Beyond Juridical Abstraction: Poverty in a World Of Plenty

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Abstract

Social justice conjures up the concepts of fairness, equity and parity in human relations. While not advocating anthropological sense of equity in a world of unequal distribution of goods, why does poverty still persist? What causes poverty? What has been done to eliminate poverty? What moral or juridical force does *social justice* have that would enable individuals, and governments eliminate poverty with finality? There are conceptual ambiguities, differences as to how data have been interpreted, and assumptions made in measurement about poverty (Ravillion, 2003a). There are concerns about methods in some studies and lack of clarity about how poverty is aggregated in cross-country data sets for defining the level of poverty or other covariates (Ravillion, 2003b).

This paper argues that since poverty is a human condition characterized by pervasive and persistent deprivation, the claims of social justice must not be an abstraction merely celebrated, but a call to action to eliminate poverty. Although there are many critical elements that cause poverty: natural cause, man-made cause; this paper will focus on governance and globalization to expose the structural and institutional settings that neutralize efforts to create equity and parity.

Introduction

Whatever frameworks are posited in our attempts to understand and define poverty, we run into perspectives that range from the objective to the subjective, they differ from place to place, and over a period of time within the same space share one characteristic, albeit its contents remain the same. That characteristic is *deprivation*. People are, feel or are regarded by others to be poor because they are deprived of or lack something which either enables them to survive and live a reasonable decent life—basic existence; endows them with some sense of self-esteem relative to others; or enables them to fulfill potentials as human beings, (Ahmed Mohiddin in United Nations, 2004, 19). It could be stretched to embrace the wider world.

However, in its basic manifestations, poverty can be reduced and ultimately eliminated. In its relative manifestations poverty will always be a nagging aspect of the human predicament. Its elimination is very much like a mirage—always seen but never subdued, stealthily moving as it is approached.

The world has deep persistence of poverty amid plenty. Of the world's estimated 6 illion humans, 2.8 billion—almost half—live on less than $2 a day, and 1.2 billion—a ifth, live on less than $1 a day. A greater percentage of this number live in developing countries here as many as 50 percent of children are malnourished (World Bank, 2000/2001). This destitution persists even though human conditions have improved more in the past century than in the rest of history—global wealth, global connections, and technological capabilities have never been greater. But the distribution of these global gains is strikingly unequal In spite of all these, some countries are not only, not growing; they are growing poorer, relatively and sometimes absolutely (Landes, 1999). This awareness has given rise to the discussion of absolute and relative poverty in the world. While we do not intend to make distinctions between absolute and relative poverty, we would borrow the analysis of Brandt Commission which conceptualized absolute poverty in terms of *unmet basic needs* and subsistence in circumstances of total deprivation, permanent insecurity, silence and despair with few or no avenues of escape. By contrast, relative poverty refers to deprivations experienced in comparative terms on the basis of societal comparisons and expectations of justice. On this basis, the Brandt Commission noted that unfair distribution of income in relatively rich countries gave rise to 'pockets of poverty' that were of concern, even though individuals inhabiting these pockets did not share the total deprivation that typically characterized the lives of the absolutely poor. Studies on poverty alleviation continue to make distinctions between absolute and relative poor through an inability "to cover basic needs" (Kokaz, 2007). For example, the United Nations Millennium Project focuses on absolute poverty defined as "poverty that kills, depriving individuals of the means to stay alive" through an inability "to cover basic needs", whereas the International Labor Organization, for example, strives to eliminate relative poverty and the social exclusions associated with it (Sachs, 2005; UN Millennium Project, 2005, ILO, 2005).

Poverty is an outcome not only of economic processes—but also it is an outcome of interacting economic, social and political forces. One of the best available outcome indicators for identifying unmet basic needs is the summary measure of deprivation compiled by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) called the human poverty index (HPI). Unlike its counterpart in the human development index (HDI) which measures the average achievements of countries in terms of whether their inhabitants are able to attain a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. HPI measures shortfalls from these three basic dimensions of human development (UNDP, 2004).

The UNDP calculates two separate HPI indexes (HPI-1 and HPI-2) to portray deprivation in poor and rich countries respectively. In its depiction of human deprivation in poor countries, HPI-1 combines the probability at birth of not surviving to age forty, adult illiteracy rates, access to improved water, and percentages of underweight children. All of these indicators have a direct bearing on the survival chances of persons. In measuring deprivation in rich countries, HPI-2 uses more demanding numerical targets for each category and also incorporates measures of social exclusion. With the focus on social exclusion and disadvantage the measure captures poverty and, therefore, could relate to principles of social justice that regulate cooperation within countries. As the concept of social justice permeates our discussion of poverty, how has it been understood over the ages? In other words, what is the conceptual foundation of social justice to enable us understand how governance and globalization impact poverty in our world using social justice as gauge?

Conceptual Framework

When we talk of or write about 'social justice' what exactly do we mean? Contemporary political philosophers regarded social justice as an aspect of 'distributive justice', and indeed both concepts have been used interchangeably (Rawls, 1971). Distributive justice is an idea with a deep pedigree. It is an element in the division of justice found among writings of classical philosophers, especially in Aristotle's writings which were passed down to the Christian or scholastic tradition through Thomas Aquinas and others (Miller, 2001). In this tradition, distributive justice meant the fair distribution of benefits among the members of various associations. Aristotle probably had in mind not only the distribution of public funds to office holders and citizens in need, but also the distribution of benefits within clubs and other such private societies. Aquinas refers to the distribution of honors and wealth within a political community, but also to appointments to professorships. As these are among the issues that we expect a theory of social justice to address, it seems natural to regard the concept as an expanded version of distributive justice as understood by these earlier philosophers. To grasp what was new and distinctive about social justice we need to go back and analyze what it meant to early propagators of the concept, especially in what context and with what background assumptions (Miller, 2003).

Earlier advocates of social justice wrote when the prevailing set of economic and social institutions was coming increasingly under ethical scrutiny and political challenge. The concept was expanded during the late-19th century treatises of political economy and social ethics, in which issues such as the justification of different forms of private property or the merits of alternative forms of economic organization were being debated. British authors such as John Stewart Mill, Leslie Stephen, and Henry Sidgwick referred from time to time to social justice, although without marking it off sharply from distributive justice (Miller, 2001). In continental Europe, Catholics had begun to develop notions of social justice by the end of the century.

However, it took a few decades later before the idea of social justice was officially endorsed in papal encyclicals (Calvez and Perrin, 1961). The subordination of human well-being to economic principles, whether of left or right, was widely recognized in the Catholic Church as resulting from distorted perception of reality. It was resistance to this economic determinism which prompted Pope Leo XIII to issue the encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 (Catholic Bishops Conference, 1996). This encyclical did not explicitly propose the notion of social justice but provided a cautionary warning about the human under economic forces. Pope Pius XI finally officially introduced this concept into Roman Catholic social doctrine with *Quadragesimo Anno* (May 15, 1931) and *Divini Redemptoris* (March 19, 1937), (Solari and Corrado, 2009).

Among many theories developed by classical philosophers, Aristotle's principles of justice- as elucidated in the fifth section of Nicomachean Ethics, remain the cornerstone of all definitions of the notion of social justice. Aristotle distinguished between a general justice (a comprehensive virtue) and three specific forms: distributive, corrective, and reciprocity-based. Distributive justice concerned honors and goods to be divided among the participants in some form of collective action in proportion to their merit. Corrective justice was directed to offset inequalities in exchange (or due to fraud and violence), and it was based on harmonic proportionality. Reciprocity-based justice applies to community exchanges and was based on reciprocal proportionality (relative to status) to keep and strengthen social ties (Solari and Corrado, 2009).

The scholastic tradition, in particular Thomas Aquinas, re-elaborated these principles. Aquina's theory of knowledge and action was based on the idea of practical reasonableness that separated the role of reason from that of will (Westberg, 1994). He exalted the role of reason in human action and, in particular, in the ability to understand what is good. In Aquinas, *jus* is the just thing in itself and concerns acts or states of affairs as subjects of a relationship. Justice is relational and inter-subjective; it concerns any relation necessary to avoid a wrong. Justice entails both rights and duties in a relationship (Finnis, 1980)) and equality is intended in the sense of right proportion. Consequently, legal justice (corresponding to Aristotle's general justice) is the power and liberty to identify the common good and to correctly establish rights and obligations in inter-subjective relationships complemented by the practice of moral necessity. Justice was applied to man and his possessions through the notion of decency, suitability, or appropriateness (Godwin, 1989). In Aquinas, the specific forms of justice fall into two types: distributive justice and communicative justice.

Social justice requires the notion of a society made up of interdependent parts, with an institutional structure that affects the prospects of each individual member, and that is capable of deliberate reform by the agency such as the state in the name of fairness. Heinrich Pesch (1905) connected social justice to the concrete institutional order. Metaphorically he understood social justice as meaning social order, the "objectively well ordered condition of social body, the correspondence of actual social conditions to the juridical state of affairs." He distinguishes legal justice from social justice. Social justice has as its object "the claim to the well-being of society." Therefore, social justice according to Pesch includes,both the claims of society on those in authority, as well as on each of its members, on its citizens, and on the various occupations and stations in life, for promoting and preserving the public welfare; and it includes also the right of every citizen and of the various classes, occupations, and levels of society to share in the enjoyment of the social good. It is the function of social justice to govern both kinds of claims; and thus we may distinguish between contributive and distributive social justice. It takes both of these aspects together to make up the integral notion of social justice. Social justice therefore requires the fulfillment of all obligations as well as the realization of all claims which have the well-being of society as their object.

Three assumptions could be made here: first, we assume that a bounded society exists with a determinate membership which forms a universe of distribution whose present fairness or unfairness different theories of justice attempt to demonstrate. Second, that the principles we advance must apply to an identifiable set of institutions whose impact on the life chances of different individuals can also be traced. Third, flowing from the second, that there is some agency capable of changing the institutional structure in more or less the way our favored theory demands. These assumptions define the circumstances of social justice: if people do not inhabit bounded societies, or if their shares of goods do not depend in ways we can understand on a determinate set of social institutions, or if there is no agency capable of regulating that basic structure, then we no longer live in a world in which the idea of social justice has any relevance. We would only be dealing with juridical abstractions that only seem to satisfy our intellectual curiosity.

Justice is about assigning benefits whose values are established by their worth to the relevant population taken as a whole, and it must be devoid of personal preferences. It follows that the idea of social justice makes sense only if we assume there is a broad consensus about the social value of a range of goods, services, and opportunities, some disagreement in private valuations, notwithstanding.

There is the assumption by some analysts that social justice should be applied specifically to and within self-contained political community. Such assumption should be challenged because people's shares of resources and their life prospects depend to some extent not only on the workings of domestic institutions within states, but also on the transnational economic and political forces. It must include global capital markets that are not subject to controls by the state at national level. From a normative perspective, there is no reason why principles of social justice should be applied within national societies rather than across humanity as a whole. We should be thinking more of global justice rather than social justice which tended to be parochially or geopolitically conceived.

Justice is a social virtue—it tells us how to order our relationships, what we must do for one another. Fundamentally, it requires us to treat people as equals. More recently social justice is normally understood to be, a question of equal opportunities. It is about the treatment of inequalities of all kinds (Barry, 2006). The concept of social justice may be perfectly sound in the abstract but at the same time social and political forces may be at work in contemporary governance that deprive it of practical relevance, thus consigning it to the realms of abstraction (Miller, 2003, 245). How do we apply this concept as articulated above to the problem of poverty? It is clear from the conceptual framework that the following have to be in place for social justice to be operative and have any meaning: community of individuals, institutions of administration or governance of a state, values to be distributed and consensus. The governance of a state impacts the outcome of social justice. Country-specific examples of poverty profile could enlighten our understanding about governance vis-à-vis poverty alleviation.

Country-specific poverty profile

Nigeria

Nigeria has a complex social and political history that has, for the most part, impacted adversely on the population and has worsened income distribution. The management of oil windfalls has dominated the progress and decline of Nigeria's economy over the past two decades. What is more, there are significant different trends in rural and urban areas as it relates to poverty: the number of the poor in rural areas sharply fell from 26.3 million to 22.8 million, while urban poverty rose from 9.7 million to 11.9 million. Extreme poverty increased nationally from 10 million to 14 million, with a tripling of headcount in urban areas. Because of the worsened income distribution national poverty increased. Furthermore, growth was not equally shared by different parts of the country. Growth was faster in southern and middle agro-climatic zones, with slower growth in northern states. This distributional imbalance in growth resulted in high number of the poor in the northern states (World Bank, 2009).

Apart from regional characteristics, poverty is strongly influenced by education, age and nature of employment. 79 percent of extreme poor and 95 percent of rural poor have only primary schooling or less. Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) indicates that poor children increasingly do not attend school as they consider quality of education weak and consider education increasing employment prospects minimal. Of all households, polygamous households experience the greatest depth of poverty, with majority of them in the northern and middle zones. Majority of the poor in Nigeria are concentrated in poor communities rather than scattered (World Bank, 2009).

The stark anachronism in the Nigerian situation is that in the decades of 1980s, Nigeria was considered to be approximating a middle income country because of the exceptionally high oil prices which brought a huge inflow of revenues that drove the per capita income from $1,300 in 1972 to $2,900 in 1980. When oil revenues collapsed and real per capita income, expenditures, and consumption dropped precipitously, public expenditures on capital intensive projects continued but were financed by external borrowing, thus mortgaging both capital and human developments. Nigerians did not benefit from the dramatic changes in average per capita incomes over this period.

With slow and negative growth in economy, especially in agriculture, and adverse relative price changes encouraged imports and stifled non-oil production, all of which resulted in distorted policies and increasing poverty. Thus, the mismanagement of oil resources accentuated the terms of trade disparities between the urban and rural sectors, increased poverty in the rural areas because of choked-off agricultural production, and also increased income disparities in urban areas, where those who could capture the benefits of distorted policies fared better than others. What this brief poverty profile in Nigeria shows is that government continues to play central role in attempting to improve the condition of the poor (World Bank, 2009). Governance dictates to this day how poverty is viewed and what strategy is best suited for its alleviation.

A successful poverty alleviation strategy in Nigeria would require a strong and focused emphasis on regional aspects of economic growth, increased access to social services and adequate infrastructure. Nigeria faces three inter-related challenges:It has to establish a viable and stable macro-economic framework and to streamline the incentive regime.It needs to establish an enabling environment in the civil society that encourages accountability and transparency. In other words, governance must be seen to be legitimate and effective since the last election was marred by accusations of rigging and impropriety. Politicians are held with the greatest contempt.

It needs to adapt sectoral policies and readjust priorities in public expenditures to meet needs identified in the participatory poverty assessment and promote efficient economic growth, increase productivity and target the poor(World Bank, 2009).

Jordan

Poverty and inequality increased in Jordan as a result of macroeconomic shock in the decade of 1990s. However, there was evident reduction of income poverty despite lagging per capita gross national product. The reason for this was a decline in inequality due to the phase out of regressive food subsidies coupled with expansion of the government safety net (World Bank, 1999q). To sustain these gains, it is important to improve growth—to make social spending more affordable and to directly expand opportunities for poor people.Government assistance is impressive—targeted cash transfers favoring female and elderly heads of households and the disabled, microcredit and health insurance benefits. But focusing on the permanently poor without concrete steps to alleviating poverty, vulnerability of the poor is exacerbated. The ensuing vulnerability can be addressed by community-based public works programs offering low-wage jobs and by unemployment insurance and assistance. Its national aid fund could identify other means of assistance by soliciting ideas from beneficiaries. However, service delivery survey done in 1998 reflects dissatisfaction among beneficiaries, who complain of procedural difficulties and obstacles, benefits canceled without verification, and inadequate assistance. Researchers have concluded that for poverty in Jordan to be alleviated, there has to be a continued emphasis on the provision of basic public education. With education, the poor in Jordan would be empowered (World Bank, 2000/2001).

Russian Federation

Consequent upon the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia has had a dramatic rise in both poverty and inequality and a worsening of adult mortality. With the loss of their old job-related forms of security, Russian people experienced large increase in insecurity—through microeconomic volatility and rise in violence—and often acute psychological stress from the rise in poverty. While the electoral process has been important in empowering the citizenry, this has been offset by the profound feelings of disempowerment stemming from the new sources of insecurity and by the problems of elite capture of the state. As the new oligarchs have also captured privatized assets and resource rents, the rise in inequality is the product not of the market-oriented reforms and the political and institutional structures during the transition process.

What actions and strategies should be employed to alleviate poverty in Russia? Fundamental to improving the overall environment is reducing the elite's capture of the state at the national level, including through further market reforms to de-concentrate economic power. Today's structural inequality, closely linked to the political structure, runs the risk of becoming deeply embedded. Dealing with associated issues of governance is a prerequisite to reduced microeconomic volatility and a business environment that fosters the investment needed to counter the extraordinary collapse in formal sector jobs. It is also a prerequisite to pro-poor budget allocations, backed by decentralization and participatory engagement to foster greater accountability and responsiveness in service provision that would benefit the poor. A system of governance is a key to solving the incidence of the rising poverty in Russia (World Bank, 2000/2001).

India

India suffers deprivations in education and health—especially in the North, where caste, class, and gender inequities are particularly strong. Studies done in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh affirm that poor women and men emphasized their extreme vulnerability and the ineffectiveness of state institutions, from schools to police. In the past, poverty alleviation in India lagged behind that of East Asia because of slower growth and significantly less progress in promoting mass education and basic health.

Most recently, however, growth has accelerated and poverty has fallen, although the actual impact of growth on poverty alleviation remains controversial because of the problems of measurement. Data from India's National Sample Surveys (NSS) and National Accounts (NAS) on issue of consumption to help determine the level of poverty and other problems are at variance. Thus, without examining why the differences between the data seem to have widened, adjusting the NSS mean upward to equal the NAS mean would arguably be a useful procedure, but difficulties remain. It is plausible that the NSS-based poverty numbers are underestimating the rate of poverty reduction in India (World Bank, 2000/2001).

The issues involved are important not only because of the Indian poverty figures' weight in global poverty trends, but also because similar problems are likely to arise elsewhere. India has a stronger statistical tradition than most poor countries. Therefore, it is not simply, a matter of getting accurate estimates on poverty, but such surveys are a key resource for identifying the characteristics of poor people and thus are a vital input for focusing policy. Additionally, there are also marked differences within India—with the South, particularly the state of Kerala, having sharply better education and health it has life expectancies greater than those of Washington, DC despite vastly lower income levels. The effectiveness of public action in Kerala has been attributed to its strong tradition of political and social mobilizations (World Bank, 2000/2001).

What are the priorities for action in India on poverty alleviation? There certainly would have to be faster growth, which in turn would demand liberalization, especially in agriculture and better provision of infrastructure, which are lacking in India. In areas with deep deprivation in health and education, the development of social infrastructure is critical. Expanding education and health services will require that state governments reverse the deterioration in their fiscal positions. Higher spending would have to be matched with better service provision. This would require deep improvement in governance, often weakest in India's poorest regions.

Brazil

Brazil's social indicators appear impressive. Between 1992 and 1997 net enrollment in primary school increased from 88.2 percent 97.1 percent. Infant mortality fell from 62 percent per 1,000 live births in the mid-1980s to 38 percent in the mid-1990s. Innovative action to get children into school includes the Bolsa Escola, which gives poor families grants if their children go to school.

Despite the advances noted above, the inequalities in health and education remain great, with the poorest fifth of the population having three years of the education, and the top fifth more than nine years. The income-poor still leave school with skills inadequate for a middle-income country integrated with the global economy. Reducing income poverty in Brazil has proved difficult. In the unstable macroeconomic environment of the 1990s, poverty rose in Brazil. Those vulnerable to such economic instability and insecurity were the poor. Drought in the Northeast hit the poor devastatingly, especially the poor rural workers (World Bank, 2000/2001).

What are the priorities of action in Brazil on poverty reduction? A prudent macroeconomic management is critical in order to increase income opportunities for poor people. Structural inequalities must be tackled effectively to maintain any gains that the poor would get. This means that a large land reform which has been underway should be sustained especially in the Northeast region. Brazil has to undertake a pattern of growth that makes efficient use of labor and invest in the human capital of the poor. Both elements are essential because they provide the poor with opportunities to use their most abundant asset—labor and it improves their immediate well-being and increases their capacity to take advantage of the new possibilities.

From the country specific examples above it is clear that, governance, indeed good governance is the key to poverty alleviation in any community or country. Governance puts emphasis on participation, equity and accountability. In a word, where the population lives under abject poverty amidst plenty of wealth and resources, the issue of equity should occupy the central focus in the allocation of values or goods in any country.

Governance

In a world where political power is unequally distributed and often mimics the distribution of economic power, the nature of governance in any state plays a central role in the way problems of poverty is handled. Poor people do not frequently receive the benefits of public investment in education and health. They all too often are the victims of corruption and arbitrariness. Despite the intentions of the United Nations and its members states, over the last few decades, reducing and or eliminating poverty has remained an elusive goal. In 2000, at the United Nations Millennium Summit in New York, member states renewed their commitment to the gradual reduction of poverty through the mechanism of the Millennium Declaration, its Millennium Development Goals and the Millennium Road Map (World Bank, 2000/2001).

These documents represent 'commitments, targets and strategies' to bring development to the poorest of the poor, to the most vulnerable of society and to the farthest reaches of the member states. The realization of such bold commitments would require effective institutions, systems and structures of governance. Regardless of where poverty exists, its characteristics as defined by the poor are: lack of access to basic necessities of life (food, shelter and clothing, as well as key services such as education and health), feeling of powerlessness, helplessness, insecurity and vulnerability, deprivation of basic human rights and self-respect, physical isolation and social exclusion, erosion and loss of cultural values/identity/traditions, and erosion of welfare systems and "safety nets". Governance should be practiced in a way that the poor have a voice in deciding what it is that constitutes their poverty and how, it can be addressed. The world is witnessing concerns about poverty and its reduction. Governments have committed themselves to eradicate poverty through global United Nations conferences, including the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, and at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The launching in 1997 of the first United Nations Decade for the Reduction of Poverty and the General Assembly resolutions 53/198 of 15 December 1998 reinforced these.

Through the Millennium Declaration of September 2000, the United Nations embarked on the reduction of poverty and this commitment has produced, *inter alia*, a set of global targets for development, including the reduction of extreme poverty by one half by the year 2015. Tackling the problems of poverty constitutes an ambitious agenda enshrined in the commitment by world leaders. Governments of developing countries are expected to take proactive stance, preparing poverty profiles, developing policy frameworks, and implementing action plans and strategies for poverty alleviation. However, progress, so far, towards the goal of poverty reduction has been mixed. Some countries are on track for some goals, but few of the goals are likely to be reached at the current rate of global progress.

It is important to note that the wealthy, and even in some countries, the small middle class, benefit from many development strategies, such as inheritance laws, education services, health facilities and skills, infrastructure projects, and favorable, even regressive tax policies. These policy instruments, laws, services and resources are less easily accessed and utilized by the poor. Even where laws and policies specifically designed to attack poverty are on the books, there seems to be little incentive to enforce these poverty-reduction-focused strategies. It would take a resolute good governance to sort out and deal with the incidence of poverty. Kofi Anan (1997) puts it eloquently,

> "Good governance and sustainable development are indivisible. That is the lesson of all our effort and experiences, from Africa to Asia to Latin America. Without good governance—without the rule of law, predictable administration, legitimate power, and responsive regulation—no amount of funding, no amount of charity will set us on the path to prosperity….Good governance will give every citizen, young or old, man or woman, a real and lasting stake in the future of his or her societies- politically, economically and socially. With that stake in their minds and hearts, there are no limits to what the peoples of your countries can achieve".

If good governance could provide the enabling environment for poverty to be reduced and ultimately eliminated, could we say the same for the wave of globalization? We posit that globalization as advanced does not appear to help but rather hurts countries and their poor inhabitants.

Globalization

The concept of globalization, though popularly used today, remains poorly defined. Although loosely employed, it connotes the processes of social change that are affecting social relations between peoples of all nations of the world. The nature of these processes and their effects are widely debated and contested in the social sciences (Midgley, 2007, Stiglitz, 2002, Wolf, 2004). Different interpretations of the nature of global change reflect different disciplinary social science perspectives. While economists view globalization as the creation of a world economic market, sociologists place more emphasis on the role of international social relations, communications and population movements in fostering space-time compression, post-modernity and cultural diffusion. In turn, political scientists stress the way power relations operate internationally to foster new systems of global regulation and governance (Midgley, 2007).

The different disciplinary perspectives have different normative implications that not only evaluate globalization differently but inspire different policy perspectives on how the process of globalization might and should be molded. These normative dimensions are of interest to scholars in the fields of social policy as they articulate and evaluate issues of social justice. Controlling the processes of globalization does not involve the domestication of some abstract construct but will require that the myriad actions of individuals, organizations, corporations and governments that directly affect human well-being at the international level be shaped through purposeful policy intervention. The point has obvious relevance for any analysis of the relationship between globalization and social justice.

Some analysts and scholars argue that contemporary forms of international exchanges are, in reality, imperialistic. They have emphasized that links between globalization, capitalism and the exercise of global power is reminiscent and reflective of the age-old imperial practices. The very use of the term is designed to obscure this fact. Since imperialism is hardly acceptable in the modern world, globalization serves as a convenient cover for the exercise of economic and political power by the United States and its allies. By suggesting that the current globalization processes are inevitable, the term legitimizes continued imperial subjugation of the world's peoples. Opponents cite an example attributed to the policy formulation in 1992 when a Defense Department document authored by Paul Wolfowitz that urged the government of the United States to adopt a new strategy of "benevolent domination" by which it would exercise economic, diplomatic and military power to protect American interests and diffuse American values (Dorian, 2004).

Subsequently this view was vigorously promoted by a variety of neoconservative groups and think tanks such as the Project for a New American Century which called on the government to emulate the imperial achievements of the Romans and the British. These imperial powers brought peace and prosperity through the benevolent exercise of power and the diffusion of values. As is well known, these ideas were used in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and have been restated again and again by former President George W. Bush who frequently declared the intention of his administration to spread American liberal democracy and free market capitalism throughout the world. The opponents of globalization urge that the term be abandoned and be recognized for what it actually is (Chomsky, 1994, 1998; Harvey 1995, 2003; Luttwack, 1999; Strange 1986; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001).

The impact of globalization could create serious pockets of poverty in a country with weak or bad system of governance. It poses fears and threats as well as opportunities and possibilities. It has winners and takers. With the expansion of trade and foreign investment, developing countries have seen the gaps among themselves widen. Meanwhile, in many industrialized countries, unemployment has soared to levels not seen since 1930s, and income inequalities to levels not recorded since the last century. A rising tide of wealth is supposed to lift all, but that has not been the case. Those who lack the capacities are unable to respond and consequently suffer. Because so many countries especially in the Third World are operating from a state of unequal economic and political development, vis-à-vis many countries of the world, the impetus of globalization would do more harm than good (Osia, 2004).

For example, a few negotiating issues at the World Trade Organization (WTO) held in Cancun in 2003 involving a number of developing countries was illustrative of the fallacy of globalization. The outcome of the WTO ministerial conference in Cancun more than recent research which proclaims the importance of globalization, was indeed instructive. Both developed and developing countries went head-to-head to debate issues of concern to them. It showed not only the weakness of many developing countries but it brought into sharp relief the failure of or the need for the redefinition and reinterpretation of globalization. What WTO Cancun demonstrated was the stark reality of want and deprivation in many countries which globalization was not actually addressing Osia, 2004).

At the WTO in Cancun, developing countries refused to accept any limited moves on subsidy cuts, market access, and the elimination of export subsidies by Northern countries. The developed countries would not agree to commitments in the face of the developing countries' reluctance to make meaningful commitments to open their markets. There were some subsidiary issues in Cancun. A number of developing countries wanted lower tariff reductions on key products such as sugar to limit the erosion of their preferences. Notably the countries of Benin, Mali, Chad and Burkina Faso proposed to eliminate cotton subsidies worldwide. The US strongly resisted, arguing that these countries focus on diversifying their economies away from cotton production towards producing textiles, which could then be granted preferential treatment in the case of market access to the US through US Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

At Cancun, competing groups were formed and the demands of each group created an impasse. The African Union (AU), the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and least developed countries (LDCs) formed a new entity in agricultural negotiations. They proposed a market access formula that would target high tariffs, tariff peaks and tariff escalation and called for self-designated special products for developing countries as well as special safeguards mechanism (Osia, 2004). Trade is the most distinguishing feature of globalization. It has to be liberalized for globalization to work. Trade has brought prosperity to many developed countries. Unfortunately, globalization has tended to aggravate the diminution of external trade of many countries.

Prior to WTO Cancun, considerable amount of research backed the dubious claims of globalization on welfare impact. Researchers on both sides of the debate have been quick to draw conclusions about the impacts of globalization from their favorite poverty numbers. Some have argued that economic globalization blocks any move in the direction of greater equality. Resource distribution is a function of global market forces that national governments are powerless to challenge; thus even modest moves toward equality are now off the political agenda. There is observed drift toward increased income inequality in most liberal democracies. This drift seemed to be muted in the countries of Continental Europe than in the countries where labor market is regulated as in the United Kingdom. Observers argue that countries of Continental Europe sooner or later would be forced to follow the Anglo-American example if they are to remain internationally competitive (Atkinson, 1995).

While the cause of the drift to inequality remain controversial, there is sizable evidence that globalization with its emphasis on capital mobility, together with the increasing volume of international trade, causes the wages of unskilled in the developed countries to be undercut by cheap labor in the developing countries (Wood, 1994). The practice of outsourcing is not a transfer of technology for development of less developed areas, but rather a transfer of expensive labor for a cheap labor in order to reap huge profits.

A number of countries especially in the Third World are still at an unequal level of economic and political development vis-à-vis the industrialized countries which seem to support globalization. The prescription of globalization as indispensable for the growth and development of these countries should be received with skepticism because most countries in the Third World are not yet where globalization could make positive contribution. The process of change—political, economic, and in the international environment—affecting most of developing countries, produce tensions of extraordinary magnitude most of which fall upon the state to defuse. More importantly, some of these countries are typically and structurally weak to handle even the routine affairs of government, let alone the additional burdens resulting from massive change. Moreover, the central paradox of development is that the economic and political reforms which form part and parcel of this broader change brought about by the push for globalization have in the long run weakened some of the states even further (Wai, 1995).

These countries had hoped that, if indeed, the new international economic order came to fruition, such would benefit them tremendously. That order never materialized because the call for it was unheeded by the industrialized nations most of which were still mired in cold war struggles and competitions. Rather, relationship with industrialized nations was at the bilateral or multilateral level or in most instances through nongovernmental agencies, namely, multinational corporations. Aid to countries was weighed against political idiosyncrasies. As eloquently put by Dunstan Wai (1995):

> The measure with which African states were judged by the Western nations was how well they have liberalized economically and how far they introduced political liberalization. The need for African countries to demonstrate results is increased by indifference and crass skepticism of publics in the Western donor countries. Public image of Africa presented by and to the Western world are fueled by the media's attention to Africa's disasters or the depredations of corrupt leaders.

What is more Amy Chua (2003), echoes Dunstan Wai's assertion about the West's negative perception of developing countries and she wonders how people could argue for globalization to solve these countries' problems when the push for economic liberalization aggravates more than it solves their problems :

> In the West, Africa is often seen as a vast continent of incomprehensible tribalism, endemic corruption, and almost intrinsic misery and violence. Cast in this way, Africa is irredeemable, its problems unique and uniquely insoluble… Africa is plagued with the problem of market-dominant minorities. As a result, economic liberalization, free markets, and globalization are aggravating Africa's extreme ethnic concentration of wealth, provoking the same dangerous combination of frustration, envy, insecurity, and suppressed anger that can also be seen among the impoverished indigenous majorities of Indonesia, Russia, Guatemala, or Sri Lanka.

These economic and political transformations underlie a shift in the attitudes and priorities of Western aid donors. Whereas in the past, international assistance could be provided without reference to a country's performance, the current trend among both bilateral and multilateral donors is to insist on merit, measured in terms of real change in economic and political policies of the country. Thus, Third World countries particularly, find themselves wearing an unpleasant badge of *conditionality*. Such experience and attitudes will weaken rather than strengthen the international standing among comity of nations.

Moreover, developing countries' situations were exacerbated by what the Nobel Laureate in Economics, Amartya Sen (2002) in recent years calls "global omission" and "global commission," The former, implies an absence of an adequately 'strong, globally shared effort to combat the lack of educational facilities and health care' and the latter involves 'one-sided institutional arrangements such as the existing patent laws.' Continuing Amartya Sen emphasized that global commission causes intense misery as well as lasting deprivations because of the involvement of world powers in arms trade with these impoverished countries. Pointedly, he notes the culprits who in their quest to maintain lucrative arms trade keep the developing countries from improving their situations, thus giving rise to perpetual instability:

> …the permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations are together responsible for 81% of conventional arms exports. The share of the United States alone is close to 50% of the total sales in the world. And, furthermore, as much as 68% of the American arms exports go to developing countries….The world powers bear an awesome responsibility in the subversion of democracy in Africa. Global arms exports continue that evil tradition. The recent refusal of the United States to agree to a joint crackdown even on illicit sales of small arms (as proposed by Kofi Anan) illustrates the difficulties involved.

Selling and purchasing of arms only go to fuel the situations in these countries and make instability the rule rather that the exception. Globalization in a situation of perpetual instability fueled by arms trade is not feasible. Development of a country that is constantly in turmoil is not possible. Moreover, infrastructure continues to crumble in bits, thus, exacerbating the already weakened state. The poor in the final analysis suffer the most.

Infrastructural and Institutional Weaknesses

A key component of any development endeavor, including poverty alleviation, is good infrastructure. Research on many developing countries, point to the impact of infrastructure deficiencies in slowing economic growth, development and inhibiting foreign investments. In many of those countries much of the population lives more than a day's travel from an all-weather road. The deficiencies affect both the smooth administration of government and private business enterprises. For example, poor public telephone and postal services are constraints on efficient functioning of government and firms. In some countries firms try to overcome the difficulties by using messenger motorcycles or radio transmitters. Fewer than 20 percent of attempted telephone calls are actually completed; in many countries the figure for international calls is less than 10 percent (World Bank, 1989).

Furthermore, frequent breakdown of electricity supply render both government and business entities incapable of productive services to the citizenry. Some government agencies and private firms resort to purchasing private electric generators to run their computers and important institutions like the hospitals. Shortages of drinking water and problems in waste disposal are all too common. Some business enterprises resort to digging bore holes. Even individuals rely on their privately owned bore holes to obtain adequate water supply because the public water supply intermittently break down. Poorly maintained and managed infrastructure has added enormously to the cost of doing business in most developing countries. Poorly maintained roads, inefficient ports, unreliable utilities and the like—greatly increase the cost of doing business.

For some the situation is chronic. For others, improvement is hesitant and slow. In an increasingly information-driven world, competitiveness of countries will depend on their ability to access and exchange information globally. Informatics are dramatically improving decision-making processes, raising productivities, and transforming the map of comparative advantage. New technologies from personal computers and tele-facsimiles to digital networks—are revolutionizing the way the world does business. None of this equipment can be used if the basic telecommunication network is not in place. Many developing countries lack the efficiency and capability in the managerial, technical, and financial resources required to obtain or maintain modern telecommunication networks. Tackling the backlog of deferred maintenance and rehabilitation of infrastructures will extend well into the next decade or beyond (World Bank, 1989). As recently as 2010 telephoning some Third World countries from the United States becomes a drama in amazement due to the lack of functionality of telecommunication technologies. In the midst of all these deficiencies, the poor suffer the most. Globalization, in all intents and purposes, has remained a pipedream.

Compounding the problems of infrastructural and institutional weaknesses is the problem of corruption which perpetuates poverty. It is unquestionable that unless and until countries take serious actions to curb and eliminate corruption actions on poverty would have been unproductive. Pervasive and rampant corruption has distorted the economies, as scarce resources are diverted from essential social services to debt repayments accumulated by corrupt politicians and bureaucrats. Domestic and foreign investors are deterred because of uncertainties in the countries and the high cost of business. The prospects for development and poverty reduction are thus severely retarded. It is, however, the poor who suffer the most. Corruption denies the poor of their share of the national product, small as it might be.

Endemic corruption is very brutal to the very poor, who are denied the basic social services and have no resources to pay the bribes. It directs income away from them and robs society of resources that it could deploy to combat poverty. And when a country does launch a poverty program, corruption can siphon off many of the benefits. Much like inequality, but in a bolder form, corruption deprives the poor of an equitable share of society's resources and indirectly reduces the opportunities for poverty reduction by dampening economic growth. Any time public benefits are distributed in line with the ability to pay- one hallmark of corrupt government- the poor are bound to suffer because they have so little. Resources tend not to flow into social services for them because the bribery receipts are low. Instead, corruption thrives on big, capital-intensive projects, such as for large infrastructure and military hardware, where bribery income can be hefty and chances of detection slim (UNDP, 2000).

The condition of institutional and infrastructural weaknesses, epitomized by poor management, lack of sustained maintenance, render governments powerless politically and economically to compete in a global arena, these countries cannot engage other nations from a basis of political nor economic equality. There has not evolved an enabling environment for political nor economic development from which the poor could benefit nor be helped. The incidence and reality of poverty amidst wealth continues because ineffective governance and unchecked market forces instigated by globalization render the situation of the poor in many countries helpless.

Policy Framework and Action

The centrality of governance and policies associated with it for reducing poverty and the need for the monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction strategies must be reemphasized. It would seem that the reasons for the lack of attention to poverty reduction are many but they often include macro issues, such as, inadequate policy provisions, insufficient and inefficient public spending, crippling debt burdens, inadequate market access especially for developing countries, declining official development assistance, as well as ineffective governance institutions.

Since improvement in governance in some countries do not appear to keep pace with economic development and some other areas, governance becomes a central binding constraint to growth and development and therefore to poverty reduction. For example, despite billions of dollars in aid, many developing countries, especially in Africa fall further behind the rest of the world every year because corruption and bad governance are the single largest obstacles to African renaissance. The tyrants who repress, starve and impoverish their own nations are still coddled and protected by the governments and leaders of Africa (Associated Press, July 2005).

The system of governance in most poor countries are not conducive to poverty reduction: lack of citizen focus, inattention to service delivery, ignorance of people’s needs, lack of enforcement of existing laws, corruptive practices that limit access to resources to those who can pay bribes or otherwise link to key institutions, and lack of coordination of services for the poor who are likely to be plagued by multi-problems requiring complex solutions (United Nations, 2004). Many strategies have been employed. Some are economic and financial, others managerial and administrative, and still others are political.

The choice and implementation of public actions that are responsive to the needs of poor people depend on the interaction of political, social and other institutional processes. Active collaboration with various organs of government are important and changes in the mode of governance can make public administration more efficient and accountable to all citizens—and by strengthening the participation of poor people in political processes and local decision-making. Empowerment of the poor is crucial to success in poverty alleviation. Reducing vulnerability to economic shocks, natural disasters, ill health and personal violence is an intrinsic part of enhancing the situation of the poor and it encourages investment in human capital.

Countries need to have policies to reduce poverty, reflecting national priorities. On this score, it would be crucial that actions of developed countries and multilateral organizations be sought. Many forces affecting poor people are beyond their influence and control. Developing countries cannot on their own produce such things as international financial stability, major advances in health and advanced research, and international trading opportunities. Nations should build the assets of poor people by creating human, physical, natural, and financial assets that poor people own or can use. Such action would first, increase the focus of public spending on poor people. Second, ensure good quality service delivery through institutional action involving sound governance and third, ensure the participation of poor communities and monitoring them to assure accountability.

Many countries than ever before are working to build democratic governance and to involve civil society and community organizations as partners in the fight against poverty. The United Nations Millennium Summit reached a consensus which recognized that improving the quality of democratic institutions and processes, and managing the changing roles of the state and civil society in an increasingly globalized world, must underpin national efforts to reduce poverty, sustain the environment, and promote human development. Various approaches have been undertaken in the developing countries in particular to fight poverty. There ought to be a shift in some of the strategies from the bureaucratic and managerial levels to engage the people in the whole governance process. There is need to listen to the people, foster dialogues, and constructive poverty-sensitive partnerships in the creation and distribution of wealth. In effect, governance with all its repertoire of administration should be pro-people and have a core value of reducing, and indeed eliminating poverty as its driving goal.

There should be focus on innovative governance which allows attention to the quality of policies, the level of capacity, for example, human, financial, and material, to implement the policies, and the quality of managing the policies. Policies should be poverty-focused and respond to the perceptions and needs of the poor. Human, financial and material capacities should be targeted to the poorest and the most vulnerable. Management of economic and social programs should be relentlessly focused and refocused on reaching the poorest, the most remote and the most vulnerable. Mechanisms should be devised for measuring progress in poverty reduction including ways to involve the poor in evaluating impact, and ways to provide feedback to program managers who can then refocus organizational efforts to greater achievement. Governance should focus on community engagement to take government to the people, and engage them in the planning processes so they can influence better resource allocation to address their concerns.

The interrelatedness of challenges stemming from poverty calls for the articulation of principles capable of guiding analysis, decision-making and the development of indicators to measure progress towards poverty alleviation. The essential merit of a principle-based process is that it guides individuals and institutions away from a focus on isolated, short-term concerns to consider problems from a systemic and long-term perspective. Therefore, the principle of globalization has not stood the test of time, especially as it relates to developing countries. These countries are ambivalent about and reluctant to embrace globalization.

Conclusion

Efforts by some studies to link poverty eradication with international human rights norms are a positive step in aligning the work of governments with the principles of justice. Human rights norms in our common human heritage—encompassing the rights of the individual and of the family; the freedom to know and to believe; the equality of men and women; racial equality, and the right to work and to education, among others—embody the most significant moral accomplishments of the human race. The concept of social justice has little force unless it is tied to the norms of human rights, as endorsed by most governments of the world. This has to be systematically incorporated into domestic legislation.

To a considerable extent, the responsibility for poverty eradication rests with the individuals themselves. While poverty is the product of numerous factors—historic, economic, political and environmental—there is also a cultural dimension, which manifests itself in individual values and attitudes. Some of these, such as the subjugation of girls and women, the lack of value assigned to education or of individual’s right to progress- can exacerbate conditions of poverty.

Education is also a bulwark of poverty alleviation. While many programs have focused on increasing enrolment in primary and secondary education as shown in the Brazil and Jordanian examples, this is the first step- the long term goal must also be to create a society in which the production, diffusion and application of knowledge infuses all facets of human activity.

We are experiencing the birth pangs of a new millennium: new modes of thought, new standards and new legal and institutional arrangements are struggling to take hold. As our understanding of the problems of poverty and their possible solutions expands, an unprecedented global consensus and accompanying capacity for international cooperation will undoubtedly pave the way for an outcome far greater than we have been able to achieve. To generate the knowledge and commitment needed to overcome poverty, the full spectrum of human intellectual potential will need to be summoned for the task

Good governance facilitates the release of the people’s energies, skills, capital, enterprise, enthusiasm, and the entrepreneurship for creative and productive purposes- conducive to human development, and the elimination of poverty. Establishing a perpetual regime of good governance incrementally eradicating poverty and continuously expanding the horizons of freedom, thus facilitating the creation of a much wider range of choices and enriching human life in all possible ways should be the hallmark of poverty alleviation. To achieve, as it were, such a virtuous circle is the major challenge confronting many developing countries in this millennium.

The pretension to the universalism of the concept of globalization should cease or be reconsidered. As a matter of fact, more and more inequality is what obtains in many communities. Indeed, the Nobel laureate, Amartya Sen (2001) warns that arguing about the trend of rising inequality of world income distribution deflects attention from the central issue, which is the sheer magnitude of inequality and poverty on a world scale. Regardless of the trend the magnitude is unacceptable. The concentration of world income in the wealthiest quintile of the world’s population is indeed shocking and cannot meet any plausible test of legitimacy (Seligson and Passe-Smith, 2003).

Evidence suggests that it is far too simplistic to draw a direct link between globalization and the economic benefits accruing to affected countries because the presence of massive poverty remains a stark reality. Globalization that cohabits with massive poverty in any country renders its tenet and purpose contradictory.

Developing countries must create enabling environment through credible governance in order to continue to improve their chances for growth and development. First, developing countries in particular must continue to ensure political stability as a fundamental precondition for socio-economic development in order to be in a position to eliminate poverty. Second, developing countries should rebuild and maintain infrastructure and seek to acquire technical and managerial skills for better governance and performance of public institutions. Governance should be defined by transparency and accountability to slow the proclivity to political and social strife which drive away investors, thus magnifying the incidence of poverty.

Poverty causes about one third of all human deaths, some 18 million annually and blights billions of lives with hunger and disease. Developing norms of universal applicability aimed at tackling poverty and the complex, multilayered problems associated with it cannot be ignored for too long. Social justice echoes moral views as enunciated in our discussion under conceptual framework and these views imply that international agencies as well as the citizens, corporations and governments of affluent countries bear a moral responsibility to reduce poverty. In considering strategies of eradication of poverty through specific policies and structural reforms, the goal must be given higher political priority by international agencies and governments of affluent countries. The problem of poverty has to be viewed and solved from a global perspective so that it acquires the recognition it deserves.

It seems that from all available evidence in a number of studies, the concept of social justice remains a concept. It is yet to be codified or translated into a system where it is viewed as a law that must be enforced if not obeyed. It is more an exhortation than legislation. We know that if it actually carries the import of justice, poor people would have meaningful recourse if their needs are not met. Justice provides the means capable of harnessing human potential to eradicate poverty from our midst, through the implementation of laws, the adjustment of economic systems, the redistribution of wealth and opportunity, and unfailing adherence to the highest ethical standards in private and public life. The concept of social justice does not seem to have the moral or legal force that would enable individuals, organizations and governments to act in order to eliminate poverty. Poverty in a world of plenty is untenable. It seems that the notion of social justice remains an abstraction that is celebrated without any juridical force.

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_______ Global Economic Prospects 2004, for detailed discussion and analysis on what was at issue in the WTO Cancun read Chapter 5 Trade Facilitation.

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