

Introduction

Evolving dependency relations – old and new approaches

ANDRZEJ GAŁGANEK

A historical analysis of processes taking place in Latin America has been both a source and intention for dependency theorists. The essence of these processes has been framed as a fight between classes and groups, which defined their interests and values under conditions of expanding capitalist mode of production. The stake in this fight has been the control or reformulation of the existing order as its result could take the form of a historic legitimization or a transformation of the dominant structure.¹

The first theories of dependency, built by (among others) André Gunder Frank, Immanuel Wallerstein and Samir Amin, shared the thesis that dependency is a way to explain underdevelopment. Those approaches blamed capitalism as a world system for the underdevelopment of the so called Third

World countries and pointed out that international market relations are a mechanism for exploitation of underdeveloped countries. The peoples of underdeveloped countries will not be able to “eliminate the meager reality” – claimed A. G. Frank – by importing from the metropolis counter-productive stereotypes unfit for their economic reality; nor will they be able to effect political liberation. Thus, the dependency theory “(...) will help the peoples of underdeveloped countries to understand the causes of underdevelopment of development and development of underdevelopment and eliminate them from their reality.”²

Another group of dependency theorists, representatives of the French economic anthropology (Pierre-Philippe Rey, Georges Dupré, Emmanuel Terray, Claude Meillassoux), believed that capitalism should not be blamed for underdevelopment and capitalists should not be accused of bad will. They have stressed that the goal of capitalism is to destroy and replace historically older modes and relations of production. Under the influence of L. Althusser’s and E. Balibar’s theoretical analysis, they rejected the thesis that international market relations have been the mechanism for exploitation and highlighted that the mode of production is the crucial concept to analyze and explain underdevelopment.³ The key feature of this approach has been the combination of thesis on capitalism’s transformative dynamic in combination with other forms of production in specific societies, especially the underdeveloped ones. It has been stressed that capitalism requires those subsidiary forms of production, which lower the costs of reproducing the work force in the capitalist sector. It amounts to a transfer of value to capitalism as a dominant form of production. According to economic anthropology approach, what A. G. Frank saw as a transfer between regions, has been a transfer between forms of production. If capitalism does not develop fast enough, it is because historically earlier social and economic structures are to blame. Capitalism could develop fast only in places where it has been protected during its early stages by

² Frank 1987: 104.

³ Larrain 1989: 180-181.

¹ Cardoso 1977: 15-16.

feudalism.⁴ It means that in non-Western states the landlords played a different role, not conducive to the birth of capitalism. Rey called the contemporary version of this feudal form of production “neo-colonial.” The key difference between them is that the neo-colonial formation is dependent on foreign capital and the most important processes of this capital’s reproduction are controlled by the financial capital of the metropolis or (to a growing degree) by international financial capital. The essence of Rey’s analysis has been based on an assumption that no differences exist in the way capitalism works and the various positions of different underdeveloped countries can be traced back to the characteristics of their traditional forms of production and their specific patterns of capitalist transformation.

It seems that, while Rey correctly highlighted the characteristics of traditional forms of production, he missed the dependent nature of capitalism itself. Jorge Larrain reinforces this criticism by rejecting the thesis of a necessary connection between underdevelopment and the existence of traditional forms of production. After all, there are states in Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay), which remain underdeveloped despite the fact that it is difficult to find traditional forms of production there. However, if underdevelopment is being connected with the resistance of traditional forms of production, then underdevelopment in fully capitalist states has been overlooked.⁵

Criticism on dependency theories has also come from Marxist side, despite the fact that the roots of the theory’s different versions are predominantly Marxist. For some Marxists dependency theories are conceptually imprecise, theoretically underdeveloped and not rooted in any rigorously understood deductive theory (1). Dependency theories are being criticized as ideological concepts replicating the errors of modernization theory. Colin Leys highlighted that the presence of such notions as: developed/underdeveloped, core/periphery, dominating/dependent in dependency theory is not accidental. They

⁴ Rey 1978:11.

⁵ Larrain 1989: 186.

are similar to notions used by the liberal development theory: traditional/modern, rich/poor, advanced/backward. From this viewpoint, dependency theories constitute a critic of modernization theory but do not avoid its problems (2).⁶ Another objection to dependency theory is described by Leys as “economism.” It amounts to treatment of social classes, state, politics and ideology as exclusive derivatives of economic forces. For example, classes are being treated as categories emerging from structural evolution of undeveloped or dependent development. Thus the landlords are technologically backward; domestic bourgeoisie is weak and comprador; wage labor is small and highly diverse (3). Moreover, critical Marxists believe that dependency theories incorrectly assume that imperialism is a monolithic structure. Such an approach limits the options available to Latin American societies (4). Dependency theories are also being criticized for their stagnant character and under-appreciation of perspectives for capitalist development of the peripheries. Contrary to their expectations, empirical data point towards progress in industrialization and transformation of agriculture in the “Third World.” Dependency theories explain the exploitation and underdevelopment of the “Third World” through drain of surpluses (capital gains in the form of profits and dividends significantly higher than the inflow of foreign investment) and unequal exchange. However, for such a drain to lead towards underdevelopment, it would have to be an “absolute drain” and not only an unequal “transaction” which in fact improves the position of both participants (5). Other Marxists stress that the thesis on “exploitation” of poor countries by the rich ones masks the real exploitation of workers or diminishes its significance (6). Finally, Marxists believe that dependency theories play a negative ideological role in relation to Marxism (7).

In the context of this criticism it is worth remembering that dependency theories are theorizations in order to research capitalism in the peripheries. Their goal is not to replace Marxist analysis of class relations of production and produ-

⁶ Leys 1977: 95.

ctive forces, but only its contextualization. Such contextualization is necessary when one accepts the distinction between the core and periphery. Analyses of dependency are then based on the core-periphery concept, which is based on the assumption that peripheral capitalist economies are not identical with the economies of the capitalist core but remain in a relation of subordination to them.

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All chapters deal with evolving dependency relations (both old and new approaches). The chapters by Marcin Fatalski and Larry Ray deal with issues related to “old” dependency. Contributions of Kacper Van Wallendael, Daniela Irrera and Michael Spång explore what can be described as examples of “new” dependency.

Marcin Fatalski (*Paradoxes of a modernization theory in the US policy: petrifying the authoritarianism and building client states in the third world during the Cold War*) explores the issue of foreign investment in economic development. Referring to A. G. Frank’s analysis of relations between the United States and Latin American states in the years 1956-1961, the author proves that the inflow of capital from Latin America to the USA was 47% higher than the flow of American capital in the opposite direction. For the entire underdeveloped world this deficit amounted to 63%. **Larry Ray** (*Colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalism – reconfigurations of global/local inequalities*) contrasts world system theories with globalization theories. The author shows how postcolonial dominance incorporated the peripheries into a new division of labor. The structure of this new division of labor proved to be more fluid than expected on the grounds of dependency and world system theories. At the same time, neoliberal globalization questions the hegemony of United States and may lead to the birth

of a post-sovereign global order. **Kacper Van Wallendael** (*Legal transplants: profitable borrowing or harmful dependency?*) shows the essence of “new” dependency through analysis of borrowing and imitation of European Union law in the case of Croatia, while **Daniela Irrera** (*NGOs and EU humanitarian aid policy: continuity or change?*) does the same using the example of NGOs’ participation in the European Union’s humanitarian aid policy. **Mikael Spång** (*Hegel and Haiti: Three Interpretations*), referring to Susan Buck-Morss’s work, proves that Hegel created his master-slave dialectic in connection with the Haitian revolution. Buck-Morss recognizes the political action of slaves as the most important process aimed at abolition of colonial slavery. Mikael Spång argues in his chapter that Hegel did not stress that slaves rebelled against their masters. Thus he proposes to interpret Hegel’s attitude to slave revolt in other categories than political action, namely the meaning of work for the slaves and “unhappy consciousness.”

Dependency theories exerted the greatest influence on understanding of the world in the 1970s and 1980s. When development opportunities offered by capitalism are being highlighted, its particular form (present in the peripheries) is often omitted. At the same time, the “Third World” did not disappear and dependency theories (to a degree in which they constitute the application of K. Marx’s materialistic concept of history to analyze peripheral capitalist states) are not dead. Interdependence does not eliminate hegemony and dependency from international relations because power in global trade and financial markets is distributed very unevenly.⁷ That is the reason why dependency theories are still a strong tool for analysis of a world in which global inequalities are on the rise.

⁷ Burchil et al. 2005: 66.

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Andrzej Gałganek is Professor of Political Science, Faculty of Political Science and Journalism, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland. His academic interests areas are: theory and history of international relations, genealogy of internationality and categories of violence in international system.

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