

What, if anything, do rich nations owe poor nations?

Introduction

Aid may increase demand for the donor state's products by promoting the recipient state's economic growth, and the preservation of social and economic stability in poorer countries may serve the interests of wealthier states, which would otherwise bear the cost of an unwelcome flood of refugees (Opeskin, 1996). Financial help to low-income countries that share similar political principles may support the propagation of an ideology that is appealing to donor states (Opeskin, 1996). Furthermore, a helpful reminder of the prudential incentives driving the acts of many of the world's wealthy industrialized governments may be found in President Nixon's (1970, p.42) injunction to 'remember that the major objective of American aid is not to help other nations but to help ourselves.' When developing their aid policies, developed states frequently favor helping certain states or helping in specific ways, which suggests more than a little amount of national self-interest (Opeskin, 1996). This essay discusses countries in the global north should have a moral obligation as what they own to the global south. Not only does this essay find the reasons, but also it tries to extend to the best ways for northern countries to help southern societies.

Discourses regarding helping the global south

An argument is often raised that many donor countries are responsible for the economic and political structures that have made countries and populations in the global south poorer. Hulme (2016) analyzes that three causations - historical, political, and self-centered - are the main reason for helping southern countries. Firstly, colonialism results in changing the whole economy and contributing to making the global south poorer. Colonialism has not only trapped ex-colonial countries in extreme poverty but also made their economies dependent on structurally unequal external links (Howe, 2006). Dependency theorists claim that European countries took possession of non-European colonies in the nineteenth century for economic benefits (e.g. providing labor and sources of raw materials to European industries with cheap and underpriced costs) (Jeffrey, 2008). This results in not only disturbing and even being trapped in extreme poverty but also an interdependent and unequal relationship between colonizer and colonized. Secondly, political causes mainly focus on reducing the political problems that northern countries face. In the countries where poverty is a norm and where a hope for improvement lacks, some citizens support violent political groups and engage in international terrors and crimes (Hulme, 2016). Thirdly, self-centered motives have been the uppermost in the thinking of northern countries. Under this logic, foreign aids

should be used to promote diplomatic initiatives. It raises the donor's international profile and creates a reputation among its peers as a country that makes a significant contribution on a global scale (Brown, 2013). Northern countries have also used aid as a form of inducement for commercial contracts to be placed with the aid-giving country, tying aid to contracts for their home companies and NGOs and allocating aid as export credits for domestic businesses (Hulme, 2016).

However, Hulme (2016) insists that the causations above show how the northern countries use these combinations of altruism and self-interest to justify their support for the south. In this perspective, the global south is a useful adjunct to elite interests (Hulme, 2016). Under the pretense of reducing global poverty, business and political elites have been able to promote economic liberalization in middle- and low-income countries, resulting in an unparalleled growth in the wealth of these elites (Hulme, 2016). Alongside their growth, the profiles and budgets of official and civil society actors are promoted for global poverty reduction by bilateral aid agencies, the multilaterals, the NGOs, and even celebrities (Hulme, 2016). The northern countries are doing the right thing for the wrong reason. Hence, it should be mainly discussed that the most fundamental reason of what we owe to the global south is the moral obligation.

Understanding Rawls's theories

In terms of moral obligation, Rawls's account provides understanding why northern countries have a duty to assist southern countries. Rawls (1971) argues that we need to construct social justice principles which are used to evaluate how important social institutions distribute fundamental rights and responsibilities and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation. By equally distributing all social values including liberty, opportunity, income, wealth, and the basis of self-respect, Rawls's (1971) claim is the obligation of humanity to transfer northern countries' resources to the south.

The cause of people's wealth and its forms lies in their political culture as well as in the religious, philosophical and moral traditions which support the basic political and social institution structure. For this, Rawls (1993, p.111) defines 'duty of assistance' as helping the global south aim for themselves to be able to 'manage reasonably and rationally in order to become a well-ordered society.' By doing this, Rawls contends that the idea of a people's self-determination as well as loose or confederate form of a society of peoples should be preserved and provided that the divisive hostilities of different cultures can be tamed. He aspires a world free of ethnic hatreds that lead to nationalistic wars. When these regimes are

found, further assistance is not required, even though the now well-ordered society may be still relatively poor. (Rawls, 1993).

Rawls's two general principles (2001) provides a reason for this duty. The first part of the principle states, 'Each person has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties which is compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for all' (Rawls, 1999, p.266). This principle mainly addresses the distribution of rights and liberties, indicating that everyone has a right to basic liberty that can not be taken. However, Rawls (1993) disregards the right to own the 'means of production' and the right to inherit wealth since these rights are not 'basic' liberties, but above the standard of 'basic' rights. Additionally, Rawls restricts the situation where basic liberty could be limited, 'only for the sake of liberty.' Likewise, he adds that curbing the liberties of a group that intended to harm others liberty could be justified.

Rawls (1993) realizes that a society could not avoid inequalities among its people. These inequalities result from inherited characteristics, social class, personal motivation, and even luck. However, Rawls (1999) claims that just society should always find a way to reduce inequalities. Here, the second principle is divided into two parts. The first part 'the fair equality of opportunity principle' is that people 'must be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity' (Rawls, 1999, p.266). Indicating best jobs in private business and public employment, job opportunities should be open to everyone by the society that provides fair equality of opportunity (Rawls, 1999). Also, the second part is 'the difference principle', stating that people 'must be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society' (Rawls, 1999, p.266). By the least advantaged members of society, Rawls refers to those at the bottom of the economic ladder, such as unskilled individuals, earning the lowest wages. After all, under the second principle, Rawls favors maximizing the improvement of the least-advantaged group in society, not only by providing guaranteed minimum income or minimum wage but also with the basic understanding of equal opportunity. Rawls's approach on social justice in general, about the two general principles as an egalitarian principle of distribution, provides the basis for the extension to the international and global level in the development theories of justice.

Practicing Rawls's theories

According to Rawls' theory, the northern countries' obligations to the south are mainly focused on the assistance in institution building. Emphasis on institution building appears in *The Laws of Peoples* (1999), which insists that unless countries with scarce resources exist,

there is no society anywhere in the world that could not be organized, governed, and eventually well-ordered. It stresses the importance of domestic institutions for economic growth. Here, Risse (2005) introduces the debate on various sources of growth, and implies the duties towards the poor. In order to achieve this, Risse (2005, p.85) analyzes three major views of what makes countries rich or poor: geography, integration, and institution. Among these, a duty is to assist institution building. Institution is important as it structures the political, social and economic human exchange. As it shapes human interaction and how society evolves as the time passes, it can also be essential when understanding the historical change of one society. However, he (2005) holds an argument that integration and geography must be concurrently considered to identify what societies owe to each other. These help to avoid being controlled as it depends on factors beyond human control, eventually leading to an extent where redistributive claims must succeed (Risse, 2005).

In addition, cosmopolitanism may also be used to expand the view of Rawls's approach. According to Pogge (2008), cosmopolitans believe that individuals are the unit of moral justification, all individuals matter equally, and all individuals should matter equally to everybody. Individuals cannot be made responsible for their institutional affiliations, since an individual's choice to an institution is beyond their control, just as they were born into either a male or female. Therefore, limiting claims to institutional aspects would mean to hold individuals responsible for matters that are generally beyond their control (Pogge, 2008).

While transferring, however, Opeskin (1996) warns that the maleficence of foreign aid fosters dependency culture and discourage self-reliance on the part of people in southern countries. This aligns with Hancock's (1991, p.183) claim, 'sometimes misused, corrupt, or crass, rather, it is inherently bad, bad to the bone, and utterly beyond reform.' Even though it is undeniable that there are instances of corruption, waste, and mismanagement of aid, we should not have a pessimistic perspective only. 60 billion dollars for foreign aid results in both successes and failures, and our belief should be that the efforts result in all societies including the global south being stabilized (Ridell, 1987).

Despite the criticism that foreign aids are not always used to support the southern societies, Hulme (2006) argues that northern societies should address feasible solutions which can be practiced. The global north needs to focus on national development strategies which are truly owned by the southern countries fostered rather than just imposed by the IMF and World Bank. This ensures that low-income countries have access to the finance they require for national development. Also, major reforms should be done to international finance. It

should be carefully monitored that national elites and multinational corporations steal a country's resources. This allows to raise the capacity of governments to pay tax from for-profit multinational corporations. Here, three roles of northern countries are to pursue making greater investment in research and development for disease and agriculture, to help reform the southern countries' law enforcement and criminal justice agencies in order to stabilize the society. Through this support, Hulme (2006) expects to have both northern and southern societies be able to develop and create a more sustainable growth, eventually achieving an economically equitable and stabilized state.

Conclusion

Global citizens regardless of their geographical origins want a decent future for their children and grandchildren, so we all have to create a fairer and more sustainable world. Meanwhile, the current unsustainable systems of production and consumption (e.g. high levels of preventable poverty, spiraling economic inequality, and social and political exclusion) become barriers of what we want to create (Hulme, 2016). Although there are historical, political and self-centered reasons for duty, moral obligation should be primarily treated as both what northern countries owe to the southern countries and why the north assists them. The language of morality should be used to validate the needs of individuals beyond state borders as a matter of legitimate political concern to define and interpret those needs in an expansive way, and to satisfy them through the global redistribution of resources (Opeskin, 1996). Even if creating a socially just and environmentally sustainable future will not be simple, we can advance in that direction considerably more quickly than we are.

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