trade expands the gap between rich and poor. The wealthy sell products to be consumed, not tools to produce. This maintains the monopolization of the tools of production, and assures a continued market for the product. (Such control of tools of production is a mercantilist strategy. It often requires military might).⁴

International Commitments and Foreign Aid – Support With Strings!

We hear more and more about philanthropic organizations set up by mega-successful business elites, where millions of dollars are donated to seemingly worthy causes. However, the fact that such donations are needed also serves as an indication that development policies and globalization policies in their current form are not sustainable. The following quote summarizes this notion quite well:

“It is all very well for Bill Gates to charitably donate \$ 750m to pay for immunization programmes for certain diseases, as he recently announced he would do, and for James Wolfensohn to urge transnational companies setting up in poor countries to contribute financially directly to local education services. Societies

which depend on such largess to meet their basic health and education needs are neither sustainable, democratic nor equitable – yet new dimensions of power are ceded to large companies”.⁵

We may thank Bill Gates, but is this enough? Let me bring you back to the international negotiations on development and aid. Let us consider the ODA case – Overseas Development Assistance – where every developed country is obliged to provide at least 0.7% of their GDP for the development of underdeveloped countries. To date, with the exception of some Scandinavian and Nordic countries that have done their best to reach this target, none of the other super powers have even dared to approach that level... SHAME! In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and later the NEPAD – New Partnership for Africa Development – again set a budget of as much as \$ 64 billion per year to see Africa boom and propell itself! Then I asked myself: if the ODA is still to a large extent a myth, why should we bother again about the same routine? OK, OK! The thing is that *they* are the only ones... And most of all, they are obliged to do so! But here is another shocking story. While the US is reluctant to support relevant development initiatives in Africa through the ODA 0.7% policy, they happily spend billions of dollars financing wars in Afganistan and Iraq, not to mention the administration costs of wars and the following reconstruction of the war-torn regions, totalling over \$ 14 billion. I deeply feel this money could have been spent in development work. WHY not Africa?

Whilst there is the support from the developed nations, which I have mentioned, it is again tied with “strings” and conditions. This gives you the picture that nothing is for free on this planet – highlighted in the fact that even Christianity, which was meant to be free, totally free, was never free to AFRICANS as it involved some system of give and take! “The Poor Africans” got the religion and the bright Europeans depleted their land, raw materials and cheap labour. That was in the 18th –19th century, but now in the 21st century, history continues to repeat itself clearly in the light of development work! Yes, development work. Out of the total support funds donated by the developed nations, almost 70% is returned to them, covering technical support. Isn't this a way of subsidizing unemployment in their countries? This totally goes against what we learn in our daily lives and in schools about project management, where we are told that less than 12% of a budget should go to administration and institutional support. Why is it, that we are going against this knowledge? Even though Kofi Annan noticed this was happening, at some point, nothing was changed. Technical support? What technical expertise are they bringing regarding the development work in Africa? Aren't there capable Africans that are

suiting for the same tasks? (I leave this to dispute)

A Case With AIDS and How Policy Decisions are Shaped

In 1981, AIDS was discovered in some parts of Africa. Today, AIDS is a major problem in Africa – one cannot imagine that more than 40 million people have AIDS in Africa. How can that be? The exercise of voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) is still very new and the practice amongst the population to undergo even regular health checkups is still not widely spread.

Today, 10 million young people are living with HIV and each day 6,000 young men and women get newly infected with the virus. Young people are the hardest-hit by the pandemic, and they remain a crucial component in terms of transmission, vulnerability, risk and potential change.

But their needs are often ignored when HIV/AIDS policies are designed, when prevention programmes are developed, and when budgets are allocated. The young people are often excluded from the implementation of initiatives that target them. Hence there is a failure in many policies to address the needs of the youth in terms of awareness raising, prevention, and care.

Corruption: Who and With WHOM?

Corruption is the misuse of public resources for personal gain. In Africa corruption is a big problem, which needs to be addressed. The only challenging issue is the fact that corruption in Africa and the Third World countries is categorical within different social classes and times. The question is still who is to blame? Is it the peasant civilians, who are using bribes to either get social services more quickly or to avoid state bureaucracies, or is it the big businesses, who extract wealth while not only destroying the nature but also accumulating abundant profits from their products? Cheating and absconding tax by taking the advantage of tax holidays in the “spirit of promoting investments” could also be called corruption. After we have answered the question of who’s to blame, the second question would be, who should be dealt with first?

Globalization, the Monster!

Many underdeveloped nations are now being forced to accept that globalization is here, and we’ve got to deal with it, without considering whether we are ready or not. The supporters of the globalization theory argue that globalization is the only solution to world problems. A good question, however, is how do we grade world problems? I suppose the problems of a poor person are very different from those of a rich person. In my point of view, globalization is an opportunity plan

that is meant to save the poor, but the problem is that this plan does not come *from* the poor! From experience, all the top-down development strategies and plans have proven to be a failure in most cases, and so has globalization. Many in the developing world have welcomed the ideas of globalization, but are wary of the realities as well. On November 16, 2000, during a lecture at the British Museum, Nelson Mandela said, “We welcome the process of globalization. It is inescapable and irreversible...”. However, he added, “...if globalization is to create real peace and stability across the world, it must be a process benefiting all. It must not allow the most economically and politically powerful countries to dominate and submerge the countries of the weaker and peripheral regions. It should not be allowed to drain the wealth of smaller countries towards the larger ones, or to increase inequality between richer and poorer regions.”

Many officials say that globalization, or the fast-paced growth of trade and cross-border investment, has done far less to raise the incomes of the world’s poorest people than the leaders had hoped. The vast majority of people living in Africa, Latin America, Central Asia and the Middle East are no better off today than they were in 1989, when the fall of the Berlin Wall allowed capitalism to spread worldwide at a rapid rate.

Rather than an unstoppable force of development, globalization now seems an economic temptress, promising riches but often not delivering, in the view of many of the leaders at the United Nations conference.⁶ More critique has been directed to the power structures of the West and their quest to decide everything for the South, while not noticing that the burden is being felt by the poor! A *Christian Aid newsletter* weighs in on this with a more recent report noting that sub-Saharan Africa is a massive \$ 272 billion worse off because of “free” trade policies forced on them as a precondition for receiving aid and debt relief. They also note that, the reforms that rich countries forced on Africa were supposed to boost economic growth. However, the reality is that imports increased massively while exports went up only slightly. The growth in exports only partially compensated African producers for the loss of local markets and they were left worse off.⁷

If we ask ourselves whether the end is positive or negative, then one of the arguments made for globalization is that the world should move further towards becoming more interdependent.

- This way, no one will want to make war with others, because they depend on each other to keep their economies alive. This sounds like a wonderful solution – to prevent future horrors such as the previous two World Wars.
- The argument probably bears some merits, if there was a truly free trade system which was fair. As argued above, the current global system appears to be more mercantilist.
- Furthermore, what is often overlooked is that given the current international institutions in place (WTO, IMF, World Bank, etc), who would benefit from the interdependence within the framework of the current form of globalization? It is the large multinational corporations and their governments. The governments of more influential and powerful nations have the ability to impose certain types of interdependence and easily force dependence in their favour, if needed, using economic or military pressure. This helps explain why for some nations, even though the Cold War has ended, their military budgets remain roughly the same.
- In fact, as pointed out by the Institute for Economic Democracy, many wars throughout history have had trade, resources and related expansion at their core. History shows us that the more powerful nations have devised international economic agreements that promote more dependency upon those wealthier countries. In a twisted sense, then, such an interdependency, as implemented, would be good for “stability” of the status quo. Real interdependency on the other hand, which deals with equity and cooperation as well, may have more likelihood of being good for all, but that would be less likely to happen because it would threaten to reduce the influence and power of the wealthier nations and the multinational corporations.

“Far from some altruistic motive to see those in poor countries improve their lot and thus narrow the gap between rich and poor, globalisation therefore merely serves as an efficient, low-cost method for TNCs [transnational corporations] to take advantage of low taxes, weak regulations and vulnerable labour whilst penetrating the economies of developing countries”⁸

Poverty and Environmental Sustainability

At first glance, it may seem like separate issues, but environment issues and issues of poverty and debt are very much related. Basically, the more the developing countries stay in debt, the more they will feel that they need to milk the earth's resources for the hard cash they can bring in, and also cut back on social, health, environmental conservation, employment and other important programs.

Responding to environmental disasters is also made more difficult when the affected countries are in severe debt. Examples include Honduras and Nicaragua, where Hurricane Mitch devastated large parts of those countries, as well as Mozambique and Madagascar, where floods have made hundreds of thousands of people homeless. Tackling debt-related issues would therefore indirectly help addressing environmental and other issues as well. Who said, that poverty is going to be a history in Africa? I can read that clearly in the "PRSP" in Tanzania and in "Vision 2025"! That is the government vision to halve the proportion of people living under abject poverty, which is expected to be one of the achievements to happen, though so many challenges still lay ahead.

Education and Cultural Identity!

There is the phenomena of "brain drain", whereby the poor countries educate some of their population to key jobs, such as medical areas and other professions, only to find that some rich countries try to attract them away. The prestigious journal, *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) sums this up in the title of an article: "Developed world is robbing African countries of health staff".⁹ In a way, this is a form of subsidy for the rich!

Some countries are left with just 500 doctors each with large areas without any health workers of any kind. A shocking one third of practising doctors in the UK are from overseas, for example, as the *BBC* reports, while the *BMJ* notes that some 22% in the US are from abroad. A good example is Tanzania, where one doctor alone serves 14,000 patients and is still getting poorly paid, due to the fact that the distribution of wealth of the nation is unequal as a result of a number of factors, including debt and trade liberalization.

And yet, this is not just a problem that Africa faces. They are faced by many other poor countries in Asian, Central and Latin America countries, in Eastern Europe, and in the Caribbean, etc. Other industries also suffer from this issue. Yet, at the same time, it is understandable that individuals would want to escape the misery of poverty and corruption in their own country. A lot of the poverty and

corruption results from structural adjustment programs and the current system of corporate globalization. As if they are twisting the knife planted already in the back, some of what little money the rich countries allow the poor to spend on health is now drained away by the already rich, leaving the poor to bear the burden.

There are other subtle, but important impacts, to peoples, societies and cultures. While the current form of globalization has its benefits such as helping opening up otherwise authoritarian or restrictive societies, the ways in which cultures and societies may be opened can also have an impact, as summarized by this following quotation:

“In order for ‘free markets’ to be ‘free’, the exchange of labour, land, currency, and consumer goods must not be encumbered by elements of psychosocial integration such as clan loyalties, village responsibilities, guild or union rights, charity, family obligations, social roles, or religious values. Cultural traditions ‘distort’ the free play of the laws of supply and demand, and thus must be suppressed. In free market economies, for example, people are expected to move to where jobs can be found, and to adjust their work lives and cultural tastes to the demands of a global market”.⁹

But what about the notion that globalization is a kind of cultural conquest? This too, is plainly wrong. Under a market system, economic interaction is voluntary. This is the market’s greatest virtue, greater by far than its superior productivity. So there is no reason to fear that globalization itself threatens traditional non-Western cultures, such as Islam, except in so far as individual freedom threatens them. McDonald’s does not march people into its outlets at the point of a gun. Nike does not require people to wear its trainers on pain of imprisonment. If people buy those things, it is because they choose to, not because globalization is forcing them to.

I think there is still a very great deal of improvement needed in the education infrastructures of the South, so that more scholars could be produced that have an actual sense of what is happening. Having the majority of our elite being produced in the West, brings us backwards, and the taste of freedom, solidarity and change is lost, due to the fact that education in Western universities generally teaches the same theories. Of course, that is not to say that since they got that education, they have no credibility, but just that diverse perspectives need to be understood. The education *can* have an effect on perspectives.

Third World OR Underdeveloped Countries: Where are WE?

Most pro-modern development practitioners are very optimistic with regards to the prosperity of the Third World countries; many are still convinced that the right time hasn't come yet, but is almost on the way. The ambitious policies, plans and strategies are now being put in place not only at local levels, but at the national, regional and international levels as well. Despite the fact that since 1972, a revolutionary global environmental consciousness along with global institutions that were meant to sustain our planet's environment, were established, large scale environmental destruction is still hitting many more parts of Third World countries than the developed nations. The 1980s was the decade that witnessed the merging of the ideas of environmental protection and economic growth for the survival of planet Earth's inhabitants. In the 1990s, other issues were very much in the policies and discussions, including poverty, access to information, ownership and management of natural resources, etc. Yet this has not emerged as the reality they predicted, particularly in Third World countries. The whole concept of sustainable development as in its definition: *The ability of the present generation to meet their own needs without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs* – (the Brundtland Report), hasn't materialized for the majority of people or on any kind of large scale. People are still extremely poor, to the level of living under a dollar per day. The walk to sustainability is still challenging and the courage to make it is everybody's concern but when will we be there? This is the question every "Third Worlder" should ask. Many countries have witnessed independencies and revolutions in the 1950s – 1970s that were meant to bring hope and dignity back to the people, but almost four decades have passed, and yet, to a large extent, in some places, the situation is still very much the same or has worsened... WHY? Are people lazy? Is it bad luck? I would argue, if we take the majority within Third World countries, many of them are still not even half-way to prosperity.

Some scholars would still argue that the Third World will never go anywhere because of different stresses that are being placed on them by large powerful institutions that somehow governs the global wealth. The dependency theory suggests that multinational corporations and organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank have contributed to making Third World countries dependent on First World countries for economic survival. The theory states that this dependence is self-maintaining because the economic systems tend to benefit First World countries and corporations. Scholars also question whether the idea

of development is biased in favor of Western thought. They debate whether population growth is a main source for problems in the Third World or if the problems are more complex and thorny than that. Policy makers disagree on how much involvement First World countries should have in the Third World and whether Third World debts should be cancelled. The issues are complicated by the stereotypes of what Third World and First World countries are like. People in the First World, for example, often describe Third World countries as underdeveloped, over-populated, and oppressed. Third World people are sometimes portrayed as uneducated, helpless, or backwards. Modern scholarship has taken steps to make academic discourse more conscious of the differences, not only between the First World and the Third World, but also among the countries and peoples of each category.

Challenges out there: Transparency, corruption, public interest and prioritization.

“For all the vivid examples of modern corporate power, such as the annual income of Motorola being equal to the annual income of Nigeria’s 118 million people, it is folly to believe that big business on its own is shaping the new world order. This allows the argument against globalization to be depoliticized, reducing it to single issues of ‘ethical trading’ and ‘codes of conduct’, and inviting its co-option. Above all, it misses the point that state power in the west is accelerating.”¹¹

Furthermore, the annual expenditure on ice-cream in Europe is the same as the annual expenditure on the health sector in Africa. The challenge of increasing unequal production and consumption patterns globally, remain to be settled. Is it the people, the citizens, or the state, who decide on public spending and allocation of resources? Clear, transparent means to monitor the implementation of plans and programmes in the Third World need to be strengthened and reinforced. Corruption should not be taken as a sin only committed by the poor people who are struggling to survive by any means; whether we like it or not, the theory of survival of the fittest is highly manifesting itself. *Where are the billions of dollars that are being extracted in the spirit of privatization from the Third World and invested in the West?* The mining sector is a good example; the tax collected from the mining corporations does not correspond to the profits these companies make daily. One of the highest ranking gold mining companies in Africa has a mining site in the Geita district of Northern Tanzania. Even if they make great profits, the Geita district still has a poverty prevalence above 50%. The heavy fishing industry around Lake Victoria supplies fish products to European countries while the local population around the lake is starving. Some

of the kids with malnutrition survive on a daily meal of fish scale leftovers from the fish processing factories, an unequal relation that is depicted in the documentary “Darwin Nightmare”. Where are the billions of dollars? A good question that each one of us needs to ask, is what actually stays with the people locally, who ought to be the direct beneficiaries of the economically potential areas? Time has come when our leaders should be held accountable and responsible for supporting the unjust plunder of poor people’s resources.¹²

Opportunities: Though Limited, the Abundant Untapped Natural Resources!

What is lacking or what is the load that still troubles the Third World? POVERTY! If we can start our quest for change by focusing on this ideal:

“Eliminating poverty is not philosophically complicated; eliminate the monopolization of land, technology, and finance capital and equalize pay for equally productive work, both within internal economies and between trading nations. Once all nations and all people have access to technology and their labor is paid equally for equally productive work, the buying power of labor in different nations, and within nations, will equalize. Eliminating those monopolies will instantly distribute a share of the wealth to all members of society even as economic efficiency increases and produces more wealth. This is a more cooperative and democratic capitalism, a people centered economy that will assure all rights for all people.”¹³

Then no effort will ever be left unrewarded! Every individual matters, every individual has a role to play and every individual can make a difference and so can corporations and governments.

So, one might naturally ask, if it is this “simple”, why haven’t the poor done this? There is, in some respects, a simple answer, but one that demands a lot of explanation! The simple answer to this can be found in things like politics, greed, dominance-politics, etc. For example, international economic institutions like the World Bank and IMF, with the influence of economically and politically powerful nations, have been able to push through policies which are known to be destructive, such as the SAPs, and in this way they have created poverty and have destroyed any real chance of developing one’s own nation.

Instead, things like SAPs open up poor countries’ economy for “Foreign Direct Investment”, for “constructive engagement”, etc. – things which are often “constructive” for the multinationals, but not always for the host country, because the “investment” is going into creating sweatshops, “constructive

engagement” to extract resources, and so on. There is little “constructive investment” in helping these countries build their own industries. So, whilst such investments might look like they create jobs in the poor countries, compared to the real potential of what the poor countries could achieve, very little is really achieved and the potential for poverty alleviation is lost. And while some mainstream commentators may not like to talk about it, the effects of colonialism etc. are still felt – the same countries are *still* poor; their resources are *still* plundered, and instead of this being achieved through force, today it is achieved largely through unequal trade.

How do I see the FUTURE?! Let's Debate...

Notes

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