

DEVELOPMENT AND ITS MANY FACETS: A SEARCH FOR THE IDEAL

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Introduction

Generally, a theory is a conjecture or proposition accepted in view of a given operation. Thus, “a theory is an assumption or a system of assumptions, accepted principles and rules of procedure based on limited information or knowledge devised to analyse, predict, or otherwise explain the nature of a specified set of phenomena or abstract reasoning.”¹ Theories of development, therefore, refer to the divergent views regarding the nature and status of development.

Seen in a broad sense, as an advancement or improvement over some more primitive status, there is hardly any disagreement about the nature of development, but different considerations from different schools of thought abound when development is conceived particularly in reference to human society in terms of adequate responses to the environment in its complexities and the existential conditions in which human beings live. Thus, these divergent views about the paradigm of development are what we refer to as theories of development. M. L. Igbafen presents a concise description to what theories of development are:

Models of theoretical understanding which seek to answer the following interrelated questions. What are the root causes of the wealth and poverty of nations? Why have some countries advanced further than others? What accounts for the underdevelopment or backwardness of some countries and the presence of sustained development in others? Why are some countries developed and others underdeveloped?²

Furthermore, theories of development refer to a conglomeration of theories about how desirable change in society is best to be achieved. Such theories draw on a variety of social scientific disciplines and approaches. Thus, theories of development represent the cumulative ideas, views and discourses of development.

In the discourse of development, different theories abound. However, the most significant of these are two competing or diametrically opposed theories- **Modernization** and **Dependency** theories- which are often referred to as historical or traditional development theories. More so, the theory of the moment in socio-economic and political discourse- inclusive political and economic theory x-rayed by Acemoglu and James A. Robinson in their internationally acclaimed book *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*. Other development theories include: World System Theory, Cultural theory, State theory, Geography and Ignorance theory, etc. Thus, before discussing these theories, let us briefly consider the Diachronic Analysis of Development.

Diachronic Analysis of Development

Development has many construals. For us to appreciate this term properly, we have to survey the construals as they appeared over the years both in theory and in practice. Agbakoba sees development as “a process by which humans seek to modernize the realization of themselves.”³ This is in line with Mabogunje's conceptualization. He says that, “development is essentially a human issue, a concern with the capacity of individuals to realize their inherent potentials and effectively cope with the changing circumstances of their lives.”⁴

The attempt to clarify the notion of self-realization leads Agbakoba to delineate development as universal and particular. He writes thus:

The universal dimension of self-realization consists of those values, orientations, attitudes, ideas, practices and objectives which are necessary (either as preconditions or as enhancing conditions) for the realization of people across the globe.⁵

He notes that the particular aspects of development are those that concern specific communities and individuals. His critical analysis brought to light that every society, based on its historical, cultural and geographical antecedents and conditions formulates its communal values and aesthetic sense in respect of secondary needs.

However, development at this level is characterized as a mere process without showcasing the movement process of development. In the 1950s up till 1980s, development was conceived in terms of one of the triads. This was measurable in terms of the level of industrialization, technological prowess and Gross National Productivity. Rogers captures this notion most succinctly when he wrote that development was “a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced to produce higher per capita income and levels of living, through more modern production methods and improved social organization.”⁶

Diagne's conception of development emphasizes the exploration of the future as a prospective in time as it relates to the problem of African development.

First Diagne critically evaluates and finds wanting the theories of time in the African sociological context as formulated by John Mbiti and French colonial theorist Levy-Bruhl. Diagne argues against Mbiti's notion that time in the African context is not intrinsically future oriented with reference to the different plans and programmes for African development, such as the Lagos Plan of Action, and the present NEPAD, Diagne attempts to show how the idea of time as it applied to prospective and a developmental political culture could produce for the youth of Africa a vision of tomorrow with a future in Africa and not elsewhere.⁷

Gordon approaches development from the fanonian stance. Gordon's survey of Fanon's two classic works, *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Mask*, lays emphasis on the cardinal aspects of colonialism and neo-colonialism: the psychological dimension which determines the political and economic worldview of the African leadership. He opines that the logical result of western normativity vis-à-vis underdevelopment is a creation of what he called "problem people". For him, the crux of the matter for the "problem people" is how to be factional. Gordon further invokes Wynster's critique that development theory is a symptom of western narcissism.

Keita's attempt is holistic. For him, Africa is conventionally believed to be a special case study for development plans as it has never attempted to develop. But his stand point is a recast of antique history of Africa as the cradle of civilization. Though this condition changed about five centuries ago, he sets for an evaluation of what the development contour for Africa should look like economically and politically. Ultimately Keita opines that it is only when the discourse is predominantly African within the context of African universities and research centers that maximal and concerted progress will be attained. Hence he argues:

Critical analysis of the idea of development reveals that development entails not just economic ministrations about alleviating poverty, but also psycho-sociological analysis in the form of the examination of mental structures, beliefs and attitudes conditioned by the colonial experience, sociological analysis in the form of examining the role that religion plays in the form of evaluating the historical contingency of economic, political and sociological ideas of western provenance that are now viewed as universal and necessary for development. An examination of the role of time in Africa's pre-colonial sociology also demonstrates that the essentialist and qualitatively different notions of time attributed to Africa cannot be supported and hence play no role in formulating dynamically prospective theories of development.⁸

Our efforts so far have been to show that the concept of development is a complex and difficult one to realize. This is because any attempt to define development in a non holistic sense will result in overemphasis on an aspect of development as seen in those that reduced development in terms of economics. Development is therefore, a holistic evolution of all aspects of the society, namely; political, social, psychological, religious, intellectual, technological, scientific and cultural aspects of the individual and society for the advancement of the individual and society as a whole and as an aggregate of individuals. At the base of our discussions is: modernization and dependency theory, cultural and state theory.

Theories of Development

Modernization Theory

The term modernization conjures images of social change in the direction of general

improvement over the past. Modernization refers to a model of an evolutionary transition from 'pre-modern' or 'tradition' to a modern society. The teleology of modernization is described in social evolutionism theories, existing as a template that has been generally followed by societies that have achieved modernity.

Furthermore, modernization is a process of socio-cultural transformation. It is a thorough going process of change involving values, norms, institutions and structures. Political dimensions of modernization involves creation of a modern nation state and the development of key institutions, political parties, bureaucratic structures, legislative bodies and a system of elections based on universal suffrage and secret ballot. Cultural modernization adheres to nationalistic ideology, belief in equality, freedom and humanism, a rational and scientific outlook. Economic modernization involves industrialization accompanied with monetization of economy, increasing division of labour, use of management techniques and improved technology and the expansion of service sector. "Social modernization involves universalistic values, achievement motivation, increasing mobility both social and geographic, increasing literacy and urbanization and the decline of traditional authority."⁹

However, in contemporary discourse on development, the notion has been the basis of a theoretical orientation variously referred to as modernization theory, approach, paradigm or framework to the study of the development of the third world or underdeveloped societies. Modernization theory is, therefore a grand theory encompassing many different disciplines as it seeks to explain how society progresses, what variables affects that progress and how societies can react to that progress.

Modernization theory focuses specially on a type of modernization thought to have originated in Europe during the 17th century, which brought social mores and technological advancements into a new epoch. The foundations of modernization theory go back to the Age of Enlightenment, when a number of philosophers began to look at how society changed and progressed. Theories were laid out as to how technological advancement necessarily led to social advancement, which in turn led to an examination of how different facets of advancement were connected. The basic premise of this phase of modernization theory was that humans were able to change their society within a generation and that this change was often facilitated by advancements in technology, production and consumption.

One key factor in modernization theory is the belief that development requires the developed countries to aid developing countries to learn from their own progress. In addition, it was believed that the lesser developed countries could then grow faster than developed countries and catch up; and it is possible for equal development to be reached.

Above all, modernization theory argues that the traditions and pre-existing institutions of primitive societies are obstacles to modern economic growth. As such, modernization which is forced from outside upon a people might induce violent and radical change. Critics therefore, point out the fact that through modernization, traditional societies are being destroyed and slipping away to a modern form of poverty without ever gaining the promised advantages of modernization.

Dependency Theory

The dependency theory was developed in the 1950s and it shared many points with Rosa Luxembourge's and V. I. Lenin's earlier, Marxist, theories of imperialism: and dependency theory was embraced by many Marxists and neo-marxists. The dependency theory conceives development and underdevelopment not as a result of internal conditions which differs between economics, as thought by modernization theory, but as relational. The theory argues that the crisis of development facing underdeveloped nations is not a stage in the evolutionary process of nations, but a created one. A high point of this theory is its conviction that neo-colonialism and imperialism are the bane of development in the Third World countries. Thus, "it argues that the wealth of nations or the poverty of nations is the end result of a global process of exploration unleashed on the Third World during the colonial era."¹⁰

Dependency thinking starts from the notion that resources flow from the periphery of poor and underdeveloped states to a core of wealthy countries, which leads to accumulation of wealth in the rich states at the expense of the poor states. Contrary to modernization theory, dependency theory states that not all societies progress through similar stages of development. Primitive states have unique features, structures and institutions of their own and are the weaker with regard to the world market economy, while the developed nations have never been in this follower position in the past. Dependency theorists argue that underdeveloped countries remain economically vulnerable unless they reduce their connectedness to the world market.

However, the ideological impact of certain historical events, such as the failure of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) in some Latin American countries and the fall of communism, rendered dependency theory 'outdated' compared to the vindicated policy prescriptions of neo-liberalism.

Sustainable Development Theory

Sustainable development theory conceives economic development in such a way that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Thus, it focuses on the capacity of the earth and its natural systems and the challenges faced by humanity. As a result, sustainable development theory chiefly considers environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and socio-political sustainability, etc. Besides sustainability, global warming is one of such other problems emphasized by the sustainable development theory.

Human Development Theory

Human development theory uses ideas from different origins, such as ecology, sustainable development, feminism and welfare economics. It wants to avoid normative politics and is focused on how social capital and institutional capital can be employed to optimize the overall value of human capital in an economy. Amartya Sen and Mahbub Ul Haq are the most well-known human development theorists. Amartya for instance focused on capabilities: what people can do and be. According to him, it is these capabilities, rather than the income or goods that they receive that determine their well being.

This core idea also underlines the construction of the Human Development idea, a human-focused measure of development pioneered by the UNDP in its Human Development Reports. However, the economic side of human development theory can best be categorized under welfare economics, which evaluates the effects of economic policies on the well being of peoples.

Extractive and Inclusive Institutions

Nations differ in their political and economic success because of their different institutions, the rules influencing how the economy works, and the incentives that motivate people. This theory was championed by the internationally acclaimed scholars; Acemoglu Daron and James A. Robinson in their masterpiece, “Why Nations Fail”. The duo used the theory to argue for the inadequacies of the traditional theories of nations inequalities.

Nations are poor because they adopt extractive political and economic institutions which are characterized with lawlessness and highly insecure property rights while inclusive political and economic institutions encourage growth and prosperity. “The central thesis of this theory is that economic growth and prosperity are associated with inclusive economic and political institutions typically lead to stagnation and poverty.”¹¹ Inclusive economic institutions are forged on foundations laid by inclusive political institutions which makes power broadly distributed in society and constrains its arbitrary exercise and such political institutions also makes it harder for others to usurp power and undermine the foundations of inclusive institutions. Political and economic institutions, which are ultimately the choice of “society, can be inclusive and encourage economic growth or they can be extractive and become impediments to economic growth. Nations fail when they have extractive institutions.”¹²

Concluding Reflections

The above x-rayed theorists deserve a resounding commendation for their attempts to discover that current global inequality is an urgent question that begs for an urgent answer.

Having said this, we must underscore that we find some of the claims in the theories problematic. There is no mono-factorial explanation of the prosperity and poverty of the nations of the world. It is with the synthesis of theories that one can explain coherently the disparities among nations. Hence, any attempt to mono-factorial explain nations inequality or the idea of development, would amount to intellectual rascality, just as Acemoglu and Robinson described other traditional theories as approaches that do not work.

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