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Modernization, Marxist, Dependency and Alternative Theories of Development Communication: A Critical Review

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Abstract

The concept of development is very complex, thus, generates abundance of literature and therefore spawns different and conflicting interpretations from the dominant paradigm theories of development-Modernization, Marxist, Dependency and the Alternative approach. This paper intends to critically appraise and review the concept of development as defined by the four dominant schools and their conceptual and historical relationship. The paper examines the convergent and divergent views that necessitate the development or underdevelopment of a nation or society. The shortcomings or inherent biases of one school led to the emergence of another. The paper discovers the existence of different internal arguments in theories. Similarly, the Alternative approach emerges to address some developmental challenges (environment, peace) that were either not conceived in the conceptualization stage or were myopically overlooked by the tripartite. Furthermore, the paper reveals how both the Modernization, Marxists and Dependency theory of development failed to address many challenges of development especially in third world countries where Africa is also located. Therefore, the need for another new theory such as African Renaissance theory to suit Africans and contain its present challenges is imperative.

Keywords: Development, Underdevelopment, Modernization, Marxist, Dependency, Alternative

Introduction

The concept of development is a vast one, and there are many ways of dealing with it. According to Egbon (2001), there are still debates among scholars on what constitutes development, and there is yet no complete agreement as to the real meaning of the term. Development is recognized as a multifaceted phenomenon. It means many things to many people and different things to different people. The development could be viewed from the human angle of the inhabitant or citizen of a country. It could also be seen from the geographical location of a country, or one could concentrate on the reasons why a particular country is said to be developed. Many, however, have tended to lean on the side of the economic and political structure of the country as clearly manifested in the literature of the modernization school of thought; it could also be studied from radical criticism of the modernists by the Marxist; or from the shifts in the concept of economic primacy and the historical relationship between strong and weak nations as contained in the argument of the "Third World" scholars. To make the paper even more complicated and sophisticated, one could try to link the interrelationships between the four major schools of thought.

Though development has been with man through centuries, academic literature on development was not available until the early 1950s. Many empires lived and perished with their civilization. Even in the literature of the 1950's and 1960s, according to Rogers (as cited in Egbon, 2001):

The concept of development had not been clearly and concisely described. Four major elements that dominated the sphere were: economic growth through industrialization and urbanization; capital-intensive labour; extensive technology imported from developed nations; centralized planning mainly by economists and bankers; and finally that the causes of underdevelopment are within the

developing nations rather than in their external relationships with other countries (p.13).

From Roger's argument of the 50s and 60' literature, the notion of development, the emergence of the Modernization school, the conception of the Marxist paradigm, and the seed of Dependency were sowed. For this reason, there is a need for a starting point to have a clear picture in the discussion of the concept of development and how the Alternative approach was hatched.

Conceptualization of Development Idea

Defining the term development is somewhat problematic and nebulous. In the context of a nation's development, the conceptualization of development becomes difficult if not impossible unless discussed in tandem with the concept of underdevelopment. Many scholars have argued that the understanding of these concepts is enhanced when it is hinged on a theory. The concept of development has been variously discussed in the literature, especially in the social sciences such that its definition has negated a single generally accepted definition. The perspective in which development is seen or defined is what social theorists tagged as the "geography of development" (Peet & Hartwick, 2009).

Development in human society is a many-sided process. To the "Dependistas", it is easier to understand what development is to the Modernization scholars by tracing the history and the underdevelopment of the third world countries. And underdevelopment is not an absence of development, because, every people have developed in one way or another (Rodney, 1986). This is probably why Todaro (as cited in Jiffry, 2013) defined development as:

A multi-dimensional process involving the reorganization and re-orientation of the entire economic and social system. This involves in addition to improvement of income, and output, radical changes in institutional, social, and administrative structures as well as in popular attitudes, customs and beliefs (p.117).

Todaro's definition indicates that if development is conceived in the aspect of the state of the national economy as seen by the Modernization scholars, it is referred to as the economic development but when it is mixed with another like socio-economic, it means the well-being of a man, hence the social or societal progression of human beings alongside their economic wellbeing lead to human development. Thus, United Nations Council on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) stated that:

Our first concern is to redefine the whole purpose of development. This should not be to develop things but to develop man. Human beings have basic needs: food, shelter, clothing, health, and education. Any process of growth that does not lead to their fulfillment-or even worse, disrupt them is a travesty of the idea of development.

Therefore, development means making a better life for everyone. In the present context of a highly uneven world, a better life for most people means, essentially, meeting basic needs: sufficient food to maintain good health; a safe, healthy place in which to live; affordable services available to everyone; and being treated with dignity and respect. Inyatullah (as cited in Egbon, 2001, Moemeka, 1994) gave an encompassing definition of development in reality to developing countries as "a change toward patterns of society that allows the better realization of human values that allows a society greater control over its environments, and over its political destiny and that enables its individuals to gain increased control over themselves". This definition sees the freedom of a man or society as the man.

In line with the new paradigm and the change in development, Rogers (as cited, in Moemeka, 1994) redefined the meaning of development as a "widely participatory process of social change and material advancement (including greater quality, freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through their gaining control over their environment. These definitions clearly show that development is multifaceted. It means different things to different people and in different disciplines. For instance, Psychologists emphasize individual or personality, self-reliance, achievement, motivation, self-worth, and self-actualization. For sociologists, the concept of development tends to revolve around the process of differentiation that characterizes modern societies. To political scientists, development is mainly concerned with developing a capacity to innovate change, increase political awareness and improve the ability to resolve conflict situations. To (mass) communication experts, it is the acquisition

of new knowledge and skills, increased self-confidence, control over oneself and one's potential and limitations, and willingness to work hard enough to improve on the existing positive conditions (Moemeka, 1994).

These different angles from which development is conceived are of course not exclusive but interwoven. It stresses the fact that existing conditions are no longer conducive. Therefore, development means one basic thing in all perspectives and to all people—a change for the better in the human, cultural, socio-economic, and political conditions of the individual and consequently of the society. Generally, the development comprises an increase in citizens' access to food, water, and shelter; information and means of communication; healthcare delivery; good roads; good education, job opportunity, good salary, peace, and justice. Absence of any of these, development is incomplete. As such, a country is said to be developed according to Dudley-Seers (as cited in Jeffry, 2013) by asking about what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then, beyond doubt, this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result “development” even if per capita income doubled (Eme & Emeh, 2012).

However, one major problem with the conception of development ideas in Third world countries especially in Africa is being an urban-based phenomenon. Rural areas are usually isolated. Imo (2013) complained that; rural people have historically been excluded and unreached by development workers, services, and messages. These people must be competent enough to make meaningful and authentic decisions and participate as equals in the development process. They must be empowered so that they can receive and give information as equals in a shared process. The challenge is to build the communication capacity of rural people so that they can have the skills and the opportunity to participate as equals. Thus, for development to be attained, national and sustained development efforts must begin in the context of the rural beneficiary communities.

Modernization and Development

The initial formulation of the modernization literature coincided with several events after the Second World War (II). National liberation movements, the collapse of colonial empires and the emergence of newly independent states, and the ideological confrontation of the United States with the Soviet Union were all basic impulses that triggered the discourse on modernization. Thus, the terms enjoy multiple definitions: dichotomic (modernization as a transformation from one state of society to another – from traditional to industrial, Rostow, 1960), historical (description of processes through which modernization occurs: transformation, revolution), instrumental (modernization as the transformation of tools and ways of development and control over the environment), mental (the specific state of mind which is characterized by belief in progress, inclination toward economic growth, readiness to adapt changes, Inkeles, 1966; Lerner, 1958;) civilizational (modernization as the spread of modernity) political stability (Huntington, 1968; Lipset, 1959;

Organski, 1966). As such, Peet & Hartwick (2009) classified modernization theory into three: economic theories of modernization, sociological theories of modernization, and psycho-cultural theories of modernization.

In 1949, the inaugural speech of the USA President, Harry Truman that “we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the development and growth of underdeveloped areas” served as a major landmark of modernization journey. However, Rodney (1986), this statement was malicious. He argues that Africa had established its empires and recorded its civilization since 15TH century. According to Servaes and Malikhao (2002), the central problem of development was thought to revolve around the question of ‘bridging the gap’ and ‘catching up’ using imitation processes between traditional and modern sectors, between retarded and advanced or between ‘barbarian’ and civilized sectors and groups to the advantage of the latter. The measures of progress were G.N.P., literacy, industrial base, urbanization, and the like, all quantifiable criteria. The school completely ignores the external influence on societal change by focusing mainly on the internal aspects of societal structure and values. As a result of ideological differences among the modernists, modernization scholars can be grouped into two:

Orthodox Modernists

According to Servaes and Malikhao (2002), the modernization paradigm, dominant in academic circles from around 1945 to 1965, supported the transferring of technology and the socio-political culture of the developed societies to the 'traditional' societies. Development was defined as economic growth. Therefore, the orthodox modernization theories fall into one or a combination of the following four categories: stage theories, index theories (of mainly economic variables), differentiation theories (largely advanced by sociologists and political scientists), and diffusion theories (advanced primarily by social psychologists, suggesting that the development process starts with the diffusion of certain ideas, motivations, attitudes or behaviors). Nonetheless, the economic root has always remained the essence of modernization theory. The proponents of this school include Walt Rostow and Carl Deutsch. Rostow (as cited in Servaes and Malikhao, 2002) defined five stages of growth: traditional society (per-Newtonian world), the preconditions of take-off (transition, modern science began to be translated into new production functions in both agriculture and industry, expansion of world markets and the international competition for them; effective centralized national state, nationalism), the take-off (new industries, high rate of effective investments), the drive to maturity (sustained progress), the age of high mass-consumption. However, according to Peet and Hartwick (2009), the radical version of "development" is fundamentally different from the more conventional "economic growth". Stiglitz (2006) supported that the continuing clashes between the Left and Right in the United States and elsewhere remind us, that there remain large areas of disagreement about both economics and basic values that lead to the development of a state. The critical question here is, is development the same as growth?

Economic growth means achieving a more massive economy—producing more goods and services on the one side of the national account (gross domestic product—GDP)—and a larger total income on the other (gross national income—GNI). But economic growth can occur without touching problems like inequality or poverty when all the increase goes to a few people. Indeed, growth has occurred in most Western countries over the past 30 years at the same time that income inequality has widened. In this case, economic growth functions, in the most basic sense, to channel money and power to the already rich and famous. Similarly, most of the UN reports on GDP & GNI vary greatly in reliability from country to country. Furthermore, characteristics such as production, income, or education are, in reality, culturally specific rather than universal. Yet, national and international agencies report only that which can be measured using "conventional" accounting procedures. Whose conventions are used? Those of the First World market economies. Thus, a major portion of the economic activity in many Third World countries is either ignored completely or simply estimated (Peet & Hartwick, 2009).

Unorthodox Modernists

After the end of the Cold War, various theories of modernization have come to rely on the ideas of Lipset, Huntington, and Wilson assigning primary importance to political culture, not economic development as the prerequisites for political development (democracy). Democracy requires a supportive culture, and such norms do not evolve overnight. Undoubtedly economic growth leads to significant changes, but these changes might not be necessarily progressive and democratic. Structural differentiation, subsystem autonomy, and secularization of culture are key factors for political stability (Huntington, 1968, Lipset, 1994).

Paths toward Modernization in the Contemporary World

Rejecting the idea of a universal model of modernization, scholars (Wittenberg, 2009; Collier, 2009; Martinelli, 2005) have identified several paths toward modernity. Within this context, the paper identified several models of modernization that can give clues to understanding developmental processes:

- a) Model of evolutionary modernization (the United Kingdom and the United States).
- b) Model of East Asian modernization (China, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia).
- c) Model of oil-producing countries of the Near East (e.g., the United Arab Emirates).

- d) The USSR and Latin American models of modernization
- e) Model of contemporary Russian modernization.
- f) Model of Islamist world as a rejection of modernization.

Criticisms

1. The theory fails to consider third world countries and ignores participation of the target community.
2. The theory is too simplistic and theoretical of the social change.
3. The theory is deterministic by reducing development to linear.

Marxist and Development

According to Peet and Hartwick (2009), marxism is a philosophy of social existence, called historical materialism; a theory of history phrased as dialectics; and a politics of socialism, meaning collective social control over the development process. The founders of this school of thought, Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) were Enlightenment modernists. The school thought that material plenty, made possible by technological advances, could make life easier, better, longer, and happier. Similarly, it sees modern industrial production as emancipatory in the sense that more could be wrested from nature, but it also saw capitalist industrialization as alienated from nature as the environment was destroyed and polluted by uncontrolled overuse. The proponents of this school see modernity as progress in material life, against the principle of modernists, marxism is a movement that is directed by a few rich people motivated by profit and capital accumulation and that had unequal results in terms of benefits. According to Peet and Hartwick (2009), Marx and Engels came to liberate modernism not to praise it. Idealism and materialism were their main focus.

Baryshnikova (n.d) traced that an initial understanding of the process of modernization came to us, first of all, from the classical writers Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. Marx talked about modernization without mentioning this exact term, considering it the main impetus of economy and economic forces, and the accumulation of capital, or, put briefly, we can say that Marx argued that through the abolition of private property people achieve a better life. Marx's theory of capitalism can indeed be considered the most influential nineteenth-century theory of modernization. It is also a bridge between the first explicit variants of modernization theories and the early twentieth-century contributions of the sociological classics, first of all, Weber and Durkheim. Development is also conceived by the Marxist perspective as a dialectical process in which the contradictions between a society's productive forces and relations of production are resolved in an adynamic manner, this contradiction in a society are regarded as the driving forces of development in that society. As such, it is a struggle between rich and power, strong and weaker nations.

Neo-Marxism is also used frequently to describe opposition to inequalities experienced by Lesser Developed Countries in a globalized world and as an approach to economics that stresses the monopolistic nature of modern capitalism. The Neo-Marxist approach to development economics is connected with dependency and world systems theories. Here the "exploitation" which defines it as a Marxist approach is external exploitation rather than the normal "internal" exploitation of orthodox/classical Marxism.

In contrast to neo-Marxist approaches of the indispensable and overwhelming influence of external economic factors, the important role of internal political developments and the country's elites in the modernization processes is now well established. Even though international factors matter, they can be managed and negotiated by modernizing elites of peripheral countries. In addition, international relations can be used as opportunities for development and redefinition of the country's position in the international division of labor, not simply as constraints that condemn it to a fate of dependency and underdevelopment (Martinelly, 2005).

Criticism

- a) Empirical in accuracy: dependent countries can have economic growth rates higher than non-dependent countries.
- b) Errors in philosophy and theoretical methodology in neo-Marxist theory.
- c) Focuses more on labour productivity.

Dependency and Development

To many scholars (Campbell, 2013; Jeffry, 2013; Matunhu, 2011), it was Andre Gunder Frank who propounded the dependency theory in 1966, 1979, and developed by Samir Amin in 1974. The theory emerged from Marxist and critical world system theories (Imo, 2013) the problem of foreign penetration in the political economies of Latin America that ultimately formed the ECLA tradition (the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America). The theory holds that “the condition of underdevelopment is precisely the result of the incorporation of the Third World economies into the capitalist world system which is dominated by the West and North America” (Randall & Theobald, 1998). It held also that the benefits of this system of relationship accrue almost entirely to the rich nations, which become progressively richer and more developed, while the poor nations, which continually have their surpluses drained away to the core do not advance, rather they are impoverished.

Dependency school serves as the antithesis of the modernization school. It sees the underdevelopment of the third world countries revolves around the relationship between dominance versus dependence. As such, Dos Santos (as cited in Jeffry, 2013) defined dependence as a conditioning situation in which the economies of one group of countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of others. As such, it is a sustained competition between the dominant/dependent, center/periphery, or metropolitan/satellite. The dominant states are the advanced industrial nations in the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and they rate the development of the dependent nations based on their per capita income (GDPs and GNPs).

Some dependents worked exclusively with economic variables (Frank, Amin, cited in Jeffry, 2013), while others also took external political factors (Rodney, 1986) into consideration in their research. regional oppositions within the dependency system were more concerned with possible class oppositions (Sunkel, Cardoso, cited in Jeffry, 2013); trade relationships (Dos Santos, cited in Jeffry, 2013). Therefore, dependency could be seen from either internal factors or external. Furthermore, the concept passed certain stages such as (a) dependency and underdevelopment (b) dependency and development (c) dependency and imperialism (d) new dependency (of market vulnerability via multinational corporations, international commodity markets, foreign assistance).

Although, Ferraro (1996), not all dependency theorists, however, are Marxist and one should clearly distinguish between dependency and a theory of imperialism. The Marxist theory of imperialism explains dominant state expansion while the dependency theory explains underdevelopment. Stated another way, Marxist theories explain the reasons why imperialism occurs, while dependency theories explain the consequences of imperialism.

Criticism

Critics of the dependency theory (Jeffry, 2013; Tijjani) argue that dependency theory leads to (i) Higher rates of corruption in state-owned companies. (ii) Lack of competition as companies may have fewer incentives to improve their products as in-country companies are subsidized to prevent outside imports and (iii) Lack of sustainability, as government support may be unsustainable for very long, particularly in poorer countries which may largely rely on foreign aid for the implementation of development programs (iv) The dependency theory is criticized for failing to interrogate the applicability of externally imposed development initiatives (v) Dependency addressed the causes of underdevelopment, but did not provide ways of addressing that underdevelopment.

Ideological Shift in Dependency Theory

Some African dependents conceived the idea of development from an African perspective and experimented that most of the challenges and hindrances to Africa’s development are from Africans

themselves. Thus, propounded the African Renaissance theory. This African Development theory emerged to counter the old notion of Rodney's conception of 'How Europe underdeveloped Africa', Ghanaian Chronicle's of 'How Africa underdeveloped Africa', and finally, Ope-Agbe's 'How Nigeria underdeveloped Nigeria'. Matunhu (2011) supported that:

The antithesis to the modernization and the dependency paradigms is the emerging African renaissance theory. The theory is founded on African values and norms which are the very building blocks of African life. The strength of theory lives in its ability to be adaptable to change and innovations provided they are initiated within the social and value systems of the average African. To think of true African life is to think of unity, communalism, and shared purpose. Therefore, development and poverty reduction strategies for Africa must be informed and embroiled in the African values like 'Ubuntu' in South Africa, 'Humwe' in Zimbabwe, 'Harambee' in Kenya, and 'Ujamaa' in Tanzania (p. 12).

The model rejects the mainstream growth (modernity) and dependency paradigms because they exacerbate poverty and fail to appeal to the African value system. That is why most of the western development models transferred to Africa made little contribution to the development of Africans. For this, Moris (1981) supported that, the western management model which presumes that major policy decisions either can or will be made by an all-knowing central decision-maker based on rational, efficient, and economic calculation is inadequate and inappropriate. That's why most of the development projects implemented by DFID, USAID, and World Bank have a short life span. Because the idea of the projects was not conceived within but rather externally.

Like other alternative models, the African renaissance theory advocates for local solutions, pluralism, community-based solutions, and reliance on local resources and relies on a social force that opposes and transcends the growth and dependency paradigms. The theory encourages Africa to act in a world that is dominated by metropolitan countries by suggesting that micro-level development and poverty reduction should be the primary focus. Therefore the critical issue here is 'transformation' for the future depends on achieving the transformation of institutions, technology, values, and behaviour consistent with ecological and social realities in Africa.

Alternative and Development

Modernization, Marxism, and Dependency can be countered only through more convincing alternatives, alternatives summoned up from the perspective of excluded groups or ones based on criticisms of the very concept of development. As such, all critical approaches find development, as presently understood, to be a mistake of (natural and social) global proportions. The relevant parties differ on what to do about it. According to Peet and Hartwick (2009), the Alternative school emerged from the criticisms of Marxist and neo-Marxist theories, Poststructural theory, and Feminist theories. For example, Marxists want to rescue modernity from capitalism by advocating new sociopolitical formations of a socialist type. Postmodernists want to hasten the downfall of the modern project altogether through deconstructive critique. Postmodernism and feminism want to support subjugated knowledge and oppositional social movements so that people can make their futures.

Ecology is very crucial in the Alternative school of development. Christoff (1996) supported that the Alternative school of thought includes environmental aspects in the development of its thinking. Because evidence is not seen to combine them in the modernization approach. As these are mostly twenty-first-century issues, it is probably a threat to the theory's relevance today. Equal income distribution, public health, and environmental concerns are important considerations for development they are completely missing in the theory. Whereas, according to Stiglitz (2006), global environmental problems affect developed and developing countries alike. And globalization, as it has so far been managed, has—with a few exceptions—not dealt adequately with the global environmental problem. So, is privatization and industrialization here a curse or an advancement? Giulianotti (2009) furthered the debate that modernity no longer seems so attractive given ecological problems, local culture, and cultural diversity. Several development decades have not measured up to expectations, especially in Africa and parts of Latin America, and South Asia.

Conclusion

Regarding utopian thinking, development has to be reconceptualized as a universal liberating activity, but, with the best of materialist poststructuralism, new imaginaries of development have to spring into existence from popular discourses influenced not only by new social movements but also embracing the political ideas of the older class-based organizations and even radical reactions to the Western Enlightenment (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). Modernity, seen as a process of permanent change and innovations is far from being accomplished. Plural modernities exist in the contemporary world. As a result, there can be neither a generally applicable path toward modernity nor universal prerequisites. The processes that are considered to be indispensable fundamentals of the modernization process for some countries can be accountable for reversing progress in other countries. Although dependency theorists failed to explain the recent occurrence of the phenomenal success of the East Asian “Tiger” economies, others advocate for a neo-Marxist approach (Baryshnikova, n.d).

Therefore, development should be (1) geared to the satisfaction of needs, beginning with the eradication of poverty; (2) endogenous and self-reliant; and (3) in harmony with the environment. Another development applies to all levels of all societies, not just the poor of the non-aligned world. It grew from dissatisfaction in the ‘consumer society,’ with what is sometimes termed ‘overdevelopment’ or even ‘maldevelopment’, as well as the growing disillusionment with the modernization approach. The central idea, which is pointed out by almost everybody who is searching for new approaches toward development, is that there is no universal path to development and that development must be conceived as an integral, multidimensional, and dialectic process that can differ from one society to another (Servaes & Malikhao, 2002). Developing countries such as Africa should use indigenous resources and local social systems to bring about social change and development at the local level, to ensure that the basic needs, interests, preferences, and values of the people are protected. The participatory communication approach encourages information generated within the community as opposed to that externally generated. Communication theories such as the ‘diffusion of innovations, the ‘two-step-flow’, or the ‘extension’ approaches are quite congruent with the modernization theory (Servaes, 2012).

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