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Research Article

How to Think and Frame Third Worldism with Illustrations from Iran-South Africa Diplomatic Relations, 2006-2019

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The historical relationship between Iran and South Africa dating to ancient times ignites flames of solidarity for countries that have suffered the predicament of global isolation and apartheid, respectively. However, there are long-standing fears that their common radical anti-imperial agenda of disrupting the structure of international order would isolate them further from the "thorax" of the global system to the periphery. It is not clear yet, the implications of this renewed geopolitical and geostrategic realignment on the contemporary world order on which that asymmetry seems to rest. I argue that the direction the Iran-South Africa partnerships will take in this renewed realignment depends largely on the ability of each side to manage the unequal political power dynamics that exist between the counterparts. On this note, I conclude by suggesting, the demand for reform within the aegis of the south-south solidarity, including, reframing the concept of Third Worldism will require the removal of the structural imbalances that more often frustrate the development of countries outside the "thorax."

Introduction

There can be no other case study to illustrate the concept of Third Worldism in the wake of the New International Economic Order (NIEO), other than the Iran-South Africa diplomatic relations. In a 2010 document for the *South African foreign policy White Paper,* the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation noted, "Building a better world would require the diplomacy of Ubuntu" (Department of International Relations and Cooperation, RSA, 2010). Unequivocally, the principles underpinning the

South African foreign policy embrace the pan-African ethos that inspires the need to collectively address shared challenges of underdeveloped nations. This statement is closely aligned with the geopolitical paradigm of the French philosopher, Alfred Sauvy, who in 1952 coined the term, "*Third World*" (cited in Solarx, 2012). Sauvy coined the term as an analogy of the *Third State* to mean 'people without privileges'. Today, the notion of *Third World* can be interpreted from different perspectives. From a geopolitical viewpoint, it encompasses very distinct nations, with a common colonial history. In this sense, *Third Worldism* denotes the pursuit of anti-colonialist and neutralist ideology as well as the rejection of domination of great power politics (Zeng, 2016). It is against this order that the South African foreign policy is intertwined with the country's pursuit of a better Africa in a better world (Department of International Relations and Cooperation, RSA, 2010). In fact, South Africa's global positioning as a 'middle-power', and 'bridge-builder' between the West and the South constructs the country as a natural 'prominent actor' (Flemes 2009; Taylor 2006).

The other interpretation of *Third World* is through the (de) colonial prism. An optimistic view might suggest that the imperialistic tendencies of the west through the notion of *Third-Worldism* came to an end with the 1955 Baldung Conference that led to the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (Patel and McMichael, 2004). The Bandung conference ended with a call for increased technical and cultural cooperation between governments of Africa and Asia; establishment of the economic development fund to be managed by the United Nations, support for human rights and self-determination, singling out the Republic of South Africa (Wolf-Philips, 1989). The growth of debate about the *Third World* from different scholarly platforms-economic, military, cultural and political, has spilled over into general political and diplomatic discourse. Unfortunately, the term has evolved into what one could call a *taxonomical jingle*. As a result, the so-called underprivileged nations in Africa and elsewhere are framed *Third-World*, not always for progressive reasons. There is also the risk that the term will be loosely adopted as a neocolonial *statute* that only serves to advance oppression of the global south. However, the South African foreign policy accords the ethos and practice of *Third-World* a significant place within the broader debate on south-south cooperation. I argue that the contemporary word order is an extension of the *Third World* experiences, and thus, the direction the Iran-South Africa partnerships will take in this renewed realignment depends largely on the ability of each side to manage the unequal political power dynamics that exist between the counterparts. For instance, the social, political and economic impact of UN sanctions against countries in the so-called

global south has wide and deeper ramifications. And so, forming a south-south alliance should be aimed at bridging the gap between the 'emerging powers' and the rest of the developing world.

The purpose of this article is to propose and test the validity of a taxonomic definition of *Third World* in the framework of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) characterized by global economic inequalities. The article is thus formulated around a fundamental question; using the case of Iran-South Africa diplomatic relations, how relevant is the notion of *Third World* to the Iran-South African cooperation? In the following section II, the notion of *Third World* is contextualized within the existing geopolitical landscape and tensions that explain the evolution of *Third-Worldism* in its historical and contemporary world order. In section III, the concept of *Third-World* will be 'reconstructed' within the four dimensions: 1) geopolitical; 2) psychological; and 3) sociological; and 4) the New International Economic Order. While it is necessary to examine the concept of *Third World* in terms of all these four dimensions, this work will focus only on the fourth-the New International Economic Order. Finally, the conclusion reflects on the relevance of the notion of *Third World* in the New World Order.

Why the Periodization, 2006-2019

In this work, the time frame has been chosen as the period 2006-2019. The year 2006 marked the beginning of Iran's political economy problems. In 2006, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 1696 on the country aimed at pressuring Iran to stop its uranium enrichment program. Although that was not the first wave of sanctions the country faced, it stood as the first measure taken by the international group that has brought with it political, economic and social consequences for Iran. One of them is the partial economic isolation of Iran from the vast world market. 2019 was chosen because South Africa is among the three African states to serve as non-permanent members of the UNSC. Although in 2015 the UNSC passed resolution 2231 to lift the UN sanctions against Iran, many western countries isolated the Middle East state, edging the country into further hardship. Hence, resorting to aligning its foreign policy with China and Russia, and eventually Africa.

The interaction between Africa and people of Persian descent can be traced to the Persian conquest of Egypt in 525 BC. The arrival of Persian merchants to the East African coast and the Indian Ocean islands centuries later (from IX c. AD onwards) marked a second wave of migration from what is now Iran to Africa. Architectural influences, cultural traditions, and Persian loanwords to the Kiswahili

language are only the most obvious pieces of evidence of the cultural legacy left behind by these mainly mercantile contacts between old Persia and the Swahili Coast.

Theorizing Iran's Global Predicament and South-South Cooperation

Since the mid-nineteenth century Iran has been experiencing waves of, on the one hand, intensive interest in the Western civilisation, and, on the other hand, disillusionment with and rejection of European paradigms. Accordingly, Iran has been swinging in terms of its developmental path from the pursuit of industrialisation and cultural Westernization to the 'return-to-self' approach, which was characterised by anti-urbanisation sentiments and the idealisation of village life. Africa has also had its own share of trying to carve out alternative development paths and of a return to the self. Indeed, the emancipatory political thought of Fanon and Césaire was popular in Iran. The Iranian Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic seemed to have finally settled a clear direction for the country – marked by rejection of the 'Western cultural invasion', Islamization of social sciences, and a strong focus on the Persian past of the country as foundations for the Iranian national identity. Accordingly, Iran's strategic position in terms of foreign policy took a 180-degree turn towards anti-imperialism, opposing Western hegemony and promoting instead South-South cooperation. During the Pahlavi Shah's rule these relations were further strengthened, especially with South Africa, in the 1940s, through the trading in oil. After the 1979 revolution in Iran, the government gave its support to South Africa's liberation struggle and there was a marked shift in Iran's hitherto pro-US foreign policy. Some scholars have observed that Africa-Iran relations, post-1979, have largely been anchored on Iran's anti-imperialist foreign policy, energy and a common political standing. It is also in this context that Iran turned to Africa, seeking to build alliances. Iran has been focusing particularly on developing cultural and diplomatic ties, strengthening trade and economic cooperation as well as collaboration in the field of defence.

The efforts to build stronger ties with African nations are partly aimed at offsetting Iran's increasing isolation by the West, while cultural diplomacy is sought as a vehicle for greater intercultural dialogue between the country and its potential African partners. Similarities in terms of diversity (multiculturalism, multilingualism, the co-existence of diverse religious and spiritual traditions within one state) make the intercultural dialogue a good starting point for building understanding between the different worlds within the South-South network, and opening up new avenues for

successful partnerships. After all, cultural diplomacy is critical to fostering peace among communities by creating ways to learn and respect the cultural diversity and heritage of others through intercultural dialogue. It strives to work towards equality and recognition of human rights. As a soft power with the ability to shape public opinion through ideas, cultural expressions and ethical values, it can have a positive impact on global peace and stability by helping to influence the ideologies of diverse communities and nations.

This article is situated in the context of South-South cooperation discourse and seeks to traverse the varied dimensions thereof, history, culture, politics, geo-politics, multilateralism, trade, economics, and science and technology. The South-South cooperation framework for collaboration among countries of the non-aligned movement was conceptualised at the 1955 Africa-Asia Conference in Bandung, Indonesia. It was born out of the need to balance the world power matrix to reflect the interests of developing countries. The Bandung Conference, convened by Indonesia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan, gathered over 24 countries from Africa and Asia (including the Middle East) to discuss the prospects of future South-South cooperation. The outcome of the conference was a communiqué signed by the participating countries, which described the goals of the newly created network. They included the promotion of economic and cultural cooperation, protection of human rights and the principle of self-determination, a call for an end to racial discrimination, as well as a reiteration of the importance of peaceful coexistence. The politics of solidarity between the countries of the Global South were further ironed out at the UN Conference on Trade and Development in 1964 in Geneva, Switzerland, and a Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries was adopted in 1978 at the conference of the Global South held in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The South-South cooperation functions on the principles of non-interference, equality, non-conditionality and national sovereignty. It constitutes an important framework for assistance between the Global South countries in the spheres of economy, politics, trade and investment, education and training, health and environment, among others. BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) alliance can be considered one of the most tangible manifestations of the South-South cooperation today. It represents an attempt at reshaping global power relations by moving away from a neoliberal and free-market dominated framework of the West.

Recognising the historicity of this "Global South network" and the inherent power inequalities between its parties, as well as taking stock of the larger international context of the modern colonial

world system, this article employs further a decolonial stance by using the "political ecology of difference" framework. Escobar's "political ecology of difference" deals with the economical, ecological and cultural distribution conflicts that arise over access to and control of a resource (be it wealth, asset or natural resources) or power assigned to knowledge and cultural practices, at the intersections of the social, the economical and the political (Escobar 2008). "Economic crises are ecological crises are cultural crises", argues Escobar. The framework is not a universal approach but a contextualised theory of difference depending on historical processes. It highlights the incommensurability of modern economy and pluri-culturality, calling for re-embeddedness of the economy in society, ecosystems and culture. It is a decolonial project that addresses pervasive binarisms of Euro-modernity and acknowledges the complexity of the ecological-economical-cultural relations. It postulates the possibility of constructing alternative worlds by recognising epistemic differences and advancing political autonomy and counterhegemony. It further advocates for a "meshwork-like network culture".

Accordingly, within this framework, the South-South network can be conceptualised as a self-organising, decentralised and nonhierarchical meshwork that operates in a nonlinear manner clashing with the domineering linear logic of capitalist modernity, while coexisting with the controls and hierarchical national systems and the international political and economic relations realms (De Landa 1997). "Hierarchies entail a degree of centralised control, ranks, overt planning, tendency toward homogenization, and particular goals and rules of behaviour, they operate largely under linear time and treelike structures. (…) Meshworks are based on decentralized decision-making, self-organisation, and heterogeneity and diversity. Since they are nonhierarchical, they have no overt single goal".

Within this framework, no particular way forward for Africa-Iran relations is prescribed. Instead, the varied possible scenarios and directions in which the many heterogeneous elements of this South-South network can grow are highlighted and discussed. The decolonial perspective adopted acknowledges different developmental paths of the network, based on the cultural differences of its elements, and recognises the importance of the politics of place. The suggested meshwork-like network culture has at its core autonomous forms of organisation over which no direct control can be exercised, due to the complexity of the intersecting threads and their dynamic nature.

Contextualizing Third Worldism

The historical ties between Africa and Iran go back to the era of the Empire in the 9th century. Iranian adventure in the Eastern African coastal cities dates back to the 16th century (Onderco, 2016). In the recent beginning 1950s, the collectivity of Africa and Iran was anchored on the notion of *Third World*. The notion denotes both functional and social constructs. The functionality of the concept has undergone phases of what one would call 'chronicle initiation'. The first wave of Third Worldism occurred between the 1950s and 60s, a period, some scholars refer to as the de-colonial renaissance. The peak of South African engagement with the Third World movement is when the African National Congress (ANC) attended the 1955 Bandung conference. The movement allowed African states to host meetings in Cairo in 1964, Lusaka, Zambia in 1970 and Algiers in 1973 (Bandyopaddhyaya, 1977). The second wave of Bandung regimes was felt in the 1960ss-1970s, mainly led by the Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi. During this phase, the Third World movement was led by revolutionary African leaders, Ahmed Ben Bella (1962–65) and Houari Boumeʹ - dienne (1965–78) in Algeria, Tanzania under Julius Nyerere (1965–85), Libya under Muammar Qaddafi after 1969, the Derg (Committee) in Ethiopia (1974–91), Guinea-Bissau from 1974 under Amilcar Cabral's successors, the People's Republic of Angola under the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) after 1975, and Mozambique under Samora Moises Machel (1975– 86) (Mushakoji, 2005).

The period 1980s–2000s ushered in a new form of Third Worldism, the New International Economic Order (NIEO). It is during this period that global powers send signals of economic hardship to the so-called global south countries. This was the era that witnessed the restructuring of the world economy to address the North–South tensions (Cho, 2004). The Bretton Woods institutions (International Monetary Fund and the World Bank), supported by the administration of Ronald Reagan (1981–88), the governments of Margaret Thatcher in Britain (1979–90) and Helmut Kohl in (West) Germany (1982–98), encouraged the governments of the Third World to liberalise trade, privatise their public sectors and deregulate their financial sectors. This trend also coincided with the renewal of the Cold War and the further weakening of the Non-Aligned Movement. Despite regular meetings, NAM played an increasingly limited role in international affairs during the so-called New Cold War and after.

The changing economic landscape, characterized by growth in Asia–Pacific, seems to have set the decline mode for *Third Worldism.* For a growing number of observers, the economic success of the Newly Industrialising Countries of Northeast and Southeast Asia by the 1980s and 1990s had called

into question many of the tenets of and the need for Third Worldism. For increasingly influential neoliberals the capitalist transformation of Asia had undermined the Third Worldist idea that the hierarchical character of the world economy was holding back the Third World countries, and so, this perspective sustained the relevance of the notion of a Third World. Another factor that degraded the idea of *Third World* during the New Post-Cold War era was the Pan-Asianism grounded in state-guided capitalist development (Berger 2004). However, this was thwarted when in the 1980s the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad (1981–2003), articulated particularly a strident anti-Western Pan-Asianism that was grounded in an explicitly racial conception of national and international power relations (Holm, 1990).

The African-Iran alliance building has occurred at the backdrop of several plights, especially on the African continent, abject poverty, and underdevelopment. However, sharing a common view of the world concerning the loaded dislike for the West, as it bears the bad image of past imperialism, stands as a crucial incentive for the fostering of that relationship seen to be central to this relationship. Besides, the military factor and the search for uranium in southern African states such as Zimbabwe, Malawi, Namibia and Lesotho states by Iran ignite controversies, because the object of this venture for Iran is to supply its nuclear venture. This is where the 'road meets the rubber' for Iran in the global system because nuclear projects are sanctioned by the UN.

President Ahmadinejad's regime in 2008 claimed that there were "no limits to the expansion of Iran's ties with African countries" (Randall, 2014). By 2011, Ahmadinejad's schedule had taken him to Senegal, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Mali, Nigeria, Djibouti, Comoros, Kenya, Sudan, Algeria and Gambia, in addition to Tehran having dispatched ministerial-level delegations to improve relations with other strategic allies such as Ghana, Angola and South Africa (25). Economic diplomacy takes precedence in Iran-Africa relations; however, cultural, religious affinity, shared history of colonialism and mutual histories are also bases for this relationship.

President, Ahmadinejad adopted a confrontational approach towards the US and the West. This marked what one could call, the renaissance of "third worldism". In effect, this was, essentially, the materialization of the Third Worldism principle accurately stated in its 1979 Constitution. On this basis, Africa became a priority in Iran's new external policies. Despite African apprehension, Iran has tried to cement its relationship with Africa via anti-Western rhetoric. In Kenya in 2009, Ahmadinejad warned the continent to remain vigilant and disallow 'the hooligan countries [of the West] to return and rob its countries'. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Iran asserted that its friendship

with the country was founded upon a common opposition to 'Western countries and a number of big powers which strive to plunder the resources of the African nations and colonize them'. Gambia and Iran have rallied around the notion that they were both being antagonized by 'bullying' Western hegemons, while Ahmadinejad and Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe ruminated on the 'need to come up with a coalition for peace in response to the aggression of global bullies'.

The Rouhani presidency's foreign policy emphasized a strong engagement with African states. It aimed at securing the already existent alliance and making more allies therein. Rouhani's legacy was a continuity from Ahmadinejad's presidency. Ahmadinejad made constant official visits to Africa; the African leaders' visits to Iran; as well as Iran's hosting of the Iran-Africa Conference in Teheran in 2008. Others have viewed this change of foreign policy by Iran towards Africa, specifically Eastern and West African states as being "feverish" (Lefebvre, 2019). As a result of this stand taken by Iran, it holds the position of observer member in the African Union (AU). Through this position, Iran secures the support of some of the member states of the AU as it has the ability to interact with as many of them as possible (Weber, 2004). The South African endless support of the Iranian position on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is a manifest of the 'Iran in Africa and Africa in Iran.' But, the nuclear issue is a 'hot potato' for South Africa's future relationship with the Islamic Republic. More so, the rise to power of a leadership seemingly more turned to solve the nuclear issue directly with the Western states places the Iran-Africa Relationship in a fragile condition considering Iran's foreign policy priorities. President Rouhani has been perceived to be turning Iran's attention to the West, hence, underplaying Third Worldism (Chimarizeni, 2017). Chimarizeni's view is, however, contested, despite the decrease in direct contact with African states, the political and geo-strategic relevance of Africa to Iran remains unchanged (McAnneny 2014). It is clear that these controversies and tensions in the global order elicited the need to strengthen Iran's relations with other states in the global south, in particular, African states through Third World alliance building.

Building alliances with African states is particularly a *motif* of Iran-South Africa relations. This is particularly important when comes to the question of 'nuclearization' in Iran. However, some would argue that building alliances with African states on this matter is an effort in futility, because the nuclear proliferation problem can only be resolved by global powers (Chimarizeni 2017). Such views have been reinforced by Iran's foreign policy critiques who observe that the power differentials in the global south, particularly Iran, tend to use the *Third World* rhetoric to advance its geopolitical goals in Africa. In turn, African states ride on similar narratives in an attempt to secure various kinds of

external support. Yet Iran's turn towards Africa and especially South Africa is viewed as a strategic measure towards overcoming the negative economic impact originating from the sanctions and global isolation. In what seems to be the 'litmus' test for this relationship, the South African strategic role in the international instruments against the proliferation of nuclear power, further degrades vibes of solidarity. On one hand, South Africa's non-proliferation credentials required the country to be concerned about Iran's behavior. On the other hand, the south-south cooperation phenomenon obligates the two countries to continue putting pressure on the west to erase imperialistic tendencies.

Before delving deeper into the indicators of south-south cooperation, the following section attempts a new classification of the notion of *Third World* in the wake of the NIEO.

How to Think Third-Worldism in the Awake of NIEO

In this article, 'Third World' is defined as a concept representing the degree of "shared values", "the Ubuntu diplomacy" and "south-south solidarity" among countries in the global south. It is related to but not identical to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). It is much deeper than terms such as less developed countries (LDC) and not synonymous with- the *classical theory* of Mint (1958) which includes variables describing international trade, and differentiating terms such as poor countries versus the wealth of nations. In the wake of the decolonization debate in Africa and the trade wars between China and the US, the notion of *Third World* has attracted both controversy and convergence. The controversy has mainly assumed two patterns. The neoclassic school begins depicting advocates of *Third Worldism* as an instrumentalist group of nations seeking to manipulate Cold War politics (Warner and Gallo 2008). Some in this category, instead of demonstrating how the term's usage is retrogressive, concentrate their attacks on the notion itself, which they claim to be responsible for the development and unbalanced global politics, hence calling for a shift in the construction of Third World within a praxis-oriented approach. Others like Mark Berger (2004) believe that the notion of *Third World* 'died' in the 1980s. This bunch of scholars hold the view that the only way to sustain the relevance of the notion is to adapt it to the dynamic new world order.

Historians and Pan-Africanists then come to the defence of Third Worldism, by reiterating the ideology of 'solidarity', (Dirlik 2004), which they believe to share values with the conception of 'south-south cooperation'. To them, south-south cooperation is a 'modernized' term that fits in the contemporary economic and political world order. In the middle of this controversy, the debate shifts from the basic question of whether or not the usage of the notion *Third World* has been favourable to

the global south and particularly African countries, to the different question of whether or not the notion is still *relevant* in the New International Economic Order. These conceptual and pragmatic controversies have motivated me to reconsider the concept of *Third World* within the ambit of the contemporary world order and validate its applicability in the conception of south-south cooperation. The four dimensions for the basis for reconstructing the concept *Third World.*

Geopolitics, the shared value system that binds together Africa, Asia and Latin America. Nations of the world who are not necessarily sharing geographical borders, but they share a common colonial history and are dependent on the western powers, in all spheres of life, culture, economy, politics and technology. Several decades of the use and disuse of the term *Third World* has (de)generated the world into two literal camps, "us" versus "them", and "we" versus "them." In its historical context, the term has a deeper meaning, sometimes tagged with anti-colonialism, a non-aligned group of nations in the global south or socio-political stratification of the broader international community. In French culture, the term means third position or third force (*tiers monde*) (Ali Mazrui cited in Hoskins, 1981). In other words, people who occupied the Third State were underprivileged. However, with the end of the Cold War, socialists were being converted to market democracies, and so the concept was losing grip in international relations studies. This conception was so much informed and influenced by the insolences of the Cold War.

Psychological, the shared value system that differentiates between the *oppressed* and the *oppressor* in the global system. The oppressed view the anti-colonial struggles as directly linked with their own attempts to obtain liberation and freedom. The strategic value system of this power bloc is driven by the shared colonial imperialism. States in this league are resentful of the former colonial powers.

Sociological, the shared value system is not necessarily industrialization, affluence or blooming gross domestic product (GDP), instead, it is building societies that provide for the 'basic needs' of their people on the basis of 'self-reliance', societies that can exist with equity, independence and dignity in the global system. In the literature, the term appears to be used most often to refer to a type of development that is value-laden, and highly susceptible to the factors of time, space and culture (Muni 1979). Measuring development purely in terms of GNP is part of the marginalization of the global south. This is because many countries in the Third World struggle to achieve development through western models. And so, *Third Worldism* should be viewed as a system of 'self-management' that reflects the historical and social mores of the people in the global south-Africa, Asia and Latin America. Even Middle East territory has a unique history characterized by revolutions, monarchies,

and the controversy between modernity and traditionalism (Bitarafan et al. 2019); the region's perception of the west is intolerant of imperialism, hence, in this article, the region is classified as Third World.

New International Economic Order, the shared value system of shifting the global economic centre of gravity from North-West to South and East, and pursuing a fair and equitable rule-based international trade regime. Through the Third World platform, Eastern-oriented economic frameworks such as the OPEC (oil exporting countries) have managed to forge a united front with the rest of the developing countries in compelling a dialogue on the West to resolve overall economic issues to the advantage of the long-suffering. *Third World* and evolve a New International Economic Order founded on the ideology and national interest. In the literature, the push for the institutionalization and continuity of the Third World is justified by the view that the current system is loaded against the interests of the developing countries. This aggressive approach to global equalization, ignited new economic thinking leading to the formation of the "Third World Forum" comprising the leading social scientists and intellectuals of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Concepts embodied in these four dimensions have been identified previously in the literature. Third World is clearly identified with *geopolitics* by Berger (2004) when he identifies issues that often create tensions in the global system; opposition to Northern hegemony; South-South solidarity; the sovereign equality and independence of nations; non-interference in internal affairs; and recognition of the perceived neo-colonialist underpinnings of global affairs. Although Berger's scholarship is mainly geopolitical, he also discussed solidarity and religious sentiments (*sociological*), and how Iran and Africa's relations have been cultivated and broken at the same time (*psychological*). Muni (1979) uses a *sociological* lens to advance to illustrate how the notion of *Third World* is closely related to structural inequalities being experienced by countries in the global south. He reinforces his view through a *geopolitical* prism by arguing that Third World is a distinct set of political culture that tries to survive in an environment that often experiences strategic polarization. Muni believes that *Third Worldism* was largely shaped by the cold war and power bloc politics. Muni uses the term *'Third Force'* (*psychological*) to describe the Nonaligned Group of Asian and African countries. This brings out the view that Third World dynamics of a bipolar global balance (*geopolitical*). In a *sociological* discussion, Chinese Marxism-Leninism, Japan, Europe and Canada, the middle section, belong to the second world. China belongs to the Third World: the Third World has a huge population. The whole of Africa belongs to the Third World and Latin America too (Cho-Hsuan and Tsao, 1970).

Similarly, Byrne (2016), views Third Worldism from the *New International Economic Order* prism by linking it to structural inequalities in the international system and the world economy. He believes that initiatives such as the Non-Aligned Movement and the Afro-Asian movement are a judicious response to this global disequilibrium. And so, the Third World could easily create a 'united front' in the struggle against hegemonist and imperialist superpowers, in a way fixing the market imperfection, and lopsided industrial development that threaten to put the prevailing *NIEO* into jeopardy.

In the contemporary world order, *Third Worldism* has taken a transnational approach to anti-Bretton Woods and anti-neoliberal movements of the 1990s and 2000s (*New International Economic Order*). The anti-west rhetoric through Third World cuts across regions-Regionally, Third World speech has been incubated in the intellectual paradigms of Négritude, pan-Africanism, African socialism and Afro-Marxism in Africa and the Caribbean, and in pan-Arabism and Maoism in the Middle East and Asia. But, there are fears that with the entrenchment of the term global south (*geopolitical*), all the Southern States might just regress into the global village, hence giving room for another form of neoliberalism where the economically powerful nations (*NIEO*) would enjoy the status of "emerging markets", at the expense of the underprivileged ones. If this prognosis stands the test of time, the notion of *Third World* risks disestablishment. There are reasons however to believe that the notion of *Third World* is not obsolete: the world continues to witness the global powers (China and Russia on one side and US and allies on the other) and international organizations putting pressure on regimes in Latin America. Regimes such as Venezuela may not be honest in their dispensation of justice and fairness to their citizens, but the level of jostling between the leading powers gives an appetite for an expanded Third World movement. Moreover, in the wake of trade wards, Africa has become a playing field between governments and Euro-US companies on the one hand, and the Chinese and other members of the BRICS on the other. In the Middle East, the winding armed conflict continues to degrade humanity (*sociological*). The 'schism' that defined *Third Worldism* during the colonial period remains active. The concept is associated with several other Marxist ideologies; national liberation, Pan-Asianism, Pan-Arabism, Pan-Africanism and Pan- Americanism. The international community through United Nations defined Third World from an economic perspective (*NIEO*). The endorsement of the NIEO by the sixth UN General Assembly in 1974 transformed perceptions of the notion of *Third World.*

Greene (1980) discusses Third World in terms of factors of economic production; nations which lag behind in industrial development, low in per capita income, exporters of only raw materials which are subject to extreme price oscillation and whose markets are 'basic needs' driven as opposed to value additions. This is *NIEO*. He also points out the relationship between principles of NIEO and sovereign equality, interdependence, common interest of cooperation, and justice to all, a key to the *sociological* dimension of *Third World*. He also presents the concept of the *global south*, which, he uses to emphasise the purpose of Third Worldism in the NIEO was to eliminate the widening gap between the developed and the developing countries. Kalter (2017) describes the emancipation of Third Worldists. In his analysis, two Third World dimensions seem to be addressed: *psychological*, relating to the mobilization myth that survived on promises, achievements and disenchantments of decolonization. The agenda of these initiatives was to dismantle the First World societies. The other dimension in Kalter's analysis is *sociological*; the solidarity of the poor people of peasants who suffered the effects of Cold War competition had to resit heroically and proved the unbending moral, military and political power of Third World liberation. Halim (2020) converges all three dimensions (*geopolitical*, *sociological* and *psychological*) when he emphasized that Third World was a watershed that established a strong bond between Africa and Asia to promote self-determination, anti-imperialism, world peace and resistance to racism.

In providing criteria for Third World, Smit (2013) appear to be referring to all the four dimensions of *Third World*, *geopolitical*, *sociological*, *psychological* and *NIEO*- when he says, "… Third World concept could connote political, powerlessness, economic poverty and social marginalization (Smit 2013:2). The "correctedness" embedded in the Euro-Americanism hegemony was the reason for Third World-countering capitalist modernity (*NIEO*) and a mobilization platform for reorganizing global relationships. Patel and McMichael (2004) coined the term politico-diplomatic unity to mean a sign of emancipation against western domination. Other scholars defined Third World as an adventure to create new institutions for managing the global economy and remove any forms of structural imbalances (Randal, 2004; Thomas, 1999; Weber 2004; Wolf-Philips 1983). The need for countries in the global south to transform into 'late developers' by imitating the Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs) (Berger 2004; Makki 2004) is a recent debate aligned to the *NIEO* dimension. This view is reinforced by Hans-Henrik Holm's (1990) assertion that the notion of *Third World* has been rendered obsolete with emerging powers such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea. However,

Africa and a large portion of Latin America, save for Brazil and Mexico, are still under the chains of underdevelopment, hence the term remains relevant from all dimensions.

On a similar note, Asian countries may have escaped *Third Worldism*, but that is only as far as 'economic' aspects are concerned. The Indian and Chinese principles for the global co-existence seem to be a convergence of all four dimensions: a) mutual respect of each one's full autonomy, within a world of nations with equal rights (sociological); a) equal benefits, indicting non-exploitative economic interaction (psychological and NIEO); c) the territorial sovereignty of all states through the principle of non-interference (geopolitical). But the principle of territorial sovereignty is controversial, especially in Africa, which has effectively changed this to the principle of *non-indifference.* This is because some of the peace and security challenges facing the continent require innovative solutions outside the principle of *territorial integrity.*

Clearly, the dimensions of *Third World* are not operating in isolation. In some settings, geopolitics may be closely tied to NIEO. Yet the various dimensions may be applied differently depending on the level of development and shift in ideological aspirations. In explaining why Asian countries and some Latin Americas (Brazil and Mexico) do not find aspiration in global economic disparities, the most suitable dimension is often NIEO and not geopolitics. In contexts where the level of poverty is high with unfair global trade dealings, countries in the global south may find it necessary to resist hegemony (*geopolitics*) or shift trading partners (*NIEO*), or altogether mobilize support (*psychological*) to resist against domination and spatial inequalities (*sociological*). The four dimensions surely represent an interrelated web, which explains why they have been treated as part of a single concept. Although this article is framed in the four dimensions of *Third World*, discussions here will be limited to the fourth one—NIEO. Using this dimension, this article is designed to assess whether indeed for the last thirteen (13) years since the UNSC 1696 came into effect in 2006 Iran has increased its trading volume with South Africa as a sign of *solidarity* with the global south or it is simply a balance of power rhetoric.

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Declarations