BRITISH AND NIGERIA'S UNDERDEVELOPMENT: REVISIT ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines the concept of imperialism which has been implicated in the underdevelopment of Nigeria like other African Countries where it had been at work While they had long operated in Nigeria, new Imperialism that relates to colonialism is said to be responsible for generating and perpetuating underdevelopment and dependency in Nigeria. The paper employed narrative and quantitative analytical historical methods, using mostly secondary sources in the study which reveals that indeed imperialism at colonialism using different methods to exploit Hunan and material resources of Nigeria leading to its underdevelopment. The paper in Conclusion maintains that imperialism nay colonialism occasioned the underdevelopment of Nigeria and recommends the Strengthening of the country's productive capacity as to fast track her development.

Introduction

This paper sets out to examine the dynamics of British Imperialism in Nigeria with special attention to the British colonial policy and activities, with the aim of showing how this led to the underdevelopment of the country.

British Imperialism stretches from the inhumanity of the slave trade exploitative trade; to the brutality of colonization and contemporary neo-colonial domination. The central role of imperialism in generating and perpetuating underdevelopment and dependency in Nigeria is the serious concern of this paper.

There have been distortion, falsification, and mystifications both by imperialists and petty bourgeois scholars concerning the nature, causes and remedy of underdevelopment in Nigeria. This paper us my little contribution to understanding the nature of imperialism as well as causes and remedy of underdevelopment in Nigeria.

The paper starts with definition and explanation of the two related concepts; imperialism and underdevelopment, which form the two major themes of this work. The two concepts need elaborate explanations as to help us understand and appreciate Nigeria's predicament as an underdeveloped country.

Next the paper gives an outline of the history of British imperialism in Nigeria and then fully examined the Nigerian colonial economy where it is felt strongly rooted the underdevelopment of Nigeria.

It finally takes a cursory look at the neo-colonialism, which is seriously perpetuating the underdevelopment of Nigeria.

Imperialism

Professor Ake (1981:20) has defined imperialism as the economic control and exploitation of foreign Lands arising from the necessity for counteracting the impediment to the accumulation of capital engendered by the internal contradiction of the domestic capitalist economy".

Imperialist exploitation involves appropriation of the economic surplus of one country by another through enslavement, forced labour, land wages, acquisition of mineral rights, land alienation, and capital export, all for the generation of huge profits for the imperialists. Exploitation therefore is the basis of unequal development fostered by imperialism (Onimode 1982:4).

Elsewhere, another broad definition of imperialism is given as "the outward drive of certain peoples to build empires - both formal colonies and privileged positions in markets, protected sources of materials and extended opportunities for the profitable employment of labour" (Barratt, 1974). This definition might associate imperialism with an unequal economic relationship between states not simply the inequality of large and small, rich and poor trading partners, but the inequality of political and economic dependence of the latter on the former.

Imperialism is therefore a system of relationship in which domination, super domination, exploitation and of course development and underdevelopment play a central part.

Underdevelopment

Underdevelopment is a concept that scholars find difficult to give an outright definition, nevertheless we are not left in the dark as to what the concept is.

To Walter Rodney, underdevelopment makes sense only as a means of comparing levels of development. The concept is very much tied to the fact that human social development has been uneven and from a strictly economic viewpoint (Rodney 1972).

Some human groups grew faster by producing more and becoming wealthier.

In this sense, economic comparison among nations can be made by looking at their per capital income standard of living level of industrialization, level of education etc. as indicators of development and underdevelopment.

Bourgeois writers and scholars have tried to advanced interpretations of the underdevelopment of nations especially African states as being a result of generic backwardness of the race of black Africans, lack of skill to develop and other forms of blanket interpretations which tend to hide the true cause of underdevelopment of these states.

Radical writers and scholar have however been able to study and unearth the true causes and right interpretation to underdevelopment of the so-called backward nations. Rodney identifies underdevelopment as "comprising a particular relationship of exploitation namely the exploitation of one country by another. All the countries named as underdeveloped in the world are exploited by others; and the underdevelopment with which the world is now pre-occurred is a product of capitalist, imperialists and colonialist explo1tation" (Rodney 1972).

The underdeveloped nations of Africa and Asia were developing independently when they were taken over by the capitalist powers and their exploitation started depriving them of their natural resources and labour.

It is typical of underdeveloped economies that they were not allowed to concentrate on those sectors of the economy which in turn will generate growth and raise production to a new level altogether and there are very few ties between one sector and another so that say agriculture and industry could react beneficially on each other.

There was complete disarticulation of their economics.

It is from this view point that Clive Thomas gave what I consider the most radical definition, or explanation of underdevelopment, dependence, and backwardness of the process of production in exploited countries on the one hand as "the lack of an organic link, rooted in an indigenous science and technology between the pattern and growth of domestic resource use, and pattern and growth of domestic demand and, on the other, the divergence between

domestic demand and the needs of the broad mass of the population" (Clive, 1974).

From this it is clear that underdevelopment in African and third world economics is rooted in the absence of an indigenous technology which centers on the process of dynamic divergence between domestic resources and domestic demand, all imbedded in the process of imperialism.

The Dynamics of British Imperialism in Nigeria

Bade Onimode (1982:4) has distinguished four phases of imperialism which fall in line with the history of British imperialistic activities in Nigeria; Britain being one of the pioneers of imperialistic assault against the third world countries.

The changing forms of British imperialism in Nigeria reflect changing strategies adopted by British to resolve the permanent crisis of international capitalism in different epochs. The British Imperialism falls within four phases, which has been identified with respect to their productive forces, property relations and dominant ideologies. The phases are, mercantilist imperialism, free trade imperialism, corporate or monopolistic imperialism and multilateral imperialism.

The British mercantilist imperialism started in Nigeria during the era of slave trade from about 1441 when slaves were on sale in Lisbon. The main commodities of pillage during this era were slaves, pepper and palm oil.

Free trade imperialism took off in Nigeria after the industrial revolution which started in Britain, this was the age of industrial capitalism. The overriding motive was to raise the profitability of mass production through cheaper sources of raw materials and food as well as lucrative market for manufactured goods.

In this bid, Britain required free trade for the greater exploitation of old colonies secured under mercantilist Imperialism and the scramble for new ones. England then "the workshop of the world" was the lender of the new imperialism whose ideology was given international rationalization by Adam Smith's practice on free trade and competition and by David Ricardo's theory of competitive advantage as the basis of for the international division of labour between Britain and the world.

During the era, Britain sought the abolition of the slave trade in Nigeria, which it saw as obstructing more lucrative markets trade in manufacture and primary products.

The legitimate trade was then advocated with great favour and established after the dethronement of Kosoko of Lagos in

1851. This phase also saw the expansion activities of explorers and missionaries who worked to initiate the people of Nigeria into the cult of subservience dating from the formation of the African association in 1788. The phase ended with the formal colonization of Nigeria by Britain in 1860.

Britain then entered the third stage of her imperialist plunder. This is the corporate imperialist stage. This stage witnessed the episode of 1884 Berlin treaty for the partition of Africa among European imperialists which ended with the second major imperialistic war christened the 2nd world war. During this phase, Britain completely consolidated her colonial conquest and domination of Nigeria with Lord Lugard's indirect rule in Northern Nigeria.

Secondly, British finance capital started penetrating into Nigeria under the sponsorship of multinational commercial companies such as the Royal Niger Company (UAC) John Holt and Barclays Bank (now Union Bank). In this phase too, the protectorate of northern and southern Nigeria was formally integrated in 1914.

The fourth and contemporary phase is the multilateral Imperialistic stage, which started since 1946. In this phase, three main features were outstanding. Firstly, colonial planning was introduced in 1946 to withstand worsening capitalist contradictions after World War II.

Secondly, in 1960, flag independence was granted to a British-bred petty-Bourgeoisie to facilitate the neo economic domination under neo-colonialism. Thirdly the invasion of American, French, Japanese, German and other imperialist forces into sectors of Nigerian economy especially petroleum to challenge British hegemony.

The last two phases of the British imperialism saw the era of complete political and economic control of the territory of Nigeria, 1860-1960. It

was during this period that Britain as the only imperialist power in Nigeria effected great damage to the country's economic resources through brutal exploitation. This was the root of Nigeria's underdevelopment. We shall now examine the colonial economy.

The Colonial Economy

Claud Ake (1981:43), has described the colonial economy as characterized by "disarticulation and incoherence". He explains that a coherent economy is ideally a system of forward and backward linkages in production, its regions and sectors will complementary and reciprocity of exchange between them. Nigeria's colonial economy generally lacked these linkages, complementary and reciprocity, which will have engendered development.

British colonial economic policies was such that there was disarticulation in all sectors of the economy. We shall examine the different sectors to see how they were disarticulated as to cause Nigeria's underdevelopment.

Agricultures

Agriculture under colonial capitalism was naturally interested only in the most profitable primary or cash crops commodities. The colonial Government encouraged the production of cash crops like palm oil, cocoa, rubber, and groundnut. Peasant farmers were encouraged by providing them with plants and seed and promise of Government purchase of their produce with additional incentive of bonuses for good agricultural production results. All these was to ensure adequate production primary commodities to feed British industries.

Plantation agriculture by foreign businessmen was discourage by the colonial Government. This was for fear of political unrest, which might result from disruption of pre-colonial land tenure'(Ekundare, 1973:p88).

The prices of the cash crops were miserably low and were subject to fluctuations in the international market. In order to curtail the price fluctuation of the cash crops produce, the colonial Government set up marketing board ostensibly changed with the duty of stabilizing prices. In reality, the marketing board played the fiscal role of appropriating agriculture surplus for the British Government, which was invested outside Nigeria(Onimode650-51).

While cash crop production was encouraged, good production was neglected if not discouraged.

Transport

The colonial transport system amply illustrates the story of disarticulation in all sectors of the colonial economy. The building of railways was dictated by the collection of export commodities(Ake, p.44). The Kano - Apapa or Western railway line was constructed to facilitate the collection of cotton, ground-nut, cocoa and hides and skin for export. Again the Enugu - Port Harcourt or Eastern line was built to serve the palm o1l and kernel collection. Therefore, the railways ran mainly north - south and non ran east-west.

Feeder roads were built only to provide access for the Nigerian producers to railway stations where their goods were cleared. The railways and roads were only functional for gathering and exporting the commodities of the Country. As a result of the pattern of the railways, the ports were built at the terminals of the railways. Ports were not necessarily located where they should yield maximum benefit to the development of the Country. Former established ports like Bonny, Opobo and Calabar were abandoned and neglected.

In the whole, the colonial Government deliberately failed to build a coherent system of communication to connect the different regions of the country as to help in building a coherent economy.

Trade

From its origin to the present, imperialist trade has been motivated by interrelated requirements for cheap foreign sources of raw materials and outlets for mass produced manufactures, both of which strengthen the international value of its currency, and are a source of collective enrichment through the transfer of economic surplus from abroad (Onimode, p.68).

Nigeria served these purposes excellently for Britain. The direction of Nigeria's colonial trade necessitates.

Britain, persistently controlled 50% to 80% of all exports and imports. Private companies of

foreign countries controlled the trade. Such companies as United African Coy.

John Holt, Lever Brothers and a host of others,featured prominently.

Besides companies, individuals participated in the colonial trade. They were mainly Lebanese, Syrians and Indians (Hopkins 1973, p.204).

These foreign traders dominated whole-sale and retail trade in the country. The Levantines and Indians were very frugal unlike Nigerians and soon grew very rich. Most of them invested in the mining industry.

Few Nigerians took part in the trade but were not very successful. The commercial banks refused them loans but rather readily gave loans to the Lebanese, Syrians and Indians.

The terms of trade was dictated by Britain for both import and exports "Throughout the history of colonial trade, exports and imports were continuously protected in the interest of British imperialism through a barrage of total prohibition military requisition, import quota, licensing and tariffs (Onimode, p.68).

Industry

While British colonial Government encouraged Agriculture, it discouraged establishment of industries. Industrialization was either neglected or forbidden. This is not surprising because the structure of colonial system by its very logic was incompatible with industrial development in the colonies.

The British sought to avoid competition of the colonial industries with the metropolitan industries which was supposed to have the colonies as reserve markets.

Beside this, the colonial Government was out to promote the profitable import and protect the shipping interest of those British companies that dominated the international trade of Nigeria.

This failure to provide an industrial component to the Nigerian economy ensured that Nigeria remained in a situation referred to by economists as "enforced Bilateralism"; and dependent on Britain for all manufactured goods.

The indigenous industries were gradually killed by the importation of British manufactured Superior substitutes of the indigenous products. A taste for British manufactures was systematically cultivated in Nigerians thereby deepening the citizens' dependence on foreign goods.

Nigeria was thus reduced to mere producers of primary product and importers of secondary or manufactured goods. It became impossible to accumulate enough capital for industrial development.

After World War II effort was made to encourage the establishment of few small scale industries. Most of the industries established had very small capital outlay of few thousand pounds, employing only 10 to 100 workers. The bigger ones produced merely consumer goods such as cigarette, soap, textiles canned food, beer, magerine and plastics.

Most of the industries were owned by the British imperialist.

By 1960 Nigerians owned only two out of the twenty-two industries establishments Identified (Onimode, p.68).

Besides this, most of the industries are not industries which economists describe as having backward and forward linkages and so cannot facilitate the industrial development of post-colonial Nigeria.

Mining

Mining industry under the colonial administration was dominated by British companies and other imperialists. Few Lebanese and Syrians also invested in the mining Industry (Cook 1964, p.237).

Most Nigerian peasants were attracted to the mines where they provided cheap labour to the companies, Introduction of taxes to be paid in cash forced many peasants to the mines.

Much labour was passed into the mining industry thereby reducing the number of people engaged in food production,

Apart from coal which Government controlled, the other minerals were mined by private imperialist companies. Mineral producing areas were usually designated

"Grown Lands", There were such minerals in Nigeria like tin columbite, coal, petroleum lead and diamond. As from 1910, the royal Niger Company was given 50% of the royalty on all minerals found in its former territories and by 1937 an oil concession on the total land area of Nigeria had been granted to Shell/Petroleum (Onimode, p.54).

Financial System Currency and Banking

In 1912, the West African currency board was established to issue currency for the British West African colonies including Nigeria. Before 1911 currency in Nigeria was supplied by Bank of British West Africa, a company dominated by Alfred Jones (Hopkins 1973, p.207).

The W.A.C.B. after taking over continued to regulate the supply of coins and currency in Nigeria until July 1939, when the newly established central bank of Nigeria became the sole authority for the issue of currency in Nigeria (Ekundare p.314).

It was the practice of the board to make annual distribution from its supplies to the Government of the four countries it serves. The essence of the currency board system was the convertibility of west African coins and notes on demand into sterling balances in London. The Board exchanged token money earned this the Nigerian export trade. The hard currency was invested in the international money market in London.

During the colonial era, there were only few banks in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the relationship between the expatriate banks and the Nigerian public was relatively poor. The banks especially the British West African Bank and the Barclays bank adopted very conservative policies. The never promoted capital accumulation within the colony and as well refused establishment of branches different parts as to mobilize Nigeria citizens to save for investment.

Personnel

For most part, most of the skilled workers employed in the industries were foreigners. The senior positions in the mines, industries and commercial companies were dominated by non-Nigerians. Nigerians were regarded as being incapable of staffing the senior positions even when they are trained.

In the colonial civil administration, foreigners also dominated the senior cadre positions.

Half the salary of these expatriates was repatriated abroad in hard currency. This drained the country's foreign reserve.

Development plans

At the end of the second world war, the Government embarked on ten-year development plans. In 1946, the first plan was drawn. This plan's emphasis was on provision of social services and public utilities. Economic problems were not tackled nor industrial development embarked upon. In 1956 the second plan was drawn and this was mainly geared towards improvement of communication. Therefore, the colonial economy remained incoherent and disarticulated until independence in 1960.

Neo-Colonialism

The attainment of independence in 1960 saw the emergence of neo-colonialism in the political independent Nigeria.Neo-colonialism simply entails the remote control of the economic and political systems of the independent contries by their former colonial masters.

Neo-colonialism refers to the continuation of colonial-like exploitation and dominance by powerful countries or corporations over weaker or developing nations, often through economic, cultural, or political means, rather than direct colonial occupation.The features could be seen in the areas of,economic dependence the rely aids and loans or investments;exploitation of resources in extraction of minerals,labour and market ;cultural dominance in imposition of western values, language and culture ;political influences they shape policies, influence elections and formation of government and lack of sovereigntyin which the countrie haveno controlovertheirinternal affair.

These features crystallise in the activities such as,structural Adjustment policies imposed by IMF and other financial institutions;foreign ownership of key industries eg mining and Agriculture; unequal trade agreements eg WTO,NAFTA ; Cultural harmonisation in globalisation of media and proxy wars.

Through these various methods and strategies, the former colonial powers of the

Industrialised and developed nations perpetuate inequality, undermines self-determination and hinders development in affected the nations

Multinational companies of Britain, U.S. France, Japan and other imperialist nations with the help of local bourgeoisies have continued the exploitation of Nigeria.

The economy of Nigeria has been rendered dependent and strongly tied to the Britain and the other imperialist powers who have made inroads into Nigerian economy to perpetuate the Country's underdevelopment.

Import-substitution industrialization embarked upon by the Nigerian has been identified as one of measures aiding neocolonialism in Nigeria.

The confines of this paper cannot allow me go into the full exposition of the concept of neo-colonialism in Nigeria but suffice it to say that it is perpetuating Nigeria's underdevelopment.

Conclusion

The British imperialism in Nigeria which started with mercantilist imperialism from 1441, reached its crescendo during the colonial period and still going on with the contemporary phase of multilateral imperialism has brought underdevelopment to the country

From the foregoing, it is clear that British imperialism is responsible for Nigeria's underdevelopment while it at same time enhanced British development. It is from this same standpoint, that onimode asserts that both development and underdevelopment are simultaneous product of the same imperialist system of domination, plunder and exploitation, that always and everywhere has manifested in development for the imperialist powers and development for the 'wretched of the earth' (Onimode:.8).

This situation is amply demonstrated in the relationship between Nigeria and Britain wherein the continual exploitation of the Nigerian resources by Britain through trade, remote political direct foreign investment, investment control, capital export surplus expropriation has led to the underdeveloped status of Nigeria.

The question is how can Nigeria come out this mess of underdevelopment and move towards development? This question calls for suggestions.

Our humble suggestion is that Nigeria should embark on a social revolution which will enable her completely restructure her economy and at the same time cut all ties between her and imperialist powers who perpetuate her underdevelopment as to put her on the right path to genuine development.

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