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Why Study Development and International Relations?

Schmidt, Johannes Dragsbæk

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IDS Roundtable 31 May 2006-05-30

DIR - Intro

Predicting the Future by Understanding the Past

Why Study Development and International Relations?

Strategic Choices - Limited Resources and Time

Root Causes of Unequal and Uneven Development

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- Why East Asia and not SSA

Why Study Development and International Relations?

- the term “development” implicitly denotes some degree of teleology, which implies a process of change and transformation in a particular purposeful direction. Development is an on-going process of qualitatively ameliorated social, political and economic change. That is, progressive change which improves and sustains the quality of life in human society. IR theory is concerned with the relationship between state and non-state actors as an issue area.¹ Development can no longer be perceived as being a localized or national problem unless it is possible to isolate particular enclaves completely from the international system historically and contemporarily.

Development remains a global issue but cannot any longer be perceived as a race whereby the South has the possibility to catch up with the North

-There are plenty of issues which encompass both development studies and IR, i.e. international and regional security, growth and equity, global and regional politics, and as mentioned poverty and the overall problematique regarding trade - the latter being a common denominator for all theories either critically assessed or positively and even aggressively promoted

- As an outcome of this discussion, it can be said that IR /IPE theory and development studies share the following interests:

- 1) Both relate to varying degrees to the interaction between states, markets, civil societies and international institutions; here the notion of order becomes crucial both at the local, regional

and global levels because it is directly related to the balance of forces in the systems both in terms of within social forces and in terms of between social forces. There is great diversity within each discipline and perspective and a new tendency of cross-fertilization among them (Underhill 2000: 7).

2) Development studies focus on resolving problems of the Third World, based on prescriptions and medicines mainly given by the developed countries. Development studies thus ought to be also considered the discipline of studying North-South relations and as such should be incorporated into IR/IPE.

3) The two disciplines are inseparable! The merger of IPE and development studies must rely on a heterodox set of theories, which can be re-grouped into the differentiation between problem-solving and critical theories (Cox 1986: 208). According to understanding this solving theories are those which tend to prescribe solutions to problems that might unsettle the international system thereby contributing to the perpetuation of the status quo. In contrast critical theory tends to question the existing world order and explore opportunities for change in institutions and social constructions. As such it is possible to make a clear distinction between the two categories based on ontologies and visions. The first comprises the problem-solving theories, which considers the world as the best of all possible worlds. They are status quo oriented, that is, the structures are viewed as viable and changes are limited to reforms within these structures. This theoretical body is deterministic and functions as source for establishing guidelines for decision-makers. The second category consists of the critical theories, which consider the world as being imperfect. They are concerned with understanding the history of the international structure, that is, how it came into being and what the possibilities are for changing it. They thus explore the possibilities for changing the status quo. It is quite obvious that to the first category comprises modernization/neo-liberalism, and neo-mercantilism/neo-realism, while Marxism/dependency and post-

modern/postcolonial theories can be situated in the other category.

- All countries with very few exceptions follow the same development model, development strategy and economic policy – this leads to a race to the bottom – with very few winners and a huge majority of losers – therefore we must situate and contextualize, whatever topic or research theme we want to investigate – whether it is the relationship between the private sector and the state, environmental disasters, gender problems, conflict and instability etc. in the local setting always in and international political economy perspective – because there are almost no examples left on the planet of independent types of development – structurally or actor-based – it means that as long as the neo-liberal type of globalization prevails we cannot understand any development oriented research divorced from the international setting.

Strategic Choices - Limited Resources and Time

- Before development research was a mirror of the social sciences where you could transfer whatever approach you wanted, and which was fashionable at that time, to development studies – this is no longer the case. It is now up to the individual researcher and the research centers to make harsh priorities when it comes to provide new knowledge on how to understand the root causes of the crisis of neo-liberal globalization.

Root Causes of Unequal and Uneven Development

(random)

-Standard neoclassical economics strains out the gnats of allocative inefficiency while swallowing the twin camels of unjust distribution and unsustainable scale. The concept of uneconomic growth has to be incorporated into our economic thinking if it is to be capable of expressing what is really happening in the world (Herman Daily, Uneconomic Growth

and the Illth of Nations: defining the optimal Scale of the Macro Economy).

- Land reform (unequal access to land) – poverty is the visual out spring of this problem

- An alarming consequence of SAPs has been the disarming of the state – lost its capacities to deliver basic services in health, education, social welfare, and even security for its own people

- Degradation of the environment – climate change/global warming and exhaustion of natural resources for instance (no real technological improvement and no technological fix) – the real problem is the blind faith in economic growth as the only imperative which leaves us with an unsustainable present and future!

- the poor are suffering the most – more growth leads to more suffering! More international trade leads to more suffering!

Cutting External Ties that Bind – Re-inventing Grounded Economic Policy-Making

- Re-inventing the state and economic policy-making which benefits the country

- Building strong and cohesive regional social compacts as a bulwark against neo-liberal and unfair economic policies and practices from the North

- One of the major lessons from East Asia is to more or less cut the ties to the Bretton-woods institutions and donors from the West!

- Another is to make strategic investment policy – and always with majority domestic capital. Otherwise cut ties to foreign companies and capital unless it gives major benefits to domestic capital accumulation, R& D, education etc.

After the End of Globalization – Alternatives and Priorities for Development Research

(Random)

- Ending the obsolete blind faith in economic growth (it is no longer the solution but the problem) – it means an end to the blind faith in trickle-down policies
- re-inventing a system and policies that are designed explicitly and directly to achieve social and environmental objectives. The global economic system, in turn, should be designed to promote, foster and support such policies, treating *growth* as a by-product, and putting the interests of the majority of the world's population ahead of those of the rich and transnational companies
- The ecological burden – increasing real sustainable solutions at local, national, regional and global levels – de-linking environmental damage from growth
- Alternatives to rising income inequality – increasing distributional policies and implementation of non-commodified land reforms
- Reversing privatisation and de-regulation – re-nationalizing natural resources and parastals
- Re-inventing a domestic non-polluting oriented business-sector in collaboration with collectives
- Inventing a citizen-wage and democratic and participatory decision-making structures at all spatial levels
- Re-collectivization of education, health, social welfare and other local and national collectives
- Ending the so-called treat of terror by re-inventing a trans-global civilizational dialogue between cultures, religions and ethnic groups.

ⁱ The former defined as countries with delimited territories or geographical boundaries and some degree of self-governance, while the latter refers to nations, supra institutions, transnational organizations, groups and individuals.