

[Patterns of Globalization and the Global South]

Von Samir Amin

In the debate on globalization, the effects of globalization on the South are rarely being discussed – even though the South is a majority of 85 per cent of humankind. So it's relatively easy to say – and I shall say it from the beginning – that that pattern of globalization which is called neoliberal pattern of globalization is absolutely criminal with respect to most of humankind, and it necessarily leads to a concept of military order, because there is no other way to pursue this pattern of globalization than by using more and more violence. This includes the always possible use and more and more of armament of mass destruction – including nuclear weapons, which are on the agenda as a consequence, a logic consequence of the attempt to continue with this pattern of globalization.

But before going into that major point, I think it's useful first to say something about the variety of patterns of globalization through the ages and particularly about the two different patterns of globalization from World War II until today: The one pattern, which was dominant during the 30 years after WW II until the mid-70s, and the other pattern that has been present for the following 25 or 30 last years.

Different Patterns of Globalization

Now, globalization is nothing new. The world has always been globalized. But it's interesting to see that globalization in ancient times – before modern times, or before capitalism – had many negative, but also many positive aspects – perhaps more than present modern globalization. Well, there have, of course, been massive killings throughout history, but globalization as it was offered the possibility to the less advanced to catch up. And this is how, for instance, globalization offered to the Europeans the possibility of catching up with the Middle East, the Arabs, who were more advanced. That is therefore a very different pattern of globalization – of patterns of regional globalizations, of course –, very different from the one that we have known throughout modern times, or capitalism, that is over the last five centuries. Which have been patterns, not only one single pattern, but many patterns, successive patterns, which have always continuously created and deepened polarization, inequality on a global level. And therefore, more or less, could be considered, and I would

consider them, as synonymous to imperialism. They have, as a result, not created the conditions making for the less advanced the possibility of catching up, but creating the conditions which make it impossible to catch up and therefore creating the most enormous scandal in human history.

Now, of course, those patterns – and I am speaking of patterns – have, one after the other, their specificities. We can speak of the pattern of early imperialism, of the mercantilist period, the building of the Americas and slavery along with it, with the genocide of the Indians etc. etc. It was a pattern of globalization, but for the Indians and for the Black people, it was the most destructive possible pattern of globalization, the most criminal pattern of globalization.

Now the second one, which we may call classical perhaps, that accompanied the industrialization of the West, of the centers – that is basically of Western Europe, but also the United States or North America and later Japan, along with, to a certain extent, but not necessarily, colonization. That is also a pattern of globalization. To say today that Africa is not integrated into the global system is really a mockery. It has been integrated through slave-trade, first, and then through colonization, which is also one of the ugliest ways of creating globalization. Now at that point in time, globalization – or the contrast between centers and peripheries, in my language – was more or less synonymous to industrialized versus non-industrialized areas.

Now, after WW II, we have moved into other patterns of globalization. And one, I would say, with and inspite of all its internal contradictions, limits and so on and, of course, far from being perfect, was less criminal and dangerous, and the other one that followed was more criminal and more dangerous. The one which was less dangerous was what we can call from the point of view of an Afro-Asian person Bandung 1955. Bandung, and we can say 20 years from Bandung to the mid-seventies, to the so-called new international economic order and the rejection of this new economic order by the imperialist powers, basically the United States and their allies in Western Europe. Now, that pattern was the result of the double victory (or double defeat): the double victory of democracy over fascism and of the peoples of Asia and Africa against old colonialism – that (one) of the previous period.

This double victory created many illusions, of course, but it created also the possibility of considering catching up as not absolutely impossible – catching up with all its contradictions and its negative aspects of course. But through state intervention with the positive and less positive aspects, with protectionism, which means negotiated globalization – not globalization to the benefit of the stronger and exclusively the stronger, but negotiated globalization, which

means creating possibilities for the others, and accompanied by social reforms, more or less radical, and which can be discussed from many points of view, usually not solely associated to any process of democratization, but still, social reform.

Therefore, in that frame of globalization, the results were high rates of growth, the highest rates of growth on a global level that have ever been seen in the history of humankind and in the history of capitalism. More or less we can say that we had full employment with very quick and large social moving up and with reducing inequalities in many cases or at least not enhancing inequalities.

Well, what we are being told today is that this pattern of globalization was irrational. And it has been substituted by the one which we have now – with lower rates of growth, half of the rates of the former pattern (over the same time period of 30 years); we have therefore shifted from full employment with upward mobility to massive and growing unemployment, precarity, informality etc., to all forms of pauperization and growing inequalities. And we are being told that this is all perfectly rational. The other pattern is now supposed to be irrational.

Now the difference between the first and the second pattern is that in the first the rates of return on capital were between four and eight per cent, and that the rates of return on capital for the second one are between 8 and 16 percent – the double. So the rationality is synonymous for whom the pattern of globalization is bringing benefit. If it is bringing benefit to capital, even at the expense of all peoples, it is supposed to be rational. If it is bringing benefit to all people and less to capital, it is considered irrational. Now, that pattern which I described as the Bandung pattern has a variety of dimensions, positive and negative dimensions, that I cannot elaborate here in detail. But this page is turned. And now, what is new is precisely this new pattern of globalization which means lower growth, growing pauperization and growing inequality – very rational, of course. This pattern is potentially the most criminal pattern of globalization, because it creates the conditions for permanent war. Including, of course, permanent terrorism, if you want, and, among many other ugly things, permanent racism, permanent internal wars, permanent stupidity. But, above all, it creates permanent war.

The New Imperialism

I call this new pattern “imperialist globalization” – not post-imperial, not post-imperialist. It is even more imperialist than the previous pattern, but with a number of characteristics which are specific. First, “imperialist” throughout the ages until WWII was to be conjugated in plural

– there was no single imperialism, but imperialist states fighting one another almost continuously. This pattern was replaced by what I call the collective imperialism of the triad: United States, Western Europe and Japan, to simplify. Now why? Without going into the details of an analysis of the internal changes within capitalism that have led to the new pattern, obviously the collective economic tools for managing this global capitalist system – which are WTO, which is the most important one, IMF, Worldbank etc. – are important actors here. And so are the political tools, in particular NATO replacing the UN. And NATO primarily is a military tool, and not by pure chance. This also means – well, that is a discussion for the Europeans here – a European project which is reduced to become the European dimension of the Atlantic project, that is a Europe with a capital in Washington, D.C. I call this collective imperialism “apartheid on a global scale”, because of its results on Asia, Africa and Latin America. It is necessarily associated with the criminal, demential and therefore criminal plan of military control of the planet.

Any demential plan – Hitler’s plan was demential, it was criminal, because it was demential, it failed, of course, it’s condemned to failure, but at what price? This one is the consequence of the military control of the planet. And it is this what is of utmost importance, that in the struggle against that pattern of globalization the demand for prohibiting, to start with, nuclear weapons, and, to start with, not the hypocritical discourse against proliferation here and there, which is not good by itself of course, but attacking those who are the real menace to humankind and who happen to be basically the most powerful – and particularly the U.S. with the arrogant and cynical declaration that they will use that weapon if they feel it’s useful from their point of view.

Now this pattern is attempting something which is, I would repeat, totally demential and irrational and this is why it leads to those irrational consequences from a human point of view . The principle that I defend – which I call “de-linking”, but perhaps the word is not good, because many people imagine that it means autarchy and moving out of this planet, the earth, and shifting to another planet. What I mean by “delinking” is submitting the participation in globalization, to the priorities of social progressive change.

That concept is exactly the opposite of the concept which is running the world today, which is the so called “adjustment”. Adjustment is meant basically as the adjustment of the weakest nations to the needs of deployment of the global system as it is presently. It is basically the adjustment of the South to the needs of the North pursuing its own present pattern of development at the expense of the others. But it is also adjustment of Europe to the needs of the US pursuing its project of global control. It is never understood as the adjustment of the

North to the needs of another pattern of global development favourable to the South . It is not even the adjustment of the US to the needs of others including Europe. Nobody asks the US to adjust and reduce their enormous deficit!! That is the adjustment of the weakest, destroying the possibility precisely of catching up – I do neither like the word nor the content – I mean here of developing with a positive social content to the benefit of their own people. I suggest to reverse the priorities. That can be illustrated with the example of agriculture or peasant societies. Peasant societies – let us remember- account for three billion people, almost half of humankind. Yet when you speak of special rights for the defense of those people, you are told: “Oh, but the principles, the values, which are included in the concept of human rights, cover everybody and therefore cover the peasants, too.” I answer:” should we, therefore, as well have no special discussion on the rights of women, because after all, they are also “only” half of humankind, and since they are human beings, there is no need to speak of them specifically”!! I do not think so.

Well, what is on the agenda today in the present pattern of globalization? It is what we could call enclosures on a global level. That is what happened in England first and then developed in Western Europe, covering more or less the whole continent of Europe gradually. The enclosures destroyed the peasant societies. Well, you may tell me, but this pattern has led to an efficient pattern of urbanization in the developed West. However, it is obvious that it cannot do the same in the South today, because in order to be competitive –and you are asked to be competitive ! – you have to develop modern technologies which cannot absorb the surplus of peasant societies. Their destruction leads to another pattern of urbanization – slums, and nothing else. It is a genocide on a global scale. For this reason, I called it apartheid on a global scale .¹

Therefore, and this is my conclusion, we have to think of an alternative, or, more precisely, alternatives with all the nuances. Not a blueprint, not the same for everybody, as the World Bank and economic liberalism suggests: the same blueprint for everybody. We need another pattern of globalization, which would be negotiated, again, in new conditions, which will mean, among others, four things. First, certainly another Europe, de-linking itself from this liberalism and Atlanticism. I do not think that is on the agenda of what will happen in the coming months or years in Europe, but it is necessary. Second, for China, market socialist understood as a stage towards another pattern of society and not just a stage towards so called normal capitalism, Third, rebuilding the solidarity of the peoples of the South, which cannot be a remake of Bandung, because there are no remakes in history, but the same fundamental principles need to be reaffirmed. And fourth, a lot of reforms and changes for

¹ See Samir Amin, Der kapitalistische Genozid, in: „Blätter“, 7/2004, pp. 817-824.

the democratization of the institutional pattern of international life, the UN and others, which is far from being the caricature of projects proposed by Kofi Annan here and there, but which would also mean to reestablish the UN – and not NATO – as the political tool for running an acceptable, human pattern of globalization.