THE GERMANS IN TOGO, 1884 – 1914: A STUDY IN MODERN IMPERIALISM

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Introduction
The role of European imperialism in the underdevelopment of modern Africa has, over time, remained a subject of intellectual discourse among scholars and commentators of varied persuasions. The well-known fact is that some of these scholars are of African descent; others are not. In the comity of continents, though Africa is believed to be most greatly endowed with rich natural resources, it has not always received a fair treatment in the distribution of the world's resources. Using Togo as a case-study of an African economy with a high percentage of underdevelopment, the duo of Tchaboure Aime Gogue and Kodjo Evlo have argued, without equivocation, that economic performance here has been very poor over the three decades (of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s). In Togo, they maintain, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita nearly stagnated between 1960 and 1999. Indeed, the country was said to have started out at independence (in 1960) with a weak, but stable economy that saw a growth rate of GDP per capita of 6.2 per cent in the 1960s. In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the growth rate declined at the rates of 0.46 per cent, 0.3 per cent and 0.96 per cent, respectively.

But what the study referred to above failed to do is an examination of the origins of the present poor economic performance in Togo. The purpose of the present study, therefore, is to fill in the lacuna so created by establishing a link between the nature and extent of German policies and practices (in Togo) of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century on the one hand and the present time, on the other. The main aim of the paper is an analysis of the exploitation of Togo by Germany between 1884, when its colonial flag was hoisted and 1914, when it lost the colony to the invading Allied Forces led by Great Britain and France during World War I.

To better understand German Togo, a section of the paper has been devoted to an analysis of the history and geography of this region of West Africa before the advent of German colonial rule in the area. Section 4 of the paper
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considers the motivating factors for German overseas' expansion. This section is preceded by a consideration of the background of the emergence of German Togo. Section 5 takes a look at Togo as a model for German exploitation. In section 6, we attempt to analyse the impact of German policies and practices on the Togolese society. It is from here that a conclusion is made.

History and Geography
It is said that Togo derives its name from Togoville, the town where Gustav Nachtigal (the real commissioner of West Africa) signed a treaty for the establishment of a German protectorate with King Mlapa III in 1884. Togo is an Ewe word which translates as “lake” or “lagoon”. Ever since 1884 when the so-called treaty of protection was signed, Togoland and much later Togo, has become synonymous for the entire region under European colonial rule. It has been argued that the concept Togolese was first adopted at the end of World War I, in 1918. Since then the populace has identified with the concept. In 1960, the populace made a choice in adopting the Republic of Togo as the official name for their country.

Togo is located in West Africa, and has a total area (land and inland water) of 56,785 square kilometres. The country extends 587 kilometres inland, 64 kilometres along the coast and 145 kilometres at its widest point. Also, it is bounded on the north by Burkina Faso; on the east by Benin Republic; on the south by the Gulf of Guinea; and on the west by Ghana.

The country is comprised of six geographical regions which include the coastal region, a low-lying beach backed by the Tokoin plateau, a marsh and the Lake Togo lagoon. The Tokoin Plateau extends by about 32 kilometres inland at an elevation of 200 to 300 feet (61 to 91 metres). Other regions of the country include the higher table land to the northeast which is drained by the Mono, Haho, Sio and tributaries and the Atakora assif which stretches diagonally across Togo from the town of Kpalime north east. At different points, this massif is known as the Danyi and Akposso Plateau, Fetish massif, Fazao Mountain and Kabye Mountains. The map below may help the reader to understand the geographical location of Togo in West Africa: