

Underdevelopment: imperialism's lasting reach walter rodney



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In this chapter Rodney has described the development and underdevelopment very effectively through a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the facts and figures and through historical evidences. He has stressed the comparative nature of the concept of development. Rodney has clearly divided the world into two groups; one being the developed (Africa, Asia and Latin America) and the other the underdeveloped (Europe and North America). Being developed or underdeveloped does not only depend on the economic inequalities but more importantly it depends on the interaction between two countries which is mostly based on the exploitation of one by the other; the exploiter becoming developed and the exploited staying underdeveloped with a very low rate of growth thus development and underdevelopment are interlinked to each other. The world development had different meaning in different periods of history. Mostly it was meant as a state of a social group which allows it to guard its interests effectively; letting the group fulfill its needs with total independence. Competition also often leads to development which is governed by the survival-of-the-fittest rule. When different social groups in past had limited supply of resources for meeting their needs they invented tools and started increasing the resources available to them so the competition among them resulted in their development. This competition prevailed and also resulted in negative developments in the form of fights between tribes and wars between nations. As the needs increased the productivity also increased, so development can also be deemed as basic human instinct. Invention of tools, specialization in certain skills, division of tasks and forming associations for benefit of each other are various phases of primary developments that took place in various societies of the world and ultimately lead to the formation of

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social systems because expansion in economy leads to change in the form of social interactions. This resulted in formation of feudalism and communalism and then socialism and capitalism. Economically analyzing, each succeeding stage resulted in development in the sense that the capacity to create a material environment for individuals in society and to increase productivity actually flourished at every stage but whether the uplift of mankind occurred or not with regards to moral state cannot be established for certain. The change almost every country of the world was revolutionary but in Africa it was more of a gradual and slow change and the ultimate result was the exploitation of the African resources by others. In addition to socio-economic aspects, religion and beliefs were also the controlling factor because Africa for instance was never allowed to establish its independent church. Moreover lack of education and social awareness in Africa resulted in comparatively easy exploitation as compared to the people of Asia and Latin America. Capitalism emerged as a developmental source; solving the problems posed by feudalism as it presented the concepts of parliament, constitution and freedom of press however the fact which was concealed by these positive aspects is that capitalism is a social structure in which one group gets benefits at the expense of other. Slowly the working class in the capitalist structure became aware of this aspect of the system and became self conscious; determined to take their destiny into their own hands thus the state of being exploited resulted in development and this development is moral and is far more sustainable than economic development. Capitalism has grasped the world very strongly and the proof is that socialism which gives better solutions to the problems present in social system as it turned the goal of production away from money market towards the satisfaction of

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human needs; arrived after capitalism has not replaced it completely and is actually present alongside it. But socialism has made the workers class the most dynamic force in development. The various statistics and figures show that the developed world is utilizing the resources from Africa for its own benefit and the benefits of the vast resources in Africa are not given to the African population. As a result the African population is unable to meet its most basic needs. Not only the external world, the African leaders, who can actually be deemed as agents of capitalist system, are also a cause of the underdevelopment prevailing in Africa as the product of development earned by the workers and common man of Africa is spent not on their development but on the cars and perfume for the minute percentage which enjoy all the luxuries while the majority of population die of hunger and disease.

Minimizing the social gap based on economic development and spending the product of the efforts of common man on them by eliminating the brain drain so that progress can be achieved by Africans themselves is the only way in Africa can become self-sustainable in development. Works Cited Rodney, Walter. How Europe underdeveloped Africa. N. p.: Howard University Press, 1982. Print.