

The eurocentric development during post world war ii era essay sample

[History](#)



Introduction

Historians and analysts look to what happened before and after major events to be able to draw out important sociological movements, and that includes the trends supporting the idea of development and how it comes, goes and stays in different countries in different periods of time. Because of the scope and the life altering characteristics of the Second World War, historians, critics and analysts consider this particular event as a very ideal point of reference from which analysis on development can be derived from.

Many considered that the development during the post World War II era was Eurocentric, while there are those who believed that on the contrary, the post World War II era allowed other countries a chance to catch up and match the pace of development of Europe through the assistance of foreign countries in the local efforts to develop and be at par with the US and Europe, while there are others that believed that development happened everywhere - Europe, America and Asia - after World War II was over.

Generally, the idea that Brohman was trying to discuss with regards to his statement about how “ the post World War II development process has been Eurocentric, thus arresting indigenous development within the third world” was basically about the putting to the fore, front and center the development that happened in Europe after the Second World War and how despite the fact that the global conflict affected many parts of the world in different continents, how the world seemed to have focused much of its strength and resources in the intensive rebuilding of Europe but not rendering as much

effort towards the rebuilding of other countries and other sectors of the world.

The impact of this in particular, according to Brohman, was the impact of such development movement that marginalized the indigenous development within the third world, considering the fact that much of the early post World War II world features third world countries that are colonies of European countries inhabited by the colonial European whites and the local, indigenous citizens - the group which according to Brohman was heavily affected when the focus on development centered on Europe.

This belief that Brohman and other history analysts and critics seemed to believe in (the Eurocentric development) may have stemmed from the earlier ideas of development as it happens globally. Marks (2006) talked about the idea of the Eurocentric model as the idea of the natural movement of development as it happens in a global level. " The implication of the Eurocentric model is that development and progress originated in Europe and spread outward from there to encompass the rest of the world: Europeans acted, and the rest of the world was passive or stagnant (Marks, 2006, p 16)." This is largely characterized by the political and historical dependence of such assumption, since Europe is the seat of some of the oldest civilizations in the world and the point of origin of many aspects that other countries now adapted.

The idea that things find its starting point in Europe traces its roots to the imperialistic age of Europe when it believes that the world should revolve around it. Even after the Second World War and the continent in a very bad

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shape smouldering from the flames of a tumultuous war, still, the world finds itself drawn towards Europe, opting to start development in the heart of the European landscape, or so Eurocentric development believers believe.

This occurrence is something which is not hardly unexpected at all; for one, at the resumption of peacetime, trade and commerce and other global undertaking involves the participation of a capable Europe, and that is why non European countries who have something to lose economically, financially and business wise collaborated with the collective effort to develop Europe immediately after the war, even at the expense of the development of the indigenous third world, which global players may have considered as somewhat a less priority in the effort to reconstruct the broken pieces of the world.

There are many players in the effort to develop and rebuild Europe, and one of these countries is the United States. But the “Eurocentric” attitude of the US in the effort to develop Europe more than anything or anywhere else is more socio-political and socio-financial in nature. “The U. S. was particularly concerned with the dire straits of war-torn Europe. With the Soviet Union already occupying Central and Eastern Europe, and with powerful Communist political parties in France and Italy, the US worried that much of Europe might fall to the Soviets (Rifkin, 2004, p. 204).”

Realizing the impact of the absence of globalized unity and the presence of possible threats for future war and global scale armed conflicts similar to what happened in the US, the American government made efforts to establish their influence, power and clout around the world within being

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directly imperialist, and they began with the development of Europe which for US is an important ally more than ever especially with the fact that the country is aware of the rise to power of other countries particularly those from Asia.

So the US put considerable amount of support to the Europe development efforts. “ To ensure against a Communist takeover, the US embarked on a two program to secure Western Europe in the post-war era (Rifkin, 2004, p. 204).” This included the military presence in the form of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or the NATO, and the economic assistance from the US. “ The US also launched an economic recovery initiative to resurrect the economies of Western Europe, in the belief that it would be the best means of slowing the advance of Communist political parties in France, Italy and elsewhere, and lowering the threat of Soviet influence (Rifkin, 2004, p. 204).”

Another possible reason why Brohman believe such occurrence took place is because of the reality that much of the fighting that happened during the Second World War took place in Europe. Countries like France, Italy, Germany and Holland were just some of the places that served as the stage for the exchange of hostilities and firepower between the Allied forces and the invading Germans.

Houses, building, roads and important railroads and bridges which are critical to local and international business were severely damaged particularly during the main offensive of the Allied power in the European Theater of Operation in (ETO) in the hope to break Hitler’s Fortress Europe and defeat

the German imperialism that cloaked much of Europe before the Allied forces arrived.

Europe indeed took the nastiest, most destructive, most damaging and most brutal World War II experience. It would not be difficult to imagine how bad Europe was immediately after WWII was declared over, considering that most of the firepower that the entire world can muster was centered and unloaded in European battlegrounds.

There is also the geopolitical factor that comes into play regarding the perceived Eurocentric post World War II development. This is because of many different factors. First, there is the fact that European influence in politics and leadership in different aspects of social life (financial, business, education, religion, science and technology, etc.) acted as a very powerful hand that can directly or indirectly manipulate policies on a country-per-country basis or even in a global range, making such policies (including development policies) centered in Europe.

Another reason why the development during the post World War II timeline was centered in Europe is because of the fact that Europe is the cradle of much of the technology and paradigms that can be used by any country to enable the start to development happen in a quicker pace compared to the state of technology and intellectual capacity of most third world countries.

Take for example the need to rebuild and repair the broken and destroyed resources critical for the resumption of Europe in the global trade (buildings, shipyards, airports, tunnels, bridges etc) - Europe evidently during that time

proved more capable in instituting development processes for itself compared to the ability of other regions like Asia to rebuild itself after the war.

Because of the pace that Europe took in the development process and in comparison with how some place looked as if it was lagging behind in comparison, some observers and analysts formed the idea that the development during the post World War II was Eurocentric, when it can also just be a case of Europe developing much faster than the other regions in the world due to internal/inherent characteristics and not because of politics and manipulations that funnelled resources and initiatives inside Europe to allow faster development compared with other regions.

Perhaps what made the Eurocentric development real is the fact that the efforts exerted in different regions of the world yielded different results found between time gaps - the development outside Europe was not felt immediately as did the Eurocentric development, making historians believe that the only acceptable idea of development post World War II was that from inside Europe.

“ Newly independent Third World countries, in turn, pushed the specialized agencies to fund more and more services and projects that might improve the lives of their people. But as we have seen in the previous narrative, most of those goals went unrealized during the two decades following World War II. The ‘ Development Decade’ of the 1960s did witness a growth in national GNP, but there was no correlating decline in malnutrition, infant mortality,

illiteracy, unemployment, or the gap between the rich and the poor countries (Staples, 2006, p. 181).”

Challenging Brohman’s idea of the Eurocentric post World War II development

If someone would pose a challenge to the idea that development was Eurocentric during the post World War II era, it could use some of the available literature which supports the idea that development among the indigenous and marginalized third world countries also happened after the World War II.

Staples (2006) believe that contrary to Brohman’s idea of the Eurocentric development after World War II, the effort to develop the world and move forward was not limited to Europe and cannot be characterized as a phenomenon that isolated the needs and overall welfare of indigenous people and the third world countries.

On the contrary, Staples believed that the World War II as a global experience triggered the move towards initiating efforts that can develop both Europe and the rest of the older, more superior countries as well as indigenous people and the third world. “ But World War II witnessed a revolution in expectations that compelled the imperial and indigenous governments of most countries to contribute to the development of peoples throughout the Third World...The United Nations systems and its specialized agencies played a key role in promoting this process (Staples, 2006, p. 181).”

Because of the rise to power of new countries previously not considered as superpower but was elevated to such status after their role in the Second World War, new countries like the United States took a more active role in the pursuit of globalized development. Leonard (2005) was among those who presented ideas that would counter the claim of the Europe exclusive or Eurocentric post WWII development, hinting instead that Europe was among the target of development, alongside other areas of the world.

“ The urgency of development problems was therefore recognized immediately in the wake of the Second World War. The United States and its allies acted quickly to shore up the developed countries of Western Europe and Japan through such programs as the Marshall Plan and the Bretton Woods System, under the auspices of which were created the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (better known today as World Bank) (Leonard, 2005, p. 459).”

Without the presence of economic efforts in third world countries and the indigenous sectors, it is difficult to justify the fact that previously less influential countries are starting to become a very dominant force in the global trade, putting to the table new factors that can alter the status quo established in part after how things fell together after the Second World War. Cain and Harrison (2001) pointed out that “ the period since the end of the Second World War has witnessed a major surge in capitalist social relations and productive forces in the third world (Cain and Harrison, 2001, p. 207).”

Conclusion

It is true that there is always a silver lining in every dark cloud. In one of the darkest hours of the world history, a new dawn appeared.

From the ashes of the battle weary and war torn Europe, the hope for the new development efforts surfaced, originating from different entities like the United Nations (UN) and other groups like the NATO and other regional alliances geared at creating a protective circle that will look after the economic and military concerns of Europe while some of its countries are undergoing development processes after what was a very crushing experience being the hotbed of hostilities during the efforts to repel Germany's imperialism.

The United States used this opportunity to show its potential toward becoming the new hegemon for the world. It provided assistance to Europe and managed international relationships well so that in the absence of new open combat and armed hostilities between nations, the US can foster a global economic relationship that will have the US at the center, and Europe, as well as the rest of the third world countries, orbiting around it like satellites.

It is no question that the development efforts inside Europe were real and evident immediately after World War II, continuing on even until today. Some believe that what happened was a Eurocentric development - wherein the world centered in on Europe with regards to the efforts to rebuild the world, while there are those who believe that the development was not entirely exclusive to Europe.

Whichever of the two positions is true, critics and historians believe that mankind is nowhere far from its previous problems that development hoped to cure. “ At the turn of the millennium, the world seemed to be posing the same questions that it had after World War II, but with seemingly less commitment to pursuing bold new strategies to improve lives (Staples, 2006, p. 181).”

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