

Dependency and Liberation: Focus on the Third World

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We view development in terms of the increasing capacity of underdeveloped countries to produce more and to purchase more of what the developed ones already enjoy. The first world of super-rich nations is deemed to represent the image of the Third World's future. Such a mechanistic conception of development popularized by some of the most illustrious ideologies of imperialism draws its appeal from the illusion or the illusory hoax of policy-makers and opinion leaders in the underdeveloped countries, that they, too, may attain prosperity within the existing international economic order. But a growing number of social scientists in the third world find development theories inadequate if not grossly misleading. They point out that development theory glosses over the reality of imperialism, and worst, it fails to come to grips with the exploitative structures in colonized societies. It provides ideological sanctions to Bonapartist dictatorship by its advocacy of a strong executive and a development-oriented government that is willing and able to ensure a favorable climate for foreign investments.

Development theories are also criticized for presupposing that underdeveloped countries, being short of capital, require a heavy dosage of foreign aid and investments to activate their latent resources. Its critics argue that foreign aid and investments in effect distort the pattern of development. Instead of sustaining growth it siphons off locally generated capital to support the affluence of the already prosperous nations. In the early 1960's, President Diosdado Macapagal who prided himself as a Ph.D. in Economics, triumphantly declared that under his administration the Philippines had reached the take-off stage. Now we are in the late 1970's and we are still taking-off, and apparently moving backwards.

True, we have five-star hotels; we have become a haven for foreign tourists; we have a fabulous Cultural Center and shopping

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arcades that put Woolworth to shame. We attract international conventions and our flashy restaurants even import cooks from France and Switzerland. The highways of Luzon are getting longer, wider and cleaner. Another is, of course, San Juanico Bridge, the bridge of love about which everyone has heard but few have used. It does not serve much as a transport facility. At least San Juanico Bridge, the bridge of love, has contributed to the physical fitness program. Because according to reports, it has promoted jogging among the Leyteños and Samareños. But behind this glittering facade is the most abject poverty and destitution. While the GNP is said to be rising, the conditions of the masses are growing from bad to worst. Money wages may have risen, but the purchasing power of workers has actually gone down. This is the pattern which Andre Gunderfrank, one of the chief proponents of the dependency theory, describes as the development of underdevelopment. It is a pattern found in the Philippines which is also very common among neocolonial nations. The dependency theory offers a conceptual framework for understanding the roots of this seeming paradox, the development of underdevelopment.

The origins of modern imperialism can be traced no further than the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Between 1870 and 1914 the most advanced capitalist nations, namely, Britain, France, Germany and, later, the United States and Japan, feverishly competed with each other for territories in Asia and Africa. During this period, 85 per cent of the British Empire was acquired. It was also during this period that countries colonized earlier like India, the East Indies and the strait settlements, were transformed into appendages to the economies of the major capitalist nations.

Colonization is the process by which a dependency relationship is established and maintained. In general it had been accomplished by means of direct political domination and administrative control. Some people, however, mistake the means of direct rule for the essence of colonialism. So that the withdrawal of direct rule from Asia and Africa had been erroneously construed as the liquidation of colonialism. But the real essence of colonialism is the transformation of the social structures and economies of subject nations that are establishing and maintaining their dependency on the colonizing power. This process has not in all instances been achieved through direct political domination and administrative control, and Latin America is a case in point. The Latin American countries as we know freed themselves from the yoke of Spain and Portugal in the

continent-wide revolution in the 1830's. But later in that century, they were colonized by the United States, in the sense that colonization is understood in dependency theory. Colonization of Latin America was done without the United States having to impose direct rule. Having kept all competitors from the Western hemisphere, the United States found that bribery and gunboat diplomacy were effective enough to win over the Latin American elites. What is important, however, is that the socioeconomic transformation that took place elsewhere in the colonies of Britain, France and Germany also occurred in Latin America with the treacherous collaboration of the Latin American caudillos. Just like countries that were conquered, occupied, and directly ruled, this old continent of Latin America became a vast satellite of Yankee imperialism.

If you prepare an illustration closer to us geographically, there is Thailand. It was never conquered, never occupied, never directly ruled by any foreign power. But Thailand survived, precisely because King Chulalongkorn and his inane successors allowed Thailand to be socially, economically and even culturally transformed into a joint satellite of Britain and France. And after World War II, with Britain and France out of Southeast Asia, Thailand was again willingly colonized by the United States. In other words, dependency relationship rather than direct rule is the essence of colonialism. Therefore, a country does not become liberated just because the colonial administrators have turned over sovereignty to a national government, if this national government perpetuates and protects the socioeconomic structure that maintains the dependency relationship. A movement for national liberation will have to continue but this time against the national government itself.

Following this line of analysis, the dependency theory designates as the First World all the advanced capitalist nations. The Second World refers to the socialist states and the Third World embraces all countries at varying degrees of dependency. Whereas the conventional development theory defines the three worlds in a seal of prosperity and poverty, the dependency theory employs the criterion of dependence and regards poverty as a consequence, an external manifestation of dependency. The First World is then described as the metropolis, and the Third World as the periphery. The Second World is that which has successfully opted out of this metropolis-periphery relationship. Around the metropolis revolves the periphery in a centrifugal manner. More and more countries in

the periphery are breaking away from the relationship, seeking genuine independence by liquidating the structural vestiges of colonialism. In the last few years South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, have already broken away to join the Second World. Angola, Mozambique, Guinea, Bissau, Tanzania, and possibly Ethiopia are moving in the same direction.

So far I have been talking about the Third World in general terms. At this point I would like to concretize by discussing the internal structure of Philippine society in order to show how this internal structure supports our dependency situation. I don't think anyone here is so naive as to take seriously the old legend that the Americans came here to teach us the art of democratic politics. Indeed, the first policy moves of the Americans like the Payne-Aldridge Act were clearly aimed to remold our economy along dependent capitalist lines.

Manila was developed into an internal metropolis, the main link with the U.S. market, and banks, merchant houses and some manufacturing industries sprouted in our primate city. Thus Manila became the center from which radiates what Gunnar Myrdal calls "the spread and backwash effects of capitalist development." It rapidly absorbed people from the rural areas, giving rise to a new social class—the urban proletariat—the class from whose ranks are recruited the workers for the capitalist enterprises. American capital also flowed into mining and timber extractions, and into export crop agriculture. American capital developed the sugar haciendas of Western Visayas, the coconut estates of Southern Luzon, and the abaca, pineapple, and banana plantations of Mindanao. All these formed a network of local pockets of capitalist economists with Metro-Manila as the hub. In other words, Metro-Manila has become an internal metropolis around which revolve the host of modern plantation, mining towns, port areas and regional trading centers. As the main contact point with the international metropolis, Metro-Manila is also the most westernized sociologically and culturally.

This pattern which we find in the Philippines can be found in the rest of the Third World, in all colonized nations. But the capital structure of a dependent nation like the Philippines is never the same as the capital structure in an international metropolis like the United States. It is characterized by heavy reliance on foreign capital; development is concentrated in the import-export sector, and its manufacturing activities consist of processing and packaging commodities imported from abroad. A great bulk of the capital

internally generated is siphoned off to the international metropolis, thus contributing to the prosperity of the latter. Cumulative underdevelopment or what Andre Gunderfrank calls "the development of underdevelopment" does not mean that the dependent nation will show absolutely no signs of progress. It will indeed have the trappings of prosperity like skyscrapers, supermarkets, heavy traffics, luxurious hospitals, five-star hotels, and of course San Juanico Bridge. But such magnificent facilities are accessible only to a thin layer of the Filipino elite, while an ever increasing number of our countrymen sink deeper and deeper in misery and squalor.

To dominate the Philippines, the Americans need only to send a few top executives who represent the multinational corporations, and they need only a few agents to monitor the performance of Filipino quislings and to manipulate Filipino politics from the shadows. For day-to-day administration, however, the United States can rely on a subservient native bourgeoisie, corrupt and corruptible leaders, and Western-oriented technocrats. This pattern of indirect domination and subtle manipulation through a native elite is also common to all dependent nations.

When the major capitalist powers colonized societies of the Third World, they invariably installed political institutions patterned after their own. Britain and France imposed parliamentary governments, while the United States introduced us to the Presidential system. In the last two decades, however, these political institutions began to flounder because they proved themselves incapable of coping with the mounting challenge of national liberation. Another reason is the sharpening conflict within the ruling class itself. Parliament became the arena of fears, for fears and virulent brawls among native bourgeoisie politicians and indirect groups. The consequence of these two factors is indecisiveness and instability of the government, a democracy of stalemate that place foreign investments in jeopardy. This situation created opportunities for astute and strong-willed executives to assume absolute power and rule the countries by decree. Thus one after another Western-type constitutional regimes gave way to "Bonapartist" dictatorship like the one we have today. But we should not mistake a change in form for a change in substance.

Renunciation of constitutional democracy does not, in most cases, indicate a rejection of dependency. On the contrary, "Bonapartist dictatorships" are desperate attempts to preserve

dependency relationships. Hence Bonapartist dictators, instead of being punished for dismantling the structures that colonialism had built, receive encouraging applause and material support from the imperialist powers. Bonapartist rule in our country is just a little over five years old. I suppose no one in this hall is too young to remember how it all started in September 1972 when our country was experiencing the sharpest clash between antagonistic political groups. The American style political institutions proved utterly helpless to cope with the situation. While the activist groups were surging forward holding parliaments in the streets and rousing the people from decades of apathy, the representatives of various factions of the bourgeoisie and landlords were squabbling in Congress and in the Constitutional Convention. In the mass media, they accused each other of corruption and other venaleties that were normally practiced in secret.

The Americans, ever sensitive to any potential threat to their investments and trade, recognize an urgent need for a strong government capable of placing the situation under control and granting to multinational corporations concessions which an awakened citizenry actively oppose. Such a situation, a democracy of stalemate, created the opportunity for an astute and strong-willed president to assume emergency powers and to establish authoritarian rules as in other countries like France in 1958 under De Gaulle and Singapore in 1963 under Lee Kuan Yew.

In most of these countries Bonapartist rulers preserved parliamentary institutions but just rendered them powerless. The Philippine Congress, however, had by 1972 so discredited itself that it was worthless even for decorative purposes. It was therefore very wise of President Marcos to dispense with it altogether, thus dramatizing his break from the past and allowing him to build an image of a leader who stands above special interests. He disarmed all private armies and even sent to comfortable detention camps his own disreputable cronies. As one writer said, "the Bonapartist regime makes a big show of total independence from special interest." Its head invariably claims to be above the brawling party factions which have misruled the nation and led it to the brink of ruin from which he has providently snatched it in time. He parades as the anointed custodian of eternal values and the true spirit of the people who have been victimized by selfish warring cliques and threatened by alien and subversive mischief makers.

Actually a Bonapartist regime under conditions of dependency exists primarily to protect the interest of imperialist as well as favored local capitalist groups by blunting the class conflicts which create the opportunity for the abrogation of emergency powers. The press is muffled, strikes are banned, and the trade unions are tamed. For these salutatory services, the Bonapartist regime demands a heavy price. Taxes and voluntary contributions are imposed to build all sorts of things, and to pay fabulous emoluments for a retinue of technocrats, hatchet-men, and cynosures. The high overhead cost of maintaining a Bonapartist regime partly explains why the patrons are just too eager to dispense with the Bonapartist ruler once he has exhausted his usefulness. The Bonapartist ruler is extremely vulnerable to such treachery, because in the first place his power rests on a very narrow social base. Since it takes power as the agency of a single faction of the possessing classes and not the capitalists in their entirety, the regime is subject to sniping, rumor-mongering and undermining by other competitors for the first place.

A Bonapartist regime, therefore, stands on shaky grounds, unless it can build a broader power base which is difficult in the short run. Its survival depends upon the Americans' perfection of the emergency. Once they no longer feel a serious and immediate threat to their interests, either they pressure the ruler to restore parliamentary democracy or he gets removed by conspiracy in favor of a less expensive but more credible substitute. Hence, a captive Bonapartist ruler will not allow the political situation to stabilize completely. This obviously is a delicate maneuver since his failure to accomplish this mission over an extended period might also give his patrons reasons to oust him just the same. The military, the police, the intelligentsia, and the bureaucracy are the crucial factors in this game. If the ruler continues to command their allegiance, well, the patrons will just have to clench their fists and pay the price. But the loyalty of these pros to the ruler is never secured especially when the legitimacy of his regime is in doubt, because the Americans have the resources to sway them at the moment of their choice.

Therefore, a wise Bonapartist ruler will adopt a long range goal—the legitimization of his regime. This is done by occasional referenda, using the controlled media to drum up support and mobilizing the most backward sectors of the population, the so-called silent majority to politically sterilize neighborhood associations. When circumstances permit he will even initiate the creation of a pliable representative structure to play the legitimizing role. This is not as

difficult as some would suggest, because even among his most virulent detractors there are many who will grab the first opportunity to reenter the corridors of power even in a largely nominal capacity. If he succeeds in legitimizing his regime by means of a pliable and credible quasi-parliament, his chances of survival are great, indeed. This will not, of course, alter the Bonapartist character of his regime because the ruler in his concurrent capacity as the head of the state, prime minister, and leader of the majority party will continue exercising both executive and legislative powers and continue relying on the coercive apparatus of the state to enforce his decrees. But the Americans will be more reluctant to pressurize or oust him especially after the embarrassing experience in Chile. This will also give him a civilian counterfoil to the military. A legitimized Bonapartist regime may indeed last for the lifetime of the ruler, but the experience of Spain and Portugal has shown that it cannot go beyond that point. What Deberil called the transference of charisma has rarely happened in history.

Therefore, the restoration of parliamentary democracy during or after the lifetime of a Bonapartist is a very real possibility. The question, however, is this: Will it last for long? The political constitution is like Humpty-Dumpty. Once it suffers a great fall all the bourgeoisie's horses and all the imperialist men cannot put the pieces together again. The period of Bonapartist rule characterized by the suspension of civil liberties, by the closure of normal channels for interest articulation and the destruction of all structures for political bargaining inevitably sharpens class contradictions. While forcing national reconciliation with an iron fist, it momentarily paralyzes the contending camps, but it does not resolve the contradictions. Once parliamentary democracy is restored, the likelihood is for these contradictions to surface once again; this time with greater fury and viciousness. This is now happening in Spain and Portugal. The chaos that brought about the first Bonapartist regime will recur in magnified form and it will be easier for a new man of destiny to reenact history.

Now, for as long as our country exists within the framework of dependency; for as long as we remain a satellite of the American metropolis, we are forever trapped in a vicious cycle of weak constitutional regimes and Bonapartist dictatorships. The only way out of the problem is to get out of dependency. But liberation from dependency can never be achieved from above. You cannot liberate a nation by decrees. Liberation presupposes the conscious and

active involvement of a military citizenry. Unless the masses are mobilized, liberation is inconceivable, because only they have the strength to smash the pillars of dependency and resist American intervention. Since a Bonapartist ruler must keep the masses silent and inert to be able to rule along, a Bonapartist regime even if inspired by genuine nationalistic intentions can never serve as the agency for this historic mission. The liberation of the people is the job of the people themselves.

So, Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, with due apologies to the Agustinian fathers, may I end my presentation with the parting words of Martin Luther: "Here I stand I can do no other." Thank you.