Critical Issues in bridging the North/South Divide.

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Abstract

Over the years the global North and South had experience great challenges of which they're diplomatically working on. The global North typically refers to developed countries, including those in Europe and North America, while the global South refers to developing countries, including those in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. One of the main issues in bridging the divide between these regions is economic inequality, with the global North being much more prosperous than the global South. This has led to issues such as a lack of access to education and healthcare in the global South, as well as a lack of economic opportunity. North' and 'South' have been established terms of use in debates about international political economy since the 1960s. In their most basic form the terms are regarded as a shorthand for distinguishing 'rich countries' from 'poor countries'. 'The North' is taken to include the industrialised, high-per-capita income, national political economies of which the majority are located in the Northern Hemisphere. 'The South' describes those countries with high levels of poverty and comparatively low levels of industrialisation, large numbers of which exist in the Southern Hemisphere. This work exposes the challenges and ways forward to bring the global North and South together.

Introduction

The concept of Global North and Global South (North–South divide in a global context) is used to describe a grouping of countries along the lines of socio-economic (the social science that studies how economic activity affects and is shaped by social processes) and political divide between developed and developing countries.

In general, global south refers to the developing, low-income countries, typically located in the Southern Hemisphere such as New Zealand, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, South Africa, Mozambique, Lesotho etc. (Ruvituso, 2023). Generally, the concept of global North and South analyzes how modern societies progress, stagnate, or regress because of their local or regional relationship with each other. The Global South is a term that broadly comprises countries in the regions of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia (without Israel, Japan, and South Korea), and Oceania (without Australia and New Zealand), according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Most of the countries in the Global South are characterized by low income, dense population, poor infrastructure, and often political or cultural marginalization. Countries of the Global South have been described as newly industrialized or are in the process of industrializing, and are frequently current or former subjects of colonialism (Grugel, 1999).

On the other hand, the global North" is a term used to describe the industrialized, high-income countries of the world, typically located in the Northern Hemisphere (broadly comprising Northern America and Europe, Israel, Japan and South Korea, as well as Australia and New Zealand, according to the UNCTAD). The global north is typically associated with higher levels of economic development, technological advancement, and political power. Countries that are developed are considered as Global North countries (Preece, 2009)

There are many correlations between the economies of the global north and the global south. In general, the global north is more economically developed, with higher levels of per capita income, industrialization, and technological development (Mimiko, 2012). The global south is less economically developed, with lower levels of per capita income, industrialization, and technological development. This leads to a number of other correlations, such as higher rates of poverty and inequality in the global south, as well as higher levels of environmental degradation and lower levels of access to health care and education (Love, 2005).

History of the Global North and Global South

The concept of the global north and global south dates back to the 19th century at about 1970s, it emerged as a way to understand the divide between the rich and the poor countries. Prior to this time, the divide was often referred to as the first world (developed countries) and the third world (developing countries).

Over the years, the idea of categorizing countries by their economic and developmental status began during the Cold War with the classifications of East and West. The Soviet Union and China represented the East, and the United States and their allies represented the West. The term Third World came into parlance in the second half of the twentieth century. It originated in a 1952 article by Alfred Sauvy entitled "Trois Mondes, Une Planète" (Afred, 2010). Efforts to mobilize the Third World as an autonomous political entity were undertaken. The 1955 Bandung Conference was an early meeting of Third World states in which an alternative to alignment with either the Eastern or Western Blocs was promoted. Following this, the first Non-Aligned Summit was organized in 1961. Contemporaneously, a mode of economic criticism which separated the world economy into "core" and "periphery" was developed and given expression in a project for political reform which "moved the terms 'North' and 'South' into the international political lexicon." (Arbab, 2019).

In 1973, the pursuit of a New International Economic Order which was to be negotiated between the North and South was initiated at the Non-Aligned Summit held in Algiers. Also in 1973, the oil embargo initiated by Arab OPEC countries as a result of the Yom Kippur War caused an increase in world oil prices, with prices continuing to rise throughout the decade. This contributed to a worldwide recession which resulted in industrialized nations increasing economically protectionist policies and contributing less aid to the less developed countries of the South (Mitlin, 2013).

Global South "emerged in part to aid countries in the southern hemisphere to work in collaboration on political, economic, social, environmental, cultural, and technical issues." The hope is that countries within the Global South will "assist each other in social, political, and economical development, radically altering the world system to reflect their interests and not just the interests of the Global North

in the process."(Nayak, 2010). It is guided by the principles of "respect for national sovereignty, national ownership, independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs, and mutual benefit."

Being categorized as part of the "North" implies development as opposed to belonging to the "South", which implies a lack thereof. According to Oluwafemi Mimiko, the South lacks the right technology, it is politically unstable, its economies are divided, and its foreign exchange earnings depend on primary product exports to the North, along with the fluctuation of prices. The low level of control it exercises over imports and exports condemns the South to conform to the 'imperialist' system. The South's lack of development and the high level of development of the North deepen the inequality between them and leave the South a source of raw material for the developed countries. The North becomes synonymous with economic development and industrialization while the South represents the previously colonized countries which are in need of help in the form of international aid agendas.

In order to understand how this divide occurs, a definition of "development" itself is needed. Northern countries are using most of the earth resources and most of them are high entropic fossil fuels (Therien, 1999). Reducing emission rates of toxic substances is central to debate on sustainable development but this can negatively affect economic growth.

However, this terminology was seen as inaccurate and outdated, as it implied that there were only two categories of countries. The term global south was introduced as a way to describe the developing countries of the world, while also acknowledging that there were a lot of diversity within this group.

Characteristics of the Global North and Global South

The Global North generally correlates with the Western world. This correlation is based on high level of economic development, with a large middle class and low level of poverty rates, while the South largely corresponds with the developing countries and the Eastern world. The two groups are often defined in terms of their differing levels of wealth, economic development, income inequality, and democracy, political and economic freedom, as defined by freedom indices. States

that are generally seen as part of the Global North tend to be wealthier as a result of high standard of living, good access to health care, education and other social services. They are developed countries, which export technologically advanced manufactured products. Their advanced technological advancement includes the high usage of internet and mobile phones, laptops, robots and presently artificial AI etc. Southern states are generally poorer developing countries with high rate of hunger, illiteracy, younger and more fragile democracies that are heavily dependent on primary sector exports. Many of the Southern states also share a common history of past colonialism under Northern states (Caporaso, 1980)

Theories that explain the North and South Divide

There are several theories that explain the North and South divide. Emphasis for this work will be based on the dependency theory. The development disparity between the North and the South has sometimes been explained in historical terms. Dependency theory looks back on the patterns of colonial relations which persisted between the North and South and emphasizes how colonized territories tended to be impoverished by those relations (Oglesby, 1969). this school of thought maintain that the economies of ex-colonial states remain oriented towards serving external rather than internal demand, and that development regimes undertaken in this context have tended to reproduce in underdeveloped countries the pronounced class hierarchies found in industrialized countries while maintaining higher levels of poverty (Dados et al, 2012).

The dependence theory is a perspective in development studies that suggests that the global south is economically dependent on the global north, and this dependency is a key factor in perpetuating global inequality. One example of this is the way in which many countries in the global south are dependent on the global north for loans and foreign aid, which often come with conditions that benefit the global north (Harath, 2008). Another example is the way in which the global north often controls the prices of commodities, which can have a negative impact on the economies of the global south. One illustration of the dependence theory is the example of coffee production. Many countries in the global south, such as Brazil and Colombia, are major producers of coffee. However, they often sell their coffee at low prices to companies in the global north, who then sell it at a much higher price to consumers (Collier, 2015). This means that the countries in the global south

do not receive the full value of their product, and they remain dependent on the global north for revenue. Another example is the debt crisis that many countries in the global south experienced in the 1980s.

In the 1980s, many countries in the global south experienced severe economic problems, including hyperinflation, high unemployment, and a drop in living standards. This was partly due to high levels of debt that they had accumulated, often from loans from the global north. When the global economy experienced a downturn in the early 1980s, many countries in the global south were unable to repay their debts, leading to a debt crisis. This crisis was exacerbated by policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which required countries to make economic reforms that often hurt the poor and benefited the global north (Acharya, 2016).

Another aspect of the debt crisis was the "structural adjustment programs" that the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank required countries to implement in order to receive new loans. These programs often required countries to privatize state-owned industries, reduce government spending on social programs, and increase exports. This had a devastating impact on the lives of many people in the global south, as it led to job losses, cuts in education and healthcare, and a decline in living standards. Some have argued that these policies only served to further entrench the global north's economic dominance over the global south (Gray et al, 2016).

Nigeria is a great example of a country that was deeply affected by the debt crisis and structural adjustment programs. In the 1980s, Nigeria's economy was severely affected by a decline in oil prices and increasing debt levels. The government implemented a structural adjustment program that was heavily influenced by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. This program led to the privatization of state-owned industries, cuts in government spending, and a devaluation of the currency. These policies had a devastating effect on the economy and led to a rise in poverty and inequality. It wasn't until the early 2000s that Nigeria's economy began to recover.

Critical Issues in Bridging the North/South Divide.

The accuracy of the North–South divide has been challenged on a number of grounds. Firstly, differences in the political, economic and demographic make-up of countries tend to complicate the idea of a monolithic South. Bridging the North/South divide involves addressing several critical issues. There is a need for increased development assistance from the global north to the global south. This assistance should be directed towards improving infrastructure, health, education, and promoting sustainable economic growth.

Secondly, there is a need for improved trade policies, particularly in the area of agricultural subsidies. Developed countries often give significant subsidies to their farmers, which makes it difficult for farmers in developing countries to compete (Stettner, 1982). There is a need for improved governance and transparency in developing countries, in order to attract foreign investment and promote economic growth.

For instance, Nigeria is considered part of the global south, based on a variety of factors. These include its relatively low level of economic development, its status as a low-income country, and its high levels of poverty and inequality. It is also located in the geographical region that is typically associated with the global south, and it is often grouped with other countries in Africa and Latin America. That said, Nigeria is also a country with a great deal of potential, and its economy is growing rapidly. It is often described as a "BRIC" (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) country, which refers to rapidly developing economies.

Furthermore, it's the critical issue is the role of multinational corporations in developing countries. Many multinational corporations from the global north have operations in the global south, and there is often a power imbalance between these corporations and the local population. These corporations often have a negative impact on the environment and the local economy. For example, they may pollute the environment or exploit local workers. Therefore, it is important to create policies that regulate the activities of multinational corporations in developing countries, and ensure that they are operating in a way that benefits the local population.

Another important issue is the role of intellectual property rights in the global south. Improving education opportunities in the South is crucial for reducing disparities in knowledge and skills. Developed countries often have strict intellectual property laws, which make it difficult for developing countries to access the latest technologies and medicines (Lees, 2021). Furthermore, investing in infrastructure, such as transportation and energy, can enhance connectivity and stimulate economic growth in the South. This can have a negative impact on economic growth and the health of the population. Therefore, there is a need for a more equitable system of intellectual property rights, which takes into account the needs of developing countries.

Globalization has largely displaced the North–South divide as the theoretical underpinning of the development efforts of international institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, WTO, and various United Nations affiliated agencies, though these groups differ in their perceptions of the relationship between globalization and inequality (Cox, 1979). Yet some remain critical of the accuracy of globalization as a model of the world economy, emphasizing the enduring centrality of nation-states in world politics and the prominence of regional trade relations. Lately, there have been efforts to integrate the Global South more meaningfully into the world economic order.

The division between the North and South challenges international environmental cooperation. The economic differences between North and South have created dispute over the scientific evidence and data regarding global warming and what needs to be done about it, as the South do not trust Northern data and cannot afford the technology to be able to produce their own. In addition to these disputes, there are serious divisions over responsibility, which pays, and the possibility for the South to catch up (Pagel, 2014). This is becoming an ever-growing issue with the emergence of rising powers, imploding these three divisions just listed and making them progressively blurry. Multiplicity of actors, such as governments, businesses, and NGO's all influence any positive activity that can be taken into preventing further global warming problems with the Global North and Global South divide, contributing to the severity of said actors. Disputes between Northern countries governments and Southern countries governments has led to a break down in international discussions with

governments from either side disagreeing with each other. Addressing most environmental problems requires international cooperation, and the North and South contribute to the stagnation concerning any form of implementation and enforcement, which remains a key issue (Grugel, 1999).

Summary

Some economists have argued that international free trade and unhindered capital flows across countries could lead to a contraction in the North–South divide. In this case more equal trade and flow of capital would allow the possibility for developing countries to further develop economically. As some countries in the South experience rapid development, there is evidence that those states are developing high levels of South–South aid. Brazil, in particular, has been noted for its high levels of aid ($1 billion annually—ahead of many traditional donors) and the ability to use its own experiences to provide high levels of expertise and knowledge transfer. This has been described as a "global model in waiting"

The United Nations has also established its role in diminishing the divide between North and South through the Millennium Development Goals, all of which were to be achieved by 2015. These goals seek to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve global universal education and healthcare, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability, and develop a global partnership for development. These were replaced in 2015 by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, set in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and intended to be achieved by 2030.

Conclusion

In all these things, there is a need to address the issue of corruption in developing countries. Strengthening governance, transparency, and combating corruption are vital to creating an environment conducive to development. Corruption can hinder economic growth and lead to further inequality. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive and context-specific approaches, involving governments, international organizations, civil society, and local communities to work together in bridging the North/South Divide.

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