Dani Wadada Nabudere’s Theoretical Explanation of Imperialism:

an Exemplary Contribution to its Concrete Understanding

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The purpose of this brief is to pay tribute to Dani Wadada Nabudere as a distinguished multidisciplinary African scholar of Uganda with a high academic and scholarly reputation in Africa and the rest of the world. He did much to capture the theoretical aspect of imperialism. His exemplary contribution to the concrete understanding of imperialism is an integral part of the struggle on an ideological front to overcome the forces of control, domination and exploitation on the global scale. His theoretical works on imperialism represent his commitment to ending socio-political and economic inequality and social class division by restoring community as the basis of socio-political and economic life. He substantiated this theoretical commitment in practice. He sought a theoretical and practical basis for concerted revolutionary and progressive action directed towards this end. His life was an engagement in the efforts to contribute towards a world united in a search for peace and security through socio-economic justice.

Introduction

Dani Wadada Nabudere passed away on 9 November 2011. Central to his theoretical work on imperialism is his provision of the historical link between the contemporary socio-political and economic development of the dependent capitalist countries of Africa, Asia and the Americas and their domination and exploitation by imperialism since the inception of capitalism. This link has run continuously through the development of imperialism from its first mercantilist phase, through its second free-trade phase and its third financial or monopoly phase, to its current multilateral or corporate phase. As a revolutionary scholar and political activist against imperialism and capitalism, Nebudere provides the evidence that since its inception, capitalism as an ideological and economic order has been fundamentally opposed to the furthering of the interests of oppressed and exploited people. As a social order established primarily for the

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The US successfully penetrated the spheres of domination and exploitation of its rivals in the developing countries

Multilateral or corporate imperialism

In the multilateral phase of imperialism, the intensifying concentration and centralisation of capital takes on new forms in which the giant transnational corporation combines the earlier forms of monopolisation such as cartels, syndicates, trusts and concerns, but at a qualitatively higher level. Nabudere explains this
higher combination of the forms of monopolisation by the most advanced organisational expressions of capitalism in the multilateral phase of imperialism as follows:

The new giant corporation that arose represented a more developed stage in the concentration of production and circulation of both goods and capital. Whereas a simple cartel divided the market between independent monopolists, a syndicate organised the centralised sale of their output, a trust gathered under a single management the sale of goods; a concern managed simultaneous enterprises of various sectors by way of production integration, and a cartel of trust divided markets at an immeasurably higher level, the transnational corporation combined all these forms of monopolisation and thus raised it to a qualitatively higher level. 8

This phase of imperialism is multilateral or corporate in that it no longer operates on a bilateral basis. The transnational corporations represent the most advanced organisational expressions of capitalism in this phase, such that this phase of the system is also referred to as corporate imperialism.

Nabudere shows how the transnational corporations sharpen the weapons they use on all fronts of the global theatre of competition and adjustment as the tactical means of responding to the dynamic, changing environment. This process of competition and adjustment to the dynamic environment contributes towards the volatility of the global system. The transnational corporations continuously adapt their tactics to safety and security requirements and challenges to remove real or perceived present or future threats to their interests. They embark upon their ‘on-going and ceaseless’ structural adjustment programme of action to ‘maximize their profits at points of [their] strength and minimise their losses at points of [their] weakness in order to fulfil the requirements of their main purpose: to obtain a satisfactory (competitive) super profit’. 9 This means that they adopt and implement ‘strategies of being everywhere and ‘nowhere’”. 10

**Accumulation of profit**

This theoretical perspective enables us to develop a concrete understanding of ‘the mechanisms of exploitation of finance capital’ in its global operations in tricontinental Africa, Asia and the Americas. Global capitalism depends on its control, domination and exploitation of human, natural, material and financial resources of these countries. In Nabudere’s words, the ‘relations, institutions and structures upon which international finance capital is sustained could never have been built up nor nurtured without the labour and other material resources of these countries’. 11

The process of colonialism constituted the base of the mechanisms of international finance capital, controlled from the centre of capitalism. The existence of neo-colonialism is evidence that these relations, institutions and structures of control, domination and exploitation are still in place. The crisis faced by imperialism ‘has made the international financiers intensify these exploitative relations and mechanisms’. 12

To understand the system, it is important to grasp the mechanisms of exploitation of finance capital in its global operations in the dependent countries of Africa, Asia and the Americas, and the dependence of the global capitalist system on its control, domination and exploitation of human, natural, material and financial resources of these countries. Central to this importance is the fact that the investment outlets of the transnational corporations of advanced capitalist countries depend on their profitable investment outlets in the developing countries. This means that the capitalists of the centre obtain the highest rate of profit in the developing countries, not in the centre. This high rate of profit which they obtain in the developing countries enables them to maintain and expand their profitable fields of operations in the centre. Defending this position, Nabudere points out that there can be no mystification of the question of where imperialist capital gains the greatest returns; the answer is in the Third World. Arguments that this cannot be so, since the major part of the direct investments of the major capitalist countries takes place amongst themselves, can be fairly well answered by the fact that such profitable investment in the imperialist countries is dependent on the investments in the Third World neo-colonies [and colonies – S. M.], since production in the centre is dependent on raw materials from these countries. 13

Under the rule or the domination of finance capital, developing countries are the principal social formations to which capital is exported for the accumulation of profits. This employment of capital in the developing countries enables
the forces of imperialism to obtain higher profits in these social formations, to maintain profit at a relatively higher rate at home in the advanced capitalist countries, to solve the problem of the falling rate of profit that is a tendency inherent in the system, to manage the social, political and economic crises of capitalism, to prolong the life of capitalism and to defend and maintain their rule of oppression and exploitation internally at home. This reality is tangibly captured by V.I. Lenin in his statement that ‘the colonies and dependent [capitalist] countries, oppressed, and exploited by finance capital, constitute a vast reserve and a very important source of strength for imperialism’.14

Nabudere: the servant of the oppressed and exploited people of the world

Nabudere, as a scholar, served the masses of the people of his country, the region, the continent and the rest of the South in their liberation struggle. He emphasised the point that their struggle was an integral part of the revolutionary programme for the overthrow of existing social, economic and political relations in all countries of the world.15 He provided an explanation of the theory and practice of imperialism16 to give the revolutionary and progressive forces a concrete understanding of it to help them to end it in his country,17 his East African region,18 the African continent,19 the rest of the South20 and the world as a whole. He also provided us with an understanding of the socio-historical relationship between imperialism, the state, the class question and the race question.21 He also contributed towards the understanding of the exploitative operations of imperialism in relation to the tasks to resolve the national question22 and to achieve integration,23 not only in East Africa and other regions of the continent, but also on a continental scale. In his analysis of the socio-historical development of finance capital, he provided the theoretical evidence that the oppressed and exploited people could completely defeat the forces of imperialism in their struggle for socio-political, economic and ideological liberation.24

What is the best and most effective way to honour Nabudere as an African revolutionary and progressive force? The best and most effective way is to intensify the deployment of our leadership of revolutionary and progressive parties, our individual knowledge and talents, as indispensable collective weapons in the ‘struggle for a one world based on the equality of all nations, countries and peoples without exception and discrimination, a world without exploitation, domination and oppression’.25

Notes and References

2 This view of imperialism within the context of the relationship between dependent capitalist countries and advanced capitalist countries is an extension of the relationship between South Africa and advanced capitalist countries, as explained in Makgetlaneng, S., 2011, op. cit., pp. 117–118; and Makgetlaneng, S., 2000. Key issues in the South African economic transformation process. Politeia: Journal of the Departments of Political Sciences and Public Administration, 19(2), pp. 41–42.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., p.125.
12 Ibid., p.126.

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25 Ibid., p.318.