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Global Justice: A Conceptual Framework

Raj Kumar Kothari¹

Global justice has entered the mainframe of global intellectual discourse. In fact, the intellectual stage for theories of imperialist exploitation was set forth early in the twentieth century by Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin. These theories were rediscovered and reinvented in the 1970s when scholars belonging to the dependency school took on the modernization theorists. The dependency theorists argued that countries of the developing world could neither replicate the path taken by the west, nor compete with the advanced capitalist world, because of their shared experience of colonialism. Though formally colonialism had ended by 1960s, the experience had succeeded in casting a rather long shadow.

In fact, political philosophers in the twentieth century had largely focused their theorizing about justice almost exclusively within the jurisdiction of sovereign state; though recent years have witnessed a marked extension to the global sphere.

The present global order comprises treaty and conventions, regulating territorial sovereignty, security, trade, human rights and environment. Politically the UN Charter codifies the most significant rules governing this system. Economically, the Bretton Woods institutions – IMF, World Bank, WTO – form a network intended to prevent war and foster worldwide betterment. The moot point is that there does not have any compatible institution like the sovereign state at the international level that could ensure global justice. International system is not sovereign; whereas, global justice requires global sovereignty. In other words, the absence of sovereignty over the states makes it practically infeasible to pursue global justice. The present paper attempts to focus on the evolving debates centered around the concept of global justice during the twentieth century and beyond.

Key Words: *Global Justice, Westphalia, Bretton Woods, International Politics*

¹ Department of Political Science, Vidyasagar University, rajkumarkothari65@gmail.com