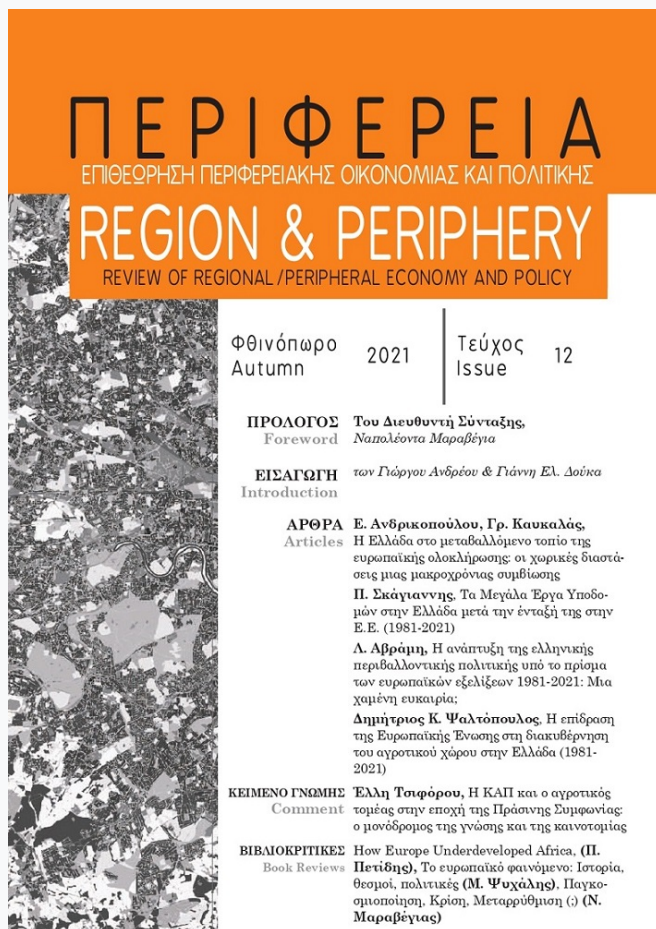


## Περιφέρεια | Regional Integration: Politics, Economics, Governance

Τόμ. 12, Αρ. 12 (2021)

Περιφέρεια | Region & Periphery



How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, του Walter Rodney, UK: Verso Books, 2018

Παύλος Πετίδης

doi: [10.12681/rp.35104](https://doi.org/10.12681/rp.35104)

Copyright © 2021, Παύλος Πετίδης



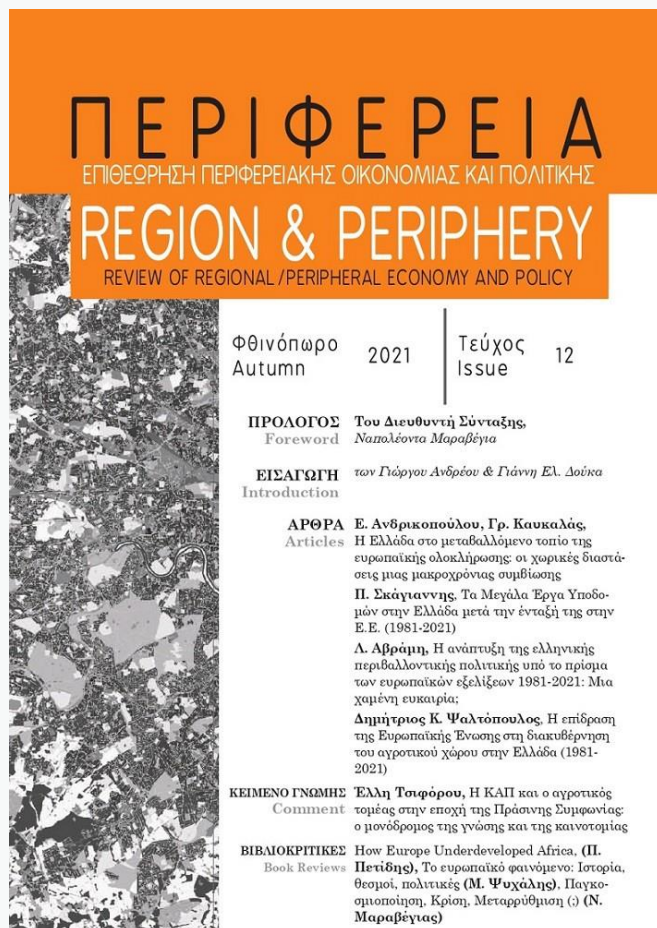
Άδεια χρήσης [Creative Commons Αναφορά-Μη Εμπορική Χρήση 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

### Βιβλιογραφική αναφορά:

Πετίδης Π. (2021). How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, του Walter Rodney, UK: Verso Books, 2018. *Περιφέρεια | Regional Integration: Politics, Economics, Governance*, 12(12), 127–129. <https://doi.org/10.12681/rp.35104>

## Region & Periphery

Vol 12 (2021)



### How Europe Underdeveloped Africa

*Pavlos Petidis*

doi: 10.12681/rp.35104

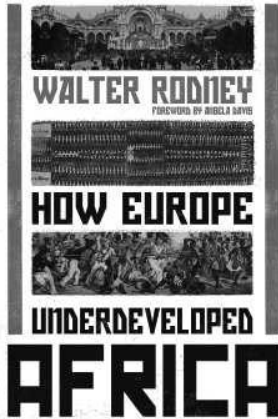
Copyright © 2021, Pavlos Petidis



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

### To cite this article:

Petidis, P. (2021). How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. *Region & Periphery*, 12, 127–129.  
<https://doi.org/10.12681/rp.35104>



**Walter Rodney**  
*How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*  
UK: Verso Books, 2018, σελ. 416

**W**hat does it mean to be developed, and what does it mean to be underdeveloped? Rodney feels forced to address this issue before proceeding with his aggressive analysis of Africa's ills. His term "underdevelopment" refers to the legacy of centuries of slavery, exploitation, and empire. Rodney demonstrates how "Europe"—the colonial and imperial powers—did not only benefit their own empires but also slowed down and even stopped the economic and social progress of Africa. His approach is predicated on the premise that, far from being an outlier in the global system, Africa has played a significant role in the expansion of capitalism in the West.

Rodney starts by critically analyzing the notion of development. Then, he makes the case that development is an idea that applies worldwide since every human culture strives to advance (develop), and this propensity for growth is not unique to any one community. However, each society evolves in a distinctive manner, at its unique rate, and throughout its own timeframe. For him, development and underdevelopment are politically determined, and exploitation is inextricably linked to both. Otherwise, it would be impossible to explain why some of the world's poorest countries in terms of natural resources are among the richest; their money comes from the violent seizure of other countries' wealth. Rodney can appreciate and evaluate the continuance of the colonial paradigm and its racist superstructure by replacing economic exploitation at the center of his research. «Under colonialism, complete control was reinforced by military dominance. Foreign ownership is still prevalent in many African countries today, even when foreign forces and flags have been removed.» In colonial thievery's ever-evolving and innovative business, foreign aid and loans were already replacing armed forces.

Enslavement, a crucial era in the contemporary past of the African continent, could be linked to the systemic reliance that eventually established Africa's political as well as economic dependency on Europe. Most of the underpinnings

that largely shape the state of most African nations today were formed back in the dreadful era of the slave trade. At that point, the social and cultural norms of nearly an entire continent were destroyed, and the populace was subjected to an unprecedented wave of migration that humanity had never experienced prior to or since. Slavery was the driving force behind industrialization, which served as the basis for Western development and domination throughout history. Without the gold taken from Africa, Amsterdam would not have at that time emerged the financial hub of Europe. So, it was no accident that the English gave their new coin the name "Guinea" in 1663. For instance, Liverpool was largely dependent on the growth of its port due to the slave trade.

The slave trade built an acrimonious split that came to define Europe's and Africa's historical prospects. The social and cultural gains that European civilizations have achieved are inextricably linked to the barbarism inflicted on African societies via slavery. While the consequences of the slave trade and colonialism cannot be quantified, Rodney argues that they have essentially denied Africa of any developmental potential, demoting it to a second-class status. On the altar of European expansionism and expensive economic prosperity, the continent and its resources had to be sacrificed. Political, cultural, and, most importantly, educational disparities arose as a result of material discrepancy. Numerous local businesses suffered due to the substantial shortage of labor, which led to a rise in the dominance of European goods and a gradual stifling of the naturally occurring trade between African regions in favor of the requirement to meet Europeans' enforced demands for trade. Furthermore, the transatlantic slave trade promoted the development of regional economies, reliant on manufacturing a single item for exporting to Europe.

Despite what Western economists speculated about the mythical advantages of the open market, the capitalist system circumvented constitutional government and the democratic processes and advanced straight to its monopolistic phase without institutional restraints. Whilst Europe built its liberties, and freedoms, the territories it controlled endured oppression, brutality, and despair. As a result, the continent that barely escaped European conquest was devoid of cultural and political consciousness. In addition, Colonial rule, a kind of capitalism, was unable to change the dynamics of society and liberate the powers of industry in Africa as it had done in Europe. Local craft industries were abolished, but zero major sectors apart from mining and farming were formed, forcing employees to accept the lowest-paying, least-qualified jobs.

The features that continue to be linked with the African continent are not their fault. Tribalism is a relatively recent occurrence and the calculated outcome of Europe's deliberate utilization of divide and conquer in all of its territories. Tribalism is regarded to be an atavist aspect of "primitive" societies.

According to Rodney, certain imperial powers saw benefit in feeding domestic tribal rivalries as a way to put an end to the movement toward greater African national and economic cohesion. Moreover, colonialism caused a shift in gender relations. As a result, the destroyed picture of Africa and its people, infants with a translucent rib cage, swollen stomach, and supplicant eyes, became the preferred emblem for the lucrative charity industry. Rodney presents an Oxfam billboard to illustrate how humanitarian business hid the roots of poverty to blackmail its backers emotionally. Charity signified its perpetuation through many means rather than providing a remedy to the poverty inflicted on Africa by colonialism. Rodney is unmistakably driven by a sense of duty to disprove that God has no hand in Africa's underdevelopment. His primary objective is to eliminate any racist beliefs from the thinking of fellow Africans who have accepted the European interpretation of events and, as a result, have begun to question their ability to change and enhance the environment in which they live.

Unsurprisingly, Africans, not kindly, guilt-stricken Europeans, provided the solution to Africa's dilemma. In the gaps of this cruel structure, seditious and subversive activities challenged the colonial authorities and troops. Because they took it upon themselves and were required to express the desires shared by all Africans, educated individuals assumed a significantly higher part in African liberation struggles than their sheer numbers would suggest. Despite the West's ongoing criticism of African barbarism, Amílcar Cabral's "weapon of theory" proved to be a crucial tool in the struggle against colonialism. The fight against imperialism was mostly successful military-wise, but it was unable to sever the particularly pernicious financial links that allowed new colonialism to persist. However, it is important to note that "in the 1940s and 1950s, it was common to have demonstrations that were particularly associated with the battle for liberation." Frantz Fanon cautioned that the risks of national consciousness may have added to the myriad issues that nations that gained independence encountered. To put it another way, resistance to colonialism has never been solely a nationalist effort.

The book's data and explanations are meant to support the thesis that the sole opportunity for the African continent to progress is through a significant departure from the world capitalist structure, which has served as the primary cause of that continent's underdevelopment for the past five centuries. However, Rodney does not provide any growth approaches that will result in this rupture. The only recommendation is that countries with socialist systems, who have never possessed any land on the African continent and refrain from investing in African economies in an effort that allows them to export profits from Africa, should deepen their ties with African states.

**Παύλος Πετιδης**

*MSc in International and European Economic Studies*