

# Under Development and Dependency: The Case of Nigeria

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**Abstract – Under development and dependency are two words that are inter-related, underdevelopment gives rise to dependency. We all know that these concepts are prevalent in Nigeria as a developing country. It is certain that Nigeria is an independent country, but it does not possessed the trappings of an independent country since the super structures that formed the society and State are controlled from outside the shores of Nigeria. Literally, Nigeria is independent but in practical terms, Nigeria is dependent on foreign influences of our colonial masters who tele-guide everything Nigeria does politically, economically, socially and culturally. Politically, Nigeria adopted British style of governance and currently American style. Economically, Nigeria adopted capitalism which is controlled by foreigners and has contributed in crippling Nigerian economy, socially and culturally. Nigerians copy foreign ways and values and our own ways and values are pushed to the background and suffer inferiority complex to the foreign ways and values. Nigeria falls back to the western Nations for loans and grants which have made us debtor and dependent nation to the west. One can go on and on without end. This paper therefore, attempt to look at the case of Nigeria as it relates to the concepts of underdevelopment and dependency. The paper adopted the Historical/ Descriptive and Prescriptive approaches in the discussion. The layout is as follows: Introduction, Synopses, X-ray the problems thrown up by underdevelopment and dependency in Nigeria and finally, the prognoses.**

**Keywords:** Under development, Dependency, Nation, Synopses, Prognoses.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The main focus of this work is on Underdevelopment and Dependency. Dependency as most people know is a product of Underdevelopment. It is certain that Nigeria is an independent Nation, but it does not reflect the trappings of an independent Nation since the super structures that formed the Nation are dependent on foreign policies and

Nigeria journey to Underdevelopment came in disguised through colonialism. It left Nigeria in shambles and dependent

on foreign influences. Nigeria got political independence but Nigeria is practically dependent on foreign influences since they formed most of our policies and decisions as seen in some of our super structures like political which we adopted their styles of government, economic which is capitalism which contributed in crippling our economic culture, our cultural values which have been polluted and degraded, socially, we suffer from inferiority complex and we have lost our dignity since we came in contact with the whites.

The post-colonial Nigerian economy could not helped Nigeria. It has led to the current debt crises which is worsen by the conditionalities of the foreign financial institutions in the quest for foreign aids and loans which does not translate to the reason for which it was obtained. Public officers now use these foreign aids and loans to line their private pockets thereby putting Nigeria in a high debt profile. In order to mediate the debt problem an organization was formed called International Monetary Fund (IMF) which is an agency of the United Nation Organization (UNO) which claims that its mandate is to aid the Third World countries in advancing the Structural Adjustment Programme(SAP) aimed at developing the Nigerian State to international standard, but in the real sense, it worsen the Nigerian economic problem.

The concepts of Underdevelopment and Dependency draw our attention to the stagnation, deplorable and peripheral condition of Nigeria. The problem centers on our inability to transform our raw materials to finished products, inability to harness and manage our products, poor leadership, balance of payment deficit, poor health statistics, material poverty, indebtedness, poor education, ethnic crises, rapid capital flight, low capacity utilization of materials and other human resources problems. Before we go into the discussion of the problems thrown up by Underdevelopment and Dependency in Nigeria, we are first of all going to define the two concepts for the purpose of clarity and understanding of the discourse.

## II. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

### 2.1 Underdevelopment

It is used in the social sciences to refer to certain areas of the world, it gained prominence in the late 1940s. Prior to this

time, other derogatory terms has been used to qualify and describe these areas as Maiser(2000) has noted , in the 18th century, such as “rude” and barbarous were used to describe countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In the 19th century those terms were dropped in favour of new terms such as “backward” and “primitive”. In the 20th century, especially after the end of World War II, the previous terms were equally abandoned and in their places, new terms such as ‘Underdevelopment and “Dependency” were used. At the moment, it has been suggested in some quarters that such terms as “less developed”, “developing”, “poor”, and according to Rodney(1972) “is to avoid any unpleasantness which may be attached to it.” It has also been suggested that the previous derogatory terms should be dropped in favour of less offensive or mild ones as ‘developing” or “emergent”. This is perceived as a calculated design or ploy by the West to mask or give erroneous impression that these countries are changing positively and thus are developing and that if the right policies are implemented, sooner or later these countries will definitely catch up with the developed countries of the world.

In view of this assumption, the Marxist Theorists prefer to use the term “Underdevelopment’ to describe the less developed parts of the world. The reason for this term is that is believed to be the best concept that can aptly describe the state of stagnation and exploitation that is prevalent in these societies.

According to Offiong, (2000), it is believed by the liberal scholars that underdevelopment is not caused by an external factor but rather is induced by internal factors. Based on the above, the liberals defined underdevelopment as a natural state of social, psychological, political, and economic backwardness occasioned by natural and internal milieu. This led the liberals to postulate that the way out of this backwardness is through modernization in order to stimulate growth and development.

The Marxists who are also known as the radicals, say it is untrue that underdevelopment connotes backwardness, primitivism or lack of development. This is because every people have developed in one way or the other and to a greater extent. Equally untrue is the assertion that it is a natural process. To the Radicals it is a man-made process and a manifestation of a long period of economic and political relationship between these countries and the advanced industrialized parts of the world. While supporting the view that underdevelopment is caused by interplay between external and internal factors; Gunder Frank (1972) asserted: underdevelopment is not simply non-development, but it is a unique type of socio-economic structure brought about by the integration of society into the sphere of the advanced capitalist countries. It is the same process that fosters development in

the industrialized countries and generates underdevelopment in the Third World countries.

Similar views have been expressed by other eminent scholars of the Marxists persuasion. The most forceful among them are Kay, Celso, Dos Santos, and Cotton, They have argued though with different emphasis that the foreign penetration is the cause of underdevelopment. Arising from these premises, they contended that underdevelopment is the state of backwardness, retardation and economic distortion counsel by exploration and plunder of the economies of the developing areas as the result of the integration into world capitalism Emeh (2013).

From the discussion so far on the concept of underdevelopment, we have seen that the term has been used and defined differently by both the Liberal and Radical scholars. These scholars see underdevelopment as apparently influenced by what they think caused underdevelopment. While the Liberal views on underdevelopment are that, it is an original and natural situation, the Marxist scholars are of the view that it is an artificial process caused by the exploitation of one country by another.

## 2.2 Dependency

The concept is coined by a Brazilian sociologist Fernando Caidoso, to cover both political analysis that is those who are beneficiaries of development with those who make decisions. Dependency simply stated that crucial decisions are made not by the countries that are being “developed” but by foreigners whose interest are carefully safeguarded used their economic power in the countries that they penetrate. The collusion between economic and political power distort both the economy and policies of the dependent countries. The process is now complete because first of all the metropolis exploit the colonies, so does the domestic colonial bourgeois class exploit the rest of the population Frank(1972).

In earliest conception, dependency, as noted by Ian Roxborough was defined as “the observer side of a theory of imperialism”. Dependency represent the complex socio-economic relationship that bind the advanced capitalist countries of the centers (United States of America, Japan, and Western Europe) and the Latin American countries of the periphery such that the movements and structures of the former decisively determine those of the later in a fashion somehow detrimental to the economic progress of Latin American societies and other Third World countries, Roxborough, (2000).

The view of Dos Santos on dependency is the most incisive and concise. According to Dos Santos dependency means: A situation in which the economy of certain countries

is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected (Dos Santos, 1996). His position was expanded by Osvaldo Sunkel as he maintained that foreign factors are seen not as external but as intrinsic to the system, with manifold and sometimes hidden or subtle political, financial, economic, technical and cultural effects inside the underdeveloped countries Sunkel (1969). Ian Roxborough has reduced others usages of the term “Dependency into two basic approaches namely; Dependency as a relationship or a conditioning for factors which alters the internal functioning elements of the dependent social formation. Regardless of how one sees dependency, in essence, it implies a kind of parasitic relationship that exists between the highly industrialized countries, and the less developed ones in a manner that ensures the continuous advancement of the former to the detriment of the later. A typical example is the Nigeria oil and gas. Crude is exported cheaply and the refined product is sold to Nigeria at a very high price, Emeh (2013).

Dependency as stated earlier states that crucial economic decisions are made not by the countries that are being “developed” but by foreigners whose interest are carefully safeguarded, foreigners use their economic power to buy political power in the country that they penetrate. Instances could be drawn from the IMF, SAP, World Bank etc. The Western World adopted this strategy which appear as a means to develop Nigeria, thereby leaving Nigeria indebted to those European nations and of which the debts owed by Nigeria increases as times goes by and Nigeria is left unable to pay the debt, her autonomous growth becomes affected as a dependent nation ( Frank and Johnson, 2008). Dependency can be seen or defined as an explanation of the economic development of a state in terms of the external influences: political, economic and cultural on national development.

### **2.2.1 Problems thrown up by under development and dependency in Nigeria**

Underdevelopment of Third World Countries and Nigeria in particular is marked by a number of common traits; distorted and highly dependent economies devoted to producing primary products for the developed world and to provide markets for their finished goods, traditional rural social structures; high population growth; and widespread poverty, Woldu(2000). Dependency theory holds that “the condition of underdevelopment is precisely the result of the incorporation of the Third World Countries and Nigeria in particular into the capitalist world system which is dominated by the West and North America”, Randall and Theobald, (1998). Dependency implies a situation in which a particular country or region relies on another for support, “survival” and growth.

### **2.3 Poverty**

This would appear to be an indelible part of Nigerian people and state and has over the past decades continued an unrelenting ravage of the Nigerian nation. Indeed, poverty has become an easy and most empirical evidence of underdevelopment and backwardness of Nigeria. Nigeria would appear to be worst hit as compared to other sub-saharan nations. Despite its enormous human and material resources, poverty has not only widened but has also depended and become ramified engulfing over-whelming majority of Nigerian people. And in spite of the huge investment of resources and several policies and programmes expended on tackling poverty–cum underdevelopment in the country, it has persisted and appears to defy every solution.

### **2.4 Poor Leadership**

Poor leadership inertia and bad governance is the consequence of underdevelopment and dependency. Poor, visionless, inept and selfish leadership. The Nigerian leaders have been mismanaging the enormous and God given resources of the country. They waste the wealth of the nation by purchasing foreign and exotic goods and services for themselves, friends and cronies. A large junk of that wealth was simply stolen through inflated contracts, frauds and other dubious methods. Apart from direct stealing of public funds, there is also the adoption of corrupt concept of development and development projects and programmes in Nigeria, hence investment and public funds are for pecuniary reasons directed by our leaders at white elephant projects and programmes that do not yield or create employment.

### **2.5 Low Level of Economic Development**

The level of Nigeria’s economic development is very low. This is because the economy has been integrated into the world capitalist system as exporters of raw materials and importers of finished and capital goods. After the independence of Nigeria this trend continued, the country had political independence but economically Nigeria have to depend on her former colonial master and other industrialized countries for technology, modernization, development strategies etc.

### **2.6 Dependent on One or Two Raw Materials**

Nigeria as a country depends on one or two raw materials for export. The economy of Nigeria is not diversified and this affects rapid development because any effect on the particular raw material affects the entire economy. For instance, Nigeria depends almost entirely on crude oil and the price fluctuation of oil has affected the entire economy of Nigeria. Nigeria budget is financed by oil revenue and any short fall in oil

revenue makes no-sense to the budget. We saw this during 2016 and 2017 financial years.

### 2.7 Low Industrialization

Rapid growth and development cannot be possible for any country that gives no serious attention to industrial development. Nigeria as a country has low industrialization. To make matters worse the few industries we have are folding up because of the difficult business environment in Nigeria recently. This situation is the result of colonialism. Nigerian were made to be exporters of raw material and importers of finished goods. The economy is that of export – import oriented. The colonialists refused to set up industries because this will challenge their monopoly on the economy of Nigeria.

### 2.8 Distorted Trade Structure

Nigeria at independence found itself as a supplier of raw materials especially tropical products and also found a market for metropolitan countries. During the Colonial period inter-Africa trade was practically non-existence while most trade were concentrated to metropolitan powers (United Kingdom and others). Transport and Communication infrastructures and monetary arrangement all reinforce such distorted trade pattern. It must be stated that little or no effort was made by the Colonial Masters /Administration to diversify the Nigerian economy through even intermediate processing of raw material goods. Not even tropical goods as cumbersome as timber were processed locally before exportation. This is why critics argued that even timber was carried away as obtained from the forest to the metropolitan countries rather than have it processed for export.

### 2.9 The Prognoses

The question to be ask here is that how do Nigeria come out from this problem of underdevelopment and dependency? Some suggestions on the way forward:

A total revamp of Nigeria's political landscape advocated as tremendous changes in the politics and leadership of Nigeria is needed such that mediocrity will give way for meritocracy as democratic good governance will ensure economic prosperity for all and at the same time ensure a peaceful, strong and virile economy based on harmonious co-existence where tolerance will be the watch word. According to Emeh (2013), such will put an end to this perennial religious violence, political and ethnic strives, alongside the fatalistically exalted political trend corruption.

Development must be seen as a national issue, a problem of transforming domestic, social, economic and political structures. Emphasis must be on our self-reliance development

at a national level and to collective self-reliance and to collective autonomy within the Third World, Tandu, Ogon and Tawo(2017).

Nigeria should re-organize the society to reflect genuine, popular, honest, dedicated, selfless leadership which see Nigeria destiny as that of the poor majority and should be equal with developed nations, Tandu, E. O. and Tandu, M. A. (2017).

An intellectual revolution; not violence should be advocated for as even organized violence as Kyari (2008) recommended will not work in the interest of the poor and the elites will be saved abroad where they would have gone to hide their children and themselves. They will come back after the revolution to rule again hence their wealth stored in foreign accounts will be and subsequently deployed to ensure that they continue their domination over the masses. According to Emeh(2013) the idea of intellectual revolution is based on the assertion that educated and enlightened people are the easiest to rule but the hardest to manipulate.

## III. CONCLUSION

The paper has made attempt to operationalize the two concepts of underdevelopment and dependency, x-rayed how it all started in Nigeria and the challenges thrown up by the two concepts and how this had affected Nigeria as a nation in terms of growth and development. Finally, the paper attempted some suggestions on the way forward such as a total revamp of Nigeria's political landscape, development should be seen as a national issue that must involve everybody, selfless leadership, an intellectual revolution. Although, this is not exhaustive but could go a long way to ameliorate the problems thrown up by underdevelopment and dependency.

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