

Roodney W. (1974) *How Europe Under developed Africa*, Washington DC: Howard University Press. ISBN: 9966-25-113-8

Reviewed by

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African countries' development has remained a questionable event in the eyes of many. From the definition of development, which implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, material well-being, and responsibility, Africa has failed to undergo these perceptions and has caused it to remain underdeveloped. The arrival of the whites and their missions in Africa has led to an appreciation for African societies' own pace and way of developing. It also highlighted the motives and desires of the Europeans who came to Africa.

The book is divided into five themes that focus on various aspects of African development and how foreign intervention has affected African development. The author has started by giving an introduction to development and underdevelopment and a definition of these two key terms.

Initially, the writer focused on the development of Africa before the arrival of the Europeans. In this case, "development in the past meant an increase in the ability to guard the sovereignty or independence of the social group and to infringe upon the freedom of others" (p. 4). However, this was disturbed when the Europeans came, since their freedom was no longer recognized. Under this theme, the author has emphasized the universality of development, believing that the conditions leading to economic expansion were universal, as he noted that "everywhere man was faced with the task of survival by meeting fundamental material needs, and better tools were a consequence of

the interplay between human beings and nature as part of the struggle of survival." However, with the arrival of Europeans, this was not the case.

On the next theme, the book took a look at Africa's contribution to European capitalism's development while at the same time under-developing Africa on its own. This was during the pre-colonial period. The most significant effect was the internationalization of trade, which gave an opportunity for the extension of European interests overseas. Traders like the Portuguese and the Arabs took ground in East and West Africa, where they traded ivory (p. 76). India also sold clothes and beads in East Africa (World Trade). As a result, Africa became an extension of the European capitalist economy. The most important thing to note is the fact that the form of trade that was undertaken was imbalanced in the sense that the goods and items that the Europeans brought to Africa were of no value as compared to the goods they took to their mother nations, like gold. It also created a sense of dependency among Africans as a whole. This is because Africa now depends on what Europeans are equipped to purchase and sell.

The other effect of the underdevelopment of Africa, as noted by the author, was the issue of slavery (p. 87). The European slave trade had to take able-bodied men from Africa, ferrying them to Europe. This has resulted in an inactive population in Africa, as they typically reached the age of fifteen to thirty-five. Also, slaves had to be given crude, non-breakable tools that held back the capitalist development of agriculture and industry. Slavery has provided additional benefits in industry to nations such as the Northern United States.

The issue of the African labor force was of paramount importance because it was comprised of able-bodied men. From the book, it is reported that slave buyers preferred 15–35-year-olds (p. 96) who were healthy and couldn't be easily affected by diseases like small pox, which was the world's greatest killer disease. This has hampered Africa's development because the disease easily killed the remaining population of young children and the elderly, leaving Africa with a poor and less active population.

The other theme in this book emphasizes on Europe and the roots of African underdevelopment. The writer mentions here how much surplus was extracted from

African labor during the pre-colonial period. He also looked at the Europeans' technological system as another factor in the Europeans' underdevelopment of Africa. They did not share their technology for the benefit of the Africans as well. On page 107, the author explained that even the African rulers sought European technology for internal development, which was meant to replace the trade in slaves, but the Europeans deliberately ignored those African requests that Europe should place certain skills and techniques.

In addition to the roots of the underdevelopment of Africa, there was the industrial area. Employers under colonialism were paid extremely small wages, especially on plantations and mines. This was usually insufficient to keep the workers' physical health alive. In other words, the book clearly showed that "capitalism was willing to exploit all workers" (p.149). There was also the introduction of taxes, where workers were ordered to pay taxes. Thus, the introduction of taxes was meant for African workers to force themselves to go and work for them to get money to pay these taxes.

It is also important to note which held that European capitalism in Africa had racial justifications for dealing unjustly with African workers. Racial theory believed that a black man is inferior to a white man, led to the conclusion that Africans should be paid less. In this sense, Africans were meant to be poor due to the conditions that they received from the white minority. As a result, Africa is underdeveloped.

Under the colonial system, infrastructure development was a driving force in Africa's underdevelopment. In countries like Kenya, Algeria, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, whites created infrastructure to afford themselves. Massive profits in the mining industry benefited Europeans. The gold fields of Tanganyika were ferried out of the country using rail transportation. In another note, "the combination of being oppressed, exploited, and disregarded is best illustrated by the pattern of the economic infrastructure of African colonies, notably their roads and railways" (p. 209).

There was also the development of Shanty Town (p. 207), where African workers were living. Most importantly, Africans were overpopulated in these shanty towns, and diseases spread easily and quickly. More so, these workers in shanty towns were not paid enough

to eat. This means that there was a high rate of mortality as a result of hunger and starvation, leading to the underdevelopment of African economies.

This book is must read for students in the discipline of international political economy because it examines nations' interests and how Europeans affected African countries economically and politically. It also covers how the issue of international trade affects politics.