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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Historical Projections of Poverty Trapped in the Hegemony of the Capitalist Ideology within the Frame of the World Bank's Quasi-War on Poverty

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Abstract

The World Bank is an important international institution that plays a role in forming the perception of global poverty and the fight against poverty. Since its foundation, the Bank's approach to the concept of poverty and the policies it proposes to eliminate poverty have undergone radical changes. The study aims to reveal the theoretical and practical dimensions of the Bank's approach to poverty with their evolutionary reflections. In the study, different definitions of the World Bank regarding the concept of poverty will be included in the axis of poverty concept and different depictions of the transformation of poverty-related policies over the years. The development approach the Bank has developed for the last 40 years is likely connected to the neoliberal policies loyal to mainstream (neoclassical) economics principles. Therefore, the emphasis on the problem of poverty put by the Bank for the last few decades consists of representing the same political prescriptions to the world economies to solve the problem. In this context, it can be argued that the policies created by the Bank regarding poverty rely on ideological concerns rather than reality since it is clear that the development discourses effectuated by the Bank over the years and the policies for the elimination of poverty generated accordingly cannot be evaluated independently of the dynamics arising from the efforts of the US to perpetuate its hegemony over the international capitalist system.

Keywords: *Poverty, World Bank, Structural Adjustment, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, Millennium Development Goals.*
Jel Codes: *O1, I3, I32.*

Dünya Bankası'nın Yoksullukla (Görünürdeki) Mücadelesi Çerçevesinde Kapitalist İdeolojinin Hegemonyası İçine Hapsedilen Yoksulluğun Tarihsel İzdüşümleri

Özet

Dünya Bankası, küresel yoksulluk algısının oluşumunda ve yoksulluğa yönelik mücadelede rol alan önemli uluslararası kurumlardan biridir. Bankanın kuruluşundan bu yana yoksulluk kavramına bakışı ve yoksulluğun giderilmesine yönelik önerdiği politikalar radikal değişim geçirmiştir. Çalışmanın amacı bankanın yoksullukla ilgili yaklaşımının kuramsal ve pratik boyutlarını evrimsel yansımalarıyla ortaya koymaktır. Çalışmada Dünya Bankası'nın yoksulluk kavramına ilişkin farklı tanımlamaları ve uygulamaları ekseninde yoksulluk kavramının ve yoksullukla ilgili politikaların yıllar içindeki dönüşümünün farklı tasvirlerine yer verilecektir. Bankanın yaklaşık son 40 yıldır geliştirdiği kalkınma anlayışının ana akım (neoklasik) iktisadın prensiplerine sadık olan neoliberal politikalara göbekten bağlı olduğu düşünülmektedir. Dolayısıyla banka tarafından yoksulluk sorunuyla ilgili son birkaç on yıldır sürekli olarak yapılan vurguların, sorunun çözümü için dünya ekonomilerine aynı politik reçetelerin yeniden sunulmasından ibaret olduğu düşünülmektedir. Bu bağlamda banka tarafından yoksullukla ilgili oluşturulan politikaların gerçeklikten çok ideolojik kaygılara dayandığı ileri sürülebilir. Zira

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bankanın yıllar içinde ürettiği kalkınma söylemlerinin ve buna bağlı olarak oluşturulan yoksulluğun giderilmesine yönelik politikalarının, ABD'nin uluslararası kapitalist sistem üzerindeki hegemonyasını devam ettirme çabalarından doğan dinamiklerden bağımsız değerlendirilemeyeceği açıktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Yoksulluk, Dünya Bankası, Yapısal Uyum, Yoksulluğu Azaltma Strateji Belgeleri, Milenyum Kalkınma Hedefleri.*
Jel Kodu: *O1, I3, I32.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty has been discussed for centuries as a widespread and deep-rooted economic, political, social, and historical problem. Poverty is directly linked to economic development. Poverty reduction is often the result of achieving economic development. To understand how poverty has been handled over the years, it is first necessary to grasp the different meanings that the concept of development has gained in the historical process. The development concept has been discussed from various aspects in the axis of other economic theories. The World Bank has played an essential role in evolving the global development paradigm with its discourses. The Bank was founded in 1944 to help rebuild Europe in the post-war period. The World Bank is an important international institution that plays a role in forming the perception of global poverty and the fight against poverty. The Bank determined its policies on poverty in the context of the evolution of development economics. It contributed to the evolution of economic theories in the world with the discourses it produced.

The dominant doctrine, theory, and models of development economics, which were shaped with the claim of solving the socio-economic development problems of the countries that gained their independence with the decolonization process after the Second World War, were disseminated and transferred to the practice ground by international economic institutions. The Keynesian Consensus, which determined the economic development philosophy of the post-war global order, seriously impacted the development theories generated in the period (See Nurkse, 1956; Prebisch, 1950; Rosenstein-Rodan, 1943; Rostow, 1959; Singer, 1950). In this process, it is possible to observe the reflections of an understanding that identifies economic growth and development economics with a reductionist approach in development theories. It is impossible to consider the development models of the 1950s independently of the primary ideological background that determined the US approach to the world in the Cold War environment. In this process, the concept of poverty has been neglected within the framework of the descriptions of the growth-oriented development approach of the modernization theory.

Since the mid-1960s, the concept of poverty has gradually come to the fore through Dependency Theories, which focus on the socio-economic challenges faced by Third World countries. According to many development economists in the 1960s, the best way to reduce poverty was to accelerate the industrialization of developing countries and improve their infrastructure. Robert McNamara's coming to the presidency of the World Bank (1968-1981) was also influential in bringing poverty to the agenda. In the 1970s, following the policies of Robert McNamara, more emphasis was placed on rural development, and some attempts were made to eliminate poverty.

Structural adjustment programs designed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank laid the groundwork for the preparation of universal policy prescriptions by putting neoliberal theory into practice following the international debt crises that shook the developing world with the effect of international oil shocks and global economic recession at the end of the 1970s. In the 1980s, this trend gained momentum. The 1980s encompassed the process of the World Bank becoming an institution in which it became an actor of worldwide market-oriented restructuring and capital (Bond, 2004; Cammack, 2004; Edwards, 2001, 2005). As a result, concepts such as development and poverty have been completely pushed into the background. In these years, the World Bank started to play a more significant role in international finance, together with the IMF.

Policies determined within the framework of the Washington Consensus began to be implemented in many emerging countries in the 1980s and 1990s, which are ideological and embodied extensions of neoliberalism and structural adjustment (Naim, 2000; Rodrik, 2002; Stiglitz and Pike, 2004). It has been highlighted that underdeveloped and developing countries that put these policies into practice would grow, and poverty would be reduced indirectly. However, in reality, this was not the case. As a result of the debt crises that emerged one after another in developing countries, the 1980s were declared the last decade of development (Hirschman, 1981: 24; World Bank, 1990: iii). The increase in inequality and poverty rates in the post-1980 period, on the one hand, brought reactions to neoliberal policies; on the other hand, it underlined the necessity of addressing poverty on a global scale.

This situation led the World Bank to deal with the issue of poverty, which it wholly neglected in the 1980s. The Bank's 1990 World Development Report, titled "Poverty," defined poverty as "the most urgent problem" and focused on reducing poverty. The World Bank also launched the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative in 1996 to ease developing countries' debt burdens with the IMF. In 1999, the scope of the HIPC initiative was expanded, and poverty reduction began to be tackled through the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). The initiatives aimed to modestly alleviate the poorest countries' debts on the condition that they implemented structural adjustment policies for years (Craig and Porter, 2003; Dasandi, 2014; Pogge, 2011; Stewart and Wang, 2004). The financial crises experienced in Latin America, East Asia, Turkey, and Russia in the 1990s also reactivated the Bank. In the context of the proposed policy bundle, since the 2000s, the Washington Consensus has been switched to the Post-Washington Consensus. One of the main emphases of the Post-Washington Consensus is concentrated on the PRSPs. Although the Post-Washington Consensus seems to have laid the foundations of a more comprehensive interdisciplinary development approach that considers the state, market, society, institutional structures, and sociocultural norms at an analytical level, the Consensus has not gone beyond being a policy package created for neoliberal consolidation (Davidson, 2013; Rodrik, 2002).

Since the 2000s, development processes' political, humanitarian, social, and cultural dimensions have been added to the positivist global development paradigm. In 2000, the United Nations Millennium Goals (2000-2015) were adopted to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. The Millennium Development Goals not only measured the number of low-income people but also included data on income levels of poverty, such as health, infant mortality rates, life expectancy, education, access to services, and infrastructure. The Millennium Development Goals were followed by the Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030). One of the most important goals of the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals is to halve extreme poverty at the global level. However, the goal of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty in rural societies (especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America) has yet to be achieved (Anyanwu, 2017; Rajabov, 2020).

In light of all this information, the evolution of the development theories and ideologies determined by the World Bank for poverty reduction has been investigated since its foundation. The study's route is determined based on the question, "How have the World Bank's general perspective, objectives, policy recommendations, and practices on poverty evolved?". In this context, the focus is on global poverty during the period described. Due to the study context, choosing a method based on descriptive and historical perspectives was deemed appropriate. It should be underlined that the article did not discuss the concept of poverty; it preferred to use conceptual discussions within the framework of the World Bank's fight against poverty concerning the subject of the article. The study limits itself to only touching on the actual historical processes regarding the issue of poverty in terms of the primary arguments in the World Bank's data sub-periods described in the study and how much these arguments are realized at the end of these sub-periods. It has been revealed that these policies and ideologies are supposedly fighting poverty (Cammack, 2004; Craig and Porter, 2003; Dasandi, 2014; Easterly, 2000; Wade, 2002, 2004). The historical development of the World Bank's perspective on poverty has been traced through specific World Development Reports, and the theoretical, practical, and evolutionary limits of its approach to poverty have been analyzed.

First, growth-oriented development theories that ignore the poverty issue fed by the modernization theory are included. The theories of dependency that emerged since the 1960s and the World Bank's policies towards poverty and rural development in this period are briefly mentioned. After the 1980s, it was said that the neoliberal approach left poverty entirely out of the agenda. The institutional infrastructure that forms the political framework of neoliberalism, known as the Washington Consensus, has been critically examined. Topics such as the fact that the Bank started to put poverty back on its agenda from the beginning of the 1990s and that it developed some methods to measure poverty were incorporated. Information about HIPC and PRSP initiatives is also presented, which started to be effective towards the end of the 1990s. Finally, the policies regarding neoliberalism and poverty, formulated in the form of the Post-Washington Consensus in the 2000s, were dealt with concisely. Up to now, the projections of poverty policies have been touched on and formed within the scope of an ideological, apolitical, and managerial development approach.

Based on all these, the study aims to reveal the theoretical and practical dimensions of the Bank's approach to poverty with its evolutionary reflections. The study can contribute to the existing literature by addressing the historical course of global poverty in the context of the World Bank's specific practices and development discourses, within an unquestionable integrity from the Bank's foundation to the present day.

2. QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE REFLECTIONS OF TRADITIONAL DEVELOPMENT THEORIES ON THE CONCEPT OF POVERTY

Poverty is a controversial concept. How poverty will be defined and measured based on this definition and what factors cause poverty may vary. Nevertheless, many studies in the literature try to reveal the causes and consequences of poverty.

It is accepted that Seebohm Rowntree first used the concept of poverty in 1901. Poverty is defined as the inability of individuals to meet even the minimum needs (basic needs), such as eating, drinking, and dressing, which are necessary for their biological existence (Rowntree, 1901; Haughton and Kahndker, 2009; Öztornacı and Demirdöğen, 2015: 7; Şenkal,2005: 392).

Despite many definitions made over the years, one thing is sure: poverty is a complex issue. Therefore, it is difficult to say that there is only one correct approach to defining poverty. Moreover, poverty has gained different meanings over the years within the framework of the theories developed by development economics and the discourses determined by the World Bank, one of the most important international institutions and organizations that shape these theories. Parallel to this, the ways and methods of fighting poverty in world economies have also altered.

The origins of development economics, a branch of economics that explores how the world's poor economies can develop, date back to the mid-1940s, corresponding to the World Bank's founding years. The first mission of the World Bank, which started its activities in 1946, was founded on rebuilding Europe after the Second World War. The Keynesian Consensus had a significant impact on the determination of the post-war development theories (Toye, 1987: 25). The primary purpose of development in this period was economic growth, the leading actor was the state, and its main tools were macroeconomic policy elements (Leys, 1996). The development theories produced in the period also sprouted in this direction (See Nurkse, 1956; Prebisch, 1950; Rosenstein-Rodan, 1943; Rostow, 1959; Singer, 1950). Theories took the Harrod-Domar model as a reference. They accepted that the economic growth and development process would be reached by transforming the increased savings in the economies into new investments. The primary development criterion has been determined as the increase in Gross Domestic Product. Many economic programs supported by these paradigms, mainly by the US government and institutions such as the World Bank, have produced disappointing results because paradigms offered technical and positivist answers to global development problems (Papanek, 1962: 46-58).

The development theories put forward are heavily based on the idea of modernization (Du Pisani, 2006: 88; Omar, 2012: 45). The modernization theory, which relies on liberal values, argues that developing countries should imitate the Western development model by modernizing their societies to assume the characteristics of economically developed countries (Peet, 1999: 85-86; Veltmeyer, 2006: 35). The meaning of these policy proposals is that non-Western countries leave themselves more in the arms of the West and their integration with the West (Peet, 1999: 90). Another issue that shaped the idea and theories of development in this period is the Cold War, which is the manifestation of the ideological environment of the period. The Marshall Plan was implemented in this direction (Leys, 1996). Marshall Aid aimed to create a robust economic bloc against the Soviet Union and to respond to the growing market need of the U.S. During this period, the loans distributed by the World Bank were given mainly to Western Europe and generally to infrastructure projects that would increase production and productivity. Education, health, and employment policies have been left in the background, which can directly affect poverty. The reason for this is the opinion of World Bank technocrats, who foresee rapid industrialization in developing underdeveloped countries that policies that would increase income and consumption cannot produce promising results, especially for underdeveloped countries that are very inadequate in this respect (Alacevich, 2011). The Marshall Plan functioned not as a means of alleviating poverty in underdeveloped countries but as an effective means of advancing US geopolitical interests.

Until the 1960s, the World Bank and the governments of industrialized Western countries focused on preventing the spread of communism, Western Europe's rapid economic growth, and large markets for Western capital. Since the mid-1960s, dependency and world-system approaches have emerged in development debates, constituting systematic research agendas by global economic historians with macro perspectives such as Immanuel Wallerstein (1974, 1976) and Andre Gunder Frank (1967, 1969, 1970). Because it has been understood that a development approach focused on the modernization theory cannot cure the development problems in Third World countries. Dependency theorists have argued that development and underdevelopment are two sides of the same coin and that socio-economic conditions are inevitably linked to a country's position in the world economic system. Consequently, contrary to the previous period, it has been comprehended that the concept of development and poverty is not only associated with economic indicators but also with socio-economic factors such as income distribution, education, and health level, political, social, and cultural factors.

Meanwhile, Robert Mc Namara came to the presidency of the World Bank in 1968, and his focus on the socio-economic conditions of the Third World Countries and rural development issues brought the understanding of poverty to the agenda. However, this agenda lasted only a short time.

3. AFTER A LITTLE POVERTY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: THE RISE OF NEOLIBERALISM AS THE NEW GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

Poverty was directly put on the agenda by the World Bank when Robert McNamara became the head of the Bank in 1968. Accordingly, since the late 1960s, the problem of poverty has been declared as the primary agenda of the Bank (Alacevich, 2011: 54). As poverty has become more entrenched in rural societies of Third World countries, particular emphasis has been placed on rural development policies. In addition, the Basic Needs Approach was brought to the agenda at the World Employment Conference of the World Labor Organization in 1976. Thus, the World Bank started focusing on health and education policies to support income and employment with micro-scale agricultural projects to reduce poverty. In this process, the discourse has shifted from understanding that economic growth is accepted as the most basic indicator of economic performance to understanding fair growth, employment, poverty, basic needs, and sustainable human development. In the 1970s, issues such as income distribution and poverty were included among the development goals. However, that did not last long.

The stagflationary environment brought about by the oil crises in the 1970s paved the way for radical changes in the development paradigm.2 As a result, a project has been undertaken to build a new political economy model in which the state is wholly excluded from the development processes, except for the worldwide state mechanism's legal and physical infrastructure functions (Leys, 1996; Toye, 1987). This new political economy model was called neoliberalism. Neoliberal policies, the basic principles of which were formulated by economists of the Austrian School and Chicago School, such as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, have found a wide application area around the world through the emphasis that the market is the most optimal solution in resource allocation, and that any intervention of the state in the market would cause economic problems by disrupting the resource allocation (Bauer, 1984: 27).

Neoliberalism has become an economic understanding that can be found almost everywhere globally. Neoliberal ideas based on the absolute dominance of free markets, which are strongly marketed through international institutions, have also become the dominant ideological rationalization in the debates on development and poverty.3 Neoliberal policies, which took a more technocratic form through the Washington Consensus, were heavily politicized by the efforts of politicians such as Margaret Thatcher, who came to power in England in 1979, and Ronald Reagan, who came to power in the US in 1980 (Peck and Tickell, 2002: 380). The integration of developing countries into world trade was established by the Washington Consensus imposed by the World Bank and the IMF. Accordingly, transforming the World Bank from a development institution to an actor of market-oriented restructuring and capital began to occur step by step.

4. STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT POLICIES AS THE CATALYZER OF DEBT IMPERIALISM AND NEGLECTION OF POVERTY

The Bank's short-term crystallized discourse in its approaches to global development and poverty problems experienced a severe break in the neoliberal period that started roughly from the mid-1970s. The factors that make this period necessary in terms of the change in global balances are the economic stagnation and crisis dynamics experienced in developed countries after the international oil crises and the international debt crises that broke out with successive moratoriums in the developing world as a result of the regimes based on import substitution and rapid foreign borrowing reaching their natural limits (Başkaya, 1986; Mandel, 1989).

The oil crisis of the mid-1970s led to debt crises and poverty in the Global South. Although Latin American and Sub-Saharan African countries are the regions most affected, whose external debt ratio

[2] In these years, some opinions have emerged that the global development paradigm needs a systematic revision. There is an opinion in the literature that this revision came after the oil crisis. However, the essence of the matter lies in the unsustainability of the current system since the mid-1960s. The relations between political blocs, which became tense due to the economic recession, the Vietnam War, and the events of 1968, increased concerns about maintaining stability in the international capitalist system. Subsequently, a paradigmatic ground shift occurred in producing a new development discourse or orthodoxy in the 1970s, which witnessed international oil shocks and debt crises that caused severe crises in the center and periphery of the global political economy system.

[3] In the neoliberal model, stabilization or a package of fiscal, monetary, foreign exchange, and related measures is the first step to achieving macroeconomic stability. Stabilization is followed by a second step, structural adjustments that include the liberalization of trade and finance that turns the economy into a world market, deregulation that removes the state from economic decision-making, and the privatization of old public spaces that may be a burden.

has increased dramatically, the entire global economy has been adversely affected by the debt crises.4 With the power of the debt crisis, the debts given to the countries needing financing have been made conditional on implementing the policy basket included in the structural adjustment programs designed by the World Bank economists. Economists at the World Bank assumed their primary responsibility was to design a new economic model that would foster capitalist development (Bulmer-Thomas, 1996). However, this model was based on neoliberal ideas, not on ideas such as development and poverty eradication. In other words, it was based on integrating almost all national economies with a new world economic order (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001). In this way, satisfactory answers could be found to questions such as: "How could independent countries be brought under the tutelage of international financial institutions under the control of the US, and how, in this way, the international capitalist system under the administration of the US could be made stronger in line with the interests of the US?". The World Bank and the IMF could force indebted countries to redefine their macroeconomic policies appropriately in the interests of the international capitalist system led by the US through borrowing conditions.

The World Bank has been trying to impose the idea that structural adjustment is necessary for poverty reduction in the national economies. Although neoclassical economists accept that stabilization measures through structural adjustment may have adverse effects on employment and income distribution at the beginning, it has been argued that structural adjustment policies would increase employment and reduce poverty in the long run as long as there are no distortions in the labor market (Krueger, 1981; Edwards, 1989; Cox Edwards, 1992). It was widely believed that the prescription was prepared very well, but the patient could not use it properly. For example, Anne Kreuger (World Bank chief economist between 1982 and 1986 and a strong supporter of structural adjustment programs for debtor and less developed countries) claimed that "zero unemployment through a sufficiently low urban wage is an achievable outcome" (Kreuger, 2007: 10). However, various studies in the literature have shown that inequality increases and poverty deepens in many countries where structural adjustment policies are implemented within a general and consistent framework (Collier and Gunning, 1999; Zack-Williams and Mohan, 2005). The studies carried out by Easterly (2000, 2001, 2005) have revealed that people experiencing poverty cannot benefit from economic growth in countries where structural adjustment loans are used extensively. Easterly (2001) stated that in the 1980s, the World Bank and IMF provided an average of six structural adjustment loans to each African country, five to Latin American countries, four to Asian countries, and three to Eastern European, North African, and Middle Eastern countries. However, despite this, he revealed that the GDP growth rate per capita was almost zero in many developing countries between 1980 and 1998 (Easterly, 2001, 2005) (Table 1). In Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, the regions most exposed to structural adjustment programs, per capita income has not increased and has even decreased in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Sub-Saharan Africa, per capita income decreased by more than 20% between 1980 and 1987 (Danaher, 2004: 101).

[4]The Mexican crisis 1982 enabled IMF-type market reforms to be carried to essential parts of the world. In this context, the IMF has imposed structural adjustment policies on Third World Countries, implying that other debtor countries may suffer the same fate as Mexico. Furthermore, the IMF stated that structural adjustment would bring strict economic surveillance mechanisms to underdeveloped and developing debtor countries (Chang and Grabel, 2016: 175).

Table 1. Terms of trade growth and per capita growth in intensive adjustment lending countries (All data refer to averages from the first adjustment loan (1980) to 1999 for the top 20 countries in adjustment loans).

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>Per capita growth rate</td><td colspan="2">Terms of trade growth</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Africa (Ranked from worst to best growth rates).</td></tr>
<tr><td>Niger</td><td>-2.3%</td><td colspan="2">-1.1%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Zambia</td><td>-2.1%</td><td colspan="2">-2.6%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Madagascar</td><td>-1.8%</td><td colspan="2">0.0%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Togo</td><td>-1.6%</td><td colspan="2">0.1%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Cote d’Ivorie</td><td>-1.4%</td><td colspan="2">-0.8%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Malawi</td><td>-0.2%</td><td colspan="2">-0.8%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mali</td><td>-0.1%</td><td colspan="2">-0.6%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mauritania</td><td>0.1%</td><td colspan="2">1.9%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Senegal</td><td>0.1%</td><td colspan="2">-0.1%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Kenya</td><td>0.1%</td><td colspan="2">0.1%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Ghana</td><td>1.2</td><td colspan="2">-0.6%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Uganda</td><td>2.3%</td><td colspan="2">-2.3%</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Other developing countries (from worst to best growth rates).</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Bolivia</td><td>-0.4%</td><td>-1.7%</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Philippiness</td><td>0.0%</td><td>1.1%</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Jamaica</td><td>0.4%</td><td>0.6%</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Mexico</td><td>0.4%</td><td>-2.6%</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Argentina</td><td>1.0%</td><td>0.4%</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Morocco</td><td>1.1%</td><td>1.9%</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Bangladesh</td><td>2.4%</td><td>1.6%</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Pakistan</td><td>2.7%</td><td>3.3%</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Average of all developing countries</td><td>0.3%</td><td>-0.5%</td></tr>
</table>

Source: Easterly, 2005: 26.

Structural adjustment programs have imposed mandatory structural adjustments on many economies, such as the devaluation of currencies, the abolition of subsidies, privatization, and the opening of national markets. However, these are not arrangements for the benefit of Third World Countries, as is often emphasized by the World Bank. For example, while Somalia was self-sufficient in food production until the 1970s, the IMF intervention in the early 1980s exacerbated Somalia's agricultural crisis. Structural adjustment programs have increased Somalia's dependence on grain imports, as food agriculture has been destroyed through structural adjustment programs. Agricultural infrastructure has collapsed, and current expenditure on agriculture has been reduced by 85% compared to the mid-1970s (Chossudovsky, 1999: 124). Rwanda is another example. In Rwanda, integrated into structural adjustment programs in 1988, the consumer price index increased from 1% in 1989 to 19.2% in 1991. The balance of payments deteriorated dramatically, and external debt, which had already doubled since 1985, increased by 34% between 1989 and 1992 (Chossudovsky, 1999: 139).

Poverty has increased in Latin America, and income distribution has deteriorated (Stiglitz, 2009: 281). A study on Latin America concluded that income distribution inequality increased in Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Puerto Rico (Cardoso and Helwege, 1992). Another author noted that per capita income fell in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, and income distribution deteriorated in the 1980s for every country for which data was available (Stewart, 1992). On the other hand, Cornia (2004) asserted that the concentration of income in the upper-income groups increased rapidly in approximately 53 countries according to the findings in his comprehensive empirical study, which included 73 countries and examined the intra-country inequalities that occurred after the implementation of structural adjustment programs. He suggested that this trend is less evident in Southeast and East Asian countries (Cornia, 2004: 9). Ghai (1994) demonstrated that structural adjustment policies negatively affect issues such as income distribution and poverty in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Implementing structural adjustment policies worldwide has significantly increased global inequality and poverty (Ferreira and Ravaillon, 2008: 15). All these negativities led the Bank to focus on poverty in the early 1990s.

5. THE DICHOTOMIC & POLITICAL REPRODUCTION OF THE POVERTY: REDUCTION OF POVERTY TO A MATTER OF SUBSISTENCE

As if the socio-economic problems of the Third World countries for the last thirty years were just being discovered, it was put forward in the early 1990s that poverty was the most dangerous problem facing world development. Therefore, it was emphasized that the mission of the World Bank in the new era would be the reduction of acute poverty (World Bank, 1990).

Through the World Development Report Poverty, published in 1990, the Bank brought global poverty to the world agenda. In the report, the poverty line is generally set at US$1 per day (absolute poverty)[5] and US$2 per day (poverty) for household members. In addition, in the report, any person was counted as poor when his income or consumption fell below 1 dollar on average (Pogge, 2010: 66).

However, the World Bank's daily measurement of poverty with 1 US dollar has been subjected to intense criticism. Many studies have revealed that the Bank manipulates the findings to get positive results about poverty (Milanovic, 2011; Wade, 2002, 2004). With such rhetoric, the Bank is thought to legitimize neoliberal restructuring (Clair, 2006: 77). According to this poverty calculation method developed by the Bank, people are not considered poor if their daily consumption reaches or exceeds 1 US dollar in monetary value. The concept of poverty, which corresponds to 1 US dollar per day, is hinged on money criteria. This criterion defines the international poverty line concerning the amount of money, not the understanding of human welfare (Reddy, 2006: 170). Such an understanding does not provide information on whether a person can survive at that level of consumption. It does not

[5] The absolute poverty line was raised to $1.08 in 1993 and $1.90 in 2005.

mention the person's welfare level and living conditions. Thus, the multidimensional causes of poverty are hidden.

Furthermore, such an approach did not consider considerations such as working hours or types of work required to earn income above the poverty line (Reddy, 2006). If a worker can consume more than $1 per day but works long, strenuous, risky, or dangerous jobs to risk his or her life, he or she is not considered poor by the Bank. Alternatively, even if he lives in poor conditions, wholly deprived of services such as education and health, even if he is half-starved, the Bank does not consider him poor if he consumes more than one dollar a day. Boltvinik and Damian (2016: 177) propounded in this context that the World Bank "leaves all other needs of man unmet, assumes that all he needs is food, thus representing an understanding that reduces man to the status of an animal."

The World Bank thus argued that a free market system based on economic freedom, private enterprise profits, and the policies that led to it would benefit the poor despite all the empirical evidence on poverty. In addition, the minimal state approach in the report titled Challenge of Development, published in 1991, right after the report on poverty (1990), proves the Bank's political line. When the World Development Reports published by the World Bank in the following years are analyzed systematically, it can be observed that the global development paradigm is not focused on poverty but focused on neoliberal policies: Development and the Environment (1992), Investing in Health (1993), Infrastructure for Development (1994), Workers in an Integrating World (1995). In particular, the World Bank's report on health in 1993 is quite remarkable. In the report, health was seen as a consumption item, in other words, as a commodity, and the idea was defended that the functioning of the health sector should be left entirely to the market system shaped by neoliberal policies. It has been emphasized that health services are more focused on individual treatment and service and work like a profit-oriented commercial element (World Bank, 1993).

Meanwhile, despite all apparent attempts, poverty and inequality continue to increase rapidly. In 1960, the wealth of the 20 percent of the world's population in the wealthiest countries was 30 times that of the 20 percent in the poorest countries, while in 1995, it was 82 times (Ramonet, 1998). The combined wealth of 358 dollar billionaires in 1996 was equal to the annual income of the poorest 45 percent of the world's population (UNDP, 1996: 2). These negativities related to inequality and poverty, which continue to intensify, have pushed the Bank to set new agendas.

The HIPC initiative, launched in 1996, is one of these new agendas. HIPC aimed to reduce the debt burden in countries with high indebtedness levels and to reduce the negative impact of debt burden in the implementation of policies that would reduce poverty (Kranke, 2020: 15). But paradoxically, in the same year, the World Bank advised economies to abandon the plan and focus on the market through its 1996 World Development Report From Plan to Market (World Bank, 1996). The report mainly focused on two issues: market failures and poverty. Supporting the markets was presented as a prescription against these two problems. According to the report, supporting the markets will be achieved by creating new commodification areas. In other words, it will be realized by drawing water, energy, public lands, pastures, and common-use areas into the commodification process. However, the report presents these ideas as privatization, not commodification (World Bank, 1996).

Meanwhile, the HIPC initiative has been the target of various criticisms for being too slow and having a short scope. Another criticism is that the aid is squandered and rendered ineffective by corrupt governments (Easterly, 2002). After four years, this initiative reduced the total debt stock of developing countries by only 13 billion dollars (Arslanalp and Henry, 2006: 214). Nearly four years after the HIPC initiative began, only four of the thirty-three poorest countries secured a negligible $2.7 billion in debt relief. This amount corresponds to one-third of the money spent on beauty products in the US annually (Danaher, 2004: 89). However, the advocacy of neoliberal discourse continues. Renato Ruggiero (1998: 131), the first director-general of the World Trade Organization, also stated that there is a potential for the complete elimination of global poverty in the early 21st century thanks to the neoliberal economic order and also stated that global institutions have a global solution recipe for the eradication of poverty.

Meanwhile, the new orthodoxy, which is described as market-centered institutionalism, connects the crises that emerged, especially in the developing countries in the late 1990s (1994 Mexico, 1997-1998 East Asia, 1998 Russia, 1999 Brazil, and 2001 Argentina) to wrong institutional policies, was the dominant view in the 2000s. Market-centered institutionalism is outlined in the World Bank Report, The State in a Changing World, published in 1997. In this report, it was explained that the creation of economic institutions of capitalism is the only prerequisite for economic development, in contrast to the radical opposition to the state of the previous period, and a new definition of the compelling state is needed for this (Stiglitz, 1998; Naim, 2000; World Bank, 1997). These issues have also started to come to the fore in the poverty debates.

Stiglitz stated that the world income increased by 2.5% on average in the 1990s, but despite this, the number of people earning less than $2 a day increased by 100 million (Stiglitz, 2002). Moreover, progress in improving life expectancy and education and reducing infant mortality rates was slower in most countries in the 1990s than in the 1960s-80s. The income gap between the richest and poorest countries was measured as three to one in 1820, eleven to one in 1913, thirty-five to one in 1950, forty-four to one in 1973, and seventy-two to one in 1992 (Karagül, 2012). Therefore, rather than focusing on issues such as reducing global poverty, protecting the environment, democracy, human rights, and social justice, there have been some debates about the need to revise the Washington Consensus, which aims at privatization, liberalization of capital markets, and completely opposes state intervention in the social field (Stiglitz and Pike, 2004: 322). The Post-Washington Consensus was thus on the rise.

However, it is thought that the Post-Washington Consensus is not much different from the Washington Consensus regarding policy recommendations. Rodrik (2002) characterized the Post-Washington Consensus as the Augmented Washington Consensus. The Consensus differs from the Washington Consensus in the context of its policies regarding the necessity of good governance, anti-poverty programs, and, most importantly, specific control over international capital movements. However, the Post-Washington Consensus could not go beyond being a device that created the necessary conditions for neoliberal consolidation. As Davidson points out:

"The first involved the first phase of neoliberalism, the Washington Consensus, a frontal assault on the labor movement, and the dismantling and retaking of previously established social democratic institutions. The second phase of the Post-Washington Consensus involved a more molecular process with the dissemination of the complete commodification of new areas of social life and the creation of new institutions, especially those built on neoliberal principles" (Davidson, 2013: 25).

While these developments continued, the World Bank adopted the PRSP in 1999. As a result, PRSPs, which set macroeconomic and social programs to reduce poverty, have become the main roadmap of development policies at the national level. PRSPs are comprehensive and detailed plans created by developing countries to reduce poverty.6 (Kaynak, 2011: 50).

[6] The World Bank has included the poverty reduction strategies announced in the 1990s within the scope of market-friendly reforms. Fighting poverty has become an increasingly emphasized theme, and an international consensus has been reached on reducing poverty. However, it is determined that there is no option other than neoliberalism in the context of the policies implemented in the compromises. The apparent initiatives regarding the issue of poverty have remained limited to the inclusion of peripheral countries in the restructuring process in line with the Washington Consensus and the permanent reorganization and reinforcement of new dependency relations through reforms. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers are based on the Comprehensive Development Framework announced by World Bank

Since 1999, each candidate country has had to prepare its PRSP under the HIPC to benefit from debt relief. Therefore, it was expected that three essential elements would be included in the content of each of the country-specific PRSPs. The first was various macroeconomic reforms and foreign trade policies, which could continue the neoliberal prescription. The second was directing social assistance to the poor and vulnerable segments of the countries, and finally, the countries' ownership of this process by providing broad participation by the society in preparing PRSPs. Considering these conditions sought in PRSPs, it is understood that the proposed policies, in essence, do not depart from the neoliberal line beyond softening the flavor of the current World Bank-IMF prescriptions. Moreover, PRSPs have ignored international factors in analyzing poverty in developing countries (Dasandi, 2014: 217; Pogge, 2011: 335).

Studies examining PRSPs of various countries from different periods generally converge because the policies in these documents do not stray too far from the neoliberal prescriptions of the World Bank and IMF (Stewart and Wang, 2004; Gottschalk, 2005; Fukuda-Parr, 2010). Critics have stated that the PRSP process is just the former structural adjustment programs packaged in new covers. However, PRSPs rely on the same economic and market liberalization policy package and augmented articulation into the world economy that the World Bank and IMF have long recommended. Stewart and Wang (2004) found that the policy contents of the thirty PRSPs they examined were generally the policies included in the Washington Consensus. Likewise, Craig and Porter (2003: 54) evaluated the poverty reduction strategy documents of the IMF and the World Bank as the third-way neoliberal approaches that aim primarily at neoliberal economic integration, good governance, and poverty reduction. Poverty has paradoxically ranked last as a target. However, it continued to be launched by the Bank as if it was the first target. The World Bank named the World Development Report Attacking Poverty, published in 2000/2001, and President Wolfensohn, in his preface to the report, stated that the fight against poverty is the most basic mission of the Bank.

However, the World Bank's sincerity about its emphasis on the fight against poverty was met with skepticism by some. It was argued that the policies were put forward as a mask to better illustrate the old structural adjustment policies. Cammack's ideas on the subject are instructive. Cammack (2004: 190) suggested that the World Bank's goal of reducing poverty can be characterized as secondary. He stated that the Bank's primary goal is to involve the developing countries in the capitalist accumulation process by systematically transforming them economically, politically, socially, and institutionally with legitimizing discourses such as social participation and country ownership. In this way, he advocated that the Bank could continue proletarianization and capitalist accumulation in the international system in favor of other powerful countries, particularly the US.

In 2000, within the framework of PRSPs, the Millennium Development Goals became prominent, centered upon the most fundamental issues such as health, education, housing, and the environment.

President Wolfensohn in January 1999. Within this framework, a new long-term development vision has been presented for the surrounding countries. Following this, the IMF transformed structural adjustment into the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility, and the World Bank launched the Poverty Reduction Strategy initiative. In September 1999, the IMF-World Bank annual joint meeting focused its policy framework on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. However, these initiatives do not mean structural adjustment policies have been abandoned. Only the anti-poverty ring has been added to these programs. The aim is to alleviate the social and political problems that may arise by reducing the poverty that has become obvious and unbearable. At the same time, strengthening neoliberal policies, that is, structural adjustment policies, with regulations. Undoubtedly, neoliberal policies implemented in this context are being propagated, and these policies are being strengthened on an ideological basis. The central axis of the strategies is based on the opening up of all profitable sectors, including the public services of the periphery countries, to international capital and their privatization.

In addition, the issue of poverty reduction with the Millennium Development Goals continued to be brought up repeatedly.

6. WAR AGAINST POVERTY OR WAR AGAINST THE POOR? QUASI GLOBAL INITIATIVES AGAINST POVERTY

The fact that poverty, hunger, and inequality are still unacceptable in many countries in the millennium has mobilized various segments of society. Through the Millennium Declaration, which the United Nations signed in 2000 with a gathering of 147 states, some concrete targets were declared under the name of the Millennium Development Goals to solve the development problems around the world until 2015. For example, eradication of extreme poverty and hunger globally, halving the population that has to live on less than a dollar a day up to 2015, ensuring full employment and decent work for all, including women and youth, ensuring universal primary education for all, gender equality and empowerment of women, reduction of child mortality, Improving the health conditions of mothers, establishing a global partnership for development and developing global cooperation with a focus on development, developing methods of fighting AIDS, malaria, and similar diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability are some of these goals (UNDP, 2000).

The Millennium Development Goals have been an essential milestone in the fight against extreme poverty. A significant initiative was established within the United Nations, headed by Jeffrey Sachs, to create concrete strategies to achieve the goals. The targets acted as a global report and formed a pillar for the international community to focus its efforts, awareness programs, and global investments in the fight against poverty (Freeman, 2018: 7). Some observers evaluated these developments as a shift from the structural adjustment-oriented strategy to the poverty-focused strategy, which came to the fore in the development debates in the 1980s and 1990s (Elkins and Feeny, 2014). However, despite this seemingly positive picture, a report on achieving the Millennium Development Goals has shown that efforts to address poverty goals have had mixed success (UNDP, 2006: 32).

Between 1990 and 2015, the number of people living in extreme poverty fell from 1.926 billion to 836 million. Despite this, the rate of people living in extreme poverty in developing countries is as high as 15% (Rajabov, 2020: 1502). World Bank poverty data show that more than half of the 780 million people in extreme poverty are in Sub-Saharan Africa (Anyanwu, 2017). World Bank President Jim Yong Kim says this is "numerically one of the lowest poverty rates in history." (See Table 1). However, is the story true? For example, the World Bank measures extreme poverty by considering the number of people living on less than \$1.90 daily. However, is this a meaningful measure of poverty? Or is it a manipulation of global poverty data? As national and international income inequalities increase, the realities of world poverty are increasingly concealed through the manipulation of income statistics. Based on the manipulation of income statistics, World Bank data serves the valuable purpose of portraying people experiencing poverty in developing countries as a minority group.[7] According to Reddy and Pogge (2010: 42-54), global poverty decreased by 27

[7] For example, Jason Hickel (2017: 2212-2214) revealed in his study that there is a large gap between the national poverty lines and the poverty line set by the Bank and that more than 55% of the South African population lives below the poverty line. However, according to the World Bank, about 18.5% of South Africa's population lives below the poverty line. This shows that the World Bank systematically ignores global poverty. This has paved the way for the Bank to be subject to some criticism for under-reflecting the global poverty level for years.

percent between 1981 and 2005 using the World Bank's official poverty line.8However, such a measurement does not consider the multidimensional aspects of poverty.9

Table 2. Global poverty rates are based on spending $1.90-3.20 and $5.50 per day.

	1990	1999	2008	2013	2015
Poverty rates by international poverty line.	35,9	33,9	18,1	11,2	10,0
Societal poverty rates.	44,5	39,7	33,7	29,6	28,4

Source: Arabacı, 2019: 130. World Bank, 2018.

The table shows the course of global poverty rates from 1990-2015 according to three different international poverty lines. As of 2015, one out of every ten people in the world was considered poor, according to the $1.90 limit. In terms of the $3.20 limit, about three out of ten people are poor. Finally, in the context of the $5.50 poverty line, about five out of ten people, in other words, almost half of the world's population, are poor.

There is a global inequality.10 Where the average per capita gross domestic product of the world's 20 wealthiest countries is about 49 times that of the poorest 20 countries (World Bank, 2016), Oxfam's 2017 inequality report provided updated figures that the eight wealthiest billionaires own more wealth than 50% of the world's poorest people (Oxfam, 2017), in 2018, only 17 global conglomerates managed more than half of the entire planet's Gross Product, with earnings totaling $41.1 trillion (Robinson, 2022: 14). Oxfam's 2019 report on global food inequality has announced that the number of billionaires has almost doubled since the 2008 financial crisis, with the wealth of the world's richest man, Amazon owner Jeff Bezos, totaling $112 billion. He revealed that only 1% of this wealth corresponds to the health budget of Ethiopia, a country of 110 million people (Oxfam, 2019). The report also stated that the per capita incomes of countries such as the US, Norway, Japan,

[8] For example, the World Bank's poverty line calculated the poverty rate in Mexico in the early 2000s as five percent. However, according to the poverty calculations of the Mexican Federal Government, about fifty percent of the national population was struggling with poverty (Boltvinik et al., 2016: 176-177). Jolliffe and Wadhwa (2018) also suggested that the poverty rates in Indonesia and Pakistan, which are low-middle income group countries, are 7% and 5%, respectively, according to the $1.90 poverty line. However, they pointed out that when the poverty line was accepted as $3.20, poverty rates rose to 26% and 33%, respectively. According to the poverty line of $5.50, they stated that approximately two-thirds and three-quarters of the countries' populations are below the poverty line, respectively (Jolliffee and Wadhwa, 2018). Many experts on the poverty line argue that the Bank's poverty line is too low and suggest that it should be increased by four to tenfold (Edward, 2006; Woodward, 2010; Prichtt, 2006). It has been argued that if poverty is calculated based on recommended levels, it can be seen that most of the world's population lives in poverty.

[9] The World Bank's poverty measurement method does not fully reflect deprivation. To eliminate this deficiency and to pursue the goal of "elimination of all forms of poverty," which is among the Sustainable Development Goals, the World Bank mentioned three new absolute poverty lines for countries with higher levels of economic development in 2017 (Ferreira and Sanchez-Paramo, 2017). In the report published in 2018 (World Bank, 2018), it implemented two of them. These limits are US$ 3.20 per person per day based on Purchasing Power Parity for lower-middle-income countries and US$ 5.50 for upper-middle-income countries. Along with these two absolute poverty lines, the World Bank's 2018 Report has also developed a "multidimensional" poverty index by using the concept of "societal poverty" and some social indicators, considering the relative side of poverty. Considering the newly defined poverty lines, the outlook on poverty at the global level has changed. According to the report published by the Bank in 2018, almost half of the world's population lives below the $5.50 per day limit.

[10] Neoliberal policies can be summarized within the increasing wealth and income distribution inequalities. On a global scale, wealth is mainly concentrated in North America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific. As stated by Eşiyok (2016: 60-65), the total wealth share of these three regions in 2015 was measured as 85.5%. The share of the remaining regions of the world is 14.5%. Africa has a 1% share of world wealth. There are deep gaps between the world wealth shares of Europe and Africa, which have similar adult population shares. Accordingly, while Africa's share of world wealth is 1%, Europe's share is 30%. In other words, Africa's wealth is only 3.5% of Europe's.

Germany, and France are approximately 100 times greater than those of Ethiopia, Malawi, Afghanistan, and Bolivia (Oxfam, 2019).

According to World Bank data, nearly half of the world's poor (43% and more than 388 million people) live in Sub-Saharan Africa. If this trend continues, by 2030, about 9 out of 10 extremely poor will live in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2019). The most significant challenges in reducing poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa lie in two countries. These are Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo. These two countries represent almost a quarter of extreme poverty in Africa, with populations reaching 150 million.

The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019 paints a mixed picture of global progress in eradicating extreme poverty (UN, 2019: 22). According to the report, approximately 28% of the world's population in 2000, 16% in 2010, and 8.6% in 2018 lived in extreme poverty. Much of this decline was due to rapid progress in East and South Asia (especially China and India)11. In contrast, over 40% of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa still lives on less than $1.90 a day. As a result, the number of impoverished people in the region is higher than twenty years ago. Moreover, progress in poverty eradication has slowed considerably in recent years. According to UN-DESA's 2019 estimates, the number of people living in extreme poverty has increased in Sub-Saharan African countries where poverty levels are already very high. These countries are the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Nigeria. In addition, poverty rates have risen in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, including the region's largest economies, such as Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, and Venezuela (UN-DESA, 2019).

However, despite all these brutal reflections on poverty and inequalities, the Bank has not given up on its rhetoric that capitalism provides an opportunity for poverty reduction and development. It tries to characterize the phenomenon of poverty on the axis of some data and measurement methods without questioning the exploitative nature of the capitalist system (Selwyn, 2021: 12-13). All development discourses and policies developed by the Bank regarding poverty in the last few decades reflect this attitude. The capitalist system that causes poverty and the neoliberal policies that have been the political representative of capitalism for the last few decades continue to be proposed by the Bank as a cure for poverty (Selwyn, 2021).

The political line of the Bank has not changed during the COVID-19 process. Although COVID-19, which started in Wuhan, China, at the end of 2019 and spread to all countries, emerged as a health crisis, it negatively affected the social, cultural, and political structures of countries, especially the economic structures. In particular, social scientists have argued that with the COVID-19 Pandemic, neoliberal policies will be discredited and questioned, and the roles and functions of nation-states will be redefined. However, it is thought that the World Bank has not abandoned its stance that imposes its political prescriptions on the world, prioritizing capitalism and neoliberalism, which is the ideological spokesperson of the capitalist system. As a result, neoliberal policies that produce socio-economic inequalities worldwide, destroy organized labor by giving privileges to global capital groups, and reject welfare state practices continue to be implemented at full speed.

The Bank examines and cares about the COVID-19 Pandemic from a poverty perspective. However, this is not the truth. According to World Bank data, it has been reported that the global economy was

[11] The Economist has claimed that the World Bank estimates, calculated especially by Martin Ravallion, overemphasize the degree of global poverty and its reduction (Economist, 2004). Poverty has been conquered in China and India to a great extent, but not in many other countries. (Access Link: https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2004/04/07/pessimistic-on-poverty, Date of Access: March 3, 2023).

affected by the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020, as much as it was not even affected by the great depression in the 1930s, the crisis in the 1980s and the global financial crisis in the 2007-2009 period (World Bank, 2022: 1). In the World Bank's 2021 Global Economic Prospects Report, it was emphasized that more than 100 million people would face extreme poverty due to the Pandemic (World Bank, 2021). About 100 million new people have been added to the absolute poverty line. In this context, the World Bank's goal of reducing extreme poverty to below 3% has become unattainable (World Bank, 2021). Job losses and income losses, lack of access to food, education, and health, are growing problems with the Pandemic, exacerbating multidimensional poverty globally (World Bank, 2021; Whitehead et al., 2021). As a result, the Pandemic has deepened both monetary and multidimensional poverty, which is depicted as a combination of deprivations globally, especially in underdeveloped countries (Summer et al. 2020) (Table 1). When the forward-looking projections related to poverty are examined, it is claimed that a rapid decrease is not expected in the short term (until the 2030s). Even a partial increase is predicted to occur in 2020 and 2021, and the COVID-19 Pandemic is effective (World Bank, 2020: 60-61). Given these forecasts and expectations, it is clear that poverty will continue to be a critical international social policy issue.

Table 3. Poverty numbers and ratios to population by region.

Region	1990	1996	1999	2002	2005	2008	2010	2012	2015	2020	
The ratio of the poor population living on less than $1.9 per day to the total population (%)											
East Asia and the Pacific	61,6	41,1	38,8	29,9	19,1	15,1	11,2	3,6	4,1	1,3	
Europe&Central Asia	2,9	7,2	7,8	5,9	4,9	2,8	2,4	1,6	1,7	1,2	
Latin America and the Caribbean	14,1	13,8	13,5	11,7	9,8	6,9	6,0	4,5	5,6	4,4	
Middle East and North Africa	6,3	5,8	3,8	3,2	3,0	2,7	2,3	2,7	-	7,2	
South Asia	44,4	40,3	-	38,6	33,8	29,5	24,7	15,1	13,5	-	
Sub-Saharan Africa	55,1	58,8	58,3	56,9	50,9	47,7	46,5	42,3	35,2	41,0	
World Total	35,5	29,6	28,8	25,8	20,9	18,1	15,8	10,9	9,6	-	
Poor population (millions) living on less than $1.9 per day.											
East Asia and the Pacific	987,1	712,9	695	552,5	361,6	293,7	220,6	73,2	82,6		
Europe and Central Asia	13,3	33,8	36,8	27,6	22,9	13,3	11,4	7,2	4,4	6	
Latin America and the Caribbean	62,5	67,3	69,3	62,7	54,4	39,7	35,4	27,8	29,7	28	
Middle East and North Africa	14,4	15,3	10,3	9,4	9,4	8,8	7,9	9,6	-	-	
South Asia	503,1	518,3	-	554,6	510,5	467	402,3	257,3	231,3	-	
Sub-Saharan Africa	281,9	354,5	380,25	401,5	389,4	396,1	407,4	400,8	347,1	-	
World Total	1.866,8	1.706,7	1.731,9	1.613,2	1.353,6	1.222,8	1.090,9	782,7	776,3	-	

Source: Compiled from Emin, 2018; World Bank, 1990, 2000/2001, 2017, 2018.

According to the World Bank's 2021 data, it has provided $157 billion in aid to countries struggling with the Pandemic and helped more than 50 countries receive vaccines safely with $4.4 billion. In addition, a financing package of 600 million Euros has been mobilized to prevent COVID-19.12 There are remarkable statements on the subject in the World Bank's 2021 report: Client countries. The World Bank treats the countries it helps as customers with a return, so it is clear that the aid is not gratuitous:

"Conditionalities-reforms that must be introduced before the money is disbursed. Such conditionalities adversely affect population health by including ill-designed policy measures such as budget cuts, reducing the number and wages of health and social workers, weakening workforce protections, or promoting privatizations" (Kentikelenis et al., 2020: 2).

Throughout the global COVID-19 Pandemic, developing and underdeveloped countries have been economically hit the hardest, rapidly increasing the inequality gap and boosting poverty to the highest levels. Furthermore, loans given by the Bank also burden countries with additional debt repayments that will proceed to pour money from a country's economic system. Bank put on policies of programs for the commitment of the ideology that underpins their outweighing economic policies and programs- in other words, capitalism- and today, neoliberalism to reach development and reduce poverty (professedly) by hinging on entirely open deregulated markets and the laissez-faire faith.

The short-term effects of the Pandemic can now be observed. However, predicting what kind of developments will occur in the long term is challenging. However, based on short-term observations, with the pandemic process, the World Bank did not aim to develop the global society, increase welfare, provide individuals with access to essential services such as education and health, and therefore provide financial support to the policies that will eliminate the development gap between countries, but to the states that dominate the world, to the international capital groups also.

In short, the discourses and policies determined by the World Bank on poverty have been subject to some changes since its establishment. These changes were determined through the development theories that were influential in the period and the development discourses developed by the Bank in the context of these theories. The Bank has also managed to be influential in shaping and changing the theories and views on poverty in the world with the discourses and reports it generated. In the first twenty years of its establishment, the Bank pushed the issue of poverty into the background. It was based on development theories characterized by modernization discourses and Keynesian policies. Since the mid-1960s, the socio-economic problems of Third World countries, their opposing views about inequality and poverty, and the rise of Dependency Theories brought the Bank to focus on issues such as poverty and rural development for a short time (Şenses, 2001: 35). However, the oil crises that broke out in the mid-1970s as a reflection of the structural problems of the capitalist system caused the Bank to change its discourse in a radical context, paving the way for its integration into neoliberal policies and imposing this integration on the world (Martell, 2017: 148). Focusing on discourses such as structural adjustment and macroeconomic stability, the Bank completely knocked out the issue of poverty in the 1980s. Although the Bank seems to have brought the issue of poverty back onto its agenda since the 1990s, this is not the reality. The Bank has not compromised on the neoliberal policies it has adhered to for the last few decades.

On the contrary, it continues its efforts to integrate world economies into neoliberal policies rapidly. Therefore, the development discourses in the world and the poverty policies determined in line with

[12] To get more information see (https://www.birgun.net/haber/iste-dunya-bankasi-yillik-raporu-gercekten-samimiler-mi-376941, Date of Access: March 3, 2023).

these discourses have continued to be determined on the neoliberal line for the last few decades. The mainstream (neoliberalism) followed by the Bank and almost all world economies dragged around this mainstream cannot deviate from this line. Veltmeyer's views on this subject are pretty remarkable:

"The development theory is like the River Nile, wide and long, running through various lands, and providing for the livelihood of many on its shores. Like the Nile, development theory has a broad mainstream, with many side streams and tributaries that drive small ships into dead-ends or very sandy areas. However, sailing towards the dominant current in the mainstream, or possibly drifting around it, its mighty ships move relentlessly towards the estuary of development practice" (Veltmeyer, 2006: 37).

Following Veltmeyer's guiding analysis, neoliberalism, the mainstream economic discourse, has increased weight in academic institutions and research institutions dealing with development and poverty studies worldwide since the early 1980s. However, critical analysis of neoliberal policies has been severely hampered, and poverty has been addressed through a single set of fictional economic relations that conceal the working mechanisms of the global economic system. Poverty policies determined in the axis of neoliberal policies did not reduce poverty but exacerbated it in some regions. As a result, poverty continues to exist as one of our age's most critical social and economic problems. At this point, there is a need for restructuring the political economy and a new understanding of development and poverty. The political economy focuses on the mechanisms that act upon the distribution rather than some data on poverty calculated by the World Bank with the help of various methods for the last few decades.[13] The world's production of goods and services is at a level that can meet all people's needs. However, the unfair functioning of the global economic system reinforces poverty. To reduce poverty, the Bank must first and foremost cease to be an institution dominated by the US and serve the interests of the global financial community. In addition, the Bank should question the exploitative and pro-capitalist nature of the capitalist system it advocates. In this way, the lack of social context in the development and poverty theories can be eliminated. However, the policies supposedly implemented to eliminate poverty were generally determined within the framework of cause-effect relationships. The policies did not address the dialectical relationship between poverty and society. Thus, a break with the neoliberal policies that have assumed the ideological and political representation of the capitalist system for the last few decades may occur.

7. CONCLUSION

The issue of poverty has been prominent in development debates for many years. One institution that plays a crucial role in determining policies and debates on poverty is the World Bank. The Bank has been influential in developing policies related to poverty through the development policies and discourses it has determined since its establishment.

The study was created to elucidate the evolution of the World Bank's general perspective, objectives, policy recommendations, and practices on poverty. In other words, it aims to explain the bank-specific practices regarding poverty and the historical course of global poverty from the establishment of the World Bank to the present day. This scope necessitated the study to be based on a historical and descriptive course. In this context, within the framework of the process from the

[13] It is far from convincing today to explain the cause of poverty as the world's resources are insufficient in the face of population growth or below the absolute poverty line. All the resources produced on earth are at a level that can meet more than 110% of the current need. In contrast, more than 30 million people die yearly from poverty and hunger. Therefore, the source of the problems should be sought elsewhere, in that meeting human needs has been left to the brutal forces of the market (For more information, https://haber.sol.org.tr/yazar/herkese-yeter-dunya-344155 (Access Date 31 January 2023).

establishment of the World Bank to the present day, various sub-periods covering some policy processes related to the issue of poverty have been created.

In the first years of its establishment, the development policies of the World Bank included the political projections of the conflict between capitalism and communism. In the 1950s, the Bank developed a discourse based on modernization and traditional development theories based on this idea. Modernization suggested a uniform development model for underdeveloped and developing incoming countries. A linear and uniform development model has been presented to almost all countries, ignoring the countries' socio-economic transformation processes and potentials. Development was mainly associated with concepts such as industrialization and economic growth, and the issue of poverty was excluded.

However, since the mid-1960s, the awareness of the socio-economic problems of the Third World Countries and the inability of the policies proposed by the modernization idea to solve these problems led to the emergence of Dependency Theories. The Dependency School has presented a new perspective on the underdevelopment problem of Third World countries, especially Latin America, through a critique of modernization theory. The Dependency School emphasized that underdevelopment stemmed from the colonial and expansionary policies of the West and the unjust distribution of power in the world. Thus, issues such as poverty, underdevelopment, and inequality of income distribution began to come to the fore. After Robert McNamara became president of the World Bank in 1968, the Bank began to focus on Third World development efforts and rural development. However, this did not last long.

Since the mid-1970s witnessed international oil shocks and debt crises, in which severe crises and depressions were experienced in the center and periphery of the global political and economic system, the Bank has undergone a paradigmatic discourse shift in producing a new development paradigm or orthodoxy. The phenomenon that has determined this shift of discourse is neoliberalism. Neoliberalism aims to open a wide field of action for global capital by restricting the presence and decisive position of the state in the economic field. It has virtually destroyed the theoretical and practical infrastructures of development movements carried out under the strategic leadership of public actors.

Neoliberal policies have become increasingly widespread worldwide through the so-called Washington Consensus, such as the structural adjustment programs initiated by the World Bank in the 1980s, liberalization of imports, financial liberalization, privatization, and reduction of public investments. Structural adjustment was the World Bank's recipe for the solution offered to many developing countries in the economic crisis in the early 1980s. The so-called neoliberal prescription included policies such as privatization, trade liberalization, reduction of subsidies and protections, downsizing of the state, and flexibility in labor markets. A country's ability to borrow from the World Bank and IMF depended on its acceptance and implementation of these policies. As Patrick Bond stated (2004: 153-154), neoliberal practices imposed by the World Bank and IMF are almost new colonial policies. The World Bank, which got closer to the IMF in the context of structural adjustment programs, used this cyclical opportunity proactively to revise the global development discourse on the examples of countries in crisis and to ensure the global spread of neoliberal policies.

The World Bank maintained a discourse and a style of action that remained indifferent to development problems in income distribution, social justice, education, health, similar areas, and poverty. In other words, the Bank has followed its agenda, which has crystallized as the Washington Consensus since the 1980s, and has virtually put the issue of poverty aside. This situation was one of the factors that paved the way for the 1980s to be considered as the lost decade of development in many regions of the Third World, especially in Africa and Latin America (Hirschman, 1981: 24). Because the Third World countries tried to live under the dominance of the doctrine prepared by the

IMF and World Bank rulers. Poverty and inequalities increased dramatically during the 1980s and 1990s due to the remodeling of national economies within the framework of the structural adjustment program. The intensification of poverty and inequality has damaged the social fabric and fueled social contradictions worldwide. These prove that there is no comprehensive road map for eliminating poverty.

As the Washington Consensus claims, financial and trade liberalization are not magical processes that would drive countries' capital and foreign exchange prices to the proper levels to maximize their long-term growth and development paths (Kapstein and Milanovic, 2003: 12). Throughout the 1980s; international capital continued to insist on imposing models that would increase the causes of depression, under the guise of finding a cure for the crisis. However, at the end of the 1980s, poverty and inequality, which became increasingly evident globally, ostensibly reactivated the World Bank. The Poverty report, published by the Bank in 1990, proves this situation.

The cornerstone of the World Bank's analysis, findings, and subsequent policy directions on poverty since 1990 has been measuring and calculating extreme poverty. In 1990, the World Bank developed the "1 Dollar" poverty line per person per day to calculate poverty at the international level and compare countries. Parallel to the changes in purchasing power parity and with the revisions in the developing countries group, which is taken as a basis in its calculation, its value has changed over time and was updated as 1.90 dollars in 2015. The World Bank measures poverty in terms of people living on less than $1, or $1.90 daily. However, is this a meaningful measure of poverty? Many theorists criticize the World Bank's poverty estimates. In traditional poverty measures and debate, the concern is almost entirely over the lack of income. However, poverty is a multidimensional problem that includes economic, humanitarian, and social issues. The Bank's global poverty estimates are primarily static, focused on determining the number of poor at a given time. These estimates do not indicate whether individuals or households are poor or have moved into poverty over time. The Bank has primarily neglected the dynamic nature of poverty (Carter and Barrett, 2006: 180).

The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), which aimed to alleviate the debts of developing countries towards the end of the 1990s, also failed to bring a solution to the problem of poverty and inequality, which continues with all its violence in the world economies. In Killick's (2004) words, these initiatives remained as extensions of the project "to put neoliberalism in a humane face" (Şenses, 2001: 53). These initiatives demonstrate the true character of the Bank, an institution committed to the neoliberal ideology that plays a crucial role in poverty eradication issues. When all the annual development reports published by the Bank after 1990 are examined in detail, it is seen that the Bank continues to impose neoliberal prescriptions on the world, embodied by the motto "Abandon the Plan, Focus on the Market." Although poverty and reducing inequality are shown as being in the foreground, they remain in the background.

When initiatives such as the Post-Washington Consensus, Millennium Development Goals, and Sustainable Development Goals developed after the 2000s are examined in detail, it is seen that the initiatives do not represent a radical break from neoliberal policies. Through initiatives, neoliberal policies have only changed shape, made up to gain a human-like appearance. Because the content of neoliberal prescriptions has not been touched. The Bank continues to exert pressure on political actors on structural transformation issues such as liberalization of foreign trade, capital movements, privatization, the flexibility of labor markets, and reduction of public investments.

The Bank has shown the leading cause of poverty in the world as economic insufficiency or lack of production for years. This is because the goods and services produced worldwide are at a level to meet the needs of all people. The main problem is the distribution of these goods and services, in other words, the distribution methods. Because the political and economic processes that affect distribution continue to reproduce poverty. In the capitalist system, all the mechanisms that ensure the system's functioning, such as laws, global markets, and public policies, continue to work in favor of the powerful in the system and against the poor.

The World Bank, especially in the last few decades, continues to play a central role in the reproduction process of imperialism, dictating how developing countries develop and shifting the effects of capitalist crises to the poorer countries of the world. Therefore, the policies it determines in the fight against poverty continue to be formed based on ideology rather than reality. Therefore, the IMF and other international institutions and organizations, especially the World Bank, should abandon their standard and mechanical policy recommendations on the problem of poverty. The problem of poverty will continue in the following years if these organizations do not determine policies based on local knowledge that will be formed by examining the economic, political, sociocultural, and institutional conditions of the country's economies related to poverty. Furthermore, the Bank must eliminate orthodox development theory and practice and become a device for promoting US or Western interests in particular world domains. For this, development should succeed beyond the discourses imposed by the central capitalist countries.

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