The North - South Gap

The global south, where most of the world’s population lives, contain the world’s poor regions. The states in these regions are commonly referred to as third world countries, less developed countries (LDC’s), underdeveloped countries (UDC’s), or developing countries.

The North - South Gap refers to the large gap of wealth between industrialized states (north) and the rest of the world (south).

About a billion people live in abject poverty, lacking necessities such as basic nutrition and healthcare. Most of these people are concentrated in Africa. Two decades ago, the concentration was just as strong in South Asia, but economic growth in this region greatly helped to reduce the levels of extreme poverty. Still, however, the average income per person in South Asia is only $2,600 per year, and $2,000 in Africa.

In 2000, the United Nations adopted the Millennium Development Goals. This set targets for basic needs measures to be reached by 2015, measured against data in 1990. The first goal is to cut the proportion of the world’s population living in extreme poverty in half. Countries or regions living in “extreme poverty” are defined as having an income of less than $1.70 per day.

Societies need to meet the basic human needs of most of the population in order to firmly grow economically. If the global south continues to blame imperialism for the absence of basic needs, extreme poverty only further fuels revolutions, terrorism, and anti-Western sentiments.

In the global south, access to healthcare is scarce. 75% of the world’s population lives in the global south. The people living in those regions only have access to 30% of the world’s doctors and nurses, and only 5% of medical research is directed at problems affecting developing countries.

The most basic need for the people living in the global south is food. Hunger does not usually kill people from starvation alone. It does, however, weaken them, leaving them vulnerable to diseases that would not usually be considered fatal.

Urbanization is the shift in population from the countryside to cities. People do so because of the economic opportunities in the cities: Higher income rates, better jobs, etc.

Land reform is the redistribution of land to peasants for use in subsistence farming. Landowners who own a great deal of land, and hold political power because of their wealth and connections to international markets, MNC’s (multinational corporations) and other hard currency, object to the idea of land reform.

Migration is the move of populations from poor to rich states. Many states in the industrialized north have made efforts to limit the influx of immigrants from the global
south. Immigrants still attempt to migrate illegally. A prime example would be the number of illegal immigrants crossing the border from Mexico to the United States.

Roots of the North - South Gap can be traced all the way back to European imperialism of southern countries. Regardless of how much a colony detests its controlling country, the colonies are still dependent on the resources provided by the controlling country. Colonies revolt to gain independence, but they neglect to see the impact of losing the resources provided to them. Without the support of the controlling country, southern states are quickly reduced to regions of extreme poverty, because they are unable to produce all the basic human needs in order to survive on their own.