

O Level Elective Geography

Chap 9: Reasons for Variations in Development

Historical reasons

1) Colonialism

- The domination of a more powerful country over another country. Dominated country: colony; more powerful country: colonial power.
- Not the main reason for uneven development, but has affected the pace many countries develop. Colonial powers tend to become more developed than colonies. (DCs like UK were colonial powers in the past).
- Reason for colonialism: colonial powers wanted to obtain valuable raw materials which are not present in their own countries, for manufacturing useful products. E.g. Portugal colonised Angola to exploit the physical conditions and availability of labour by setting up plantations of cash crops.
- Besides exporting the crops, it may be processed into useful products (e.g. processing cotton into clothing) and sold at higher prices. This allows economic development; therefore former colonial powers can develop quicker.
- But for colonies, their profits hence economic development rates are slower in comparison with colonial powers. The former colonial powers had a head start to propel their development and economic growth, leaving the colonies far behind; and the disparity continues to widen with technological advances and industrialisation.

Physical reasons

2) Presence of raw materials

- In general, countries with plenty of raw materials usually develop faster than countries with no raw materials. This is because the money earned by exporting the raw materials can be spent on development projects such as improvements in infrastructure.
- E.g. the reason for Norway's high development is partly due to its abundant natural resources including timber and crude oil. Crude oil can be manufactured into petroleum for exports.
- However, this is not guaranteed. E.g. Nigeria is the 11th largest oil producer which exports oil overseas, but the majority of rural people remain poor. The income is spent to develop urban areas instead of the rural areas, and oil spillages and pollution has caused environmental issues- consequently its SOL remains low.

3) Climate

- The temperate climate favours development to some extent. E.g. cool and moist climate in Canada and USA is suitable for growing cash crops like wheat on large scales, and can be sold locally or exported overseas. This may partly explain why the top DCs are found in temperate regions.
- However, this is not widely applicable today (1800s only).
- Limitations of climate can be overcome with technology. E.g. growing crops in greenhouses so that physical conditions can be controlled.
 - But, not all countries have access to modern technology especially for LDCs. In the case of Ethiopia, droughts cause insufficient water for agricultural activities which may be an income source.
- Floods also affect development. LDCs are more vulnerable to floods than DCs as they lack sufficient money for flood control. Hence, when floods occur in a LDC, it takes longer for it to recover which slows down development.
- E.g. Yellow River in China experiences floods yearly, incurring financial losses due to damage



to infrastructure. Its frequent occurrence in rural areas exacerbates poor living conditions, resulting in low SOL.

- But, Netherlands which is a flood-prone country has overcome the problems of floods through technology- Zuider Zee project. This would otherwise have hindered its development.
- Hence, climatic disasters will not always affect a country's development (if technology were utilised to overcome them).

Economic reasons

4) Cumulative causation

- Cumulative causation is the process of how the movement of people and resources from the periphery increases the wealth of the core.
 - Development of new industry (core)
 - More employment created: periphery workers are attracted into the core (backwash effect)
 - Increase in demand for goods and services (more people in core)
 - Creation and expansion of businesses
 - Increase in general wealth of people
 - Expansion of infrastructure to meet people's increasing needs
- Areas with better potential to develop will attract investment and labour. E.g. when Singapore became independent, it attracted workers from periphery countries like Bangladesh and Philippines, resulting in the backwash effect.
- The backwash effect refers to the flow of labour and raw materials from the periphery to the core, causing the core to develop at the expense of the periphery.
- Spread effects are the opposite of backwash effects. They can occur when the government deliberately encourage investments that bring about development to the periphery. E.g. development of automobile industry in Thailand has aided its development. Japanese car manufacturing companies invested in setting up factories in Thailand. While the Japanese car manufacturers benefitted from the cheaper labour costs, the Thais were offered employment and its economy has grown.

Social reasons

5) Education

- A higher literacy rate leads to a more competent workforce, and they are more likely to work in the secondary and tertiary sectors. The country therefore earns a higher GDP to spend on development projects for a higher SOL.
- E.g. the compulsory primary education policy has led to high literacy rate. The educated workforce is likely to earn more by being employed in secondary or tertiary sectors. Their SOL will increase with a higher income.

6) Population growth rate

- When a country's population increases quickly (LDCs like Ethiopia), its people tend to face the lack of resources. This affects their SOL.
- Countries with a low population growth are usually DCs. As married couples in DCs have fewer children, they can spend more time and energy on their career which promotes the country's economic development.



Political reasons

7) Political conflict

- Political conflicts may hinder the development of a country.
- Example of Cambodia
 - Due to a civil war, Cambodia's economy suffered greatly due to disruption of businesses.
 - Caused tourists to avoid the country for many years in fear of their safety.
 - Deters investors from setting up businesses due to political instability. Further hinders economic development.
- On the other hand, Switzerland, being a politically stable and peaceful nation, has won the confidence of foreign investors to set up businesses, and allowed local businesses to prosper.

8) Leadership

- Countries progressing well in their overall development are run by efficient and competent governments.
- Example of Norway
 - Norway has a stable and forward looking government, and has shown care for economic development and the people's well-being.
 - E.g. the wealth generated from Norway's petroleum industry is also shared among its citizens. The government with good leadership has played a significant role in Norway's development.

Notes:

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