



Maldevelopment: Anatomy of a Global Failure by Samir Amin
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economy, symbolized by declining oil prices in the 1980s, and notes that this volatility affects the incomes of some jùjú musicians negatively.

Although inequality exists between high- and low-status bands or even captains within the bands, musicians or band boys, Waterman does not agree that jùjú has encouraged inequality. He concludes, on the contrary, that despite the hardening of class boundaries, “talking drummers, the artisans closest to the wellsprings of Yoruba identity,” are still feared for their ability to unmask the corrupt, and to chasten and dethrone irresponsible leaders through surrogate speech and metaphor (p. 228).

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ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

Samir Amin. *Maldevelopment: Anatomy of a Global Failure*. London: Zed Books. Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1990. 244 pp. Index. \$55. Cloth. \$17.50. Paper.

This is an extraordinarily hard book to review in the space allowed, but readers definitely should be aware of this very important work. The difficulties arise from several sources. Among the more minor is the appallingly bad copy-editing of the text resulting in many detectable typos, and no doubt more that one does not realize are there. The latter is possible because the translation from the original French (by Michael Wolfers) is poor. Samir Amin is very eloquent in French; this translation often seems to stick too close to the original word choice and order with unfortunate consequences in English. Further, the book reads as though much of it was constructed by patching together bits and pieces written for other purposes, without the benefit of coherent editing. Thus there are some jarring transitions, even within chapters, and repetitions that could not be deliberate (e.g., of the neat phrase “thirty years war (1914-45)” between Germany and the U.S. for succession to Britain, attributed to Arrighi both times used—although only one of them made it to the index).

However, the two major difficulties for a short review are quite different. First, the book is not an academic study in the mainstream North American sense. It is a sustained polemic, and uses the rhetorical devices of polemics very freely. For example, Samir Amin is very fond of the rhetorical question. This is useful when it briefly summarizes unanswered questions or foreshadows later discussion. It is much less satisfactory when used as a substitute for argument and evidence, as it is frequently by Amin. The trick is to pose a question that, from context

and phrasing, clearly expects the answer "A," and then rapidly continue assuming readers have agreed the answer is "A," without any concession to the distinct possibility that much evidence may exist for "not A." A related device heavily employed by Amin is the strong assertion wholly unbuttressed by evidence. Second, Amin has a very distinct world view, and one to which many North American readers will be only vaguely familiar, but Amin's discussion is very much within his world view, which he assumes readers either also hold, or at least understand. Although he makes various disparaging remarks about both "Western liberal orthodoxy" and "vulgar Marxism," Amin never in this book systematically presents his views from first principles, or confronts them with alternative approaches in an organized manner.

These difficulties are unfortunate because Amin is always stimulating (his ideas are often both original and to some degree plausible) and especially because his ideas are very influential in Africa among students and intellectuals. To summarize his content in the space available is impossible, particularly because in several chapters he indulges in long digressions (e.g., on Arab history) which are clearly, in his view, an important part of the argument he is making (by the process of confronting conventional wisdom with "actual history"). However, the duty of a reviewer includes some attempt to indicate the book's contents. There are eight chapters, but in many cases the chapter titles are highly misleading (e.g., chapter 2 is titled "The Decade of Drift: 1975-1985," but the first six pages deal with the Bandung plan and its failure from 1953 to 1973). Amin's stated aim is to provide an analysis of the failure of development, especially in Africa, "from a political standpoint" (p. 1). For Amin, this requires investigating three facets of "social reality": the economic, the political, and the cultural. In his view, with respect to the theory to use to do this, conventional economics (for short run questions) and historical materialism (for deeper analysis) work well on the economic side; on the political side, the field "lies virtually fallow," and "the cultural dimension...is an even more complex mystery" (p. 2). Of course, this does not prevent Amin from discussing them. His first four chapters examine various dimensions of the crisis of development, and his latter four suggest some responses to the crisis. He sees these suggestions explicitly as a "thesis with a political basis" (p. 4).

Amin sees the crisis in development as arising from an inevitable contradiction of "actually existing capitalism," namely that it generates increasing polarization both between states and within the states of the periphery. This is explosive, and capitalist expansion cannot overcome this tendency (although within the countries of the capitalist centers problems of conflict between classes have been largely overcome, resulting in stable and more equal income distribution

than in the periphery). Thus, attempts in the Third World to develop within the existing system under national bourgeoisie leadership are bound to founder as a result of increasing internal income inequality and the process of "recompradorization" in Africa, in particular, resulting from U.S. reaction (with European acquiescence) to calls for a New International Economic Order and the oil price increase of 1973. The only hope is for a genuinely "national popular" response which leads to delinking from the world system. Delinking does not mean autarky but the "subjection of external relations to the logic of internal development," the latter requiring freeing relative prices and incomes from the logic of world prices and basing them instead on coordinated agricultural and industrial growth, each serving to support the other, each country defining for itself a "law of value of national application."

The discussion includes extended examination of the evolution of international relations and power structures and explanations for why things went wrong (or occasionally right) in the past. This can produce extraordinary juxtapositions—for example, of Nasser's Egypt and South Korea. As for the prospects for the future and the realization of the required national popular revolutions and delinking, Amin sees a possibility. It requires an evolution of the world system toward polycentrism, with not just competing great powers (Amin predicts five—the U.S., Europe, Russia, China, and Japan) but also "new forces organized at various regional levels of the Third World (Latin America, the Arab world, Africa, India and South-East Asia)." Earlier he had labeled African unity the "only possible response to the challenges of our age." Amin identifies some trends in Europe and elsewhere which he sees as encouraging in terms of the possibility of what he calls the "only acceptable perspective" happening.

An obvious criticism of Amin from one who is not a true believer is that often what he writes seems internally contradictory if not positively utopian. For example, he repeatedly calls for democracy and respect for diversity, and yet repeatedly also declares the necessity of a strong state to impose the "rationality of internal economic options" rather than "world capitalist rationality," and this within much larger, and genuinely socialist, regional or continent-wide groupings in Africa rather than the current inheritances of colonialism and neocolonialism. Well, yes, but a) does not this ignore much "actual history" of the last few years in terms of what states are able to impose on their economies, and b) how do we get from here to there? Nevertheless, all those interested in the future of African (and world) development will find things to stimulate them in this book, and it may well make conversations with African colleagues and students more mutually intelligible. But do not expect a quick read; and pray for the day when

someone will insist on a good translator and an excellent editor working together on one of Amin's books carefully and slowly.

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Donald Rothchild, ed. *Ghana: The Political Economy of Recovery*. Boulder, Colorado and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991. xvi+285 pp. Tables, Index, Bibliography, Map. \$16.95. Paper.

Ghana has attained notoriety as the success or test case for the IMF/World Bank type of economic recovery program in Africa. The short-term indicators of the country's economic recovery are impressive. However, opinions vary on both the long-term economic prospects and the sociopolitical consequences. The book under review is the edited proceedings of one of several conferences organized to assess the recovery of Ghana under the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) (current Ghana government led by Rawlings).

This edited volume is significant for collating in a single source opinions and some evidence about the effects of the PNDC's program. The issues covered are varied, ranging from how the PNDC has been transformed and sought to legitimize itself, to education reform, export diversification, privatization, and how organized labor has responded to the austere economic agenda of the Rawlings' regime.

The introduction by Donald Rothchild merits comment because it raises a number of useful issues and questions for gauging the impact of Ghana's contemporary socioeconomic policies. Some of the important concerns touched on include the sustainability and the political ramifications of the IMF/World Bank-inspired economic solutions to the country's decayed economic infrastructure.

Among the flaws in the book is the failure to distinguish the Economic Recovery Program (ERP) from the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). Both are treated as the same thing. Thus the reader is unsure of when the ERP turned into SAP. Two other issues are even more problematic. Assuming the inevitability of the policies recommended by the IMF/World Bank, both the protagonists and critics of their policies fail to explain precisely how the PNDC adopted them. The theoretical and practical underpinnings of these policies are also neglected or simply assumed away. A visibly missing issue is the debt implications for future Ghanaian generations. For example, one is (mis)led into believing that concessionary loan terms from the IMF/World Bank and OECD nations will mitigate future debt burdens. There is also the incomplete exploration of how Rawlings' charisma and personal probity may have contributed to Ghana's implementation of ERP/SAP