The West owes ‘Restern’ world a redistribution of wealth

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WHY is the gap between rich and poor widening so fast, globally? The World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, last week had no structural or historical sense.

Growing income inequality, environmental damage and even the growth and the development of capitalist economic systems.

During the second half of the 20th century, the US not only perpetuated the empire-building of the Western European countries. It continues to do so in a way that is conspicuously draining the countries in the Western world.

Not all countries in the non-European world, that is the Restern world, became colonial empires of Western countries, but all of them were directly or indirectly exploited and disrupted by Western maritime empire-building.

The rest of the world – Latin America, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe, including Russia – includes countries that are underdeveloped. Some systems and many are not yet industrial.

The population of the Restern world (or the non-European world, excluding Japan) after 1500 was always more than 76% of the world population, and at present 86% of the total.

The huge inequalities in the distribution of power, property, income and levels of industrialisation and education between the West and the Rest are undoubtedly among the greatest challenges that face our world in the 21st century.

The inequalities emerged slowly over the period between 1500 and 1600, but increased dramatically in the 130 years from 1840 until 1960.

IMBALANCE: The venue of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, last week. The writer asks why the gulf is widening between rich and poor worldwide.

Picture: Reuters/African News Agency (ANA) Archives

The West’s relative share of total world manufacturing output increased from 17.3% in 1750 to 73.9% in 1953 and then declined to 56.4% in 1980. The Restern’s relative share declined 41.8% in 1953 and then increased to 12% in 1980.

The central question is what external factor contributed (at least until the middle of the 20th century) to the lack of development of the underdeveloped – and the lack of industrialisation in the Western world to Western empire-building, Western capitalism, Western industrialisation, Western industrial militarism and Western ideological propaganda?

The underdevelopment of the non-European world (mainly non-European and non-Christian) could not be judged without the Western’s historical guilt with respect to the Restern world. The West’s historic record, as well as the current record, is not a matter of economic, social, political or cultural rights.

The spectre of development of the Western world vis-a-vis the underdevelopment of the Restern world could not have taken place without the Western’s perpetuating parasitically and relentlessly on the people and the resources of the Western world.

In making this statement we are not denying the huge contributions the Western world has made to the scientific, cultural and economic development of the world. The Restern world has also benefited from this progress.

But we are not acknowledging these contributions of the Western world, it is also necessary to emphasise that the Western world to remain largely unprepared and unable to adapt to this peculiar or singular progress would not have been possible without the exploitation, underdevelopment and economic drain of the Restern world. We must never forget the important question of the Western world’s historic guilt regarding the Restern world.

We cannot ignore the true and international exploitation and underdevelopment of the Restern world, even under the guise of the ‘development’ project, whenever the West is now doing the opposite by attracting more funds back to the West by low-interest rates.

Richest foreign states are not helping by the intervention of the Brits (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa and other Restern states) in Africa to get hold of Africa’s natural resources for their related industrialisation processes.

The time must come for the correction of this imbalance, not by going to Davos and doing as the New York credit ratings agencies and British governments say, but by developing a counter-force based on sound moral principles. Redistribution of wealth is one step to be taken.

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