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# **Decolonisation of Development: Samir Amin and the Struggle for an Alternative Development Approach in Africa**

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## **Abstract**

*Samir Amin remains one of the best political economists advocating an alternative approach to development beyond the selective methods promoted by the Euro-North. Samir was at the forefront of discourses bent on the exposition of the economic, social and political distortions that frustrated development efforts, particularly in Third World Countries. In his honour, this article reflects on the nature of development that Africa needs. The study displays new global processes, such as globalisation, liberalisation, privatisation, contract farming, as part of the Euro-Western efforts to strategically place themselves at the ‘centre’ while fast-tracking the social fragmentation in the periphery and, in particular, destruction of peasant societies. Using the works of Samir Amin, this article argues that it is possible to move beyond the stultifying past and open up discourses on how to decolonise institutions and development frameworks to picket alternative approaches to people-oriented development in Africa. It concludes that growth in Africa needs to be agro-based since the continent as a whole is mostly an agrarian community.*

**Keywords:** Africa, development, home grown policies, Samir Amin, agriculture

## **Introduction**

For the past six decades, and particularly since the early 1960s when Africa was at the height of its new political transformation period, the word ‘development’ became a buzzword on a continent which was emerging from the great and gluttonous 1884 Berlin plunder. Naturally, the steady submergence of colonial rule on the continent inspired many thinkers, among whom Samir Amin is included, to document and to mobilise African governments to pursue inclusive development policies as part of the collective and continued effort to decolonise the continent and to ensure that a people-oriented development path was pursued (see Amin 1972, 1973, 1976). Since then, debates on development on the continent have been heated with some writers declaring that in the post-colonial reality, ‘development’ has been subordinated to personal gain by neo-colonial leaders (Cheru 2009; Rodney

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1972) while others discoursed that the adoption of inapt development models have frustrated progress on the continent (Ayittey 2005).

Gumede (2018) links the lack of proper development on the continent to the ‘state capture’ of externally-oriented and subservient African leaders who swallow the dictates of the Euro-North, delaying the integration agenda of the continent. The view is supported by Adedeji (2012) who argues that France, Britain and the United States ensured the continued fragmentation of the Global South as part of the collective and sustained effort to ensure that the North remains the centre of political and socio-economic power. Cheru (2009: 275) is of the view that the kind of the development model pursued in the post-colonial period ‘resembled the colonial development model, which stifled peasant autonomy and production. Development became something to be organised from above and from outside instead of a process of unleashing people’s energies for their self-improvement from below.’ One of the writers who has been arguing for the need for an alternative approach to development, not only in Africa but globally. (Amin, 1971, 1991)

Samir Amin (1931–2018), the former Director of the United Nations African Institute for Planning (IDEP) from 1970 to 1980; Director of the Third World Forum in Dakar, Senegal; and a co-founder of the World Forum for Alternatives was one of those few writers in the Global South who threw their energies towards the epistemological discontinuity of the Eurocentric discourse that saturates the social sciences and humanities, and thereby conceals our ability to discern the cause of our various challenges including our underdevelopment. In the context of Africa, Amin considered that it might be necessary for the continent to first delink from the rest of the world, pursue its type of development based on its own cultural and situational context. Also, he suggested that it could relink with the global economy on terms different from those enforced during the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism. (Amin, 1971)

This article focuses on the works of Samir Amin, and argues that examining his works could afford us an opportunity to move beyond Africa’s stultifying past and open up discourses on how to decolonise institutions and development frameworks in order to picket alternative approaches to people-oriented development in Africa. After the introduction, the article presents the research method that was used. This is followed by an exploration of Samir’s thesis on

the trajectories of accumulation; and a conceptual analysis of development in Africa and the challenges that have emerged as a consequence of domination by countries from Global North. The article provides an interpretation of Samir's thesis on how Africa can place itself on the route towards its own type of development. The last section makes recommendations and concludes the article.

## **Research Methods**

This is a conceptual article, which is based on the interpretation of Samir works. The report also draws on the writer's experiences as student of development and as a reflective citizen of Africa. Consulted texts by Samir include books, chapters, journals, and conference papers. In all of these sources, the need for an alternative development model for third world countries emerges as an overriding and inveterate theme. It was as the writer engaged with these texts as reflective researchers that the interpretation provided in this article began to formulate in our mind. While this study makes a valuable input in emphasising the issues present in the context of development in Africa, its conceptual nature represents a particular limitation. The author of this article seeks to motivate researchers to draw some inspiration from the discussion and conduct empirical studies that will both criticise and validate some of the arguments.

## **Trajectories of Accumulation**

Amin's intellectual works primarily centred on three elements: value and unequal exchange in the context of a global structure; the development of world capitalism; and 'delinking' as a development theory for third world countries. From the 'law' of value, which points out that the cost of commodities is best measured through the amount of labour that is needed to produce it, Samir built up a theory on accumulation and unequal exchange in the global capitalistic system. Amin (1974:2) argued that capital accumulation 'is an essential inner law of the capitalist mode of production, and doubtless also of the socialist mode of production, but it is not an inner law of the functioning of the pre-capitalist modes of production.' For Samir, capitalism relates to the production of goods for the markets while in pre-capitalism, goods are not produced for the purposes of distribution in the markets. Samir believed that the latter had taken

over in the world, and thus, no “single concrete socio-economic formation of our time can be understood except as part of this world system” (Amin 1974: 3). Amin opines that the pre-capitalist societies of the third world were subjected to the rules of capitalism such that a theory of ‘accumulation on a world scale’ has to be used to understand the ‘development’ disparities between the ‘developed’ and the third world.

The theory of accumulation premised on the notion that the developed countries (the centre) and the developing countries (the periphery) hold different and unequal roles in the world’s capitalist system. The centre, which comprises of former colonisers, is dominant in the order and dictates to the periphery (former colonies) how they should go about their businesses, including dictating the terms and conditions of exchange. The terms and conditions of commodity exchange are biased and mostly benefit the centre while bringing no benefit to the periphery. This is quite clear in the structure of labour remuneration when he states that:

“Analysis of exchanges between advanced countries and underdeveloped ones leads to the observation that exchange is unequal as soon as labor of the same productivity is rewarded at a lower rate in the periphery, as is the case today. This fact cannot be explained without bringing in the policy (economic policy and policy in general) followed by the capital that dominates in the periphery, as regards reorganisation of the surplus of labor power.” (Amin, 1974: 62-3)

In this context, the soaring unemployment levels in the edge are not just ‘bad luck’ but a result of the policy executed by the centre. This has been achieved through the installation of puppet leaders who would make sure these policies are implemented in the peripheral countries (Amin 2014).

The major loser in the capitalist system is the proletariat and the peasant. The accumulation of resources, at costs that are not commensurately compensated gives birth to the condition of underdevelopment. Underdevelopment, according to Amin (1991), is a form of imbalance and is not so much a quantitative but rather a qualitative characteristic. Amin (1976) also states that underdevelopment manifests, mostly, in three features the first of which is the unevenness in the ‘distribution of productivities’ across the sectors of economy in the periphery. The second is the lack of meaningful links between productive areas, due to a focus by the boundary to produce products that will

please the centre. This is what Amin refers to as ‘disarticulation’. This kind of operation distorts and frustrates the transmission of economic benefits throughout the systems of the periphery. The third feature of underdevelopment manifests through the economic domination of the periphery by the centre. This condemns the perimeter to survive on handouts often sugar-coated as ‘international aid’. This is meant to ensure that the periphery remains the exporter of raw products and agricultural produce to the centre so that the edge will always depend on the centre. This process leads to the shattering of the peripheral countries and their populace. It leads to:

“...proletarianizing of the small agricultural and craft producers, rural semi-proletarianization, and the impoverishment without proletarianization of the peasants organised in the village communities, urbanization, and massive growth in both open unemployment and underemployment in towns, etc.” (Amin 1976: 194).

The encounters of the periphery with the centre have, therefore, not been beneficial to the periphery. It has not only been disruptive but also destroyed the prospects for the periphery to stand on its own and pursue its own kind of future. One of the regions that had its future disrupted and distorted through engagement with the centre is Africa.

### **A Conceptual Analysis of Development in Africa**

The African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 envisions an African future that is characterised by pan-African unity, integration, prosperity, and peace. It is left in the hand of Africans to ensure that such a vision is realised. The broader target, in short, is to ensure that the entire continent and the people therein are free from poverty, diseases, and, in general, from lack of development that characterises the continent. The realisation of a united, integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa is not a game of chance. It will be a product of day-to-day struggles of the people and their governments to expel the conditions that engendered underdevelopment on the continent.

There have been heated debates on what constitutes development. Tandon (2015: 145) rightly argues that the “major challenge for the theoreticians of not only the global south but also of the marginalised peoples and sub-nationalists of the north is to provide a.... definition of development”

outside the cages of the Euro-West. As it stands today, development ‘has been and still is the westernisation of the world’ (Latouche 1993:460) or simply “...an empty signifier [emerging from the West] that can be filled with almost any content” (Ziai 2009: 198). Gumede (2019: 51) defines development as “...improvements in wellbeing, involving socio-economic progress.” Brobbey (2010:1) defines development as “the capacity of a state with the aim of achieving higher outcome of production for the satisfaction of citizens and empowering them to make demands.”

The most controversial, of all the definitions of development, is one pushed forward by W.W. Rostow, an adviser in both the John F Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson eras of the United States of America, who posited that development was basically an evolutionary process through which the western societies evolved and through which third world countries were still in the process of evolving. This thinking was based on the belief that the development of the third world could be encouraged if these countries would adopt or copy Western capital, technology and social organisation and values. In some academic circles, more generally, development is associated with modernity; a process characterised by transformation from traditional, rural agrarian society to a secular, industrial and urban culture. Modernity is a Western construct whereby non-Euro-Western countries that are considered primitive and custom-bound are mobilised to embrace Western-based lifestyle choices, tastes, etc.

This modernity involves a social change in the elements of science and technology. In the context of Africa, this form of development is rejected by most scholars, who argue that: “Africa cannot possibly develop by modernising or becoming like the modern west” (Lushaba 2006:3). Also, Gumede (2019:51) argues that “modernity is not an appropriate form of development that Africa needs.” With reference to post-development, Ziai (2013:126) argues that the Euro-Western notion of development faces rejection largely for its romanticisation of local communities and “legitimising oppressive traditions, and for being just as paternalistic as the chastised development experts.’ It is thus widely agreed that the form of development espoused by the West is not the kind of growth that Africa needs. At the same time, while it is argued that the structure of development that Africa needs is one that promotes reliance on resources available in various contexts of culture and situations, it is also argued development, for Africa, should not exhibit a yearning for the primitive past

(Fanon 1963; Mugo 1992). Ndlovu-Gatheni (2012:2) considers development as a “liberatory human aspiration to attain freedom from political, economic, ideological, epistemological, and social domination...”

The debates have also been rife on why Africa remains underdeveloped or undeveloped for that matter. Evidence is demonstrating that Africa remains undeveloped is abundant. Gumede (2016) found that from 1980 to 2015, as an example, the Sub-Saharan Africa Human Development Index (HDI) has remained very low when compared to other regions; and that the HDI levels for East Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific were making better progress when compared Sub-Saharan Africa. Although the HDI for regions, such as the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, Central Asia, and the Arab States had not shown any noteworthy improvement in the 2011–2015 period, the HDI levels of those regions were still better than for Sub-Saharan Africa. In this view, Gumede (2019: 59) concludes that “development in Africa is underpinned by the ideological and epistemological confusion and imposition that define the pursuit of development, justice and freedom.”

Ake (1996) posits that at independence, development was never realised due to the neglect of the agrarian revolution, which itself is a vital stage for growth. Some scholars have posited that progress has been elusive on the continent due to the adoption of inappropriate policies, the use of ineffectual socio-economic development approaches, and the fact that former colonisers did not give Africa some enough space develop, but rather quickly bounced back with some new imperialistic tendencies, including structural adjustment policies, globalisation, contract farming (Amin 2016; Cheru 2009; Gumede 2018, 2019). In terms of the Euro-centric ideology of westernisation, African countries remain underdeveloped today because of their narrow resources and productive base; overvalued local currencies; the presence of large and incompetent public sector bureaucracies that interfere in ‘purely economic matters’ (Erunke 2009:8); and the upkeep of subsidies in certain economic communities which in the end overstrain the state. Also, it is claimed that Africa’s campaigns at development are hampered by its economies, which are not well integrated in the global financial system. This view is dismissed by Amin who posit that:

“In 1990 the ratio of extra regional trade to GDP was for Africa 45.6 per cent while it was only 12.8 per cent for Europe; 13.2 per cent for North

America; 23.7 per cent for Latin America and 15.2 per cent for Asia. These ratios were not significantly different throughout the twentieth century. The average for the world was 14.9 per cent in 1928 and 16.1 per cent in 1990.” (Amin (2014:28)

In this view, Amin (2014: 29) argues that “all the regions of the world (including Africa) are equally integrated in the global system, [only that] they are integrated into it in different ways. The concept of marginalisation is a false concept that tends to becloud the real question, which is not to which degree the various regions are integrated” but “in which way they are integrated.” What, therefore, explains differentiation in terms of the development of regions is the imperialistic tendencies of others? Reviewed discourses also concur that development on the continent is frustrated by poor political leadership, inappropriate policies, corruption, social unrests, etc. In this long list, Amin (2014) added that Africa is also in the weird grip of dependency where every advisement by former oppressors is embraced uncritically. It would be paradoxical for the former oppressors to exhibit a genuine commitment to ladder their former subjects (who disrupted their accumulation trajectory), out of poverty and underdevelopment so that they can be of the same status with the former oppressor. Samir will always be remembered for his application of Marxism in the analysis of the challenges of socialist transformation in Africa.

Amir is among the few scholars that first recognised that the only form of development that would be meaningful for Africans is one that was agrarian-based. Land is wealth in Africa. Land and agrarian activities play a vital role in the livelihood development of many former settler colonies such as Algeria, Kenya, South Africa, Namibia, Tunisia and Zimbabwe; and even among those that did not experience settler colonialism such as Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, and many others. African countries, except Ethiopia and Liberia, which were never colonised, experienced massive land dispossession or agricultural disruption, leading to the emergence of the land question as an anti-colonial historic grievance. Early writers such as Samir noted that in the post-colonial era, land-based economic development on the continent exhibited the value that emerging governments placed on land. This observation was also confirmed by the sustained interest in agricultural-based development economics amongst development economists and some non-governmental organisations. At the height of the new political transformation period in the 1960s and 70s,

economists such as Amin, (1972, 1973) Johnston and Mellor (1961) first introduced the discussion to academic attention and also ensured the progression of the subject. In the current economics of the continent, the postulations made by these economists and others such as Cheikh Anta Diop, Thandika Mkandawire and Sam Moyo, continue to dominate development imperatives – mainly as they focus on land and agrarian concerns.

The land holds diverse important meanings that exhibit its link to what constitutes development to Africans. It is a source of wealth and a livelihood source (Ndhlovu 2018), a political instrument (Mupfuvi 2014), a symbol of belonging (Chavhunduka and Bromley 2012), and the abode of the ancestors (Gumede 2014). Land for the African peasantry is a means of survival (Ndhlovu 2018); and thus, allowing Africans to own property through land reform would enable the people to have control over their development. For the peasantry, land ownership enables them to produce, to develop their livelihoods; and hence, improve their lives.

While most reviewed discourses, particularly by northern scholars and policy institutions highlight the symbolic and productive value of land (Bernstein, 2010; Borras, McMichael, and Scoones 2010; FAO 2016), studies conducted on the continent reveal that for many countries that lost land due to colonial dispossession, area is not predominantly a merchantable asset, but rather a secure base on which to develop and nurture livelihood strategies, and hence, development (Hendricks, Ntsebeza and Helliker 2013; Ndhlovu 2018). Recent works, such as Ndhlovu (2019) and Moyo (2013) found that household members that migrated to urban areas in search of employment opportunities in Zimbabwe continued to bank on the support of families they left back at home who were working on land. The dispossession of Africans from their land and the subsequent distortion of their agricultural activities constitute the highest form of the disruption to the course of development on the continent. Samir clearly documented how millions of Africans, who depended on land for survival, had been evicted from their lands to make way for colonists. Samir posited that the failure to place the periphery – the peasantry – at the centre of analysis often occludes the understanding on how precisely development should be pursued following the shattering tendencies of the 1884 Berlin conference. Development initiatives today, should therefore, return to the source of the continent's nature and form of development that was interrupted – the peasantry. For this cause,

land and agrarian issues are, once again, at the centre of the socio-economic and political activities of developing countries, and hence, it is proclaimed that:

“A spectre is haunting the world—the specter of a new agrarian question. There is no country today that can ensure the food security of its people into the future; no major investor that has not bet on agriculture and natural resources; no international organisation that is not concerned with its consequences; and no serious social or political movement that is not considering the peasant path as a modern solution to the multiple crises of our times, the economic, climate, energy and food” (Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013).

The reasons why land and agrarian issues hold much significance to African societies is related to their close link to development which is so elusive for the vast majorities. Amin (1976) argued that the alteration of the African traditional modes of production did not only temporarily evict a significant number of the peasantry from land, but it did not also offer anything of compensatory value in terms of providing employment opportunities so as to reimburse for the pre-capitalist production modes that had been subjugated to create room for foreign capital. Considering that the industrial development of the nineteenth century was based upon the capacity to absorb a large share of rural populations that had been evicted from the countryside, the failure to absorb job seekers in Africa constituted a perfect recipe for the growth of underdevelopment. The distortion of pre-colonial and pre-capitalist forms of agrarian production and relations engendered urbanisation without industrialisation. With limited job opportunities in towns and cities, more people poured into the countryside from cities in pursuit of re-peasantisation. This situation, according to Amin (1976), led to increased pressure on the land and subsequently to a decline in agricultural technique since a positive performance in agriculture is usually characterised by the use of more capital and a lower population density per hectare. Amin (1976) concludes that this situation doomed agriculture to stagnation on the continent much to the suffering of the majority.

The promotion of foreign capital and its profits which were channelled back to foreign nations resulted in nothing other than the callous and tragic ruin of the rural people’s welfare, peace and communal sovereignty in Africa (Amin 2016), and is, therefore, the primary source of the continent’s underdevelopment today. The nature of underdevelopment that Africa faces

today, as opposed to its former colonisers which are now viewed as ‘developed’, is not only discernible in the level of production per individual household or per head, but, as Amin (1976:201-202) argued, it is noticeable in certain typical structural features, such as:

- The domination and dictation of Africa by Euro-North American powerful countries in terms of commodity production and pricing;
- The manipulation of production orientation in Africa to the needs of the Euro-West and also some semi-periphery countries, such as China and India which have also joined in the race of siphoning resources out of Africa. This has ensured that only foreign players benefit while Africa continues to sink in poverty and conflict; and
- Economic control by foreign nations in which they continue to shape Africa in accordance with their own needs, and in the dependence of the structures whereby growth on the continent is financed.

The distortion of African economies toward exportation activities in the distribution of both financial and human resources, following the needs of integration into the world capitalist market, gives powerful countries an opportunity to control Africa, in a hegemonic fashion, and thus frustrate the continent’s prospects for development (Amin 2006). This view is taken further by Mokoena (2018:87) argues that ‘the capitalist world system continues to hierarchically and dichotomously configure the world culturally, epistemologically aesthetically, ontologically at the exclusion, oppression, exploitation of *othered* populations such as African people thus reproducing the crisis of inequalities ... This world’s system is Euro-American-centric, capitalist, patriarchal, hetero-normative, and hierarchical, Christian-centric and characterised by an interstate system.’ Also, Oloruntoba (2015:123) identifies inequality as one of the critical central problems that define the contemporary world. Thus, it is widely posited that the power relations that inform and sustain the existing order need to be transformed as the starting point on the route to development.

The reason why the Euro-Western countries are developed today largely links to the colonial and imperialistic tendencies of these countries. The idea behind Europe’s colonisation of Africa clearly connects to various factors, including the advent of the industrial revolution that opened the floodgates of

socio-economic change and technology in Europe. This resulted in booming production, thus, frustrating the capacity of the agricultural sector to meet industrial demand in terms of raw material provision. European countries, thus, colonised Africa to acquire extra raw materials for their industries. In addition, declining agricultural production rendered European countries unable to produce adequate food to feed their growing urban populations, and thus, of necessity, food had to be acquired from elsewhere. In the same way, due to the rapid increase in technology, products could now be produced at a faster rate than could be consumed. European warehouses would, therefore, be piled up with wares. Africa constituted a ready market for such products.

While colonialists needed products and profits to transfer back home, the organisation of African economies themselves, at the time, did not guarantee a steady supply of the required raw materials. This generated the need for direct takeover to control the economy as well as the affairs of the African states so that the necessary raw materials would be produced. Europe thus needed to take direct control of the African economy and political administration to reorganise the economy and the markets to engender its integration into the world market and international economics (Amin 2016). Since one of the goals of colonialism was to find markets for European goods and raw materials, there was a need for an organic linkage between the African economy and market with that of the international system, that was controlled and directed by the colonisers. This explains why even today, the role of African states in the world market is the production of primary goods and agricultural products.

The main effect of colonialism on the African continent is that it engendered under-development in many ways, including the denial of the rights of indigenous peoples. Colonial education and western civilisation are, for example, to a significant extent, responsible for underdevelopment in Africa. Rodney (1972) reveals how colonial education was detached from African culture and therefore, could not bring about any meaningful development within the African environment due to a lack of organic linkage. Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012) additionally state that colonial education was fundamentally literary and had no technological basis. It was thus antithetical to real or industrial development. The current weak technological base of Africa, which has been the cause for their underdevelopment, stems from the continent's poor foundation of education laid by colonialists.

The colonial education fundamentally aimed to train clerks, interpreters, inspectors, artisans, and so forth that would help colonialists to exploit Africa's rich resources. Colonial education distorted and disarticulated the African indigenous pattern of knowledge, which was rooted in African technology. The execution of colonial education detached Africans from their indigenous technologies, catalysing the collapse of farming systems in particular. This was the basis for the weak technological foundation of African states, which has perpetuated their underdevelopment. This situation accounted for the impoverishment of most Africans, including their farming systems. Colonialists forced Africans to focus on the production of goods meant for export and not Africans goods required by the local population. This caused many African farmers to abandon the production of food items necessary to feed their growing population, leading to shortages of food and escalations in food prices. The present-day importation of food by African states is a carry-over from colonialism (Bayeh 2015). In this view, colonialism distorted the satisfaction of local needs in terms of food production and other requirements in favour of the creation and fulfilment of foreign industries.

Imperialism and colonialism also generated disarticulation in the provision of social amenities and the urbanisation pattern on the continent. Most of the few social facilities provided were concentrated in cities. This caused huge migration levels to the urban centres where they could be found (Rodney 1972). Additionally, this problem resulted in rural-urban migration, overpopulation, filthy environments, poor hygiene conditions, the spread of epidemic diseases, social vices, tribal and ethnic problems. Colonialism also resulted in the clear entrance and development of classes in Africa. These classes included comprador bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, proletariat and the peasantry. The petty bourgeoisie class served as the puppet of colonialists through which they exploited and siphoned the resources of African countries (Wa Thiong'o 2009).

There is always harmony between the interests of the African petty bourgeoisie and those of European comprador bourgeoisies. This explains why colonialists, at independence, installed African petty bourgeoisies as leaders. The petty bourgeoisie preserved the same association with the erstwhile colonial masters and thereby, bringing about no change at all. The African petty bourgeoisie sustained the long exploitation of the proletariat and the peasant classes (Bayeh 2015). The extensive and compound nature of political

uncertainty and socio-economic malaise being witnessed in most nations today, has recourse to the character of classes introduced in Africa by colonialism. The economic resources of Africa, today, are shared between the petty bourgeoisie and their colonial counterparts (Ocheni and Nwankwo 2012). The severe impoverishment, marginalisation and oppression of most Africans by their petty bourgeois leaders and by those who have access to state power are an offspring of a colonial hangover among African states.

In view of Africa's unfair encounter with the North, and the disruption of the agrarian sector in Africa, it is argued that Africa should "disengage from the Global North because Africa connected with the rest of the world incorrectly – Africa can then re-engage at a later stage on its own terms" (Gumede 2019:60). Samir requires that the third world 'delinks' from the North, and he argues for another trajectory of development which places the centre within the context of cultures and situations of the peoples of the continent to be able to 'emerge' as sovereign states – socio-economic and political. Amin (2016:141) espouses that the new model of development is one that is "shaped by the renewal of non-capitalist forms of peasant agriculture, which in turn implies delinking from the imperatives of globalised capitalism." Amin (1990) argues that in order for development to be realised on the African continent and the rest of the third world, there is a strong need to 'delink' from the world capitalist system, by way of adopting some new market strategies and values which are far removed from those deployed by the so-called developed countries. Samir's argument is that it is possible for developing countries to achieve economic development without necessarily following in the footsteps of 'developed countries' in terms of their approaches to production systems. This process enables developing countries to emerge as sovereign nations with market and production strategies which are based on the contexts of cultures and contexts of situations, and, therefore, different from the global capitalist system, and allow these nations to resolve their development problems.

Emergence, as a concept, constitutes an approach whereby countries prioritise the construction of an economy which is nationally focused, although it is also made to be open towards the exterior to allow the inward flow of benefits that might also be coming from outside. Emergence also comprises the prioritisation of economic sovereignty by developing countries (Amin, 2016). Emergence requires developing countries to embark on a complex project, one

that could provoke ostracism and international sanctions as what happened to Zimbabwe in the 2000s when the state acquired farms, mostly white-owned, and redistributed them to peasants (1.3 million); small-to-medium capitalist farmers (30,000); and to large-to-corporate capitalist farmers (250) (Moyo 2005: 187). Samir adds that however hard and opposed, this process is crucial and should comprise policies that ‘promote the consolidation of food sovereignty, and sovereignty in the control of its own natural resources, as well as access to these outside of its own territory’ (Amin 2016: 142).

Amin places the ‘emergence’ project right in the hands of the state, which must adopt and implement policies that can benefit its entire populace. For Amin (2016: 144), “Such a state should possess the capacity to coherently construct and implement a project of production geared primarily to serve national requirements. Its effectiveness is also complemented by policies to ensure that the majority of popular classes are also able to benefit from growth.” The form of development that should emerge from these efforts should be opposed to ‘lumpen development’ which is characterised by the social fragmentation which is often imposed by powerful countries on the countries which they dominate. Amin (1976) posits the ‘lumpen development’ type is often defined by the booming of survival strategies, such as the growing informal sector and the worship of donor handouts, which is an intrinsic feature of one-sided capital accumulation. Samir bemoans the fact that most African countries today are in the clutches of the ‘lumpen development’ process.

The major challenge today is that most African states are too poor even to finance their national budgets. Amin (2016: 155) argues that:

“the handouts or the so-called ‘international aid’ extended by the World Bank, or by development agencies from Western imperialist countries, the United States or the European Union—is not genuine development aid. It is a financial support intended to maintain our position as subordinate countries, and thus to reproduce underdevelopment.”

These developing countries continue to operate within ‘iron cages’ where policy is dictated to them. The imposition of structural adjustment programmes on African countries since the 1980s is an example of such dictations. This represents a continued form of domination.

In pursuit of handouts distributed via the IMF, most, if not all African states have embraced the dictates of Euro-North American countries through these financial institutions instead of experimenting with home-grown methods towards their own development. Amin opines that what makes the situation worse is that the popular resistance movements or possibly, the opposition politics, seem to not have been aware of the fact that economic neo-liberalisation constitutes the major problem of the underdevelopment of the continent. Many more governments are prepared, since the 2007-2008 global crisis, to release land to the renewed imperialistic tendencies of Europe in exchange for capital. This situation continues to evict Africans from their source of wealth and their source of development – their land. What is needed on the continent is some powerful governments, radical in outlook, that will mobilise the vast majorities towards the realisation of the national question as an integral part of the development agenda, as has been the case in Zimbabwe, Cuba, Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Nepal (Moyo and Chambati 2012; Moyo and Yeros 2007, 2011). It is in this view that Shivji (2019:7) argues that: ‘A revolutionary resolution of the agrarian question in the South by the semi-proletarianised working people of the South, therefore, holds the key to the liberation of the working people of the North as well.’ Unless African nation-states, non-governmental actors and land movements admit the diagnostic potential of the role of the peasantry which already makes the majority of the world population, the realisation of human welfare peace, democracy, and consequently, development will remain an elusive undertaking.

### **Towards Our Own Game and Rules**

The African development situation always revolves around its structural, historical origin and mechanism, contemporary manifestations and impacts. An indigenous approach is hence imperative in grappling with the continent’s development impasse. There are several methods that have been proposed by scholars towards the realisation of development on the continent. The Economic Commission for Africa (1983) espoused the belief that Africa needed an alternative approach that is capable of grappling with both the challenges of adjustment and transformation and not merely some short-term adjustment mechanisms under the conventional classical system. Julius Nyerere, the former president of the Republic of Tanzania proposed the adoption of *Ujamaa* not only

as a development model but also as a political-economic management model (Nyerere 1967). The *Ujamaa* concept prohibits personal acquisitiveness and promotes the horizontally rather than vertically distribution of wealth throughout the society (Himmestrand 1984). It was in this context that Nyerere introduced the villagisation of production, which fundamentally collectivised all forms of local productive dimensions.

In support of Nyerere's model, scholars such as Erunke (2009) have also argued that the alternative indigenous paradigm for development needs to place emphasis on the creation of conducive political, socio-economic environments and a useful resource mobilisation which can translate into sustainable development so as to guarantee the right balance between the private and public sectors of the economy in pursuit of a more sustainable approach. Scholars such as Elumelu (2010) propose the idea of Afro-capitalism, which they view as an economical way of life that exemplifies commitment by the private sector to the economic transformation of the continent through investments that can eventually result in the economic development as well as social wealth.

The most robust approach to development in Africa is one pioneered by Amir, and then popularised by scholars such as Moyo (2005, 2013), Shivji (2019) and Ake (1996), for example. The approach is based on the need for an agrarian revolution on the continent as part of Africa's collective and continuous effort to pursue culturally context-specific development using its 'own rules'. This approach could be relevant considering that close to 70 per cent of the households on the continent, both urban and rural, directly rely on agro-based livelihood activities today. Samir's proposal points to the idea of drafting and implementing some inward-looking and some 'homegrown' policies that display a clear link between social and economic systems. Amin (1990, 2016) argues for the process of 'delinking' from all Eurocentric approaches to development – globalisation, adjustment programmes, contract farming, etc in pursuit of home-grown alternatives. According to him, to engender the realisation of active development, Third World countries need to 'delink' themselves from the global capitalist structure that has enabled the callous fragmentation of their societies.

Amin (1990, 2016) proposes that underdeveloped countries, such as those in Africa, need to adopt different market approaches and standards from those in the developed world. The strategies adopted need to promote the renewal of

the peasant economy which was interrupted, distorted and disfigured by the imperialistic tendencies of the Euro-North, which helped colonial domination at independence. Samir subscribed to the lesson offered by China, which has bridled its financial system and made sure that it remains outside the globalised finance system, as well as its pursuit of a non-capitalist agricultural renewal model. This has allowed China to better resist financial imperialism by investing directly in the development of its own ‘sovereign projects’ (Amin 2016) instead of relying on the former capitalist oppressors. Sovereign projects are those ‘which are conceived of by us, for us and which are to the greatest extent independent of the tendencies and pressures exerted by the global capitalist system’ (Amin 2016: 155).

However, the efficacy of the ‘delinking’ process is disputed by Gumede (2019), who argues that this is fundamentally a foundation phase for the ‘socialist transition’ in developing countries. Gumede (2019) suggests that Africa should ‘disengage’ rather than ‘delink’ from the rest of the world. Disengaging will not only allow Africans to acknowledge the importance of agricultural activities as a source of development but also encourage them to put their labour to productive use in agricultural-based activities which have already been vilified by northern-based scholars. In the classical Marxist sense, the agrarian question, and hence, agricultural livelihood activities, posed merely as a question of transition from feudalism, semi-feudalism or peasant agriculture to advanced industrial agriculture. In this classical sense, the peasantry was evicted from land and proletarianised. Today, scholars such as Bernstein (2010), Bryceson, (2000) and Byres (1991) argue that if the peasantry was indeed successfully proletarianised in the North, then the agrarian question was resolved in that part of the world. It is, therefore, important for Africans to acknowledge that if the agricultural question was resolved in the north, it was not addressed in the south and Africa particularly where land remains the primary source of development.

The argument on the resolution of the agrarian question, which in Africa also constitutes the question of development, is flawed on several fundamental levels, including that the agricultural question cannot be answered without stripping and dismembering the very processes that throw it up and make it a problem that requires attention and urgent action: imperialism. Henry Bernstein, Deborah Bryceson, and Terry Byres are, therefore, caught up in the

primary challenge of trying to reflect, in detail, the African difficulties that they are experiencing. The gross errors by these scholars, in terms of conceptualising African phenomena, are not only unfortunate, but are to be expected if someone is working from afar, and as an outsider who pretends to be an expert in an environment that they are not part of. In this view, it is crucial that Africans and African governments ‘delink’ from any sources of knowledge that frustrate the realisation of development on the continent.

Delinking this way is an essential step in the struggle for genuine decolonisation of knowledge, as a process that will lead to the adoption and implementation of homegrown policies and projects that will engender development that is inclusive. With the proliferation of distorted agrarian knowledge about Africa and the nature of development that the continent needs by Euro-Western centric intellectuals who enjoy increased access to mainstream platforms, it is crucial that Africans work together with other countries in the South to come up with solutions to their own problems. South-south collaborations, such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) should be reinforced as examples of such working together and also as part of the collective inward-looking by countries in the South. This will ensure that Africa is no longer shaped to satisfy the requirements of the centre (Amin 2014).

Gumede (2019) argues that instead of merely ‘delinking’, African needs to ‘disengage’ from the capitalist world. In the first place, the continent was incorrectly integrated into this system through the slave trade, colonialism, and thus, ‘delinking’ only is not sufficient. Disengaging goes further than “delinking and could, therefore, pry open an opportunity for Africa “to get its house in order, so to speak, then reintegrate with the rest of the world in its terms rather than the terms that were imposed on it” (Gumede 2019: 64). He further argues that ‘disengaging is not an economic process like delinking... [as it] goes a step further in the sense that it would not only allow Africa to adopt market and production strategies that are different from the global capital’ (Gumede 2019: 64).

Considering that Africa is an agrarian society, with most rural households relying directly on farming activities for survival, with the exceptions of South Africa and Botswana, the kind of development that needs to be pursued should be agrarian based although linked to prospects of industrialisation. In this view,

Africa needs to first grapple with the land question as an anti-colonial historic grievance. Africa needs to corrects the landownership injustices that were instituted by colonialism and imperialism, not only as of the starting point towards the realisation of welfare and development but also as a point of departure on the resolution of the various conflicts that now characterise the continent. Today, the unsatisfactory nature of the approaches that are currently under use in grappling with the land issue has resulted in the underdevelopment of the agricultural sector, thereby aggravating questions of livelihoods, food security, ecology, gender and development in general. In actual fact, the agrarian question has been violent in some of its manifestations, such as the mounting gap between the production and demand for food, as well as environmental disasters resulting from changes in land-use patterns, particularly large-scale conversion of wetlands. Considering that the vast majority on the continent are peasants or are in the process of seeking re-peasantisation, Africa thus, needs to address its land and agrarian issues as the starting point towards the realisation of development.

## **Conclusion**

Samir Amin remains one of the most influential thinkers to have articulated the African social realities that have undermined and frustrated any development efforts on the continent. Amir maintained that discourses on development in Africa need to be understood within the context of imperialism (in its colonial, neo-colonial and neo-liberal phases) on the one hand and the continuous struggles by Africans to expel it from their lands on the other. In the context of Africa, Amin highlights the need for renewed discourse on the role that can be played by the peasantry who make the majority. In this view, he needs to be read alongside other development scholars on the continent. For example, his friend Sam Moyo, who consistently argued that extensive land expropriation in Africa by colonial masters resulted in widespread landlessness by the poor majorities who needed land, not as a property, but as a livelihood development tool (Moyo 2013). Colonial land expropriation engendered semi-proletarianisation and the emergence of a frail peasantry across Africa, leading to its chronic underdevelopment.

It is crucial to open up discourses in which the national sovereignty of countries can be debated particularly in the context of rectifying the racial and

ethnic discrepancies in property and economic relations. The article has displayed that the kind of development that Africa needs should be one that is agrarian based, considering the land and natural resources that the continent has. Furthermore, its significant total population can serve as the labour force to exploit the resources towards the realisation of the development that the continent needs. Future research should focus on the development of models on how land can be restored back to Africans. For instance, how national resources can be best channelled towards agriculture; or how the peasantry, which makes the majority, can be protected from the 'land grabbing' tendencies of monopoly capitalists as has been the case since the 2007-08 global crisis in most countries in Africa.

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