

THE THEORETICAL APPRAISAL OF GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS)

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ABSTRACT

The Global world is a mixture of poverty and wealth, development and depression, exploitation and assistance that led to interdependence and extreme poverty in some societies. The economic disparity between North and South has existed for a long time. The issue is whether pragmatically it can continue much longer. This transcended to developing counties in Africa, Latin America and Asian. The Millennium Development Goals illustrates the failure of capitalism and markets which unfairly create and distribute wealth. Extreme poverty is the consequence of capitalism, and it cannot be eliminated through capitalism. The redistribution of wealth through market mechanism leads to corruption, incompetency, Lack of good governance, transparency, and accountability among recipient countries. Therefore, this paper examines global theoretical perspectives of the Millennium Development Goals. In order to achieve this, the paper relies on qualitative data generated from a desk review.

Keywords: Theoretical, Appraisal, Perspectives, MDGs

Introduction

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been presented and advocated as an exemplary model to surmount the constraints of previous methodologies. Sachs (2005) acknowledges that the MDGs were amended commitments formulated by the global community throughout the years. For instance, the original strategy stipulated the attainment of universal healthcare by 1978 and universal education by 1990.

Consequently, the Millennium Development Goals were conceived for the "global family" as all nations are perceived to be part of the international community and the entire global society. As such, all nations are participants in this global family that aspires to achieve the MDGs. The MDGs are established upon a rejuvenated global alliance that unites all countries based on collective rationality. The fundamental solution to eradicate poverty is to establish

an interconnected global network that extends from destitute communities to the epicenter of global influence and affluence (Sachs, 2005). The impoverished nations of the world find themselves ensnared in a cycle of poverty that encompasses ailments, dire impoverishment, physical seclusion, environmental duress, and ecological deterioration. These countries are profoundly destitute and are unable to extricate themselves from extreme poverty autonomously. Therefore, the objective of eradicating poverty is driven by two aims: firstly, to strive for the cessation of extreme poverty, and secondly, to ensure that all individuals are afforded an opportunity to ascend the ladder of development through the realization of aid.

Sachs (2005) further argues that previous approaches to development have been unsuccessful due to their narrow focus and standardized advice, which neglected specific contexts. Furthermore, these approaches disregarded urgent issues related to poverty traps and placed the entire burden of poverty eradication on the poor countries themselves. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aim to overcome these limitations by being quantifiable, driven by the people, and guided by a global partnership between wealthy and

impoverished nations. The MDGs are supported politically by both developed and developing countries, as well as civil society and other relevant development institutions (MDG Reports, 2005 & 2006).

The analysis of the successes or otherwise of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have attracted a lot of discussion about who to be blamed; the internal problems inherent in the developing nations; the problem internal to capitalist development or the dependent nature of the international donor countries and organisations. Several studies were conducted empirically on the nature, implementation, and evaluation of the MDGs. Therefore, this article is theoretical in nature and relies majorly on qualitative data derived from the desk review conducted.

Millennium Development Goals in the Global World

At the World Summit in the year 2000, the participants of the United Nations (UN) established ambitious development objectives that require extensive international collaboration among all UN members and organizations. These objectives, known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), encompass

both conventional and critical approaches to development and adopt a more human-centric perspective. The primary aim is to eradicate extreme poverty by reducing the percentage of individuals living on less than \$1 per day and experiencing hunger by fifty percent, by the year 2015. The achievement of MDG 1 is contingent upon the success of MDG 2, which seeks to provide universal primary education for both genders. However, each objective is accompanied by a specific and measurable target (Peace, 2003). The ambitious objectives set forth at the Millennium Summit illustrate the UN's dedication to meeting the fundamental needs of the global population by 2015. For favorable outcomes, economic development must align with human development. There is a widespread agreement that these objectives are necessary and attainable, although there are differing viewpoints on the most suitable strategies. The World Summit in 2005 exemplified some of the disagreements surrounding the optimal approaches to achieving the MDGs. The United States sought to exclude any mention of the MDGs from the agenda, partly due to concerns about international and governmental intervention in the global economy. However, international protests compelled the US to retract its position.

Progress towards attaining the MDGs by 2015 has not been entirely encouraging. The UN Human Development Report (2005, p.18) states that the objective of the MDGs to decrease child mortality will not be successful, resulting in more than 4.4 million avoidable deaths in 2015. In the upcoming decade, the disparity between the objective and current patterns will lead to the demise of over 41 million children before their fifth birthday due to easily treatable illnesses, mostly caused by poverty. This is an outcome that presents significant challenges concerning the millennium. Furthermore, the discrepancy between the MDG objective of halving poverty and the projected results is expected to lead to an additional 380 million individuals in developing nations living on less than \$1 per day by 2015. Moreover, the MDG objective of achieving universal primary education will not be achieved, as 47 million children in developing countries are still devoid of schooling in 2015.

The MDG initiative has achieved a certain degree of success primarily due to the advancements made by China in terms of reducing poverty, promoting primary education, and attaining gender equality. The substantial economic growth and enhanced international trade of China have

positively influenced the lives of numerous Chinese individuals and have significantly impacted the statistics pertaining to MDGs. Nevertheless, Sub Saharan Africa and certain regions of South Asia have experienced deteriorating conditions. In 2008, the escalating prices of fuel and food aggravated the living and working circumstances of impoverished individuals worldwide. Consequently, individuals living in poverty and extreme poverty encountered difficulties in meeting their fundamental nutritional requirements due to inflation. The global fiscal crisis has resulted in wealthier nations being less generous in providing Official Development Assistance (ODA). Since 2005, the provision of ODA has declined and the current financial instability in advanced industrialized countries makes it unlikely for an increase in ODA to occur. Under the leadership of President Obama, the United States has embraced the MDGs as the primary means for implementing its multilateral approach to poverty alleviation and development promotion (Peace, 2003).

This clearly indicates that the MDGs in some developing countries, despite the promises and commitments in decades, the number of poor keeps on scaling up and yet it could not be able to achieve its target goals

for eradication of extremely rural poverty. As, several theoretical perspectives were advanced by scholars to analyse and evaluate the successes or otherwise of the MDGs. The next section of this paper presents the analysis of these perspectives.

Perspectives on Millennium Development Goals

Several perspectives were advanced to appraise the implementation of MDGs. Some perspectives look at the dependency nature of the goals while others look at obstacles that prevented successes of the implementation. Therefore, the perspectives (Dependency theory, Realism, Liberalism, Marxism, Constructivism, and Feminism) would be discussed in this section of the article.

Dependency Theory

Dependency theory emerged in the late 1950s with the guidance of Raul Prebisch, the Director of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America. The proponents of this theory were concerned by the fact that economic growth in the advanced industrialized countries did not necessarily result in growth in the poorer countries. They proposed that economic activity in the wealthy nations led to significant economic issues in the less

privileged countries. Dependency theory was seen as an explanation for the enduring poverty observed in Third World countries. According to this theory, persistent poverty is a consequence of capitalist exploitation. A related concept known as the World System Approach argued that poverty was a result of an unfair division of labor within the international political economy, which favored the advanced countries and disadvantaged the poor (Ferraro, 1996). The initial development of this theory took place in Latin America, particularly among social scientists such as Raul Prebisch, an economist from Argentina, who served as the Secretary to the UN Economic Commission for Latin America during the 1950s. The idea of dependency was further refined and expanded upon by other Latin American social scientists including Celso Furtado, Theotonio Dos Santos, and F.H Cardoso, as well as by Samir Amin from Senegal, Andre Gunder Frank from Germany, and Paul Baran and Immanuel Wallerstein. It is important to note that dependency theory is not a single, homogeneous theory, but rather a multifaceted approach. There are significant analytical variations within this school of thought. Nonetheless, dependency theory asserts that a comprehensive understanding

of the root causes of persistent global poverty cannot be achieved without considering the entire international economic system. Underdevelopment should not be seen as a static condition, but rather as an active process of impoverishment that is inherently connected to development. In other words, certain regions of the world remain underdeveloped because others have already achieved development.

The exponents of the dependency theory argued that the third world countries had remained underdeveloped because their social and economic development was being conditioned by external forces. Historically, these countries had remained colonies of the advanced capitalist nation; their looting and plunder by the metropolitan countries was the initial cause of underdevelopment (Gaub, 2003).

In summary, Dependency theory argues that relying on foreign aid rarely influences development. Therefore, the Millennium Development Goals, as an agency for promoting rural development in the African countries fall short of expectations. Its activities fail to promote sustainable livelihood among the poor masses.

Realist Perspective on Millennium Development Goals

The major proponents of Realism include Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Hans Morgenthau. The realists posit the argument that international aid has a greater negative impact than positive (Easterly, 2006). The commendable efforts of the United Nations (UN) in attempting to fulfill the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) often result in failure. This failure is attributed to the inefficiency of international institutions in effectively administering the comprehensive plan for implementing the MDGs. The infusion of resources often leads to corruption and mismanagement within the UN and among aid recipient states. States that aim to support other nations in achieving the MDGs would be wise to allocate aid bilaterally in order to ensure proper management. An example of this approach is the establishment of the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) by the United States, overseen by the government corporation known as the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). This initiative allows states that meet specific conditions of economic liberalization and good governance to apply for development aid (Peace, 2003). Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge

that China's development and progress cannot be attributed to the UN or any other global initiative. Instead, it is the result of China's ability to harness market forces for the country's development while maintaining its socialist government. The Chinese state took the responsibility of improving the lives of its citizens, even if it violated human rights domestically and engaged with oppressive regimes in Africa to secure access to raw materials and African markets. Nevertheless, if any progress has been made towards achieving the MDGs, it is largely due to China's efforts in improving the lives of its people. Meanwhile, African states are experiencing a regression.

The Realists posit the notion that the nature of humanity is not innately inclined towards benevolence, but rather towards self-centeredness and competitiveness. This particular standpoint, which is held by scholars including Thomas Hobbes, perceives human nature as being centered around the self (not necessarily driven by selfishness) and prone to conflict unless specific circumstances are present to enable coexistence among individuals. Due to the self-centeredness of nation-states in international relations, it will be difficult to

achieve international cooperation to the benefit of developing nations.

Liberal Perspective on Millennium Development Goals

The major proponents of liberalism are Adams Smith and David Ricardo among others. This perspective is premised on the notion that when states roll backward their frontiers and allow civil society organisations to intervene and contribute to the resources and expertise needed to implement the MDGs. The MDGs are attainable with the appropriate level of funding and the right economic policies. By drawing upon the ideas and resources of civil society, the international community can meet the basic human needs of the population. Neo liberals stress that the governments of the poorest states must be reformed if international efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals are to be successful. Corrupt governments and their ill-concerned policies have contributed to the extreme poverty experienced by their citizens. The Monterrey Consensus involves good governance reforms in exchange for increased ODA. If states have failed or governments remain corrupt, then the international community can do very little (Peace, 2003).

Sachs (2005) argues that market forces are powerful; they are insufficient for reducing poverty in countries that are geographically challenged or suffer from poor infrastructure. Such countries tend to have populations that suffer debilitating diseases and have little or no access to health care. He argued that if wealthy countries increase their ODA to a combined \$150 billion, the international community could easily meet the MDG. Some liberals such as Collier (2007) argued the “bottom billion” people living in the poorest countries are slipping deeper into poverty. The MDGs may need to be refined to focus more on these individuals, 70% of whom live in Africa. Moreover, the provision of aid has a distorting effect on the economy. The ultimate solution to alleviating poverty lies in embracing free trade and open markets. Advocates of economic liberalism contend that free trade has the potential to lift countries out of poverty. In recent years, scholars and proponents of neoliberal economics have raised doubts about the efficacy of foreign aid. They assert that foreign aid does not contribute to economic growth in developing nations and the funds allocated to it are squandered. However, other experts argue that aid can indeed be beneficial in the presence of good

governance and is indispensable for saving lives in the least developed countries (Thayer, 2010 & Ibryamova, 2010). Furthermore, Sachs (2005) posits that certain countries are trapped in a perpetual cycle of poverty and foreign aid is crucial for their emancipation. In contexts such as disease prevention, humanitarian aid, and education, foreign aid can be a matter of life and death. The majority of aid proponents suggest that aid can be effective if it is targeted towards the appropriate objectives. Unfortunately, aid has often been directed towards misguided goals. Instead of focusing on the creation of physical and human capital, governments should utilize aid to establish high-quality institutions. This alternative perspective views aid as a facilitator of governance rather than merely an input for manufacturing, as the previous financial model suggested. By assisting in the development of effective institutions, aid plays a crucial role in creating the necessary infrastructure for individuals to make investments that drive economic development. In instances where governance is robust, aid is less likely to be misused by corrupt officials. Dollar, an official at the World Bank, argues that foreign aid primarily fosters the growth of high-quality institutions that empower the state to act

effectively. He contends that protecting property rights and ensuring that state bureaucracies are capable of providing essential services are vital components of this process (Qatley, 2010).

Others contend that the issue lies not in the specific aid targets, but rather in the structure of the foreign aid regime. Easterly (2006) posits that a central constraint on the effectiveness of aid lies in the multilateral organizations tasked with managing aid provision. Easterly focuses on what he terms the "foreign and cartel" phenomenon, arguing that the bureaucratic agencies responsible for delivering and administering aid prioritize projects that please their constituency over projects that would yield a greater return in developing societies. In order to achieve greater effectiveness, fundamental reform of the international organizations that oversee aid is necessary. These organizations must be answerable to their clients in developing countries. Introducing market competition in the distribution of foreign aid could foster accountability (Smith, 2011 and Farrands, 2011). The use of foreign aid as a tool for development has been the subject of extensive debate. Supporters of liberal ideology tend to advocate for aid as a valuable means of attaining development

objectives, particularly when it is targeted and well-managed. Neo-liberals and adherents of structuralism, on the other hand, criticize aid, arguing that it distorts market functioning (Hayter, 1971). Moyo (2009) in Adeyemi et al (2014) espouses a version of the established Washington Consensus in her rejection of most conventional foreign development aid practices, positing that aid distorts markets and undermines domestic capital formation, even in the absence of corruption.

The notions by scholars as implied, MDGs success is determined by proper utilization of resources, good governance, transparency, and accountability. With these enormous amounts of foreign aid, intervention given by the foreign donor development would be attained. But without that development in rural areas would be deepened. The other strand negates that developed countries must inject capital in addition to their commitment for developing countries to attain its development.

Marxist Perspective on Millennium Development Goals

The Marxists believe that the MDGs illustrate the failure of capitalism and markets which unfairly create and distribute wealth. Extreme poverty is the consequence

of capitalism, and it cannot be eliminated through capitalism. While Multinational Corporations (MNC) pay lip service to the MDGs, their participation in the Global Compact is more public relations than substantive action. MNC seeks policies that allow them to exploit raw materials, labour and market. China is one of the few success stories in part because the state is strong to regulate MNCs and its 1.3-billion-person market.

One of the targets of MDG 1 is to halve the number of people who suffer from hunger. Reaching the goal is complicated because of the dramatic rise in food prices in 2008. Marxist also stresses that IMF (International Monetary Funds) and World Bank policies eroded state investment in agriculture and state support for local farmers. The Marxists argue that socialist policies would redistribute wealth and resources and are the only way to meet the MDGs (Peace, 2003).

Constructivist Perspective on Millennium Development Goals

The constructivist theory shows how international organizations create norms and play an important coordinating role in poverty relief operations and in improving health. It was the UN that created the MDGs

and developed a system for achieving them. Throughout the 1990's, a series of development conferences were held by the UN, which brought together the State, NGOs, MNC and other actors to pursue and define the value of development. The MDG strategy revolves around the Millennium Project. The Millennium Project was commissioned in 2002 by their Secretary General Kofi Anan to develop action steps for achieving the MDGs. The project, headed by Sachs, sought to promote scholarly research efforts to tap innovative ideas for achieving the MDGs and for prioritizing operations. The project's main objective was to embed the MDGs in world activities (Peace, 2003)

Foreign aid may take the form of grants for social, economic, or military purposes; loans, particularly at concessionary interest rates reduced below market levels by donor country as a form of assistance. The American economists attempt to dispel what they considered to be some of the development debate. As with most authors within the development field, they begin with a discussion of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They doubt, however, that cutting agricultural subsidies in wealthy countries or increasing foreign aid will help poor countries achieve the

MDGs. The main cost of subsidies they argue falls on consumers in wealthy countries, not poor countries. Moreover, given corruption in many recipient nations increasing aid will be wasted (Pevehouse and Goldstein 2008).

The year 2005 has emerged as a period of significant advancement. During the September gathering of the United Nations Millennium Summit, where leaders of affluent nations convened in New York, a notable emphasis was placed on their dedication to furthering debt relief and augmenting assistance initiatives for developing nations. The focal point of the conference, known as the Millennium Development Goals, advocated for a reduction of global poverty and hunger by half before the year 2015. The focal point of the summit will revolve around augmenting international aid to 0.7% of donors' gross national product in order to facilitate a twofold increase in aid transfers to regions facing acute need, particularly in Africa (Pevehouse and Goldstein 2008).

Feminist Perspective on Millennium Development Goals

The feminists applauded the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for including

gender issues among the goals. The United Nations (UN) acknowledges that women and girls tend to exist on the fringes of society, experiencing the greatest marginalization. They are also the least likely to reap the benefits of globalization and markets. The initial step towards progress lies in the elimination of the gender disparity prevalent in primary education. Remarkable advancements have been made by China in this particular context, while sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia seem to be moving in an unfavorable direction. This observation signifies that the reduction of agricultural subsidies, coupled with the pervasiveness of corruption in developing nations, will never lead to development in African countries. However, it is essential to note that feminist scholars have voiced their criticism regarding the absence of sexual and reproductive rights within the scope of the MDGs.

Conclusion

The disparities in progress are manifested mainly in rural areas, which require developed countries to fulfill their commitments for foreign assistance. This clearly indicates that the MDGs in developing nations despite its promises and commitment in decades, the number of poor

keeps on scaling up and yet it could not achieve its target goals for eradicating rural poverty among others. China was cited by liberal scholars as a good example of the benefactor of MDGs, but they failed to explain how China has improved the lives for so many of its people through dedication and good governance. The paper concludes that instead of foreign aid to rescue developing nations from underdevelopment, it led to continued dependence and exploitation as explained by Dependency and Marxian perspectives. The result of these is the increase in corruption, mismanagement, and poor governance.

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