

CHANGING CONCEPTS OF DEPENDENCY: THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT AS A POLITICAL STRATEGY IN THE MISSION FOR GLOBAL CAPITALISM

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Abstract

Together with humanitarianism and human rights, development forms the conceptual heart of the post-colonial world order, which revolves around the values of egalitarianism and compassion. Compassion unites mankind under the same egalitarian and universalist post religious morality. However, at a closer view, the politics of compassion harbour a set of arguments that legitimises post-colonial interventionism: 'just wars' to replace dictatorship by democracy, humanitarian intervention to halt excessive human rights violations and sustainable development programmes to promote general welfare and well-being.

This paper investigates the concept of development as a strategy to pursue the political interests of economically strong international stakeholders, as represented by the global economic institutions; the World Trade Organisation, World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Because the World Bank has manifested itself most prominently as a global development agency, the emphasis will be on the study of the Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF). Comprehensive development should be viewed in contrast with the Bank's former 'narrow' economic concept of development. In accordance with the popularity of the discourse of compassion, the World Bank's development ideology has become a wholistic amalgam of policy goals related to human welfare and wellbeing

Generally, World Bank development projects are concerned with the privatisation of those services, welfare and well-being oriented sectors. It will thus be argued that the comprehensiveness of the World Bank's development concept should be seen in the light of the Bank's neo-liberal premise of a global, privatised and liberalised market economy, while weakening the influence of the state and public sector.

Keywords: Development, Human Rights, Power Politics, International Organisations, World Bank, Comprehensive Development Framework.

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'What if it were possible for governments to join together with civil society, with the private sector, to decide on long-term national priorities? What if it were possible for donors to then come in and coordinate their support, with countries in the driver's seat, with local ownership and local participation? What if it were possible for these strategies to look five, ten, twenty years ahead so that development could really take root and grow and could be monitored on an ongoing basis? Too ambitious some will say. Too utopian. But what if I told you it is already happening?' (James D. Wolfensohn, 1998)

Introduction

Together with humanitarianism and human rights, development forms the conceptual heart of the post-colonial world order, which ideologically revolves around the values of compassion, egalitarianism and universalism. Compassion unites humankind under the same egalitarian and universalist post religious morality. However, at a closer view, the politics of universal compassion harbour a set of arguments that legitimises post-colonial interventionism: 'just wars' to replace dictatorship by democracy, humanitarian intervention to halt human rights violations and development programs to promote general welfare and well-being. This paper investigates development policies as a political strategy to pursue the political interests of economically strong international stakeholders, as represented by the global economic institutions: the World Trade Organisation, World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The interest of dominant member states and private sector partners resides in the maintenance of relations of dependency with developing areas as a reservoir of cheap resources and production. The concept of development emphasises the subjected status of developing states, or more generally, the global poor. Akin to humanitarianism, the concept of development is based on victimisation, which legitimates intervention as a moral calling to relief human suffering (Halttunen 1995; Hunt 2007).

In recent decades, the World Bank brought itself prominently to the fore as a global development agency. The conceptual framework of the Bank's development policies is condensed in the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF). The CDF revolves around four principles, namely: wholistic long-term approach to development, country ownership, country led partnership and result orientation. According to the 2004 Staff Manual, these principles have meanwhile permeated the whole of the World Bank's development policies (World Bank 2004). The CDF should be viewed in contrast with the Bank's former

'narrow' economic concept of development, as represented by the neo-liberal Washington Consensus. In accordance with the popularity of the discourse of compassion, the World Bank's development ideology has become a wholist amalgam of policy goals related to raising the general level of welfare and wellbeing. The ideological shift from plain neo-liberalism to comprehensive development is commonly portrayed as a linear process of enlightenment, more in particular, crystallising wisdom through experience, together with the rhetorical surplus of charismatic leadership, like that of former World Bank president James D. Wolfensohn.

Despite the limited mandate of the World Bank, involving economic issues exclusively, the expanding concept of development has legitimised an elaborate range of policy interventions in developing states, including public sector reform, health care, education and environmental protection. Generally, World Bank development projects are concerned with the privatisation of service, welfare and well-being oriented sectors. A CDF related instrument concerns country-led partnerships, which aim to forge co-operation between lending governments and a diversity of private sector actors, such as investment banks and transnational companies (TNCs). It will not be inquired whether the comprehensive development approach is 'just' or 'unjust'. Rather, this study focusses on the mapping of structures of global power politics and, in particular, the question how these are reflected in morally imbued concepts like human development. In particular, it will be analysed how such concepts change under influence of powerful transnational market actors as well as the pressure of their major critics. Accordingly, the World Bank's CDF is studied in the light of preceding development concepts that dominated the World Bank's policies and regulations.

Comprehensive Development or Compassionate Global Economy?

In her book on the history of human rights, Hunt (2007) discusses the construction of normative self-evidence of human rights. The premise of self-evidence is necessary to explain the moral force of human rights. The classifying criterion for superior normativity consists in the presumption that the rule of law and political consensus at best only partly explain the existence of these norms. They are 'something more', an added dimension of justice, paradoxically assumed to exist 'out there', despite a lack of clear legitimising criteria. Religious self-evidence has mostly given away to a secular compassionate conscience enveloping whole humankind (Halttunen 1995). The normative self-evidence of human rights relies on the assumption that this special category of rights is characterised by naturality and universality.

The concept of normative self-evidence could be applied to moral concepts in general. The contemporary mainstream development discourse centres primary on the moral urgency to relieve the poor. As such, the concept of development has similar qualities that Hunt (2007) observes in human rights. Development, whether or not formulated as a human right in itself, is perceived as normatively self-evident, which is legitimised by its presumed natural and universal character.

Accordingly, poverty is conceptualised as large scale, extreme, remediable, undeserved suffering that necessitates a compassionate response (Gasper 2004). Especially noteworthy are the aspects of remediability and undeservedness. The latter emphasises the unjust character of poverty, while the first expresses the possibility for positive change through action. Furthermore, the undeserved character of poverty legitimises interventionist actions as a compassionate necessity to remedy injustice caused by poverty. A clear example is the Jubilee 2000 movement; with reference to Leviticus, the movement rose the clearance of Third World country debts to a crucial moral imperative of liberation and emancipation of the underprivileged. The movement had a significant impact on international debt relief policy and the discourse on development in general. In 1986, development was officially declared a human right by the UN General Assembly. Thereby, it has been explicitly incorporated in the international human rights discourse. Besides the right to development itself, a variety of human rights are integrated in development theory and policy. The MDGs provide a typical example, for instance, the right to education is converted into the policy goal of primary education for all by 2015. In a similar vein, anti-discrimination provisions are reflected in the goal of gender equality.

The presumption that progress through intervention is both possible and necessary underlies the concept of development (Woods 2006). This connects it tightly with the premises of the concept of modernisation, as well as the tradition of liberal political and economic philosophy since the Enlightenment. Traditionally, development - as modernisation - has been conceived as a phased process of a technology and science led progress. Though, in the post-colonial era the emphasis shifted towards economic growth, in the sense of a prosperous market economy, which is nevertheless conceived as closely connected to technological and scientific innovation. Woods (2006) observes that the ideology and models of economic growth have been changing significantly over time. A concept of development that primarily focuses on poverty reduction as a moral cause, is a recent phenomenon, related to a quest for authority and morality after the collapse of the two-tire Cold War world system. The World Bank's development concept harbours a quest for legitimacy beyond its economic mandate. This quest should mostly be seen in the

light of persistent critiques on Bank's capitalist premises, which drew broad public attention to the alleged environmental and humanitarian hazards resulting from its policies. As will be discussed in more detail below, the World Bank has significantly broadened its mandate and discretion beyond economic support to developing states. It nowadays rather assumes a task of dictating the reform and rearing of entire political and societal structures that should support the transformation to a liberal market economy and integration into the advanced capitalist world system.

Economist Amartya Sen and former World Bank president James D. Wolfensohn are generally seen as the ideological gurus of development as a concept of compassionate morality. This morality establishes a global responsibility for and solidarity with the misery of fellow humans, which in turn, obliges the powerful and well-resourced to relief suffering. In case of development, this takes the form of poverty reduction. Sen's concept of development as freedom is closely related to self-respect, which he defines, with reference to Adam Smith, as being able to appear in the public sphere without shame (Sen 1999). Increasingly the individual and opportunities for self-realisation became main objectives of development, as fundamental building blocks for the prosperous development of the national and global market. Accordingly, Sen (1999) defines development as (individual) freedom acquired by opportunities to achieve values and goals in life one has reason to value. Development typically depends on the acquisition of liberal democratic assets such as civil rights and a progressive standard of living, defined in terms of purchasing power (Sen 1999). Substantive or basic (human) rights play a crucial role in Sen's conceptualisation of development, namely as the elementary normative safeguards of freedom and opportunity. It is noteworthy to mention that Sen's book *Development as freedom* (1999) is based on lectures delivered at the World Bank in 1996 as a visiting scholar on invitation of Wolfensohn, the then president of the Bank.

The period of Wolfensohn's presidency went into history as an era of crucial change in which he played a key role. Like Robert McNamara in the 1970s, Wolfensohn is renowned as one of the 'socially minded' World Bank presidents. McNamara's presidency is widely associated with the emergence of the basic needs approach, which put the interests of the poor on the World Bank's development agenda. Instead of mere GNP growth, development came to signify a conscious effort for poverty reduction, including redistribution of resources and basic welfare provisions. Sen explicitly pays tribute to the basic needs approach as the precursor of his capabilities theory of development (Sen 1999). Both depart from the premise that fulfilment of primary needs - food, shelter, basic income and healthcare - are a precondition

for development. Typically, both arose in times that the global economic institutions' market liberalisation policies were harshly criticised and were thus in need for alternatives. CDF is also such a deliberate alternative. 'Founding father' Wolfensohn (1998) formulated five targets the World Bank's wholistic development policy, which in fact constituted the Comprehensive Development Framework.

First, it should advocate principles of good governance, both by the Bank and lending governments, including transparency, free flow of information and participation. Second, it should formulate the institutional framework necessary for a well-functioning market economy, such as property rights and access to justice to enforce them effectively. Third, the framework should foster inclusive development policies, involving education for all, basic health care and social welfare facilities. Fourth, effort should be given to the necessary infrastructure and public services for communication and transportation. Finally yet importantly, the framework should guarantee environmental and human sustainability. The concept of development borrows the notion of intra and inter-generational equity from the Brundtland definition of environmental sustainability (WCED 1987). Explicitly stretching the scope of development policy beyond the borders of generations, profoundly articulates the future and progress oriented character of development ideology.

Thus the Comprehensive Development Framework aims to provide a set of guidelines for concrete development policy strategies and programmes. Besides prescribing a more democratic, country owned approach to development, it seeks to harmonise the World Bank's development policies and regulations. The CDF proposal was launched in the early spring of 1999 and monitored since March 1999, based on an experiment with a selection of CDF pilot countries. Already in the 2001 report to the Board, it is claimed that the combination of long-term holism, country initiative and result orientation indeed lead to more development effectivity (World Bank 2001). Wolfensohn assertion that developing states should be placed on the driver's seat became one of the slogans of the comprehensive development era (Wolfensohn 1998). This is no surprise, taken into consideration that the Bank's standardised structural adjustment programmes (SAP) are one of the major targets of critics, blaming their non-responsiveness to local needs and opinions for ineffectiveness of the SAPs, as well as ruthless enforcement of market liberalism on dependent states.

Country-led partnership is envisioned as a partnership between lending governments, private actors, including investors, lenders and donors, and civil society, that serves to map public needs and draw up a

long-term development plan. In those partnerships, private funds tend to dominate the scene, qua resources and thus bargaining power. In fact, this model results in a high degree of privatisation of functions that have been traditionally associated with the public sector, like health care, education, negotiation of labour conditions, social welfare provisions and infrastructure. Thus, the humanitarian morality that legitimises the CDF, serves to support the primary objective of the World Bank which still is generating a global market economy in which private actors dominate. Presenting this moral framework as self-evident does not mask the uniform liberal democratic value package that is deemed necessary for the creation of the right environment of a flourishing, global oriented market economy.

In his 1998 presidential address to the Board of Governors, Wolfensohn (1998) calls upon an outright humanitarian appeal as he stresses that the poor are the major and most tragic victims of the East Asian crisis. The general message conveyed by Wolfensohn's speech is one of humanitarian crisis in the developing areas of the world and, in one go, the necessity to intervene in order to counter the spiral of human misery. To underline the message of humanitarian urgency, Wolfensohn mentions, amongst others, war threats between Ethiopia and Eritrea, nuclear tests by India and Pakistan and terrorist attacks in Kenya and Tanzania as humanitarian drawbacks that especially affect the most vulnerable. Instead of hope, those crises have left *'dark, searing images of desperation, hopelessness and decline'* to put it into Wolfensohn's (1998) charismatic words. Strong images of human suffering are prone to catch broad public attention, since they trigger compassionate identification (Halttunen 1995). However, the flip side of compassion is the implied superiority status of the 'better off', which is converted into a moral responsibility and thus legitimacy to intervene. Indeed, following the sketch of the suffering of the vulnerable - the helpless subjects dependent on the humanitarian goodness of the better-off - comes the incentive for intervention:

'Mr. Chairman, we must address this human pain. We must go beyond financial stabilisation. We must address the issues of long-term equitable growth, on which prosperity and human progress depend. We must focus on the institutional and structural changes needed for recovery and sustainable development. We must focus on the social issues. ... Because if we do not have the capacity to deal with social emergencies, if we do not have longer term plans for solid institutions, if we do not have greater equity and social justice, there will be no political stability. And without political stability, no amount of money put together in financial packages will give us financial stability' (Wolfensohn 1998).

Humanitarian concerns are skillfully driven home to the Bank's financial objectives by presenting the satisfaction of basic human rights as a precondition for lasting financial stability and economic growth

(World Bank 2005B). This is the crux of World Bank's development concept as worked out in the CDF. According to the successive legal councils Ibrahim Shihata and Roberto Danino, the World Bank's mandate includes political and social issues as long as they are directly relevant for economic growth (Sage and Woolcock 2006). Thus stretched mandate leaves ample discretion to the Bank's policy makers and management to broaden its scope of legitimate intervention in the political and social businesses of developing states.

However, this should not automatically be condemned as the 'evil capitalist genius' of the financial institutions. The International Financial Institutions (IFI's) are no relentless power machines; they need public support and recognition from governing elites, private and public. They are built on the very premise that a free market merits all. As Head (2008) recalls, the Bretton Woods conference operated under the creed that world trade fosters world peace. Even though, market liberalism ideologically legitimises the global power status quo and maintains existing dependency relations, there is a general belief that liberalising markets and privatising public sectors is 'the best thing to do' for all parties involved. This is based on the assumption that efficiency and effectivity are maximal in a free and competitive market economy. The common good of a global market economy is generally thought of as a trickledown effect, which spreads the benefit of a free, competitive market throughout the entire (world) community. The 1980s African debt crisis and the East Asia crisis by the end of the 1990s put into question the effectivity of uniform Washington Consensus style market liberalisation and privatisation.

Moreover, the growing popularity of humanitarian imaginary and increasingly rapid circulation of these images in high tech media, stimulated worldwide public outrage with the injustice of poverty as a hazard of global capitalism (Halttunen 1995). The 'Battle of Seattle' and kindred large-scale protests against the global economic institutions have meanwhile acquired a nearly legendary status. The IFIs apparent disfavour of the global poor marked them as part of the camp of oppressors. The IFIs, especially the World Bank, have been attempting to get rid of this stigma, which harmed their credibility and legitimacy (Woods 2006; Head 2008). The World Bank has been trying to accomplish this by adopting the discourse itself, thereby putting humanitarian concerns at the service of a global market economy. Rather than proving the evil of capitalism, the US and/or global economic institutions, this observation indicates that morals might not what they seem to be. Instead of a transcendent category of justice, moral values come to light as rhetorical fashions and strategies to present political interests.

Development as power politics

Basically, development as power politics manifests itself in two ways:

1. The content and goals of development concepts.
2. The institutional structure in which those are embedded.

Especially the latter reveals which are the dominant interest groups behind an ideological constellation. The CDF as a development ideology supports the objective of a global advanced capitalist economy, which is likely to consolidate existing North-South dependency relations. Even if the CDF in principle compensates for this power imbalance by granting more 'voice' to lending governments and directly affected individuals, developing states are at least dependent on the approval of the IFIs, which leaves the power to set the terms and conditions with the IFIs. For instance, International Development Agency (IDA) funding is made dependent on a compulsory Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), prepared by the applicant government. After approval, the IDA produces a medium term development plan, called Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) based on the PRSP.

Partly the World Bank's persisting emphasise on the importance of privatisation could be explained as an anti-corruption measure and for good reasons: corruption is often deeply imbued in developing states' governing institutions. Otherwise, ideological commitment to the neo-liberal assumption of superior efficiency and effectivity of market forces accounts for the advocacy of private sector partnerships and a small state apparatus and public sector, resulting in an environment where corporate governance flourishes. However, by stretching its mandate into vital public policy areas like education and healthcare, the World Bank propagates transnational, rent seeking entrepreneurs to seize the development market in fragile states and economies. Notwithstanding the question whether this is to the advantage of the public good, privatisation and increasing corporate governance fail the promise of more country ownership, so fundamental to the CDF principles (Woods 2006).

The World Bank's (and IMF's) Third World management, as Rajagopal (2003) calls it, at first serves the interests of dominant corporate players on the global market. They easily compete, often small, local businesses out of the market and profit from cheap labour, resources and production. The domination of developing markets by foreign corporations tends to reinforce their status of 'satellites'. Mostly, foreign consumer markets feast upon the revenues of cheap outsourced production. The global political economy

seems to evolve exactly according to Wallerstein's (1974) concept of a modern world system of centres and peripheries. Wallerstein already pointed out that emerging centres in developing states resemble enclaves, rather related to developed economies abroad than raising the local levels of technology transfer, economic growth and welfare (Wallerstein 1974; Wolf 1997).

The humanitarian culture of legitimacy thus comes to the fore as a concept of dependency, defining and legitimising the neo-colonial relationship between the global north and south. The imperialism of civilisation missions and Washington Consensus model Structural Adjustment have been replaced by humanitarian interventionism; compassion with the poor as political strategy to manage the poor. Rajagopal (2003) discusses the ironical role of resistance movements in the reaffirmation of the power of the IFIs as guards of the north - south divide. The more they pressure those institutions to adopt human rights and other liberal democratic values, the more the IFIs colonise those values for the pursuit of a global (corporate) market economy. Woods (2006) elaborately discusses the Janus face contemporary mainstream development ideology creates within the World Bank as an institution, its policies and practices. She especially stresses the odds between the weighed voting system, hierarchical structure and professionalism, on the one hand, and liberal democratic ideals such as country ownership, stakeholder participation, consultation procedures and quasi-judicial review on the other.

The Bank's hierarchical structure and strong professional orientation on economic analysis have an advantage that they generate a high level of policy consistency and modelling of complex problems, resulting in standardised policy programmes. Woods (2006) points out that the large majority of the Bank's employees are economics graduates from a prestigious Anglo Saxon university. Developing states are under-represented, while, at the same time, dependent on the World Bank in several ways. First, the weighed voting system prioritises the largest shareholder states, while developing states are subdued by conditionality and depth re-payment (Woods 2007; Head 2008). Furthermore, developing states have significantly lesser means than developed states to provide for highly skilled, well-equipped state representatives and staff members in Washington as well as decentralised World Bank offices (Woods 2006).

The ideals of country ownership, country-led partnership and stakeholder participation are significantly impaired by the formal and *de facto* political power surplus of developed states, which, in practice, results in a lack of participation of developing states and local stakeholders in policy decision-making. Ironically,

the IFIs were construed to be rather independent from state interests and the UN family, in order to carry out their Keynesian mandate to check and balance transnational market forces from a politically neutral point of view. Instead, their very institutional structure reaffirms the power surplus of resourceful member states and corporate partners. Woods considers this as one of the most important failings of the IFIs. She summarises as follows:

'The governance structure of the institutions (World Bank and International Monetary Fund) produce a dramatic asymmetry of accountability whereby paradoxically those countries least affected by the decisions and actions of the World Bank and IMF have the most influence and the most capacity to hold either institution to account' (Woods 2006).

The position of developing states is further weakened by their dependency on funding by the IFIs, since foreign investment and private funding generally depend on the 'seal of approval' of the World Bank and IMF. Moreover, when applied, decentralisation and bottom-up policymaking significantly tend to slow down decision-making and lead to case-by-case compromises that lack the coherence and consistency of top-down applied structural adjustment programmes, assembled by high skilled economists and decided upon by the senior management in Washington DC (Woods 2006). This leads to a profound tension between the Bank's organisation structure and institutional habits, on the one hand, and the pressure for change, on the other. This contradiction is hard to solve without either re-centralising or decentralising policymaking. Till so far, the prevailing trend within the Bank has been preaching country ownership and country-led partnership, while keeping the stronghold on formulating the ideals, targets, standards and conditions of development plans, based on in-house professional modelling and centralised decision-making. The conclusion to draw from this analysis is a simple one: lest the political interests and organisational structure that dominate the World Bank should change radically, putting developing states on the drivers' seat is not likely to be realised.

Conclusion

The study of the World Bank's CDF as a concept of development serves to illustrate the dynamics of defining, legitimating and institutionalising global power structures. While states are on decline, international institutions, like the World Bank, play an increasingly important role in transnational governance. Institutions in themselves are devoid of intentionality; their 'voice' and influence depends on a complex interplay of political interests, knowledge distribution and resources involved in their institutional structure and identity. Analysing this interaction is doomed to result in a somewhat

simplified, or to speak with Weber, ideal typical picture. Nevertheless, such ideal typical mapping could contribute to study and discussion on globalisation and its effects on different interest groups. The underlying theory in this paper is that morals are neither the transcendent category they seem, nor do they guarantee justice. Instead, morals should invite to an investigation into political relations focusing on the question: who benefits? The World Bank's comprehensive development concept has been analysed as part of a humanitarian morality that currently dominates the discourses of international relations. Compassion with human suffering serves to legitimise interventionism, varying from military force to development programmes. The study of the World Bank's CDF shows how this structure of victimisation serves as a powerful neo-imperialist incentive to extend the limits of legal mandates and de facto political influence alike.

The increasingly holistic and inclusive character of the World Bank's development concept - resulting in the CDF - empowered the World Bank to bring a whole range of development issues under its wings and freely relate them to the pursuit of economic growth. Additionally, by pushing lending governments for partnerships with private investors and lenders, privatisation of vital public interests and 'common goods' is stimulated, such as basic education, health care and social welfare provisions. This leads to further weakening of often already feeble and under-resourced national governments and public institutions in favour of corporate governance in close cooperation with the global economic institutions. In its current ambiguous form of preaching country ownership, while at the same time weakening the basis for country influence, the CDF serves an exploitative world system in which developing areas serve as the peripheries or satellite regions of the global market economy, dominated by corporate actors.

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