



FROM THE THIRD WORLD TO THE GLOBAL SOUTH: CONCEPTS, ESSENCES AND CONCEPTUAL INTERPRETATIONS

Muhayyo Khabibullayeva

International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan,

1st year Master's Student, Majoring in International Relations and World Politics

Mukhtor Nazirov

Associate Professor of the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan, Ph.D.

Abstract

This article considers the evolution of the concept of the “Global South” and approaches to its content, which specifically refers to the developing countries of the world. The article focuses on the origins of the concept of the “Global South”, its development and criticism. The article also discusses in detail issues related to the geographical location and socio-economic situation of the southern countries.

Keywords

Global South, Global North, Countries of the South, Third World, Non-Western World, Poor World, Brandt Line, Underdeveloped World.

Аннотация

В данной статье рассматривается эволюция понятия «Глобальный Юг» и подходы к его содержанию, в которых конкретно указываются развивающиеся страны мира. Основное внимание в статье уделяется зарождению концепции «Глобальный Юг», ее развитию и критике. В статье также подробно рассмотрены вопросы, связанные с географическим положением и социально-экономическим положением южных стран.

Ключевые слова

Глобальный Юг, Глобальный Север, Страны Юга, Третий мир, Незападный мир, Бедный мир, Линия «Брандта», Слаборазвитый мир.

INTRODUCTION

Studies on global development show that most of the developed countries are geographically located in the north, and most of the developing countries are in the south, thus dividing the world into two parts, hence the terms “North” and “South”. Over time, as a result of various criticisms, the need to revise the concept of “North-South” arose, as a result of which the term “Global South” [1] appeared, which today is popular in the scientific community. But before that, there were other terms to define the developed and developing countries of the world. For example: “Underdeveloped World”, “Majority World”, “Non-Western World”, “Poor World”, “South”, “Third World”.

Among the above terms, the concept of “Global South” is the most common in scientific literature. According to statistics, the level of use of this term, which was used for the first time in 1996, increased 10 times by the 2000s [2]. Since 2007, the scientific journal “Global South” has been published regularly. Another similar journal – “Journal of Global South Studies” began to be published in 2015 instead of the former “Journal of Third World Studies” [3]. The connection of the modern trends of the world development with this phenomenon was shown when the interest of the scientific community in the concept

of “Global South” increased.

Therefore, it is necessary to create an understanding of the origin of the terms “Global South” and “Third World”, its evolution, and why they have taken a firm place in the modern lexicon of international experts studying world development.

DISCUSSION

The origin of the term “Third World”.

English anthropologist and sociologist P. Worsley is often mentioned as the author of the idea that there is a third world. It’s not for nothing. Worsley is the author of many books of the same name, the first of which was published in 1960. However, in fact, the concept of “Third World” (le tiers monde) was previously included in the scientific works of French demographer A. Sauvé in 1952 [4]. However, when the scientist used the term “Third World”, he did not mean the existence of “first” and “second” worlds. On the contrary, he described the similarities between poor and colonial countries and characterized them as a third world.

In the 1970s, the “Third World” referred to an alliance of countries that were distinct from and incompatible with the “First World” (capitalist) and “Second World” (socialist/communist) countries. However, poor countries with weak economies soon began to be classified as the “Third World”.

By the 1980s, most authors began to use the term in their writings to describe issues of economic inequality. For example, “Economic Development in the Third World” (1985) [5] by the American scientist M. Todaro, “Equality, the Third World and the Economic Illusion” by the English scientist P. Bauer (Equality, the Third World, and Economics Delusion, 1981) [6], “The Third World tomorrow: a report from the battlefield in the war against poverty, 1983” written by another English scientist P. Harrison [7] in the works, the “Third World” countries began to refer to countries that are always lagging behind in development, and the economy is in a bad state, and this term has become a concept with a negative meaning.

Thus, in the second half of the 1980s, due to changes in world economy and politics, the term “Third World” began to be used less often. There were several reasons for this.

First, it is the weakening of the great opposition between the “first” and “second” worlds and the gradual elimination of economic conflicts that seemed intractable before.

Secondly, the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, which was considered the center of the “Second World”, led to the disruption of the economic balance and the inclusion of some countries that broke away from it into the “Third World”. The authors note that due to the rise of the market economy, many countries (for example, China since 1978, Vietnam and Laos since 1986, partially the USSR since 1987) began to leave the ranks of underdeveloped countries. In addition, as a result of the processes of globalization, mutual ideological, political, and economic polarization has eroded, and subsequently the term “Third World” has lost its original meaning in a certain sense.

The rapid economic growth in many countries of the so-called “Third World” Asia no longer allowed them to be classified as poor and weak, instead some of them began to be called the new “Asian Tigers”. Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan were soon joined by Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. After that, Vietnam and China became the most remarkable examples of the scale and speed of economic change. As the standard of living in these countries rose, the term “Third World” became a pejorative term in the public eye.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, alternative terms such as “Poor World”, and “Underdeveloped World” [8] began to appear. However, their use has caused a lot of debate, because these concepts do not adequately reflect the further development of these countries, which are now changing rapidly. Moreover, these terms lacked sufficient conceptual foundation.

Here, “poor world” means impoverished because it is underdeveloped by the “rich” (or “first world”) who dominate through the processes of globalization and capitalist expansion. This term is used to refer to countries that are dependent on others. On the other hand, the concepts of “less developed world” and “poor world” refer to countries whose economy is not well developed. In addition, when describing countries with these concepts, their history and place in world politics are not taken into account, but only their economy is meant. Thus, by the end of the 20th century, the term “Third World” began to lose its original meaning.

Strengths and weaknesses of the “Global South” concept

Changes in the world economy that began in the mid-1980s led to the emergence of the concept of the “Global South”. More precisely, in 1983, former German chancellor Willy Brandt used the following phrase in one of his articles, “The general crisis. North-South: cooperation for recovery”. In another article, he used the concept of the “North-South line” [9] (or “Brandt line”), which divides countries into rich and poor according to GDP per capita. This later motivated the use of the term “South” in relation to developing countries.

Here, more attention is paid to the geographical location of countries, that is, the majority of poor countries are located south of 30° north latitude. Such an approach is based not on the economic and historical features of the development of states, but on their geographical location. But rich and developed countries such as Australia and New Zealand are excluded from this list. Although the term “South” seems more successful than previous concepts, it has not always been able to explain processes of differentiation in an increasingly complex world landscape.

In the 1990s, scientists reached a methodological impasse. On the one hand, they continued to occasionally use outdated terms like “Third World”, “Poor World” or similar ones. However, in the radically changing world order, these concepts could not describe the new geo-economic changes. For example, the rapidly growing economy of small Singapore or the rapidly increasing global economic and political “weight” of China, which is huge in terms of its population, no longer fits these terms.

Therefore, several alternative concepts have been put forward to more accurately define the nature of “poor and developing” countries. Some researchers began to use the concept of “Most of the World” based on the fact that almost 80 percent of the world’s population lives in the South, and that most of the UN member states are located in the South. But this term has been criticized for not having clear boundaries. It was replaced by the term “non-Western world”, which is still used in some places. This term distinguished Europe and North America (the West) from the rest of the world.

At the moment, the concept has a clear geocultural perspective and is more focused on emphasizing the distinctiveness of the West in relation to other countries and regions. This term still exists and is called “The West and the Rest” in English. This expression is also used to indicate that Western countries are superior to other countries [10]. Such an approach can often be found in the works of British historian N. Ferguson and American political scientist F. Zakaria.

RESULTS

Actualization of the “Global South” phenomenon

In the 2000s, the term was further refined by the transition from the simple term “South” to the concept of “Global South”, which allowed for overcoming methodological difficulties. This concept refers to the division of countries not only by geographical location but also by economic inequality. With this, it is emphasized that the “North” and “South” countries have become part of the rapid integration processes and have united on a global scale. In addition, this term also means that the socio-economic situation of the world is not uniform, but undergoes constant changes.

American political scientist T. Friedman in his 2005 book “Global South” stated that “It is appropriate to divide the world into two parts, “Global South” and “Global North” because these concepts are not related to differences in political and economic systems but to the framework of global capitalism; represents a renewed perspective on the post-Cold War world characterized by differences between “losers” and “winners” [11].

However, the current use of the term “Global South” to refer to developed countries as the “Global North” and “Global South” to designate countries with a lower level of development also raises many objections.

First, such a classification inevitably leads to exclusions and limitations. The countries of the world are so diverse that dividing them by two terms is a very narrow description.

Secondly, in such a division, the harmonious view of the world is disturbed. Even if the most basic socio-economic indicators of the countries of the world are used, a more complicated situation appears when they are divided. For example, three of the ten largest economies in the world (by nominal value) are located in the “Global South” (China, India, Brazil), and one of the ten countries with the highest export and import is Indonesia. In addition, on this list, Portugal is considered a “developed” (“North”) country, and Saudi Arabia is a “developing” (“South”) country. Therefore, among the countries of the “South,” there are also

countries with a much higher development index.

In turn, if we take the ranking of countries according to the Human Development Index, which is an integrated indicator that takes into account the standard of living, education and life expectancy, a number of countries in the “South” are Singapore (5th place), South Korea (18th place) and Israel (19th place) are also included in the “South” countries. At the same time, there are countries in the “North” whose economic position is much lower than a number of representatives of the “South”. Some European countries rank below 50th on the development index, including Bulgaria (56th), Albania (75th) and Macedonia (82nd), among many others.

The dividing line between developed (“North”) and underdeveloped/developing (“South”) parts of the world can pass not only within countries but also within regions and cities. This division is typical for almost all countries of the world, both very rich and very poor. Today, it is natural that the remote areas of some countries are backward and underdeveloped. The differences in development between the Walloon and Flanders parts of Belgium, the north and south of Italy and the east coast and eastern regions, and the inland and western regions of China are some of the examples. Such socio-economic stratification exists even in countries with the lowest level of development, and their cities, various regions, and especially megacities, are developing significantly faster.

CONCLUSION

If we look at the geographical map of the “South”, there are many former colonial territories and groups of countries located on the periphery of world political and economic life, dependent on the export of natural resources, with socio-economic problems. Many of them share common or similar aspects and threats, and this is a vast geopolitical space. At the time, countries such as Japan and South Korea were able to use their full potential and move from the “Third World” to the advanced “First World” according to economic indicators, which, it can be argued, destroyed many stereotypes for developing countries and served as a “light of hope”.

The concept of "Global South" includes countries and international institutions that strive to eliminate socio-economic inequality and join the ranks of highly developed countries in the future. In this respect, it can be called a new emerging phenomenon of globalization.

Today, the “Global South” is becoming a center where global flows of capital and resources are concentrated. Attempts to stimulate and polarize the competition between “South” and “North” for geopolitical purposes are being made by some power centers, but these processes have no economic basis.

Although the term “Global South” is generally used to distinguish between the developed and developing world, the dividing line between North and South is already receding from the macro level to the micro level, now running largely within states, regions and cities. This makes the global development landscape more complex and diverse.

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