

On Samir Amin's Strategy of "Delinking" and "Socialist Transition"

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyze Samir Amin's contribution to the strategy of "delinking" and "socialist transition". He analyzes the global capitalist system and argues that its process of capital accumulation is exploitative and destructive of the Third World countries, namely, the periphery. The global capitalist model has created underdevelopment and marginalization in the periphery. Accordingly, the Third World countries need to "delink" from the capitalism-led globalization and the world capitalist system, and make a socialist transition, which, in essence, is a new development model characterized by liberation and a full and effective participation of the Third World countries in the global system. Amin's strategy provides a model for change and development of many underdeveloped countries.

1. Introduction

Samir Amin, the Third World Forum President, is well-known for his "dependency theory" and the study of capitalism and the Third World development issues. He discusses the problems of underdevelopment in the Third World macroscopically and criticizes the traditional bourgeois economics and development theory, emphasizing that the Third World underdevelopment results mainly from the control and exploitation by the United States and other Western powers. Dependency theory is the notion that resources flow from a "periphery" of poor and underdeveloped states to a "core" of wealthy states, enriching the latter at the expense of the former. It is a central contention of dependency theory that poor states are impoverished and rich ones enriched by the way poor states are integrated into the "world system". So, in Samir Amin's opinion, if the Third World countries can't depart from the world capitalist system and move towards socialism, namely "delinking", it is impossible for them to get rid of their dependent status and get real independence.

2. Several basic viewpoints of the fate of capitalism

For the historical destiny of capitalism, Amin discusses it from the historical perspective as follows.

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2.1 The uneven development of regions has been a major feature of human history

It was not until modern times that polarization became a by-product of the development of capitalism. While in the evolution of the capitalist mode of production, the polarization of modern capitalism has showed several different continuous forms:

"Mercantilist form"(1500-1800).It appeared before the industrial revolution. This commercial capital mainly took its monopoly position in the main Atlantic countries, with the outlying areas of the Americas.

The so-called "classic mode"(1800-1945). It originated in the industrial revolution and decided the basic form of capitalism. The peripheral countries at this time further developed and covered Asia (excluding Japan), Africa and Latin America. From the industrial revolution until the end of World War II, the world system was based on the polarization of this "classical mode".

Post-war period(1945-1990).This was an industrialization period of the peripheral countries. This industrialization, undoubtedly, was unequal and unbalanced. In Asia and Latin America, industrialization was the leading social factor. In these peripheral countries which had just gained political independence, national liberation movements further accelerated this unequal and uneven process of industrialization. However, at the same time, the self-centered national production system gradually disintegrated. This double-dip recession is a symptom of deepening globalization.

Recent years(since 1990).The cumulation resulted in the collapse of the world system equilibrium after World War II. Since the 1990s,with the marked acceleration of the process of globalization, the social form of capitalism itself seems to have undergone important changes, and the disorderly state and extreme vulnerability of the world capitalist system are unprecedented. This is an extremely important basis on which he makes rational judgment of the historical destiny of capitalism.

Amin believes that to examine the problem of the end of capitalism and the prospect for humanity, the key is to illustrate whether the development of capitalism today has solved all the conflicts and crises, or whether capitalism has reached a perfect harmonious development status. Amin 's answer is clearly no. In his own words:"Now, this evolution does not just bring a new form of polarization characteristic of the new world order, but also has resulted in a disorderly world ." "This crisis," argues Samir Amin," is visible in all regions of the world and in all facets of the political, social and ideological crisis." Instead of encouraging peace and security and international interdependence, globalization is reinforcing inequalities, polarizations, chauvinisms, and conflicts within and among nations. There are three main reasons: globalization's failure "to develop new forms of political and social organization going beyond the nation state; to reconcile the growth of industrialization in parts of the Asian and Latin American periphery with the pursuit of global growth; and to develop a relationship, rather than an exclusionary one, with the African periphery". Therefore, in Amin's view, the current chaotic situation not only can't sustain the process of globalization, but reveals the extreme vulnerability of it.

2.2 The "three contradictions" of capitalism can't be overcome

Amin believes that the process of capitalist accumulation is inconsistent with the interests of the vast majority of people, which is mainly reflected in three major contradictions: first, the contradiction between the capitalist pursuit of

interests and the workers' position as appendages; second, the inherent contradiction of capitalism between its so-called "reasonable" short-term economic benefits and the overall future development of the globe; third, the growing gulf between the rich and the poor. All these contradictions have never been overcome; conversely, they have gradually deepened with the development of capitalism. The flexibility of capitalism, that is, its capability to use various means of social adjustments, enables itself to overcome the crises caused by the outbreak of conflicts. However, these halfway approaches taken to deal with the crises have increased the contradictions inherent in capitalism itself.

2.3 The five capitalist monopolies absorb "surplus value" produced in the periphery

Amin encourages those committed to "the perspective of global socialism" to struggle against "the five monopolies which reproduce capitalism". The five monopolies are: the monopoly of technology generated by the military expenditures of the imperialist centers, the monopoly of control over global finances and a strong position in the hierarchy of current account balances, the monopoly of access to natural resources, the monopoly over international communication and the media, and the monopoly over the means of mass destruction.

2.4 The question of polarization of the world capitalist system stands out

The "polarization" law is the inherent law of the capitalist world-wide expansion. The capitalist mode of production is based on a combination of goods, capital and labor markets, while the operating mode of the world capitalist system is only a combination of the circulation of goods and capital, from which the labor market is artificially separated. In France, the United States and other developed capitalist countries, there exists a smooth flow of goods and labor. However, in terms of the world capitalist system, there is no labor market integration. Political boundaries still exist, and will long endure. Despite population shift, it would seem insignificant when set beside much relevant labor. This logic is enough to make people see clearly that the world polarization is an inevitable result of capital expansion. Capitalism produces an unprecedented problem which can't be solved by itself, namely: the growing polarization of the world. World polarization is a modern phenomenon associated with capitalism. Therefore, what we need consider is how the current system will react to this prospect. People can't see the dawn of human liberation but the danger of mass unemployment in it, combined with the deepening poverty among some people.

Amin believes that the capitalist system is bound to be replaced by the new society and the new system due to the three contradictions and polarization law which it can't overcome by itself. He said: "the contradictions of which we are speaking do their work quietly, and one day the 'stable' structures collapse. History then enters a phase that may be described later as transitional, but which is lived as a transition toward the unknown, during which new historical subjects crystallize slowly. These subjects inaugurate new practices, proceeding by trial and error, and legitimize them through new ideological discourses, often confused at the outset. Only when the processes of qualitative change have matured sufficiently do new social relations appear, defining post-transitional systems that are capable of sustained self-reproduction." Amin's prophecy of capitalism is consistent with Wallerstein's views. But Amin is even more decisive: "precisely because the immanent contradictions of capitalism are sharper at the end of the century than they were at its beginning, and because the means of destruction are also far greater than they were, the alternatives for the twenty-first century are (more than ever before) socialism or barbarism."

3. "Delinking" strategy: new path for the development of the Third World

One of Amin's key points concerning the development of the Third World is: the capitalist countries in the periphery (the Third World countries) are bound to experience a delinking process from the world capitalist system if they are to have a true development.

In discussing "delinking", Amin emphasizes the need for underdeveloped countries to adopt new market strategies and values different from northern developed countries. Delinking, he explains, does not mean "autarky but refusal to bow to the dominant logic of the world capitalist system". Delinking implies a transfer of political hegemony to new "centers". Delinking is a form of cutting oneself off, "a kind of active anti-globalization which is in dialectical relationship with globalization itself". Amin has four propositions in justifying delinking. First, the necessity of delinking is the logical political outcome of the unequal character of the development of capitalism...Unequal development, in this sense, is the origin of essential social, political and ideological evolutions...Second, delinking is a necessary condition of any socialist advance, in the North and in the South. This proposition is, in our view, essential for a reading of Marxism that genuinely takes into account the unequal character of capitalist development. Third, the potential advances that become available through delinking will not "guarantee" certainty of further evolution towards a pre-defined "socialism". Socialism is a future that must be built. Fourth, the option for delinking must be discussed in political terms. This proposition derives from a reading according to which economic constraints are absolute only for those who accept the commodity alienation intrinsic to capitalism, and turn it into an historical system of eternal validity.

Amin agrees that the center grows at the expense of the periphery. It is in this context that Amin argues that the only way for the Third World to prosper would be through the process of delinking. But, because the capitalist Third World countries haven't yet achieved economic take-off, even though they verbally express to be self-sufficient, they are very weak and have no means for achieving delinking. Therefore, delinking can only be relative. It depends on the negotiating capacity, bargaining power and the economic, cultural and political advantages of the peripheral countries. As a development proposal, delinking is associated with some kind of social program, which is the plan to build a national, modern and self-centered nation.

Amin analyzes the root of the "underdevelopment" of the Third World. He argues that in the "center" and "periphery" structure of the capital system of the world, the "periphery" is incorporated into the world capitalist system in accordance with the center's requirements. The development process of the periphery must be subject to the capitalist development of the "center". Although industries have expanded in semi-industrialized countries, this does not mean that the gap between the "center" and "periphery" is shrinking. In fact, the large-scale transfer of labor-intensive industries has accelerating generated a new unequal international division of labor. In this unequal international division of labor, the Third World in the "periphery" has inherited those industries with limited potential; while the capitalist countries in the "center" maintain the industries with core competency and the greatest development potential.

Amin further points out the way out of the status of underdevelopment. He believes that as long as there is a "center" and "periphery" structure in the world capitalist system, the development of the Third World countries could only be a

dependent and controlled one. Thus, he advocates that in order to become independent, the Third World have to delink from the world capitalist system.

As for the means of "delinking", Amin suggests that socialism be a fundamental condition for progress and independence, and that only socialism can make "marginal capitalism" move towards the path of real self-reliant development, and only the socialist development path can be the only alternative to "the development of underdevelopment", because only in socialism, the Third World can really get rid of the control and exploitation by capitalism in the center of the world capitalist system, thus achieving "delinking". That means, only by economically "delinking" from the developed countries and getting rid of unequal exchange, peripheral countries can gradually embark on a healthy path of development and ultimately surpass the developed capitalist countries economically.

Amin believes that for the Third World countries, the prerequisite for realizing the socialist structure and creating a new international economic order is self-reliance. Self-reliant development path must be of a mass character, because only the "mass" development can lead to "national and self-reliant economy". The industrialization development strategy of the Third World mainly proceeds from agriculture and industry."In order to serve the mass of the peasantry, industrialization must first be made to concentrate on improving rural productivity. Similarly, in order to serve the urban masses, it is necessary to give up the luxury production for the local market and give up exporting." However, the social system required for the agricultural revolution and the city mobilization must be socialist, "because socialism is a fundamental condition for progress and independence, rather than a ideology or moral motivation which can be chosen freely." Only through socialist revolution, could the "real self-reliant" national economic development be achieved, and the situation in which the Third World is dependent on the developed capitalist countries be reversed and changed.

4. The socialist alternative to globalization

Amin points out that globalization is not a new thing. Since the 15th century when capitalism came into being, globalization has been going on. Only after the industrial revolution, this process has greatly been accelerating. In the "Communist Manifesto", Marx pointed out that capitalism created global markets and developed into global capitalism. The modern form of the world capitalist system has expanded beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, and gives rise to serious problems which the nation-state alone can hardly manage.

For the current trend of globalization, Amin thinks it has the nature of objectivity and progressing significance."Globalization is a fact of modern history; it is a positive fact and a historical progress, which shouldn't be obliterated by the spontaneous cultural response." But, to recognize that globalization is a positive fact and historical progress is one thing, while how to treat and guide globalization is another. Therefore, he points out that the word "globalization" needs to be qualified. First, what is globalization? What kind of globalization is it? Is it capitalism-oriented or socialism-oriented? In *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization*, Amin emphasizes the initiative to participate in globalization. He argues that "delinking" doesn't mean "anti-globalization", as is misunderstood by some people, rather it is implemented in participating in globalization. In his opinion, "There are no situations which are

insurmountable, and alternative choices always exist.....Neither does 'rejection' of globalization constitute an adequate response. 'Rejection', apparent only by the ways in which they are expressed-the turning back to ethnicity, and religious fundamentalism-become integrated in to this brutal globalization and are made use of by it. 'Delinking'.....is not to be found in these illusory and negative rejections but on the contrary by an active insertion capable of modifying the conditions of globalization".

Amin recognizes that there exists a hegemonic discourse which thinks that there should be no any constraints with globalization, or otherwise, doors should be closed. He repeatedly stresses that he is not against globalization, but against the capitalism-led globalization. He believes another form of globalization is possible and the problem just lies in which kind of globalization we need. What he proposes is that from the perspective of socialism, we must fight back the globalization of markets by developing another program of globalization.

Amin argues that although people are far from clearly understanding the issue of "globalization", understandings of "globalization" from different standpoints are quite different. Capitalism wishes that capital could freely flow in every corner of the world and cover the entire social life, while socialism should let people see clearly why capitalist globalization is gradually deepening the polarization of the world. That is, in the context of globalization, people should see clearly the reactionary nature of capitalism: the polarized world has become increasingly inhumane and threatened the entire human race. Therefore, it is the obligation of socialism to make an alternative globalization program, which needs to be humane and characteristic of cosmopolitanism.

Amin sees the alternative to the capitalism-led globalization as a build-up of a global political system, which is not controlled by the global market. The market is just one of the non-dominant arrangements, and the power of the market shouldn't prevail over the nation-state, but needs to be placed under the control of the society. He also believes that "a humanistic response to the challenge of globalization inaugurated by capitalist expansion may be idealistic, but it is not Utopian: on the contrary, it is the only realistic project possible, in the sense that the beginning of an evolution in its direction must quickly rally powerful social forces capable of imposing logic".

5. Conclusion

All in all, what Amin's strategy of "delinking" and "socialist transition" suggests is: first, capital expansion and the capitalism-led globalization have created a global system of development and underdevelopment, and globalization thus perpetuates uneven development and inequality in the world; second, "delinking" from the capitalist center and making a socialist transition is the optimal development path for the periphery-the third world countries; third, it is the obligation of socialism to make an alternative globalization program, which needs to be humane and characteristic of cosmopolitanism, thus providing scope for the Third World people's autonomous progress. This strategy aims at eradicating pauperization and inequality through a revolutionary way such that people of the world can live in harmony without being dominated by the imperialist center. Amin's analysis may sometimes seem idealistic but relevant to many countries. Any study of the globalization, polarization, issue of the Third World and so on can't go without mentioning Amin and his theory.

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