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What was the Third World?

The term 'Third World' was used frequently in histories of the societies, economies and cultures of many parts of the world in the second half of the twentieth century. But, although the phrase was widely used, it was never clear whether it was a clear category of analysis, or simply a convenient and rather vague label for an imprecise collection of states in the second half of the twentieth century and some of the common problems that they faced. Not even enthusiasts for the term provided any precision. As Peter Worsley, one of those who self-consciously began the process of passing it into academic currency, later confessed,

> . . . the nature of the Third World seemed so self-evident in the 1960s that in a book on *The Third World* I published in 1964, I saw no need to define it any more precisely than that it was the world made up of the ex-colonial, newly-independent, non-aligned countries.[1]

Like other collective descriptions of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Pacific islands and Latin America — such as the 'South', the 'developing world', or the 'less-developed world' — the designation 'Third World' was more about what such places were not than what they were. That the term was often used normatively rather than analytically complicates matters further. As Christopher Clapham has pointed out, 'there is no gap so wide as that between those who seek to change the Third World and those who seek merely to understand it'.[2]

Those who developed a concept of the Third World around a set of measurable criteria usually relied on identifying material circumstances. As John Goldthorpe put it in his influential *The Sociology of the Third World: Disparity and Involvement* in 1975, 'if the affluent industrial countries of the modern world are grouped into those of the "West" and those of the "East", . . . then the poor countries constitute a "Third World" whose small command over resources distinguishes them from both'.[3] However, all such attempts to establish a standard measurement of relative poverty that can distinguish

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[1] Peter Worsely, *The Three Worlds: Culture and World Development* (London 1984), 309. The reference is to his book *The Third World* (London 1964).

[2] Christopher Clapham, 'Understanding the Third World', *Third World Quarterly*, 8, 4 (October 1986), 427.

[3] Quoted in Marc Williams, *International Economic Organizations and the Third World* (New York 1994), 3.

various parts of the world from each other run into considerable difficulties. It has often been argued that the various countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America (not to mention the Pacific islands and elsewhere) differ greatly in their size, political ideologies, social structures, economic performance, cultural backgrounds and historical experiences. These differences exist not simply between Third World countries, but within them as well. There are rich and poor people, empowered and disempowered citizens, to be found inside all states and societies in the world.[4]

The divergent histories of different states in Asia, Africa and Latin America in the recent past have made it harder to argue that 'Third Worldness' can be identified unambiguously by a check-list of common material circumstances or endogenous social or cultural characteristics. But it does not follow that the term has no meaning. An alternative approach has stressed the importance of the formation of a Third World consciousness, formed by common ideas, and an awareness of a common history, in relation to the West. Thus, in some accounts the Third World has existed because it provided an identity that was important to those both inside and outside its borders. As John Toye pointed out in 1987,

> . . . the Third World is not . . . yet able to be dismissed from our minds. It is not a figment of our imagination ready to vanish when we blink. It is a result of our collective lack of imagination, our inability in our present difficult circumstances yet to see ourselves as belonging to one world, and not several.[5]

One important characteristic of the term 'Third World' is that its academic usage has declined strikingly in recent years. A keyword search of major library collections reveals that at least 1805 books have been published on the subject.[6] Of these, 140 were published before 1975, 654 between 1975 and 1984, 755 between 1985 and 1994, and 169 between 1995 and 2001. By contrast with this decline in usage, the use of the term 'globalization' (in some senses an antonym for Third World) has increased markedly in recent years. The first three books with globalization in their titles were published in 1988; the first year in which more books were published on globalization than on the Third World was 1996. Between January 1995 and March 2001 there were 358 titles on globalization, and only 162 on the Third World. The rise and fall of academic terminology is partly a question of fashion and marketability, but the spectacular decline in the academic use of the term Third World, with only seven books with this phrase in the title appearing in the British Library catalogue between January 2000 and March 2001, reflects a genuine re-arrangement of our mental furniture. The reasons for this, too, are worth investigating.

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[4] Recent World Bank calculations of relative equality and inequality of the distribution of income and consumption have shown that India, with a Gini co-efficient of 29.7, is among the top 20 least-unequal economies in the world, while Brazil (which has an economy of similar size and with a similar history) is among the most unequal in the world, with a Gini co-efficient of 47.9. World Bank, *World Development Report 1999–2000* (Washington DC 2000), Table 5.

[5] John Toye, *Dilemmas of Development: Reflections on the Counter-Revolution in Development Economics* (Oxford 1987), 31.

[6] The statistical data in this paragraph is based on a search of the British Library catalogue in March 2001. A later search may modify these figures slightly, but not significantly.

Like so much of the terminology used by historians and social scientists in the second half of the twentieth century, the notion of a Third World grew out of the rhetoric of the Cold War in the late 1940s and 1950s. The phrase had its origins in the idea of a 'third force' or 'third way' in world affairs (distinct from American capitalism or Soviet socialism) that was identified in the polemical literature of the non-communist European left in the late 1940s. The term was coined in August 1952 by the demographer and economic historian, Alfred Sauvy, in an article in the French socialist newspaper *L'Observateur*, entitled 'Trois Mondes, Une Planète', which stressed the disempowerment of the newly-independent countries of Asia and Africa, concluding that 'the Third World has, like the Third Estate, been ignored and despised and it too wants to be something'.[7]

The first attempt to create such a third force in world affairs took place at the Asian African Conference attended by 29 independent countries and held in the Indonesian city of Bandung in 1955. The Bandung Conference is often supposed to have represented a crucial moment in the emergence of the Third World as a self-conscious political grouping, but the proceedings of that meeting did not use the term. Bandung provided a useful advertisement for the diplomatic status of formerly-colonial powers, but the conference also revealed the extent to which the language of the Cold War had already undermined any sense of collective identity. The attempt by the Indian and Indonesian governments, the main instigators of the conference, to establish 'positive neutralism' between the great power blocs as the principle of a collective approach to foreign policy was frustrated by the insistence of other delegates — notably from Ceylon, Iraq and the Philippines — that peace could only be established once the threat of communism had been repulsed. Membership of collective security arrangements sponsored by the great powers was not condemned, despite the arguments of India and China that Asian states 'should not take any sides in the Cold War'.[8]

Bandung had no sequel, but the Non-Aligned Summit Conference held in Belgrade in September 1961 created an alternative forum for negotiating the diplomatic solidarity of countries which saw an advantage in advertising their autonomy from the rival superpower blocs. The aims, rhetoric and membership of the group of nations represented at the Non-Aligned Summits of the

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[7] Leslie Wolf-Phillips, 'Why "Third World"?: Origin, Definition and Usage', *Third World Quarterly*, 9, 4 (October 1987), 1131–9 confirms Sauvy's claim to be the originator of the term.

[8] Carlos P. Romulo, *The Meaning of Bandung* (Chapel Hill, NC 1956), 31–2, 92–102.

1960s, 1970s and 1980s broadened and expanded considerably over time.[9] In the early 1960s, the main concern was with defusing the impact of the Cold War, as represented by the British and French invasion of Suez, and the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956, on states which were not part of any power bloc. Significantly, Egypt and Yugoslavia took the initiative that led to the Belgrade Conference, supported by India. By the middle 1960s, the main focus was on anti-colonialism, especially as this approach to the problems presented by Israel and South Africa provided a way of unifying the interests of Arab and African states. From the late 1960s, and through the 1970s, the main issues were problems of economic development, especially those arising from heightened uncertainty in the international economy. From the Lusaka Declaration on 'Non-Alignment and Economic Progress' in 1970 onwards, attempts to reform the international economic system to balance the interests of rich and poor countries moved to centre-stage. As the preamble to the Lusaka Declaration put it, ' . . . the poverty of developing nations and their economic dependence on those in affluent circumstances constitutes a structural weakness in the present economic order'.[10]

It was over broad issues of economic development that the fiercest battles for the concept of the Third World were fought. Orthodox development economists in the 1950s and 1960s had suggested that the poverty of non-western economies was the result of low levels of savings and investment, and that these problems could best be resolved by increasing external influence over them to help local élites modernize their societies (in other words, make them more like those of the West) by providing technology and education to increase productivity and output. The blueprints for this process were provided by 'modernization theory', which sought to identify the 'transitional process' that could move societies from the 'traditional' to the 'modern'.[11]

To many radical critics, these ideas, and the US government's development policies that flowed from them, seemed to mask a narrow political agenda that sought to justify the dominance of free-market capitalism as a model and mechanism for economic, social and cultural development. One powerful reaction to this agenda was to argue that dependence on the West had distorted the economic and social conditions of non-western societies, leading to a common process of historical change in the periphery of the world economy brought about by 'a situation in which the economy of certain countries [and hence their social and political structures] is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected'.[12] Such accounts provided the foundations for a large literature on 'underdevelopment' and 'dependency' in the 1960s and 1970s, which raised doubts as to whether Third World countries could ever achieve satisfactory development while they remained subject to the global reach of the advanced capitalist economies of the West, and also suggested that their experience of exploitation within that system might give them a common cause.[13]

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[9] This evolution can conveniently be traced in the 12-volume semi-official compendium, Odette Jankowitsch, Karl P. Sauvant and Jorg Weber (eds), *The Third World without Superpowers: The Collected Documents of the Non-Aligned Countries* (New York 1978–93), although the organization itself never used the term 'Third World' in its formal documentation.

[10] 'Lusaka Declaration on Non-Alignment and Economic Progress', September 1970, quoted in Peter Willetts, *The Non-Aligned Movement: The Origins of a Third World Alliance* (London 1978), 28.

[11] As has often been pointed out, these concepts derived from the work of Talcott Parsons, and can be traced back to Max Weber. Max F. Millikan and Donald L.M. Blackemer (eds), *The Emerging Nations: Their Growth and United States Policy* (Cambridge, MA 1961) provides a fairly sophisticated version of this approach.

The dependency school was never a unified voice, and contained significant variations of opinion about whether any development was possible within the existing international economic system. Some arguments stressed the structural barriers to development that followed from the division of the world economy into 'core' and 'periphery'; other writers suggested that 'associated dependent development' was possible given appropriate local political encouragement. One crucial area of analysis concerned the political and social structures of 'dependent' economies, with a key role being attributed to the 'national bourgeoisie' — the local business and political élite that had played a role in overthrowing colonialism, and which now used alliances with international capital to dominate the new state and suppress challenges to its position.

An important element of the 'underdevelopment perspective' derived from frustration with the activities of state economic planners in Third World countries, and the links between these and the activities of regional and international development organizations, that was felt by progressive intellectuals and academics on the fringes (literal and ideological) of such organizations. Out of this frustration grew a sense of common identity around the plight of those suffering from underdevelopment both in the periphery and in some radical opinion in core countries. This identification of a homogeneous condition of dependency was not a necessary part of the theory of underdevelopment, but such ideas certainly underlay many of its popular versions, and fed into a perception of the inhabitants of Third World countries as victims rather than agents of their history. One effect was a sudden expansion in the use of the term 'Third World' in the late 1960s and the 1970s that has been linked to what one enthusiast for the term described as 'the emergence of a growing consciousness among the peoples of different Third World countries themselves that they shared common problems and experiences in relation to other countries'.[14]

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[12] T. Dos Santos, 'The Structure of Dependence', *American Economic Review*, 40 (May 1970), 231.

[13] Colin Leys, 'The Rise and Fall of Dependency Theory' and 'Underdevelopment and Dependency: Critical Notes' in his *The Rise and Fall of Dependency Theory* (London 1996), 3–44, 45–63 is an excellent review and sympathetic critique of the dependency school.

[14] Kofi Buenor Hadjor, *Dictionary of Third World Terms* (London 1992), 6.

The 1970s was the great age of Third World rhetoric of common cause and common action. The growing influence of dependency theory, with its argument that the Third World existed in 'a global and political system marked by a deep-seated and steadily increasing asymmetry and a cause-and-effect relationship between the underdevelopment of some nations and the over-development of others',[15] helped to legitimize a common agenda for changing the structure of international relations — especially of international economic relations — on which that asymmetry seemed to rest. In this decade, the collective identity of most Asian, African and Latin American countries in international relations became expressed through demands for reform in the institutional structure of the international economy.

The lead here was taken by the Group of 77 self-declared 'developing countries' which had been formed at the first UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) meeting in 1964. This grouping included the Latin American states (which did not attend the Non-Aligned summits of the 1960s), and drew heavily on the intellectual heritage of Latin American economic thinking on the structural barriers to economic growth caused by open systems of international trade. During the severe external shocks that hit the international economy in the early 1970s — oil price increases, food-supply crises, abrupt changes in the international monetary regime, and a world-wide recession accompanied by inflation — the G77 led the demand for new institutions of global economic management to remove the structural imbalances that, as they saw it, frustrated the development of the countries outside the OECD and Comecon.

The strength of this campaign was shown by the passing of the Charter on the Economic Rights and Duties of States and the Declaration of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) by the sixth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1974, convened in the immediate aftermath of the oil crisis. At this session, the General Assembly committed itself to a Programme of Action which sought 'to work urgently for the establishment of a new international economic order based on equity, sovereign equality, common interest and co-operation between all states'.[16] The demand for the NIEO was based on the implementation of 25 objectives dealing with international aid and assistance, international trade, industrialization and technology transfer, and social issues. These were to be achieved in ways which assured the economic sovereignty of states, including their right to control the exploitation of natural resources, with the right to nationalize them if appropriate.

In retrospect, we can see that the UN resolutions of 1974 concerning the New International Economic Order marked a high point in the diplomatic solidarity of Third World governments engaged in a 'revolt against the West',[17] and in the rhetoric associated with the international economic relations of development. Sympathetic observers saw the NIEO programme as an inevitable consequence of the revolution of rising expectations that had been set off by decolonization, and that were frustrated by structural difficulties and management problems in the international system that could be defused by negotiation.[18] But to other commentators they represented a grave threat which put the whole basis of a liberal international order under attack from 'the armed doctrines of Bolshevism and nationalism' that had produced a new hybrid which 'divides the world into the "northern", rich, exploiting nations and "southern", poor, exploited nations'.[19]

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[15] Ignacy Sachs, trans. Michale Fineborg, *The Discovery of the Third World* (Cambridge, MA 1976), ix–x.

[16] Quoted in Michael Todaro, *Economic Development in the Third World*, 4th edn (London 1989), 600.

Such apocalyptic visions of sustained economic warfare between developed and developing countries proved to be exaggerated. The continued demand for a direct transfer of resources from 'North' to 'South' at the United Nations General Assembly and elsewhere, caused some acrimony, increased by the uncertainty caused by the continued economic difficulties of many western economies and the outbreak of the 'second Cold War' in Africa during the 1970s. Despite these pressures, little formal institutional change took place. Although Third World countries had a numerical majority in the United Nations General Assembly, their demand for a New International Economic Order was opposed by the western countries that controlled the IMF and the World Bank. However, the endemic disorder of the international economy during the 1970s made the influence of the existing institutions of international economic management largely ineffective — the IMF could not cope with the strains of running an integrated world monetary system in which all the major currencies were floating in value against each other — while the resources available through the World Bank were much smaller, and harder to obtain, than the funds that could be borrowed from the private international capital market swollen by the surplus balances of the OPEC nations.

By the end of the 1970s, the ability of the Third World group at the UN to exert pressure for change was weakening as their ability to use their chief weapon — the threat of commodity boycotts for a range of primary products and minerals in the manner of the OPEC manipulation of oil prices — lost credibility. Demands for radical reform were kept up at the Havana meeting of the Organization of Non-Aligned States, but attempts to organize global negotiations on international co-operation through the Committee of the Whole set up by the UN General Assembly in 1977 had reached stalemate by 1980. The report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues (Brandt Commission), published the same year, dealt with inter-state relations in the context of world poverty, using the phrases 'Third

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[17] Hedley Bull, 'The Revolt Against the West' in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford 1984), 217ff.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Elie Khedourie, 'A New International Disorder' in Bull and Watson, op. cit., 350.

World', 'South' and 'developing countries' interchangeably as synonymous with 'poorer' countries where people were 'pre-occupied solely with survival and elementary needs', and faced 'total deprivation'.[20] The report itself, widely criticized as careless in its assumptions, unrealistic in its proposals, and having no real concern for feasibility or procedure, quickly faded into obscurity.[21] The key element in the Brandt Report, which was adopted even before the International Commission had met, was that there was a clear mutuality of interests between North and South that would best be served by closer economic integration. The result was a 'North–South Summit' attended by 22 heads of state at Cancun, Mexico in 1981, but here the developed countries maintained their objection to holding a global round of negotiations on economic matters.

By the time of the Cancun Summit, the balance of international economic power had tipped back firmly towards the developed nations. In the early 1980s, the Reagan administration in the USA reasserted a strong dollar's central place in the international monetary system; as real interest and repayment rates rose, so the boom of inward investment into developing countries that had been fuelled by the recycling of OPEC balances became the debt crisis that dominated relations between many developing countries and the international system in the 1980s. The combined capital accounts of all the developing nations, which had been in surplus by $85.7 billion in 1978–80, moved into deficit in 1981, and showed a cumulative deficit of $54.8 billion between 1981 and 1984, combined with a combined current account deficit for those years of $233 billion. For the rest of the 1980s the 'debt crisis' dominated discussions of the Third World's place in the international economic system, with the average debt/GNP ratio running at between 24 per cent and 38 per cent for the rest of the decade. Latin American and African countries were particularly badly hit, with the average African debt/GNP ratio exceeding 50 per cent consistently from 1986. Overall, the World Bank calculated that the net resource flow (new lending minus debt service) for all indebted LDCs (Less Developed Countries) went from a positive $35.2 billion in 1981 to a negative $30.7 billion in 1987.[22]

The political, economic and ideological changes of the 1980s had a significant effect in every part of the world. For developing countries, the main impact was to change fundamentally the terms on which they could deal with international economic institutions, and with the major powers — notably the

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[20] Independent Commission on International Development Issues, *North-South: A Programme for Survival* (London 1980), 49. The term 'South' (attributed to Lord Franks) was being used in the early 1960s to split the globe along the latitude of the Mediterranean sea, and to identify 'a poor, largely peasant, world in Africa, Asia and Latin America'. William Clark, 'Preface' in Adrian Moyes and Teresa Hayter, *World III: A Handbook for Developing Countries* (Oxford 1964), x.

[21] Charles A. Jones, *The North–South Dialogue: A Brief History* (London 1983), 92–3 is a critical view of the lack of intellectual coherence or sustained influence of the Brandt report.

[22] Todaro, op. cit., chap. 13. The statistics quoted are based on World Bank estimates.

USA — which cemented their hold over the management of the global system. While some countries used the new opportunities that were offered for growth through trade in manufactured goods — notably the East Asian economies of South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong, followed slightly later by the ASEAN countries of Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand, and by China — many others, especially in Africa, suffered severe shocks. The decreased demand for primary produce, declining terms of trade for their exports, rapidly rising costs of debt repayment and re-borrowing and internal problems of agricultural productivity and natural disaster brought about widespread economic failure in Africa, which undermined the strength, vitality and legitimacy of many Third World states.[23] The ending of the Cold War in the late 1980s, and the removal of the possibility of Soviet support, limited both the importance of existing African governments as allies in the geopolitical war of position between the superpowers, and their ability to conclude favourable bargains for outside assistance.

These changes had serious effects on the political and psychological linkages that had bound the Third World together, since the United Nations ceased to be a major forum for achieving reform in the structure of the global political economy. As even its official publications admit, in the 1980s the UN lost 'development momentum', and appeared to be 'less relevant to development in the eyes of major member countries, both developed and developing' than it had during the campaign for the NIEO.[24] The UN regained some of the initiative in broad debates on global issues with the series of world conferences on the environment (notably the Earth Summit held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992), population, women, and social development that it ran in the early 1990s, following the doctrine of 'sustainable development' that had been proposed by the Brundtland Report (*Our Common Future*) in 1987. However, no major breakthrough on these issues was achieved, with the UN Commission on Sustainable Development concluding in 1997 that 'the overall trends for sustainable development are worse today than they were in 1992'.[25]

During the 1980s, the idea of a distinctive Third World, with its own coherent set of development issues and problems, was further undermined by changes in the international balance of power between global development institutions. In the absence of any UN resources or major initiatives, the task of managing specific economic issues associated with development was now effectively devolved to the IMF, the World Bank and the new World Trade Organization that was founded in 1995. These agencies, especially the World Bank, adopted a much less sympathetic attitude to the existing internal management of the development process, applying the new principle of 'structural adjustment', coined by the president of the World Bank, Robert Macnamara, in 1979, and institutionalized in the introduction of 'structural adjustment lending' by the Bank in 1980. As a result, the World Bank and other international development agencies insisted on reforms to devalue currencies, remove government monopolies, encourage the private sector, establish market prices, and cut government spending as the price of further aid and assistance. The key theoretical shift here was in the denial of any specific sub-discipline of 'development economics', and the assumption that what has been called 'mon-economics' could be applied universally because the potential for economic rationality, and hence rational choice, was a constant across all societies at every stage of development. [26]

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[23] Nigel Harris, *The End of the Third World: Newly Industrializing Countries and the Decline of an Ideology* (London 1986) is based on a retrospective critique of the self-serving nature of Third World rhetoric in the light of these changes.

[24] John Tessitore and Susan Woolfson (eds), *A Global Agenda, 1997–98: Issues Before the 52nd General Assembly of the United Nations* (Lanham 1997), 108–9.

[25] Ibid., 136.

The extreme anti-statist position of this counter-revolution, derived from the rhetoric of 'Reaganomics' in the USA, was quickly moderated, but states were only allowed back into the development process if their institutional capabilities for appropriately neutral macro-economic policies met approval. This critique of existing state structures extended to their socio-economic base, and the domestic forces that dependency theory had identified as the 'national bourgeoisie' were now identified with the equally derogatory label of 'rent-seekers' — privileged groups in a symbiotic relationship to the state who were rewarded by access to scarce factors of production such as capital, education and import licenses, without any competition for their productive use.[27] The political accompaniment of rational choice economics and structural adjustment was the propaganda of democratization exemplified by the imposition of 'political conditionality' — a concern for human rights, democracy and 'good governance' — by aid donors on recipient countries. While western governments were not always able to enforce these conditions, they did represent an ambitious project for reordering Third World states, that some critics argued amounted to a process of 'recolonization' and the 'reassertion of Occidental hegemony in matters of development'.[28]

As the coherence of the materialist concept of the Third World dissolved in the 1980s, an alternative approach to identifying a distinctive and (partially) unified Third World experience and voice emerged in the growing body of literature concerned with post-colonial theory and history. Here the lines of debate over the meaning and validity of a common Third World identity have followed similar lines to that in the discussions of political economy already outlined — especially in terms of how many worlds there are, and the homogeneity or heterodoxy of post-colonial struggles and responses to the West.[29] The attempt to identify a coherent and distinct Third World experience has come under attack from those who are concerned to stress the 'multiplicity of margins' — the proliferation of many distinct voices in African, Asian and Latin American cultures that must be given equal privilege — and also by those who prefer to stress a 'one-world' model based on the importance of identities forged by class divisions and class solidarities across cultures.

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[26] See Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge 1996), 169ff.

[27] Anne O. Krueger, 'The Political Economy of the Rent-Seeking Society', *American Economic Review*, 64, 2 (June 1974), 291–303 is a classic exposition of this view.

[28] Clapham, *Africa and the International System*, op. cit., 186; David Slater, 'Trajectories of Development Theory: Capitalism, Socialism and Beyond' in R.J. Johnston, Peter J. Taylor and Michael J. Watts (eds), *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World in the Late Twentieth Century* (Oxford 1995), 70.

The equivalent to the political economy concept of dependency that underlay cultural studies approaches to this problem were the notions of 'hybridity' and 'strategic essentialism' that were proposed as the basis for both identifying and justifying a unified response to the West. The notion of 'hybridity' emphasizes the complementarities which exist between the different aspects of the post-colonial cultural formation across national boundaries and tries to build upon them. Such an attempt makes possible the adoption of the principle of 'strategic essentialism' as an 'intermediate' model of post-colonial identity which 'allows a conception of essentialism as — at the very least — a stage which must be passed through in the process of cultural decolonization' that offers 'advantages . . . for a coherent politics of resistance' and possibility for 'solidarity among different kinds of "margin"'. Despite continued political problems in attempting to combine on the basis of common differences, this approach provides 'the possibility of alliances in a "war of position" in a way that cultural particularism is reluctant to do'.[30] While acknowledging that cultural nationalism proved effective in helping to end the era of formal colonialism, and can provide the basis for opposition to dominant global orders based on an alliance of nation states, such approaches echo dependency critiques in attacking the character of many of the regimes set up after decolonization. Thus, according to Moore-Gilbert, colonial and post-colonial systems of control were maintained through the cultural production of complicit 'mimic men' and the creation of 'the national bourgeoisie . . . to which control was relinquished at the beginning of the (neo-)colonial period'.[31]

These ideas (or at least the rhetoric derived from them) helped to form the basis of radical responses to the impact of structural adjustment and political conditionality on Third World societies which called for the 'empowerment of the people' to achieve 'human-centred development'.[32] One result was renewed attention to local social movements, now often seen as 'cultural struggles over material conditions and over practices and meanings of everyday life', that targeted local state structures as well as global economic institutions.[33] Such movements — which often found expression in opposition to large-scale development projects such as the building of dams, commercial logging and the extension of pastoral agriculture that seem to threaten local communities, and mobilized action around civil rights, gender issues and environmental issues, expressed in terms of quality of life or access to economic resources for social reproduction — led to the formation or reassertion of identities and solidarities based on religion, kinship, neighbourhood, and local social and cultural networks.

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[29] This account is largely based on Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Policies* (London 1997) and his 'Postcolonialism: Between Nationalitarianism and Globalization? A Response to Simon During', *Postcolonial Studies* 1, 2 (April 1998), 49–65.

[30] Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory*, op. cit., 191–2, 198–9, 202.

[31] Ibid., 195.

[32] The Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa argued in 1990, 'The foundation for self-reliant and internally self-sustaining processes of development is people's participation. . . . Authentic, self-reliant processes of development inevitably result in the transformation of the people who bring about the change.' Quoted in Richard Sandbrook, *The Politics of Africa's Economic Recovery* (Cambridge 1993), 138.

The decline and fall of assimilationist ideology in the USA, and its replacement by ideologies of internal cultural distinctiveness, with many citizens choosing to identify with particular groupings that saw themselves in competitive opposition to previous systems of dominance, also shaped the context in which such issues were studied. Those seeking to escape from perceived oppression by the political, social, economic and ideological hegemony of the state within their countries, and from the influence of powerful states or interests within the international system, often identified the coalescence of forces represented by imperialism, colonialism, neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism as the key factor in securing and maintaining the dominance they were contesting. Thus the notion of a Third World lived on, in some post-colonial historiography at any rate, not as a compendium of quintessential characteristics, but as the voice of 'subordinated subjects' which has now 'penetrated the inner sanctum of the first world in the process of being "third-worlded" — arousing, inciting, and affiliating with the subordinated others in the first world', such as socialists, radicals, feminists and ethnic minorities.[34]

The sense of common circumstances or identity central to a concept of the Third World over the last 40 years of the twentieth century was based around three key issues of perception: differences between the Third and other worlds, the consciousness of such differences, and inter-connectedness — the extent to which difference and consciousness were the result of the dependence of events in one part of the world on actions in another. All these issues — the causes of difference, the validity of common consciousness, and the extent of dependence — have been disputed in the specialist literature, and in the polemical debates about the nature of the Third World that have taken place inside and outside academic circles. This contestation over the use of the term 'Third World' goes to the heart of many ways of thinking about the modern world, its past, present and future. It can best be seen as a marker for these battlegrounds of interpretation, rather than as a banner for one of the sides taking part in the fight itself.

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[33] Paul Routledge, 'Resisting and Reshaping the Modern: Social Movements and the Development Process' in Johnston, Taylor and Watts, op. cit., 273.

[34] Gyan Prakash, 'Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 32 (1990), 384, 403; for a similar argument, see Chandra Tapande Mohanty, 'Introduction: Cartographies of Struggle' in Chandra Tapande Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (eds), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington, IN 1991), 7.

The paired opposites of modernization and dependency theory, and rational choice and post-colonialism, have dominated analyses of the Third World. One clear contrast between these broad approaches has been the differing weighting they have placed on material and cultural approaches, although modernization and dependency theories were both concerned, to some extent, with cultural issues (over entrepreneurship on the one hand and 'peasant studies' on the other, for example), and some strands of post-colonial criticism have paid some attention to material matters (in the continued campaign over international debt). However, the most obvious distinction between them has concerned their treatment of public institutions, especially the state. Modernization model-builders and dependency theorists attacked the existing state-structures of many developing countries, but both saw an important role for a reformed state and other public institutions in bringing about economic growth and social change. Those who base their analysis on rational choice theory or post-colonial perspectives, on the other hand, are equally critical of any public institutions, above the very local, as barriers to the proper expression of individual or community autonomy and choice. For them, almost any form of state is part of the problem, not of the solution.[35]

At the end of the twentieth century, the nature of states and the international state system created by the Cold War world, that once seemed to represent the climax of an evolutionary process of nationalism and nation-building, looked much more contingent and historically specific. Increased mobility of capital, people and ideas caused serious problems for conventional political and social institutions. The ability of existing states to provide material and psychological satisfaction for their citizens was widely called into question.[36] How can we write the history of the modern world as a whole without a narrative of the inevitable rise of states and nations, or the creation of a global alliance of those who think themselves oppressed? Some accounts of the contemporary world and its recent history have suggested that there is a simple division across space and culture between the empowered and the disempowered,[37] while Edward Said has advocated a position of 'reconciliatory' post-colonialism, seeking to provide 'a reconsidered or revised notion of how a post-imperial intellectual attitude might expand the overlapping community between metropolitan and formerly colonized societies'.[38] Others have attempted to find, 'against the grand narrative of history itself, the cultural resources to negotiate the terms through which people, living in different, contextually defined, communities, can co-exist peacefully, productively and creatively within large political units'.[39] Such arguments beg crucial questions about the constructed meaning of 'community',[40] but they make it harder to conceive of coherent states inhabiting separate worlds, distinct from each other and yet cohesive in themselves, and this has dealt a further blow to the idea of the Third World.

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[35] On these issues, see John Martinussen, *Society, State and Market: A Guide to Competing Theories of Development* (London 1997) and J. Schuurman, 'Paradigms Lost, Paradigms Regained? Development Studies in the Twenty-first century', *Third World Quarterly*, 21, 1 (February 2000), 7–20.

[36] Andrew Levine (ed.), *The State and its Critics: Volume 1* (Aldershot 1992). Part IV is a convenient collection that focuses on 'state imperfections' from public choice and 'new Right' perspectives.

[37] See John Friedman, *Empowerment: The Politics of Alternative Development* (Oxford 1992).

In the late twentieth century, the world was confronted with the new problematic of globalization. Many responses to this phenomenon (which is, again, better seen as a label for a set of contested issues, rather than as an objective set of characteristics in its own right) have stressed the historical connections between it and earlier globalizing forces of the recent past.[41] For historians, the concept of globalization can, perhaps, best be seen as an heuristic device or ideal type that maps the integration and interaction of economic, social and cultural processes from the local or regional to the world level. These processes, based around the cultures and commodities of consumption, can be traced back to at least the seventeenth century, but they have not progressed in a linear or continuous way since then.[42] The notion of the Third World, in both its material and cultural manifestations, grew out of the specific form of global interaction that resulted from the rise of nation states in Europe, and the expansion of their power through international trade and imperial rule. The phenomenon of imperialism was characterized by unequal relations of political, social, economic and cultural power exercised across communities not bound together by a common sense of identity. While these power relations were unequal, the more powerful did not always successfully dominate the less powerful consistently over time, and there were significant shiftings of power both between and within the communities of the colonizers and the colonized. One consequence of this was that the European empires, which had seemed so dominant in 1900, came to an end in the third quarter of the twentieth century. The history of imperialism has been immensely important in shaping our view of the modern world, both from the top down and from the bottom up,[43] but the phenomenon was also historically specific, and represents only one stage in the process of understanding the interaction between the local and the global. To write the history of the 'Rest', as well as of the West, we need now to move on, and to construct new narratives of global history that go beyond the models of coherent and distinct communities, nations and states, arranged into hierarchies of material achievement and cultural power, and underpinned by universal institutional ideals of participatory democracy and free markets, that dominated thinking about international and local systems in the world for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Only then will the ghost of the Third World be laid to rest, and the contested nature of its history be properly understood.

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[38] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London 1993), 19–20.

[39] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ 1993), 237–8. On the Indian case Viayek Chaturvedi, *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London 2000) reprints a number of key essays, and also contains a useful short introduction.

[40] For a sceptical survey of the post-colonial historiography that has developed these ideas, see D.A. Washbrook, 'Orients and Occidents: Colonial Discourse Theory and the Historiography of the British Empire' in Robin E. Winks (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume V: Historiography* (Oxford 1999), 596–611.

[41] See Jorge Larrain, *Ideology and Cultural Identity Modernity and the Third World Presence* (Cambridge 1994); Jan Aarte Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke 2000); F.J. Lechner and J. Boli (eds), *The Globalization Reader* (London 2000); A.G. Hopkins (ed.), *Globalization in World History* (London 2001), especially Hopkins, 'The History of Globalization — and the Globalization of History?', 11–46.

[42] C.A. Bayly, '"Archaic" and "Modern" Globalization in the Eurasian and African Arena, c.1750–1850' in Hopkins, *Globalization in World History*, op. cit., 47–73, is a stimulating introduction to this approach.

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[43] Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, 'Between Metropole and Colony' in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, CA 1997) provides a treatment of these issues sympathetic to both political economy and cultural studies approaches.