

Grasping Reality with Both Hands

The weblog
of Brad DeLong. Since 1999.
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3.1. Imperialism & Colonized || Required Readings || Econ 115 || complete by We 2020-09-23

Prefatory note: In addition to chapter 6—Imperialism & Colonized—of the DeLong draft, the assigned reading this week contains two short pieces, selections from books.

The first reading is 19 pages from **W. Arthur Lewis's** 1977 book *The Evolution of the International Economic Order*. The 19 pages assigned cover Lewis's story of:

- the division of the world as a result of 1870 to 1914 globalization into middle class farmers in the global north and poor farmers in the global south,
- how cumulative processes amplified this difference by concentrating manufacturing with its powerful positive externalities for growth in the global north,
- how global market fluctuations and depressions further hindered the prospects for growth of countries that were not lucky enough to find themselves in or elbow themselves into the charmed circle,
- and Lewis's one-page postscript that provides—from his late 1970s perspective—his list of practical and politically feasible action items to boost global south development.

Focus on Lewis's major point: that it did not take bad will or large-scale theft and violence (although large-theft and violence there was) for the globalization that brought world trade and colonial rule to serve as a global inequality amplifier: the simple competitive workings of the market did that all on its own, and that outcome of the division of the world into the global north and global south was “efficient”, as economists use that word.

The second reading is 15 pages from **Chinua Achebe's** 1958 novel *Things Fall Apart*, about the coming of colonialism to the Igbo people of what is now Nigeria. You should all, sometime, read this novel entire—indeed, I suspect that about half of you already have. The portion assigned is the end of the book: from protagonist Okonkwo's return to his patriarchal-line community from exile to his death by suicide, as accident and conquest by the British colonial masters deprive him of the life he wanted to live, and he cannot find a way through. This is so even as others adjust to the New Dispensation:

The white man had indeed brought a lunatic religion, but he had also built a trading store and for the first time palm-oil and kernel became things of great price, and much money flowed into Umuofia...

Achebe firmly keeps the camera in the book on Okonkwo, but if you look at the margins of the scenes you can see how others react very differently to the inversion of authority and the creation of various kinds of opportunity that global trade, communication, ideas diffusion, and colonial rule bring. How would a novel about one of the other characters be different?

Required Readings Links:

W. Arthur Lewis (1977): *The Evolution of the International Economic Order* <https://github.com;braddelong/public-files/blob/master/readings/book-lewis-evolution-selections.pdf>, selections (19 pp.)

Chinua Achebe (1958): *Things Fall Apart* <https://github.com;braddelong/public-files/blob/master/readings/book-achebe-things-selections.pdf>, selections (15 pp.)

DeLong: chapter 6: Imperialism & Colonized <https://github.com;braddelong/public-files/blob/master/slouching-6-empires-%23tceh.pdf>

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#teachinghistory #2020-09-17

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