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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE PLACE OF FOREIGN AID IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS: BETWEEN STRATEGIC AND HUMANITARIAN GESTURES

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ABSTRACT

The paper tries to examine the nature and dimensions of foreign aid within the framework of international politics. It also discusses the politics of foreign aid as well as why the powerful states provide foreign aid to the weaker nations. The research adopted the secondary methodology to provide a substantial argument on the topic under study. Findings show that, albeit nations provide foreign aid through humanitarian interventionist gesture, some powerful nations are completely without such motive, but give out foreign aid based on strategic logical motive. The paper concludes that, giving out aid to third world societies without monitoring where and how the money is going to end, continues to make foreign aid meaningless, as corrupt leaders of the Third World would continue to siphon whatever that is given to the state. The paper recommends absolute monitoring and evaluation of foreign aid as well as targeting more productive areas of the economy of the recipient nation.

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INTRODUCTION

In an intellectual exposition, Siraj (2012) conceptualized the term foreign aid as generally used in the sense of flow of resources from the rich countries to the poor underdeveloped countries. According to the United Nations, economic aid means outright grants and long term loans for non military purposes by Governments and various international organizations. An appropriate definition of foreign aid was given by Mikesall (1996), according to whom foreign aid is a Transfer of real resources or immediate claim on resources from one country to another which would not have taken place as a consequence of the operation of market forces or in the absence of specific official action designed to promote the transfer by the donor country. Thus foreign aid so defined includes both direct government transfers and those promoted by special official action such as government guarantees. According to Todaro (2008), the concept of foreign aid that 'is now widely used and accepted is one that encompasses all official grants and concessional loans, in currency or in kind, that are broadly aimed at transferring resources from developed to less developed nations on development and income redistribution grounds." Foreign aid includes also the resource transfers from OPEC to other Third World countries. In a similar definition given by Mumin (2013), the concept of Foreign Aid is widely used and accepted as a flow of financial

resources from developed countries to developing countries on development grounds. However, the role and effects of foreign aid in the economic development of developing countries have been and are controversial issues. Generally, foreign aid is advocated as necessary for the promotion of economic development in the least developed countries (LDC's). The purpose of foreign aid programme to LDC's is to accelerate their economic development up to a point where a satisfactory rate of growth can be achieved on a self sustaining basis. Thus the general aim of foreign aid is to provide in each LDC a positive incentive for maximum national effort to increase its rate of growth. However, the effects of foreign aid on the economic development of developing countries have been controversial issues. Foreign aid, according to Audu (2013) while reviewing the documents of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization of Economic Cooperation Development (OECD) is referred to as official development assistance around net official aid given by a country, multilateral institutions and non-governmental institutions. It consists of grants and loans with a grant element of at least 25%. Grants or loans to TWCs are classified as Official Development Assistance (ODA) if they meet the following requirements:

- They must originate from the official sector in the donor country.
- The financial terms are concessional

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- The primary Motivation of the grant or loan is the promotion of economic development and welfare of the recipient (aid receiving) country (Audu, 2013).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material used in this research work was derived from existing literatures from library collections, under the secondary methodology. The material and method are also supported by a theoretical backing of the dependency theory. The dependency theory belongs to the critical theories of international politics, which blames the western world for the misfortunes of the third world. Theotonio Dos Santos (1971) saw Dependency as an historical condition which shapes a certain structure of the world economy such that it favors some countries to the detriment of others and limits the development possibilities of the subordinate economics, a situation in which the economy of a certain group of countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy, to which their own is subjected (Theotonio, 1971). Based on this theory, however, it suffices proper understanding on why and how the third world continue to depend on foreign aid from the western world.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is pertinent to mention that, foreign aid can be granted either for the purpose of humanitarian assistance or for strategic reasons. It is humanitarian if and when the aid is to serve for development projects, which nothing is expected in return. But when there is an expectation, such as the aid given to Turkey and Greece by the United States immediately after the Second World War, so that these two states would not be lured by the Soviet Union. But in the analysis of Lancaster (2007) foreign aid can be given or advanced, because of the following reasons:

- (a) As a signal of diplomatic approval, a strong nation wants to introduce a diplomatic relation offer to another, especially a weaker one.
- (b) To strengthen a military ally, already the recipient is an ally, in a difficult situation, the donor may give such an aid to reinforce the recipient's military capability. This for example was given to Israel by the united states during their previous wars (though is continuous).
- (c) To reward a government for behavior desired by the donor. This was seen when the Egyptian military shoved the democratic regime of Muslim brotherhood in Egypt, the US, supported the military government by aid in military jets and other normal financial aids.
- (d) To extend the donor's cultural influence. This cultural influence is always seen in the Chinese politics, where it provides scholarship to foreign students to study Chinese language and culture in china before commencing on any major study.
- (e) To provide infrastructure needed by the donor for resource extraction from the recipient country. This type of aid is obtainable from the western world and the United States. There are resources needed by these nations, therefore, they will provide you with an aid to facilitate their own agenda.

- (f) To gain other kinds of commercial access. To access the economies of the receiving nations for their own economic gains.
- (g) Humanitarian and altruistic purposes are at least partly responsible for the giving of aid.

### Sources of Foreign Aid/Agencies That Provide Foreign Aid

In the writings of Audu (2013), in terms of forms and nature, there are three (3) broad categories or groups that provide aids:

- Bilateral donors
- Multilateral agencies
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

Bilateral aids refer to nation to nation aids. This type is mainly determined or given for political consideration and in some cases granted specifically for development project. This form of aid was prevalent during the Cold War era but fell as Cold War came to a close. Aids from multilateral agencies or institutions come in most cases during periods of poor economic and political conditions, natural disasters, wars and civil wars. Multilateral aids generally refer to aids channeled through the institutions of World Bank and the IMF which it comes in form of loans and grants (Lahiri, 2007). It is instructive to note that these loans and grants are given with interest attached. Many Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the industrialized countries also provide aids. Non-Governmental Organizations such as Gate Foundation, CARE, The Red Cross and World Vision, etc. provides aids to developing countries. There are other thousands of NGOs that fund projects in the TWCs with some of the capital transferred coming from private sources. This include direct aid programme such as, Christian aids gifts from individuals and also commercial undertaking (Harms and and Rauber, 2004). However, not all capital grants that come from government are aids. In the light of the foregoing, you are expected to note that, foreign aid, be it bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental organizations are exogenously determined. It is the donor's interest not the recipient's interest that determines the allocation of aids (Audu, 2013)

### Urgency and Emergency Aids

The concept of aid has also been typified into urgency and emergency. This classification is the responsibility of the United Nations especially in dealing with cases or issues of humanitarian urgency or emergency.

### Urgency Aid

Aid may be also classified based on urgency into emergency aid and development aid. Emergency aid is rapid assistance move given to a people in immediate distress by individuals, organizations, or governments to relieve suffering, during and after man-made emergencies (like wars) and natural disasters. The term often carries an international connotation, but this is not always the case. It is often distinguished from development aid by being focused on relieving suffering caused by natural disaster or conflict, rather than removing the root causes of poverty or vulnerability. Development aid is aid given to

support development in general which can be economic development or social development in developing countries. It is distinguished from humanitarian aid as being aimed at alleviating poverty in the long term, rather than alleviating suffering in the short term (Easterly, 2005).

### Emergency Aid

The provision of emergency humanitarian aid consists of the provision of vital services (such as food aid to prevent starvation) by aid agencies, and the provision of funding or in-kind services (like logistics or transport), usually through aid agencies or the government of the affected country. Humanitarian aid is distinguished from humanitarian intervention, which involves armed forces protecting civilians from violent oppression or genocide by state-supported actors. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is mandated to coordinate the international humanitarian response to a natural disaster or complex emergency acting on the basis of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/182. The Geneva Conventions give a mandate to the International Committee of the Red Cross and other impartial humanitarian organizations to provide assistance and protection of civilians during times of war. The ICRC, has been given a special role by the Geneva Conventions with respect to the visiting and monitoring of prisoners of war.

### The Use of Foreign Aid

This area explores the intended action of which the aid is going to serve. Some of the areas which foreign aids serve are as follows:

- (a) Project Aid: Aid given for a specific purpose; e.g. building materials for a new school.
- (b) Programme Aid: Aid given for a specific sector; e.g. funding of the education sector of a country.
- (c) Budget support: A form of Programme Aid that is directly channeled into the financial system of the recipient country.
- (d) Sector-wide Approaches (SWAPs): A combination of Project aid and Programme aid/Budget Support; e.g. support for the education sector in a country will include both funding of education projects (like school buildings) and provide funds to maintain them (like school books).
- (e) Technical assistance: Aid involving highly educated or trained personnel, such as doctors, who are moved into a developing country to assist with a program of development. Can be both programme and project aid.
- (f) Food aid: Food is given to countries in urgent need of food supplies, especially if they have just experienced a natural disaster. Food aid can be provided by importing food from the donor, buying food locally, or providing cash.
- (g) International research, such as research on green revolution or vaccines.

### Conditions for Foreign Aid

Some of the conditions usually given by foreign aid donors, which may not apply to all are as follows (Munther, 2007):

- In the argument of Dugger (2007), the major proportion of aid from donor nations is tied, mandating that a receiving nation spend on products and expertise originating only from the donor country. Eritrea discovered that it would be cheaper to build its network of railways with local expertise and resources rather than to spend aid money on foreign consultants and engineers. US law, backed by strong farm interests, requires food aid be spent on buying food at home, instead of where the hungry live, and, as a result, half of what is spent is used on transport. As a result, tying aid is estimated to increase the cost of aid by 15–30%. Oxfam America and American Jewish World Service report that reforming US food aid programs could extend food aid to an additional 17.1 million people around the world (Mitchell, 2000).
- The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as primary holders of developing countries' debt, attach structural adjustment conditionality to loans which generally include the elimination of state subsidies and the privatization of state services. For example, the World Bank presses poor nations to eliminate subsidies for fertilizer even while many farmers cannot afford them at market prices. In the case of Malawi, almost five million of its 13 million people used to need emergency food aid. However, after the government changed policy and subsidies for fertilizer and seed were introduced, farmers produced record-breaking corn harvests in 2006 and 2007 as production leaped to 3.4 million in 2007 from 1.2 million in 2005, making Malawi a major food exporter. In the former Soviet states, the reconfiguration of public financing in their transition to a market economy called for reduced spending on health and education, sharply increasing poverty (The World Bank, 2002)
- The New York Times (2001) highlights in the April publication of Oxfarm Report, aid tied to trade Liberalization by the donor countries such as the European Union with the aim of achieving economic objective, is becoming detrimental to developing countries. For example, the EU subsidizes its agricultural sectors at the expense of Latin America who must liberalize trade in order to qualify for aid. Latin America, a country with a comparative advantage on agriculture and a great reliance on its agricultural export sector, loses \$4 billion annually due to EU farming subsidy policies. Carlos Santiso advocates a "radical approach in which donors cede control to the recipient country" (New York Times, 2001).

### Foreign Aid and Third World Dependency

Foreign aid focuses on promoting certain changes in the third world countries that will enhance donor countries' economic expansions and dominance. This is done through the following ways (Audu, 2013; Bhagwati, 1976):

- By encouraging reform in TWCs overall economic policies
- U.S. works to dismantle laws and institutions that prevent free trade
- They help to privatize state dominated economies. For instance, a \$3 million aid to support privatization in Indonesian energy sector led to a \$2 billion award to an America firms for Indonesian first private power contract.

- iv. Foreign aids encourage TWCs to create a business codes and the law as dictated by the U.S. It there by helps to create a stable business environment that donor country's business firms needs to operate.
- It helps to create a new elite class of consumers in the TWCs. Having developed the appetite for western products, this very elite class is willing to drain their meager foreign exchange to import those items.

To buttress the above, George (1966) in his essay entitled: "U.S. Foreign Aids Helps America at Home" had observed that the relatively small amount of money the U.S spends on foreign economic assistance serves as an engine for American economic growth. In addition many aid programmes in donor countries cover an assortment of activities such as strategic and commercial initiatives, which often have a tenuous relationship with development. Business interests are significant in donor countries in the award of aid. Nigeria's case with the US clearly demonstrates the significant role business interest play in awarding aid. Nigeria decided in 1986 to ban the importation of wheat and their basic food in an attempt aimed at boosting domestic agricultural productivity. U.S. food aided in Nigeria was tied to Nigeria importing wheat to the tune of \$250 million from the U.S. per year making Nigeria the 6th largest U.S. wheat importers. Agricultural groups in the U.S. demanded U.S. retaliation unless Nigeria re-opened its market to U.S. wheat (Offiong, 2001).

Foreign aid is therefore used to create economic satellites that would guarantee regular sources of raw materials, cheap labor and markets for finished goods. Alkali (2003:31) had observed that advanced countries could achieve its foreign policy objectives through the use of multilateral loans, bilateral grants, technical assistance and even military aid. In an attempt to get the U.S. Congress to agree to 3/ 100th (that is three third of one hundred) percent increase of aid over that of 1974, the State Department listed some facts about the US economy. These facts are: 40% of their foreign earnings come from the TWCs; nearly 33% of its exports go to the TWCs, these create jobs for American; 25% of U.S. investment in 1973 went into the TWCS. The TWCs therefore need American skills and capital resources to feed their people, develop their resources and assure their people in equitable participation in the benefits of growth, exploit their natural resources in environmentally sound ways; and strengthen their cooperation in building a peaceful stable world community. Contemporarily, aid volumes are declining and donor polices do not give priority to poverty reduction. Governments of the advanced countries do not appear to be making the transition from rhetoric to action. The volumes of resources available for poverty reduction is threatened both by aid budget cut as well as by the diversion of funds for other purposes such as emergency relief and debt forgiveness (Michael, 2005).

It is within this context that Senator (1966) of the American Congress observed that Africa has two unfortunate distinctions, it is both the poorest and the most ignored continent and aid to Africa is considered expendable when resources are sought for other purposes even while Africa suffers from poverty, pollution and the scourge of Aids. Now that the Cold War is over, Africa is of no strategic importance

to the west as such it is not as profitable as other region in terms of foreign aids.

### **Quitting the Shackles of Foreign Aid**

In order for the third world to survive without the foreign aid or make the foreign aid work in a proper direction, there are many approaches that try to explain the manner in which foreign aid should be handled. Some of these ways are:

#### **Searchers Approach**

William Easterly offers a nontraditional and somewhat controversial "searching" approach to dealing with poverty, as opposed to the "planned" approach in his famous critique of the more traditional Owen/Sachs, *The White Man's Burden*. Traditional poverty reduction, Easterly claims is based on the idea that we know what is best for impoverished countries. He claims that they know what's best. Having a top down "master plan," he claims, is inefficient. His alternative, called the "Searchers" approach, uses a bottom up strategy (Cabral and Weinstock, 2010). That is, this approach starts by surveying the poor in the countries in question, and then tries to directly aid individuals, rather than governments. Local markets are a key incentive structure. Easterly strongly discourages aid to government as a rule. He believes, for several reasons, that aid to small "bottom up" organizations and individual groups is a better philosophy than to large governments (Provost, 2012)

In the end of his book, Easterly proposes a voucher system for foreign aid. The poor would be distributed a certain amount of vouchers, which would act as currency, redeemable to aid organizations for services, medicines, and the like. These vouchers would then be redeemed by the aid organizations for more funding. In this way, the aid organization would be forced to compete, if by proxy.

#### **Proscriptive "Ladder Approach"**

Sachs presents a near dichotomy to Easterly. Sachs presents a broad, proscriptive solution to poverty. In his book, *The End of Poverty*, he explains how throughout history, countries have ascended from poverty by following a relatively simple model. First, you promote agricultural development, then industrialize, embrace technology, and finally become modern. This is the standard "western" model of development that has been followed by countries such as China and Brazil. Sachs main idea is that there should have a broad analytical "checklist" of things a country must attain before it can reach the next step on the ladder to development. Western nations should donate a percentage of their GDP as determined by the UN, and pump money into helping impoverished countries climb the ladder. Sachs insists that if followed, his strategy would eliminate poverty by 2025 (Collier, 2005) Sachs advocates using a top down methodology, utilizing broad ranging plans developed by external aid organizations like the UN and World Bank. To Sachs, these plans are essential to a coherent and timely eradication of poverty. He surmises that if donor and recipient countries follow the plan, they will be able to climb out of poverty. Part of Sachs' philosophy includes strengthening the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and the United Nations. If those institutions are given the power to enact

change, and freed from mitigating influences, then they will be much more effective. Sachs does not find fault in the international organizations themselves. Instead, he blames the member nations who compose them. The powerful nations of the world must make a commitment to end poverty, and then stick to it. Sachs believes it is best to empower countries by utilizing their existing governments, rather than trying to circumnavigate them. He remarks that while the corruption argument is logically valid in that corruption harms the efficiency of aid, levels of corruption tend to be much higher on average for countries with low levels of GDP. He contends that this hurdle in government should not disqualify entire populations for much needed aid from the west. Sachs does not see the need for independent evaluators, and sees them as a detractor to proper progress. He argues that many facets of aid cannot be effectively quantified, and thus it is not fair to try to put empirical benchmarks on the effectiveness of aid. Sachs' view makes it a point to attack and attempt to disprove many of the ideas that the more "pessimistic" Easterly stands on. First, he points to economic freedom. One of the common threads of logic in aid is that countries need to develop economically in order to rise from poverty. On this, there is not a ton of debate. However, Sachs contends that Easterly, and many other neo-Liberal economists believe high levels of economic freedom in these emerging markets is almost a necessity to development. Sachs himself does not believe this. He cites the lack of correlation between the average degrees of Economic Freedom in countries and their yearly GDP growth, which in his data set is completely inconclusive. Also, Sachs contends that democratization is not an integral part of having efficient aid distribution. Rather than attach strings to our aid dollars, or only working with democracies or "good governments", Sachs believes we should consider the type of government in the needy country as a secondary concern. Sachs' entire approach stands on the assertion that abject poverty could be ended worldwide by 2025 (Offiong, 1980)

### **David Dollar**

Dollar/Collier showed that current allocations of aid are allocated inefficiently. They came to the conclusion that aid money is given in many cases as an incentive to change policy, and for political reasons, which in many cases can be less efficient than the optimal condition. They agree that bad policy is detrimental to economic growth, which is a key component of poverty reduction, but have found that aid dollars do not significantly incentivize governments to change policy. In fact, they have negligible impact. As an alternative, Dollar proposes that aid be funneled more towards countries with "good" policy and less than optimal amounts of aid for their massive amounts of poverty. With respect to "optimal amounts" Dollar calculated the marginal productivity of each additional dollar of foreign aid for the countries sampled, and saw that some countries had very high rates of marginal productivity (each dollar went further), while others (with particularly high amounts of aid, and lower levels of poverty) had low (and sometimes negative) levels of marginal productivity. In terms of economic efficiency, aid funding would be best allocated towards countries whose marginal productivities per dollar were highest, and away from those countries that had low to negative marginal productivities. The conclusion was that

while an estimated 10 million people are lifted from poverty with current aid policies, that number could be increased to 19 million with efficient aid allocation (Loewenberg, 2008).

### **New Conditionality**

New Conditionality is the term used in a paper to describe somewhat of a compromise between Dollar and Hansen. Paul Mosely describes how policy is important, and that aid distribution is improper. However, unlike Dollar, "New Conditionality" claims that the most important factors in efficiency of aid are income distributions in the recipient country and corruption.

### **McGillivray**

One of the problems in foreign aid allocation is the marginalization of the fragile state. The fragile state, with its high volatility, and risk of failure scares away donors. The people of those states feel harm and are marginalized as a result. Additionally, the fate of neighboring states is important, as economies of the directly adjacent states to those impoverished, volatile "fragile states" can be negatively impacted by as much as 1.6% of their GDP per year. This is no small figure. McGillivray advocates for the reduced volatility of aid flows, which can only be attained through analysis and coordination (Alan, and Linnea, 2009).

### **Conclusion**

In any type of assistance or aid that may come to the third world society needs to be monitored and the veritable purpose of the aid evaluated or to assess if such importance is attached to the aid given to the recipient nation. Without the above, foreign aid would completely become useless, as it is not serving the desired purpose. The contradiction is here is that, if foreign aid is humanitarian in nature, it usually gets such trend of evaluation, but strategic aid may need no evaluation, as the donor nation is just lobbying for a market, resources or military base to serve the interest of the donor nation. The donor may not agitate on how the government of the recipient nation spends the money. Thus, foreign aid on account of strategic purpose is dangerous and not healthy for the third world society.

### **Recommendation**

In order to deal with the issue of third world dependency vis a vis foreign aid, the following recommendations are useful: One, the donor nations should always provide foreign aid based on humanitarian gesture without string attached. This would ensure an independent development planning and economic growth in the recipient nations. Two, the recipient nation must ensure productivity of the foreign aid received for proper developmental projects. Three, third world leaders who siphon money given by international donors into their private accounts for their own familial use, should be prosecuted to the international court of justice, for that should be regarded as crime against humanity. Four, Strategic foreign aid should always be avoided by states, if it is not in line with national development agenda. This is largely because the price of such

strategic aid is more severe than the situation of the third world prior to accepting the aid. Foreign aid should also be directed towards education, agriculture, research and development, health care and infrastructure. For emergency period, shelter, food, clothing and medicine should be consolidated.

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