

CRISIS OF INEQUALITY AND DEPENDENCY OF THIRD WORLD STATES IN GLOBAL POLITICS: AN EVALUATION

Isaac E. UKI,

*Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education, Department of Political Science, Nigeria,
isaacuki8@gmail.com*

Korikiye WENIBOWEI, (CA)

*Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education, Department of Political Science, Nigeria,
mcebiwoni@gmail.com*

&

Daniel KEMEBRADIKUMO,

*Niger Delta University, Department of History and Diplomacy, Wilberforce Island, Nigeria,
danielkeme21@gmail.com*

Abstract

The study examines the historical evidence of the phenomena of colonialism that led to the situation of economic subservience and political control by the industrialised countries who incidentally are the former colonial master of most third world states. Arising from this, the study was guided by two main objectives. The first is to examine the major contradictions in the relationship between scarcity and human inequality in the distribution of available resources in developed and third world states. The second is to evaluate the crisis of inequality and dependency and their effects on the political economy of third world states, including Nigeria. To achieve these objectives, the study adopts the World System theory as its explanatory framework for analysis of the issues raised in the study. The study is historical in nature; therefore, it is purely descriptive, and it relied on secondary data as the main sources of information. Findings of the study show that the existing relationship between third world states and developed countries is a product of structural historical discontent built on the exploitation of the post colonies or developing countries. Findings further reveal that very little had changed as third world states were still being dominated and controlled economically and politically by developed countries, hence the clamour by third world states for more freedom for individuals and states to guarantee rapid economic growth and political stability. It recommends the redressing of the structural imbalances of globalisation and deliberate proactive development interventions in the area of new economic order to mitigate the problems of inequality and dominance by developed countries.

Keywords: *Inequality, Dependency, Third World States, Globalization.*

DOI: 10.31039/jgss.v2i8.8

1. Introduction

Nkrumah K(1966) defines the third world as countries of the colonial and ex-colonial territories. The third world comprises the emergent Afro-Asia states which were once ruled, exploited and oppressed by imperial powers. The distinguishing mark of the Third World is their poverty, low level of industrial, social and political development. Their state of being presently, is a direct consequence and impact of centuries of slavery, dehumanisation, severe exploitation, domination through colonialism.

Hans Morgenthau H (1973) considers the third world as states comprising the Afro-Asian bloc in the world system. To him, the third world symbolises the emergence of another bloc in the international political order and a probable shift from the bipolar power structure to the emerging multipolar system in the world balance of power arrangement. However, Morgenthau does not include Latin American states as belonging to the third world bloc in global politics. To Adebayo (1987) what underlies the concept of the third world particularly is economic underdevelopment.

Thus strategies of economic control in third world states are undertaken in the form of organisational structure through which the economy is managed. Economic policies of third world states are divided into forms where there is the private (capitalist) structure on one hand and government or socialist ones on the other. The capitalist category is twofold, indigenous or domestic capitalism and external or transnational capitalism. In the majority of Third World states, ownership and management of economic statutes initially comes from foreign sources due to lack of indigenous entrepreneurial tradition and partly because economic development is closely associated with overseas trade, which requires technology, capital, and forms of organisation.

According to Russell E (1979), neocolonialism means new colonialism that is a situation in which a colony is granted formal political independence, yet its entire lifeline: economically, socially, culturally and politically is dominated and teleguided from outside. In this type of situation, one finds that politically the elites in power are only representing their former masters doing their biddings to the neglect of their people and any legislation or political pronouncements are made to impress and assuage their foreign masters.

Russell noted further that even the democracy they emulate is badly practised as all the important rules of democracy like free election, tolerance and peaceful change of government

are violated. Economically their economies remain dependent on their foreign masters as they have been incorporated into the world capitalist economy. With lack of capital, tied down by aid and debt, their fate is sealed. Their existence is not so much for their own existence but for serving foreign interests. Imperialism on the other hand could be defined as a desire by one country to control and dominate another. These are manifested by signing of Military pacts with weaker states and the provision of military bases by the weaker state to the metropolitan states. Manoeuvres and military exercises are all forms of domination exerted on third world states. Politically weaker states are dragged into unnecessary political, military economic alliances in which their contribution is their mere presence. Even at world fora like the UNO, the voting behaviours of states are teleguided so as not to go against an unpopular stand against their Western masters. Economically weaker states are teleguided and told who to trade with, enter into agreements with and which economic association they join. As a result you find states transacting businesses with states which, left to them, they will not do so willingly.

Culturally, the metropolitan states dazzle the third world states with the superiority of their way of life, music, dressing and values. In these varied ways, neocolonialism and imperialism have continued to dominate the third world states. Russell (1979), Schumpeter J.A. (1943).

There is a consensus that the relationship between developed countries and third world states have always been that of dominance: this type of dominance takes three forms. Firstly, the Western Nations make sure that third world states remain producers of raw materials and importers of manufactured consumer goods.

Secondly, the relationship is that of fragmentation. Whereas the Western nations are coordinated and unified, the third world states are underdeveloped, disorganised and disunited. As a result, the centre states deal with the periphery on individual basis without the benefit for multilateral cleaving. This gives room for monopoly to the centre as it can turn to any direction and establish links. The final aspect of this relationship is penetration. Penetration means the elites of former colonial territories are in ideological identification with the elites of the center. This identification is achieved through educational institutions set up during colonialism. Dependency is thus accomplished in terms of economic vested interest in a high trade level between the center and the periphery (Krapivin 1983).

Taken together the three factors outlined above in examining developed and developing countries relationship shows a carryover from colonialism pursued in a subtle form. As a result

the former dependencies could not get equitable treatment from their masters under colonialism and certainly cannot be attained now and the resultant effects is the deepening and expansion of the vertical integration of the post colonies into an ever-growing world market as globalisation exerts pressure on the post-colonial states as a sovereign territorially banded political entity not only from supra-national organisations, but also from sub/infra-national movements. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the crisis of inequality and dependence of third world states in global politics.

2. Conceptual Clarification

Terms are discussed within the context of economic development and industrialisation.

Inequality

The term inequality is a socio-economic as well as political terminology used to refer to people, countries or regions. It is seen as unequal allocation of socio-economic benefits, or unequal opportunities and access to resource of material conditions. Engels (1976). The economic and socio-economic platforms which generates, promotes and sustains inequality is capitalism.

i. Inequality between Countries

The North-south dichotomy in the contemporary world political economy is a clear case of economic inequality between the countries of the Northern hemisphere and those of the Southern axis of the world. The countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and the Caribbean Islands, constitute the bulk of the less industrialised and less developed countries of the world. The United States of America, Britain, France, Germany, the former Soviet Union, China and Japan constitute the industrialised/developed states in the world economy.

ii. Inequality between Regions

Using the indices of development, the industrialised regions of the North and the less industrialised Southern region occupy almost opposite sides of the socio-economic spheres of life. The South which harbours most of the poor countries of the world also experiences inequality within the regions. For instance, the African sub-region of the Third World States is said to be the poorest region of the world, and thus likely to degenerate further. On the other

hand, countries like Japan and China, even though geographically situated within the Third world region, now rank with some of the developed countries of the North.

Kaha T. (1970) observed that rather than incorporation, what accounts for the critical state of poverty and debilitating inequality in the African region presently is the intensity of several decades of colonial exploitation and brutalisation of African human and material resources by imperialist powers coupled with the equally exploitative forces of neocolonialism in post independent Africa.

Dependency

Dependency is a situation in which a certain group of countries have their economy conditioned by the development and the expansion for another economy.

It is also the history colonial imperialism has left and modern capitalism help creates in underdeveloped countries. Historical situations of dependency have conditioned contemporary underdevelopment in Africa and the Third World in general. In other words the basis of Third World underdevelopment can be traced to Trans-Atlantic slave trade, which legitimated, trade and partition of Africa. Africa supplied human beings as objects of trade, in return for guns and other items. Later the African become exporter of primary products in which foreign capital is brought to control-social overheads - transportation facilities and other utilities to enhance proper exploitation of the people and their resources. Economically, dependency (imperialism) is a phenomenon equated with monopolistic privileges and preferences, plunder of raw materials, seizure of territory, enslavement of indigenous population, nationalism and racism.

Third World States

Third world refers to those countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Geographically, the world is divided into five continents, but politically and economically they are essentially divided into two; the socialist states comprising the Soviet Union, the whole of Eastern Europe, China, North Korea, North Vietnam and Cuba. The capitalists group includes countries like the USA, Canada, the whole of Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

One common feature of third world states is that they are all ex-dependencies who even after formal political independence found themselves politically and economically tied to their former colonial masters. Their politics equally revolve around lack of political will and

economic subservience producing raw material and importing manufactured goods. Most third world economies are to a very large extent neo-colonial in theory and practical as a result of neo-colonial intrigue and machination, Third World countries have witnessed the highest level of political crises culminating in mass killings, assassinations, civil wars, the rise of inequality and civilian irresponsible political leadership of various dimensions and magnitudes.

Globalisation

There is no consensus on the definition of “global” or globalisation and its theoretical values. However, the position and views of Appadorai is readily available for use in this context. Accordingly, Appadorai (1998:907) sees globalisation as a socio-economic formation which marks a set of transitions in the global political economy since the 1970’s in which multinational forms of capitalist organisation is being replaced by transnational, flexible and irregular forms of capitalist organisation like labour, finance, technology and technological capital is assembled in ways that treated national boundaries as mere constraints or futurisms. These transnational corporations have increasingly begun to produce arrangements of labour capital and technical expertise which produce new forms of laws, management, and distribution that has led to a decline in the sovereignty of nation-states in respect of the working of global capital.

Globalisation theories and concepts tends to highlight certain fundamental issues in world politics such as the mutuality of capital and labour, the role of transnational corporations, the rise of a global culture, the expansion of a new information technologies, the emergence of new organisational and surveillance structures and the extraordinary penetration of economic market relations into almost all aspect of human life crisis-cross territorial boundaries has created deep crises that has at least two crucial implications, the first is a crisis of rationality reflected in the states inability to fulfill its traditional functions; and second a crises of legitimacy reflected in its inability to achieve massive loyalty. Hebd (1995:139).

3. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the World System theory which has its ascendancy in the social sciences to Immanuel Wallerstein (1974). Immanuel Wallerstein attempts to show that capitalism is global and that while it promotes development in some regions. It at the same time promotes underdevelopment in other regions. Specifically, he looks at capitalism as a World System, his

views of capitalism and the World System are developed, in the two volumes of the Modern World System published in 1974 and 1980.

He begins by noting that the world constitutes a system. A system is whole structured into parts with each interacting with the others to achieve a common purpose. The World System then sees the world as a whole structured into units called politics. There is one division of labour. Some politics find themselves on one side of the division of labour while others find themselves on the other side.

Where there is one political authority governing all the politics, we have universal empire. But where there is no political authority and each polity is autonomous we have a modern world economy (free competition. no compulsion).

Wallerstein is interested in the world economy. In the modern world economy there is a vertical division of labour. Some politics specialise in the production of manufacture goods and in the raising of animals using high level technology and skills; they are the core states. Others specialise in the production of raw materials, they are peripheral states. Because of the division of labour and specialisation in production, exchange occurs between the core and the peripheral states.

The core states have a very strong state machine while the peripheral have a weak state machine. Because of their strength, the core states are able to restrict imports into their colonies, that is, they are able to erect protective barriers against exports of the peripheral states and with equal force they penetrate and open up the economies of the periphery.

By the use of power, the core states are able to fix high prices for their manufacture goods and very low prices for primary product from the periphery. The exchange that takes place is therefore unequal. The loss of the periphery is the gain of the core states-through exchange surplus is transferred from the periphery to the core states. Development in one region is underdevelopment in another region.

Wallerstein says that inspite of this naked exploitation of the periphery; the World System does not develop crises. He argues that it is able to stabilise itself for various reasons;

- i. That between the core and peripheral states, there is a group of middle income states who are both exploiters and also exploited. In other words, there are labour aristocratic

states and because they are exploited and also exploiter, they are able to shield the periphery from rebelling against the core states (e.g. Belgium).

- ii. There is a pervasive ideological commitment for the system as a whole; people feel that their wellbeing is anchored on the existence of the system and that a revolt against the core state will lead to destruction of the whole system.
- iii. The concentration of power in and the sheer use of force by the core states. On the whole, Wallerstein sees capitalism as a world system which generates development in some regions and under development in other regions.

It is from the foregoing advantage that the researcher decided to adopt the World System approach to the study.

4. Contending Crisis of Inequality and its Effects on the Political Economy of Third World States

One major problem of Third World States as noted by Nkrumah is that almost all of them experienced colonial rule of domination and exploitation, especially African countries. Their emergence as sovereign states came as a result of nationalist movements and armed struggles which straddle several decades. In Africa, almost all of the states experienced one form of nationalist movement, or armed struggle. Examples are places like Nigeria, Ghana, Angola, amongst others.

Secondly, one other crisis of Third World States is that of widespread poverty and low level of development. This is so as third world falls within the southern hemisphere where economic growth and industrial development remain low. Other factors which include diseases, unemployment and social insecurity remains high. Myriad of problems beset the third world states where the per capital income, energy generation and consumption of the citizens are low compared to what obtains in developed societies. Poverty, disease and low industrial development are the hangovers from imperialism and neo-colonialism. Thirdly, some of them are far ahead of others in terms of political and socio-economic development. States like Brazil, India and Algeria are relatively more industrialised than Chad, Niger, Benin and Gabon, these relatively developed third world states have been closely integrated into the international capitalist countries. The fourth crisis is that their pattern of international trade is poised towards their erst-while masters or their neo-colonial industrial centres. The industrialised countries of the North have reduced the South to a near permanent position of producers and consumers of

raw materials and manufactured goods respectively. Due to the structure of unequal development between the north and the third world, there arises the situation of unequal exchange in the economic and financial relations between the North and the South with the balance of trade in favour of the North. Most third world economies are neo-colonial and what neo-colonialism does is to consolidate the pattern or colonial economy which was established in colonial times.

A fifth crisis is political instability which is marked with military intervention in politics. Since their independence, most third world states like Nigeria have witnessed the highest level of political crisis culminating in mass killings, assassination, civil wars, border clashes, subversion and the rise of military dictatorship and civilian irresponsible political leadership of various dimensions.

However it is instructive to note that colonialism and its exploitative super-structure (political institutions) were established in the third world by the use of force. Equally, force is required in order to maintain, promote and strengthen a neo-colonial economy and its political and social institutions. This way the neo-colonial political leaders in the third world receives support, assistance and aid in cash and kind to enable them preserve the statusquo in the interest of the ruling class and their mentors at the metropolises. These leaders often run to them as political fugitives or seek asylum in moment of intensive crisis in their home states.

Finally, a major crisis of third world states is that they remain dependent, either on their former colonial masters or advanced industrial centers of Europe for their development. Such dependency is manifested in the direction of foreign loans, aid, technology transfer, foreign investment and credit line which the third world states go for in the international capitalist market and other financial institutions. As most third world states are victims of imperialism and neo-colonialism, foreign loans and aid from the metropolitan countries of Europe tie recipient states to the apron strings of these imperialist states. Nkrumah k (1965) Morganithaou H (1973), and Spero J (1977)

5. Third World States the Crisis of Dependency in Global Economic Relations

The concept of dependency by Brazilian Sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso, helps to links both Economic and political analysis; that is, it links those who are the beneficiaries of development with those who make the decisions. In the views of Richard and Ronald (1974) dependency simply states that crucial economic decisions are made not by the countries that

are 'develop' but by foreigners whose interests are carefully safeguarded. Foreigners use their economic power to buy political power in the countries they penetrate. This could mean political pressure by the imperialist metropole and even military intervention. This collusion between alien economic and political power distorts both the economy and the policies of dependent states of the third world. The process becomes complete once the metropole exploits its erstwhile colonies and the domestic bourgeoisie class exploits the rest of the population. The dependency nature of relationship is that of exploiter-exploited between third world states and industrialised Western states. Third world states are dependent economically on the developed countries for their development. These states serve as markets for capital investment of industrialised states as the fattest profits are derived from the overseas investments. The policy of the Western Nations has always been designed to consign the Third World States as sources of raw materials and markets for their finished products. The years of colonial domination has invariably drawn the third world into the capitalist global economy in which the third world is an appendage. Gus H (1972), Richard B and Ronald H (1974).

This inclusion into the capitalist economy has made the third world dependent in operating the policies laid down during the colonial regime and after nominal independence kept in place by neocolonialist machinations. Other ways in which Third world dependency could be seen is not only through the increasing economic dependence, but equally by growing debts, deteriorating terms of trade and balance of payment, and vulnerability to decisions made by governments and non governmental bodies in the rich and powerful nations. Thus profit resulting from outside expansion was windfall gains which in other words means plunder of the dependent states. Both in capitalist and precapitalist societies of the third world, profit derived from overseas trade and investments have become an integral part of national income. Due to the inherent nature of the dependent status in which the third world states found themselves they are exploited and dismembered and their economy integrated into the structure of the metropolitan economy and by extension the capitalist world economy.

Historically, third world dependence is conditioned by their subordinate position in relation to the world economy. The world economy is dominated by the capitalist mode of production which is characterised by a vertical international division of labour. From the historical perspective, this vertical international division of labour emerged as a consequence of the expansion of European merchantilist capitalist system which started from the 16th century onward to societies of unequal levels of economic and military strength. In other words,

because of the unequal political, military and economic relationships between a dependent economy and the dominant external economy, the structure of the former is shaped as much or more by the requirements of the external economy, but the domestic political economy is also shaped by this process. Indeed, the economic side of dependence would be impossible to maintain without the existence of the infrastructure of dependency – that is the domestic configuration of strata, institutions and mechanisms which supports and is in turn supported by external factors. Thus both the economy and the political relationships of a third world states is conditioned by the dynamics of interaction with the external economy. This dependence is reflected in the structure of both the economy and the political relationships of the third world state. The economy consists of the pattern of production and distribution of goods and services, the political economy of the pattern of social and political relations endangered by the economic pattern. Santos (1970).

Third world economies exhibits a variety of structural characteristics which reflect and reinforced their dependence on the capitalist world system. The first of such structural characteristics of dependence is the lack of interdependence between sectors of the domestic economy and the consequent extent to which the external trading sector, rather than indigenous industry was called upon to transform raw materials into producer and consumer goods. Economic growth as measured by changes in GDP in third world states was more closely linked to the vagaries of weather and external commodity prices than to the level of domestic investment. The early years of independence in most third world states like Nigeria saw agriculture accounting for 65% of GDP and subsistence or non-monetary sector a further 30%. Agricultural exports accounted for 80% of total exports. Mining, Manufacturing and construction contributed only a paltry 10%. Apart from preliminary processing of commodity exports, most manufacturing was of the import-substitution variety which relied heavily on imported raw materials and machinery and thus contributed only marginally to the integration of the domestic economy. Since trade, rather than domestic industry transformed raw materials into finished products, employment opportunities which accompany processing remained overseas.

Also, third world dependence on the developed world is the commodity composition of trade. Exports are mainly agricultural in natures which are subject to erratic price fluctuations in the world market. Conversely, imports consisted largely of manufactured consumer goods and producer goods required to sustain the extraction of raw materials including the agricultural

commodities. Further, third world dependence on the developed world has been lack of technological autonomy which resulted in the leakage of the benefits of multiplier effects and backward linkages to overseas suppliers of machinery when major investments projects are undertaken. A fourth characteristic of dependence on the developed ones is that most of the economies of the emerging third world states after independence were faced by the paucity of indigenous control of key sectors of the economy. Foreign firms and expatriate controlled most commercial banks, insurance companies, import and export houses, construction firms, mining, petroleum distribution, wholesale trade and most industry.

A fifth structural characteristic of dependence is the gross asymmetry in the trading relationship between a third world state and its former colonial master. By contrast, this ratio of trade may only represent an insignificant percentage of that former colonial master with all nation's combined. Thus this flow of trade becomes more important to the former colony than to its former master.

Finally, the sum total of factor income (which include interest, dividends, royalties and profits) and private capital flow is in most cases not favourable to the third world state concerned. One great problem facing a structurally dependent economy is generally not one of the shortage of capital as is commonly assumed, but a lack of indigenous control of the accumulation and allocation of surplus value.

6. Dependency and Nigeria's Constraints to Economic Development

The present Nigerian economy is characterised by reliance on a few export commodities for foreign exchange earnings and development funds. At independence, the pattern of trades and dependence was maintained, even though the country had more room to maneuver. Diversification of economic activities was simply translated to mean multilateralization of foreign private capitalist activities. For example, instead of a shift in trade from the west to the rest of the world, there was a shift from Britain to Western continental Europe and the United States. Between 1960-1980, the West accounted for over 92% of Nigerian Exports and Re-exports as percentage of total value. Likewise, the West accounted for over 90% of Nigeria imports for the same period. In addition, the West accounted for over 91% of net flow of private investment to Nigeria.

Before January 1, 1973, when the Naira was introduced, Nigeria used the Britain pound as the basis of its currency. Consequently, the major decisions regarding the nation's currency were

made in London and these usually emphasised factors external rather than internal to Nigeria. Foreign exchange management was automatic with the central bank purchasing sterling from the commercial banks in exchange for the local currency and immediately investing this in the London money market. Reinforcing this, monetary dependence was the domination of the Nigerian banking system by British banks.

Perhaps this approach to economic independence is one of the few options that the Nigerian government could realistically pursue but it is not an answer to the problems of dependence. The same can be said of subsequent economic development programme, including SAP i.e. the Structural Adjustment Programme. Past and current economic development programmes collectively fall to the developmental problem of Nigeria in its essentials. First of all the state of Nigeria's technology is a critical aspect of her dependence and these approaches offer nothing relevant to this aspect of her dependence. As long as Nigeria depends wholly on foreign technology, it cannot make significant progress towards economic independence.

For example, achieving majority Nigerian equity participation in the petroleum industry does not say much about progress towards economic independence, for those who own the technology in fact control the critical means of production, and therefore the direction of the economy. If the technology is withheld, then Nigeria's oil wealth, for all practical purposes, ceases to exist.

Secondly, development approaches in Nigeria do not come to grips with the structural links of the economy to the metropole. For instance, they do not worry about the nature of international exchange, which is a critical mechanism for the transfer of surplus to the metropole as well as for maintaining the international division of labour which underlies Nigeria's underdevelopment and dependence up to a point, these strategies some of which emphasise trade liberalisation and heightened privatisation and commercialisation of the commanding heights of the economy, actually reinforce the dependence of the Nigerian economy.

The failure of development policies in Nigeria mirrors the pattern and challenges of development for other African economies. There is increasing evidence that the political leadership in most African states, as currently constituted, is incapable of achieving development, guaranteeing security and basic human rights of citizens, and promoting the development of democracy.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Sawyer (1988) has rightly observed that the post-war capitalist political or economic arrangement cannot sustain the increasing contradictions and pressures in the development of the international economy on a global scale.

The developing countries of the third world should exert enormous pressure on the developed states for an equitable redistribution and management of world resources for the mutual benefits of all the actors in the system. Preparatory to exerting these pressures, the article recommends as crucial major issue areas, to include;

- i. The price of raw materials in the international market. Being the main producers of primary products, third world countries should demand 'upward stabilisation' of the prices of their primary commodities in the international market. A call for more favourable trade relations between the industrialised and less industrialised countries should be added to the list by the primary producing states.
- ii. The degree of participation of Third World States in global economy. In this direction the third world must insist that most of the developing states are included in the strategic sectors of the world economy, namely, representation at the decision-making level of the IMF and World Bank and in the determination of the modalities for the operation of the global economy.
- iii. The activities of transnational corporations. Third world states, being the host countries of the transnational companies, should demand greater participation in and control of the activities of these companies by their host states and governments, particularly in the areas of development, employment and technology transfer.
- iv. Reduction in the increasing gap between the developed and the developing states and societies. It is being argued by Third World countries that the yawning gap between the North and the South in the global economy has been due to the continued exploitation of the resources of the South by the capitalist giants of the North and thus should be reduced. It is feared that if nothing was decisively done to close the gap, the situation and the trend would serve as a serious threat to world peace and security.

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