**De-Linking from Destruction**

By Farwa Sial

The period since the 7th of October 2023 has starkly revealed the constraints of alignment with the US-led Western imperial order. On one hand, every avenue of dissent against the ongoing genocide has been met with punishment; on the other, the genocide has escalated into a regional and global conflict. Simultaneously, G-7 countries, beyond superficial gestures of deterrence, have wielded their economic arsenal of sanctions, penalties, and state-sponsored incarcerations, against both States and individuals.

Now more than ever, integration into such a system lacks pragmatic viability, even for the staunch believers of ‘pragmatism’ and so-called ‘realism’. The active pursuit of delinking has become an essential strategy for survival in the Global South and a prerequisite for revitalising the Third World development project ([Amin 2004](https://ia801501.us.archive.org/31/items/the-liberal-virus-permanent-war-and-the-americanization-of-the-world-samir-amin/The%20Liberal%20Virus%20Permanent%20War%20and%20the%20Americanization%20of%20the%20World%20%28Samir%20Amin%29%20%28z-lib.org%29.pdf)). Unless development is reconceptualised as a national liberation project rooted in delinking, the fate of the majority world—and indeed planetary survival—will remain one of abject misery and potential extinction.

**What Does It Mean to De-link?**

De-linking, as a mechanism against an anti-imperialist global order, has diverse intellectual origins worldwide (for Arab perspectives, see [Ajl 2020](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03056244.2020.1837095); for African contributions, see [Chukwudinma](https://roape.net/2019/08/01/towards-a-full-understanding-of-walter-rodney/) on Rodney and : [Latin America](https://thetricontinental.org/dossier-how-latin-america-can-delink-from-imperialism/)). As an organic response to imperialism, numerous writers and activists have championed a new order that disengages from imperialist wars, genocides, and economic coercion. Every militant struggle for national liberation against imperialism, embodies a vision of a future founded on an autonomous development model.

Among the many intellectual contributions, Samir Amin’s work on delinking remains one of the most prominent and influential, valued for its clarity, consistency, and nuance. Amin defined delinking as ‘the refusal to submit national-development strategy to the imperatives of “globalization”’ (Amin, 1987, p. 435). Importantly, for Amin, delinking was not synonymous with autarky, as delinking

‘does not consist in rejecting relations with the outside, but in submitting the external relation to the logic of initial development that is independent from them’ (Amin 1987, 435).

This implies that, as a national development project, delinking is not inherently incompatible with the external or global logics of capital accumulation; rather, it operates selectively. While it is not socialism, it holds the potential to pave the way towards socialism. In this context, China’s remarkable global ascendance has been theorised as ‘[regulated peripheral integration’](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03056244.2020.1837094), wherein integration into the World capitalist economy is strategically managed. This model, though not universally replicable, offers valuable lessons for Global South countries.

However, even with selective engagement in external relations, ensuring the agency of peripheral nations and advancing the quest for national liberation has proven exceptionally challenging. [Patnaik (2015)](https://www.networkideas.org/news-analysis/2015/09/de-linking-domestic-reaction/) has argued that genuine delinking has yet to occur:

‘It was never left to the third world countries to work out their own class contradictions and class antagonisms. Imperialism, inevitably, entered everywhere; it intervened everywhere.’

**Resistance to De-link**

Historically, severing economic ties with the imperial core has consistently proven to be a violent and arduous process. Yet, it remains essential to end the ongoing cycles of suffering, violence, and premature deaths in the majority world—a phenomenon Ali Kadri terms the “accumulation of waste”. The right to self-defence against colonialism, as enshrined in [Article 51](https://legal.un.org/repertory/art51.shtml) of the United Nations Charter, underscores the reality that the colonised often have no alternative means of liberation beyond resorting to armed struggle. Consequently, any possibility of delinking is inherently rooted in the broader struggle for national liberation and resistance.

In light of the escalating brutality and impunity surrounding the Palestinian genocide, many now recognise the necessity of resistance by the colonised. However, this recognition is far from universal. Western leftists, for instance, have consistently downplayed the necessity of resistance, often focusing instead on the internal contradictions of the most marginalised nation-states, as their defining characteristic.

Such perspectives are rooted in an apolitical, ahistorical, and ultimately misconstrued “bogey-man” analysis that obscures a fundamental understanding of resistance. Liberation struggles cannot emerge as pure or absolute entities isolated from the internal contradictions of nation-states. These contradictions are themselves a synthesis of the imperialist order and a reflection of what is possible, within the constrained framework of national unity, which is perpetually under siege.

This flawed logic, which overlooks the political and material consequences of imperialism, often reduces the agency of colonised nations to mere authoritarian despotism (see for example on [Libya](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09692290.2022.2028180)). Moreover, dismissing any expression of agency as resistance is not only politically unfavourable to most Western analyses but is also frequently deemed culturally inferior. As a result, vast regions of the World are simplistically characterised as a "black hole" of Islamic fundamentalism, overshadowed by the spectre of artificially constructed sectarian strife.

Such reductionist narratives obscure the reality of organic struggles against the US-led imperial order, notably those led by Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, which have increasingly converged. Western international law, mainstream academic and media narratives alike often fixate on the supposed "rogue" nature of certain nation-states, overlooking the broader context of imperialism’s pervasive harm.

Critiquing the framing of the Iranian Revolution, its aftermath, and its current status within the Eurocentric episteme, [Farnia](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19436149.2023.2182053) calls for reversing the unthinkability of Iran in Western academia. She advocates for recentring Iran’s role as a pivotal site of Third World struggles. Similarly, in contrast to mainstream approval, acquiesce and misconstruction of sanctions, [Doutaghi](https://asre-iranian.ir/Newspaper/item/184531), and others have emphasized the inherent illegitimacy of sanctions in facilitating the ongoing genocide in Gaza as well as sanctions on Iran and other states to weaken their capacity for resistance.

Focusing on US campaigns in Syria, [Donovan Higgins](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/19436149.2023.2199487), highlights the issue of common Eurocentric assumptions, arguing that “war” and “regime change” are interchangeable terms, a conflation that fails to acknowledge that US-led imperialism maintains both maximal and minimal aims in any given covert war. Similarly, [Pierre](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/00086495.2024.2378658?needAccess=true) critiques the impunity surrounding the repetitive invasions of Haiti by US forces, linking this to manufactured consent and racist tropes portraying Haitians as incapable of self-governance.

As history demonstrates, no regime in the Global South is purely authoritarian or purely democratic. Instead, these regimes represent a series of context-specific negotiated compromises with the [imperial powers at play.](https://www.plutobooks.com/9780745347868/revolutionary-movements-in-africa/) This reality is a fundamental reflection of what dependency truly entails, yet it is often overlooked in Eurocentric analyses - even in ostensibly critical perspectives. For instance, the growing appeal of heterodox economics frequently separates ‘economic’ and ‘political’ dependency, prioritising the former, while abstracting the latter.

In contrast, [Patnaik and Patnaik](https://monthlyreview.org/product/capital_and_imperialism/) (2021) present a more holistic analysis. They identify the drivers of capital flight from the Global South under neoliberalism as ‘spontaneous’ obstacles to delinking. At the same time, they emphasise that the suppression of Third World struggles is neither merely a matter of spontaneous obstacles nor an abstract process. As they succinctly state:

"But if spontaneity fails, then the CIA steps in."

In summary, the overwhelming tendency of Western intellectual discourse to prevaricate actively discourages meaningful praxis, such as that emerging in the rise of [People’s Tribunals](https://monthlyreview.org/2019/05/01/decolonizing-justice-in-tunisia/). In contrast, delinking as a resistance agenda reorients the abstract ideals of internationalist solidarity in the West towards the tangible realisation of national and international liberation. Organisations such as [Palestine Action](https://palestineaction.org/) demonstrate how direct action in the West disrupts and [dissipates](https://palestineaction.org/barclays-divest-elbit/?link_id=0&can_id=11271fbdec9f241ce67ae9f1f8883db1&source=email-elbit-dropped-by-barclays-and-lobby-firm-apco&email_referrer=email_2515883&email_subject=elbit-dropped-by-barclays-and-lobby-firm-apco) the value-chains sustaining genocide. Such efforts complement consumption-focused movements like BDS and citizen-led national boycotts, empowering individuals to exercise genuine democratic agency and hold national leadership accountable.

The intrinsic connection between international and national struggles underscores the importance of organised and coherent anti-imperialist movements as a foundation for broader resistance. Similarly, contemporary struggles in the Global South to establish collective frameworks necessitate a focus on national liberation, fully aware of their entanglement with imperial structures.