



RETHINKING DEPENDENCY THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATION

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Abstract

Dependency is one of prominent theories aimed at understanding International relation since last decades of twentieth century. Being landmark in the discourse of International politics it evolved around 1950 just a few years after the Second World War. It availed extensive popularity as a strong critique of modernisation took place in colonized and decolonised nations. Advocates of dependency theory argue that modernisation took place in developing and undeveloped countries are nothing but a new way of economic hegemony of western world. It justifies that resources flow from a periphery of third world countries to a core of wealthy states, enriching the latter at the expense of the former and poor states are impoverished and rich states are enriched. At the same time proponents of dependency approach hold that periphery of poor states has been brought under the umbrella of common order of world politics just for the fulfilment of western developed states.

Keywords: Dependency, Modernisation, Developing, Underdeveloped Etc.

Introduction

In the last part of 20th century many recent theories have taken respected place in the study of International relation. Dependency theory is one of those by which intellectual circle was highly influenced. Till the emergence of this theory neo colonial and imperial character of western capitalist country was yet to be exposed.¹ Dependency theory had shown that colonialism in new dress is still going on even after independence of third world countries. It tries to explain the role and effectiveness of third world countries in international relation from post colonial view. It explains the condition of the underdeveloped as a situation of dependency which has resulted from the expansion of world capitalism and neo imperialism.² Due to rapid expansion of world capitalism underdeveloped countries have gone through critical situation. Therefore, an attempt is made to a critical estimate on dependency theory along with its historical development and features.

Objectives of the Study

Main objectives of the study are

1. To make a theoretical estimate on dependency theory.
2. To focus on its application in international politics
3. To analyze basic characteristics of dependency theory as a way for understanding international politics.

Method and Materials:

It is a historical and analytical study. Logic used here both deductive and inductive. Materials and data used here are from secondary sources like books. Journals and electronic resources.

The central meaning of dependency theory is that rich and developed countries are largely dependent on poor and underdeveloped countries. Here developed countries are called as core and poor countries are known as periphery states. Resources are flowed and transferred from poor or periphery states to core or developed states. To run and continue such exploitation and impoverishment poor countries are made as a part of world politics by introducing modernization and development in third world countries.³ Therefore, pioneers of dependency theory sharply criticises modernization and development in underdevelopment countries. They believe that western countries apply technique of modernisation in underdeveloped countries just for exploitation of resources. In this process poor states are used and exploited by rich countries by integrating them into the process of international relation. At the same time in the present period of neo imperialism and globalisation market economy has been expanded through expropriation of labour and resources of periphery and underdeveloped countries. Dependency theory of development is an international relations theory that examine the relationships



and interactions often between developed and underdeveloped states, where the Global South states are often reliance on the Global North for trade, economic aid, etc. dependency theory discusses the international system as comprised of two sets of states, variously described as dominant/dependent, center/periphery or metropolitan/satellite. The dominant states are the advanced industrial nations in the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development and the dependent states are those states of Latin America, Asia, and Africa which have low per capita income.⁴

According to advocates of this theory the capitalist system has enforced a rigid international division of labour which is responsible for the underdevelopment of many areas of the world.⁵ The dependent states supply cheap minerals, agricultural commodities, and cheap labour, and also serve as the repositories of surplus capital, obsolescent technologies, and manufactured goods. These functions orient the economies of the dependent states toward the outside: money, goods, and services do flow into dependent states, but the allocation of these resources is determined by the economic interests of the dominant states, and not by the economic interests of the dependent state. This division of labour is ultimately the explanation for poverty and there is little question but that capitalism regards the division of labour as a necessary condition for the efficient allocation of resources.⁶

Development

Though the history of origin and development of dependency theory is mentioned from the decade of 1950 but it will be injustice to forget to say that Karl Marx was the first person to discuss dependency order in world politics. It has its roots in Karl Marx's work on economic structuralism and the economic relationships between economically rich and economically poor states. Karl Marx argues that the world system, and international relations are driven by economic power and exploitation. Namely, the economically rich take advantage of the economically poor, through their control of the economy. While they are looking to make profits for themselves, they are doing so at the expense of the poor individuals and/or countries. So, Marxist thought is the foundational point of dependency theory. Of course, it got popularity in 1950 through modern formations through the work of Raul Prebisch.⁷ Prebisch, in studying international relations and issues of development, with particular attention to Latin American states, Prebisch and his colleagues were troubled by the fact that economic growth in the advanced industrialized countries did not necessarily lead to growth in poorer countries. Indeed, their studies suggested that economic activity in the richer countries often led to serious economic problems in the poorer countries. The lack of explanation of this economic imbalance, and economic conditions that arise when the rich states were getting richer, Prebisch looked to explain what was happening. What he initially argued was that poor countries were sending their raw materials to the Global North, who in turn would turn these into finished products, then sell them back to the poorer states.

Techniques and styles of core states

According to supporters of dependency theory core states apply following techniques of impoverishment for becoming rich and sophisticated through resources of periphery states-----

- i) It fosters financial /technological crises and problems by developed capitalist countries. Rich nations actively influence periphery by means of economics, media control, politics, banking and finance, education, culture, sport, and all aspects of human resource development.
- ii) It produces an unbalanced economic structure in the peripheral societies
- iii) It leads to limitations on self sustained growth in the periphery.
- iv) It favours structural imbalance and specific patterns of class relations through divide and rule.
- v) It creates structural imbalances in political and social relationships.

Types of Dependency Theory: Structural and Marxist dependency

There are two main types of dependency theory. One is Structuralism stream, typified by the works of Prebisch, and Furtado and other is Marxist school of dependency developed by Baran, Sweezy, and Frank. Thus, two approaches are developed by two classes of economists. According to Marxist school of dependency capitalism



is characterized by creative destruction. It has two effects: destruction and regeneration. Paul Baron emphasized the destruction side of capitalism in underdeveloped countries. Structural dependency theory argued that socio political cultural and economic structure, corruption, red tapping of bureaucracy, domination, hegemony of elite class are contributing to destruction of third world countries.

Criticism

Dependency theory is also not free from criticism. Critics argue that there is too much emphasis on economic imperialism to explain domestic and international relations in the world today. Similarly, they argue that at the expense of these international economic forces, dependency theory scholars are failing to go deeply on international affair. Today, discussing world issues by international economic relationships between the rich and poor is out of date is inaccurate. Dependency theory has failed to see internal factors of political and economic rivalries and contestations for power, the role of domestic corruption and nepotism, as well as other factors that may have led to an inability to develop economically. Third world countries are not affected by western countries only. Internal condition, social division, discrimination, bureaucratic rule, elite politics, corruption and criminalization socio economic and political order also are responsible of underdevelopment and poorness of third world countries. Moreover, all third world countries cannot be included into periphery ones because many of them are sustaining economically in comparison to a good number of developed countries. Another, important point is that climate, weather, environment labour, resource and power generation (electricity), local industrialization also are main factors of underdevelopment. So, impoverishment by rich country may not be single factors of underdevelopment.

Evaluation.

But, the above criticism is partly true because, the aforesaid issues are created by western developed nation through a long and systematic process. Developed countries after decolonization or independence of third world countries have started a new way of imperial economic order in backdrop of neoliberal and globalization process. To organize a network of market economy rich countries have been trying to motivate poor countries to enter into global world politics. Through soft and friendly way, resources and cheap labour of poor countries are flowed and transferred by introducing modernization, development etc. Therefore, dependency theory is and will relevant till the existence of present global order. The end of the Cold War and the emergence of globalization and neoliberals brought a number of changes in the international system. Originally, dependency theorists argued that the ideal way to break out of the dependency trap and end global inequality is for the periphery to separate from the core, but the post-Cold War era led to further integration rather than separation. This outcome ultimately proved that separation from the core countries was not a viable course for the countries on the periphery. These evolutions have weakened the assumptions of dependency theorists' proposals to separate the periphery from the core to overcome asymmetrical dependence and inequality.

References

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