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Forthcoming in the special issue: 50 Year Anniversary of  
the Call for a New International Economic Order

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## New international economic order at 50: a reflection on the vision through Samir Amin's lens

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### ABSTRACT

As part of the special issue commemorating the 50th anniversary of the New International Economic Order (NIEO), this article critically analyses its significance, achievements, and setbacks from the perspective of Samir Amin. Amin, a prominent scholar known for his ideas on the role of global capitalism in the underdevelopment of the Global South, significantly influenced the formation of NIEO. The continued extraction of raw materials by the developed world along with the enduring legacy of colonialism and other exploitative global strategies has hindered the development of the Global South. He called for a "delinking" strategy to rectify these disparities and promote development in the Global South. We show Amin's continued influence on African developmental thought and its potential to revitalise and advance the vision of NIEO in Africa.

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## Introduction

In 2022, elevated fiscal deficits and public debt levels, together with the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war in Ukraine, and global monetary policy tightening, triggered a decline in international investor confidence in Ghana, resulting in the loss of international market access (Medina 2024, para 1).

That year, Ghana attracted attention in the media and political landscape because of the pressing economic challenges highlighted in the above quote, which brought the country to a standstill. These issues sparked heated debates, with some demanding the Finance Minister's resignation, leading to parliamentary inquiry into his accountability (Mensah 2022; Reuters 2023). Various activist groups have organised protests to demand that the government address the country's economic hardships (Adattor 2023). However, Ghana is not the only country struggling to effectively address the economic needs of its people or facing increased inequality compared to developed countries (UNDP 2024). This can be attributed to the history of undue exploitation perpetuated by global capitalist development practices (Amin 1972a; Amin 1976b).

In this context, on the 50th anniversary of the New International Economic Order (NIEO), it is important to reflect on the progress made in attaining development equality and the ongoing efforts required to establish a more just and equitable global economic order. The NIEO was

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founded on principles such as enhancing the economic agency of developing nations, ensuring fair-trade practices, and addressing structural barriers that hinder economic development (Amin 1982, 1979b; UN 1974b, 1974a). While there is a considerable amount of literature on NIEO failures (Amin 1982, 1979b), renewed calls from Global South countries in 2022 by the UN underscore that the intended issues of NIEO remain unresolved (Nicholls 2024; Progressive International 2023; Sneyd 2023). In addition, the emergence of China as a global actor and its influence on Africa over the past few decades has introduced a further dimension to Africa's developmental complexities (Brautigam 2011; Brown 2014) and deserves further scholarly scrutiny. These calls have given fresh impetus to scholars interested in economic relationships and the global order to examine the spirit of the NIEO in contemporary times (Gilbert 2024; Moghaddam and Ramezani 2023; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021; Nicholls 2019; Oyaró 2024).

Despite a surge in scholarly interest in NIEO, including conferences and special issues dedicated to commemorating its 50th anniversary, little emphasis has been placed on the contributions of influential thinkers, such as Samir Amin, whose ideas played a crucial role in its formation. This oversight is significant because these ideas remain highly relevant to contemporary developmental debates. Amin may not have received significant attention because he was also a critic of NIEO. Amin's ideas have garnered attention in Marxism, neo-Marxism, material history, and decolonisation studies (Bagchi 2020; Bhuiyan and Ghose 2019; Emmanuel 2020; Folsom 1985; Gumede 2023; Hensman 1976; Kvangraven 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021), and many tributes after his passing in 2018 were published by the *African Review of Political Economy*.<sup>1</sup> Previous studies that have examined his work have often focused primarily on the political and economic aspects, demonstrating a lack of engagement from scholars in other fields. We argue that Amin's scholarship, with its distinct focus on macro-level development and the interplay among various development actors, warrants greater attention in development studies because these factors profoundly shape the development space.

We employ his "delinking strategy" as a framework to untangle the Global South from being bound by global economic structures with a particular focus on Africa. According to Amin, this delinking strategy rejects Western capitalism. Instead, it advocates an alternative development path that emerges from the national interests of the concerned countries (Amin 1987).

We employ a discourse analysis that draws insights from Amin's writings, including articles, books, book chapters, interviews, opinion pieces, and critiques of his ideas before the NIEO Declaration and the subsequent debates that unfolded after the Declaration. We use discourse analysis to examine his influence on contemporary African debates.

This article contributes to the international development literature. Efforts to decolonise development often emphasize cultural and indigenous knowledge. However, little attention has been paid to the impact of macro-development schemes at the local level. As Engel and Mabefam discussed in the introduction to this special issue, this issue is central to the discourse. This article emphasizes the need for development scholars and practitioners to examine how macro-development schemes interact with local development. Macro-development schemes and local development efforts are interconnected and do not function in isolation.

Furthermore, we do not fully understand the development dynamics, which requires further academic analysis. We start with the premise that, although Amin's concept of delinking was considered radical and not fully pursued, the alternative path failed to produce the expected results (Amin 1982; Hickel 2017). This demonstrates that embedding emerging economies into existing structures has not been promised by silver bullet proponents and that innovative and unconventional approaches are required. In summary, this article highlights the importance of radical thinking in development discourse, starting with Amin.

In terms of structure, we begin with a brief history of the NIEO. This is followed by Amin's ideological positioning and how it shaped his approach to unpacking the global development order and his proposed delinking strategy to foster development. We examined the aftermath of the NIEO Declaration. The subsequent section focuses on Amin's ideological influence on political actors

and intellectuals. The conclusion reflects on Amin's contributions and challenges and how his ideas continue to shape contemporary intellectuals and political leaders through avenues such as the Third World Forum, World Forum for Alternatives, and Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA).

### ***Historicising and contextualising NIEO***

In the latter part of the nineteenth century and at the onset of the twentieth century, colonised nations were confronted with two crucial challenges: political and economic decolonisation. Addressing these two challenges sparked debates, particularly in Africa, where some argued that it was not feasible to address both questions simultaneously and advocated tackling them individually. This perspective held that political independence should be prioritised, assuming that economic and social development would naturally follow an approach that was particularly emblematic of Kwame Nkrumah, a political theorist and Ghana's independence leader (Getachew 2019). Despite gaining political independence, Africa continues to grapple with contradictions as it seems to be the region with the highest concentration of underdeveloped countries (Amin 1979b, 1976c; Rodney 2018). We assert that this is partly because the economic question has not yet been fully addressed despite many attempts.

Economic questions have been the subject of ongoing internal and external debates. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a strong focus on addressing the economic question, leading to the formation of groups such as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which aimed to negotiate with global institutions and countries holding wealth and power and redistribute it to newly emerged independent states (Amin 1976c). One notable outcome of these movements was the NIEO, proposed at the Algiers Conference of the NAM (Cox 1979); however, it was the product of sustained efforts that predated independence for some states. Engel and Mabefam summarised the history of this special issue. The 1974 Declaration of the NIEO represents a crucial milestone in geopolitics, particularly in pursuing developmental justice for Global South countries. The NIEO intended to correct the existing imbalance in global economic relations and promote a more equitable approach to development (UN 1974b, 1974a). It proposed reforms, such as fairer terms of trade, technology transfer, and increased development assistance for developing nations (Amin 1979a, 1976c; UN 1974a). The NIEO aimed to ensure that economic development became a central global concern, emphasizing the significance of addressing economic challenges alongside political independence.

Despite its initial promise, the NIEO faced significant resistance and challenges in implementation, mainly due to opposition from powerful global actors and geopolitical interests (Amin 1982; Edwards 1983; Progressive International 2023; Sneyd 2023). While the NIEO Declaration loosely united Global South countries, with some Western countries acting in solidarity, some powerful states and global institutions felt that this was a direct attack on them and refused to engage with the substantial issues raised and direct them toward redress (Amin 1979a, 1979b; Edwards 1983). Amin summarised the situation effectively by asserting that the West collectively rejected the NIEO and failed or twisted it to continue its power and dominance (Amin 1982). Part of the sustained efforts to resist NIEO was a deliberate attempt to disintegrate the unity of the Global South through fragmentation and interference in different countries, which contrasted with what NIEO had proposed (Amin 1979a). Unity in the Global South remains an issue.

### ***Amin and his ideological positioning***

To understand Amin and his contribution to NIEO, we must begin with the rise of dependency theory and the debates between Amin, Raúl Prebisch, a development economist from Argentina, and African liberals, as they have played crucial roles in shaping our understanding of the economic relationship between the Global North and South. Dependency theory critically examines the economic imbalances experienced by Global South countries and explores pathways to reduce their

dependence on the Global North (Amin 1987, 1982, 1979b; Prebisch 1962, 2016, 1981). The two scholars had differing opinions on the best approach to address this issue. Prebisch posited that countries in the Global South could enact transformative change from within the prevailing system, drawing on his insights gained from his leadership roles in two United Nations bodies: the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and, subsequently, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (Hannah and Scott 2017; Margulis 2017), whereas Amin (1987) advocated delinking from the exploitative global economic order. Amin argued that working within the system would not bring about substantial change, as these systems are resistant to reform and any changes made are often superficial. As conceptualised by Amin, this delinking strategy was not fully embraced by the architects of NIEO; nevertheless, elements of Amin's ideas are evident. To fully appreciate Amin's contribution to NIEO, it is essential to recognise that his comprehensive scholarship constituted an intellectual foundation that elucidated the issues on which NIEO was predicted (Amin 1972a, 1974, 1972b). According to Cox (1979), Amin was part of a Third World Forum network that held conversations to shape NIEO. In particular, Amin opposed his colleagues, who adhered to liberal economic thought, arguing from a historical Marxist perspective that if the NIEO were to replicate Western capitalism, it would likely lead to the emergence of a peripheral bourgeoisie, thereby ushering in a new phase of imperialism (Amin 1977; Cox 1979). Essentially, Amin advocated that NIEO pursue a path of self-reliance by reducing raw material exports to the West by prioritising value addition through local processing, if necessary (Amin 1977). This view or contribution has been articulated in the action program establishing the NIEO on the fundamental problems of raw materials and industrialisation (UN 1974b, 5).

Scholars' positionality also has a significant impact on their theoretical approaches and scholarship. Numerous scholars have considered Amin a Marxist (Bagchi 2020; Kvangraven 2019). However, Amin rejects this ideological classification and refers to him as a historical materialist (Amin 2014, 2011b; Folson 1985). He dismissed the Marxist label because of its Eurocentric nature, opting instead to transcend the European perspective and theories with a more eclectic lens, which many Marxists had failed to do (Amin 1989, 2014). Furthermore, his scholarship extends beyond the "present" as he integrates historical, empirical, and contemporary perspectives, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the organisation of development and how such organisation has created an unequal relationship between the Global South and North (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021). Some of these ideas are contained in his groundbreaking works, *Unequal Development* (Amin 1976b) and *Eurocentrism* (Amin 1989).

Amin had an eclectic career in three professions: academic/researcher, practitioner, and activist. Arguably, he was successful in all. Amin's political awakening was noticeable quite early, as he drew inspiration from his family, school, and a time marked by world events, such as world wars and their aftermath, which divided the world into two blocs: communist and capitalist (Bagchi 2020). Amin was well-rounded in his academic achievements; he had academic qualifications in political economy, economics, and mathematics.

Amin's background influenced his scholarship, practices, and activism. Economic questions became the central focus of his research. His doctoral thesis and several other works focused on economic questions. This led to his theorisation of centre-periphery analysis, commonly known as dependency theory, based on the division of labour. It explains the organisation of capitalism and positions nations in a hierarchical model. Amin pursued his professional endeavours in various locations, including France, Egypt, and Senegal (Kvangraven 2022, 2019). However, he spent considerable time working in Senegal. Geographic knowledge enabled him to see economic development from both the centre and the periphery.

A distinguishing aspect of Amin's scholarship is accessibility. His work is available in multiple languages, initially in French but later translated into English to reach a wider audience. There are two distinct perspectives on his work: those who highly admire Amin's work (Emmanuel 2020; Gumede 2022, 2023; Kvangraven, Styve, and Kufakurinani 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021) and those who vehemently reject it (Smith 1980, 1982; Smith and Sender 1983). There appears to be no

middle ground, likely due to his work's challenge to mainstream economic ideas and our understanding of the relationship between states. As demonstrated in the next section, Amin is among the rare groups of scholars who witnessed the contested nature of his ideas and were able to defend them. For instance, he was accused of being a socialist for challenging the capitalist mode of production and the corresponding deterioration in the lives of people in the periphery that came with it, and a radical for his delinking strategy. This accusation led him to expand on what he exactly meant by delinking in his 1983 article "Notes on delinking". We first focus on Amin's understanding of development:

### ***Problematising global order through the lens of Amin***

The emergence of the unjust international economic order is a subject that has intrigued scholars, including those advocating for the NIEO. Lewis (Lewis 1982; Lewis 2015) argued that the global economic order stems from the historical division of the world into industrialised and agricultural nations. Lewis argues that the existing economic order can be traced back to the Industrial Revolution, during which international trade was primarily shaped by geographical factors rather than structural considerations. The Industrial Revolution and the emergence of railway transportation spurred economic growth and created higher demand for raw materials and markets (Lewis 1982; Lewis 2015). As a result of this increased demand, there was a search for new markets that eventually led to the colonisation of post-colonial states. During the colonial period, the colonisers exploited the raw materials of these colonies for their advantage, further cementing the unjust nature of the international economic order.

Amin held similar views, but added that African economies during their formative stages were incorporated into the mercantilist stage of the nascent capitalist system, steering them away from self-sustaining development trajectories (Amin 1976a). Therefore, Amin attributes the underdevelopment of the Global South to the exploitative mechanisms of global capitalism (Amin 2011b, 1987, 1989, 1985, 1982, 1972a). He argues that global capitalism created an inherently inequitable economic framework, placing the Global South at a systematic disadvantage compared to the Global North. Amin identified persistent resource extraction by the developed world, the long-lasting effects of colonialism, and strategic mechanisms of exploitation as significant obstacles to the progress of the Global South (Amin 2011b, 1987, 1989, 1985, 1982). To illustrate, Amin noted that African economies were divided into three macro-regions: Africa of the colonial economy, concession-owning companies, and labour reserves (Amin 1972b; Gumede 2022, 2023) to support the insatiable capital appetite in the West.

Amin was not alone in this critical theorisation; however, he distinguished himself from his colleagues in unpacking this issue, and his contributions warrant scholarly enquiry. This assertion is not unique. For instance, Aji (2021) articulates a similar point in a paper highlighting Amin's contributions. His article, entitled: *The Hidden Legacy of Samir Amin: Delinking's Ecological Foundation*, contended that "Amin has justly come to be the banner-holder for this notion, although, in fact, he developed his thinking in league with a layer of kindred intellectuals" (Aji 2021, 83).

A critical analysis of the above arrangements highlights the exploitation of all sorts; none of the arrangements triggered independent development in these countries. Instead, they sought to truncate development trajectories and rob countries and incorporate them into a global economic model that places minimal value or price on Southern labour, resources, intellect, and skills, among others (Amin 1974, 1989). This structure led to an unbalanced relationship, in which development in resource-accumulating countries was stronger than that in resource-extracting countries (Amin 1976a; Amin 1985, 1972b).

The dire circumstances of World War II prompted the development of a new framework for fostering economic stability and cooperation. During this critical period, the Bretton Woods Conference took place in 1944, which would play a pivotal role in shaping the post-World War II economic order. It established two vital institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. These

organisations formed the bedrock for global economic recovery. The Bretton Woods system implemented fixed exchange rates linked to the US dollar supported by gold reserves. This mechanism was intended to stabilise rates and aid postwar recovery efforts. However, these institutions support mainstream economic development by exploiting peripheral economies. This was the main reason the NIEO sought an overhaul.

However, neither the institutions nor the Global North countries were willing to readjust the global economic order in the ways the NIEO proposed (Amin 1982). Their refusal to make these changes helped maintain much of the global order in the same manner as during colonisation and the post-colonial era, particularly from an African perspective. These institutions prefer to undermine African agencies, thereby dictating the structural and operational frameworks of African economies. An example of this can be observed in the structural adjustment programs of the 1970s and their current enduring legacies to the present day. This is the delinking strategy that Amin frowned upon. In addition, as indicated in the introduction, China has emerged as a significant global actor in Africa over the past few decades. China's engagement with Africa has raised concerns among critics, who argue that it constitutes a form of neocolonialism, a debt trap, and a mechanism for the extraction of African resources (Babatunde 2013; Bo, Lawal, and Sakariyahu 2024; Cheung et al. 2012; Moody 2011). These implications are complex in terms of delinking strategies. However, supporters of China's engagement in Africa argue that its emergence has afforded African countries greater agency in their choices, moving beyond exclusive reliance on Western nations for engagement, resulting in mutual benefits (el-Shafei and Metawe 2022; Hinga, Jun, and Yiguan 2013). Despite China's complexity in Africa, we posit that it could align with delinking strategies when emphasizing inherent South-South relationships, which are also core values of the NIEO. However, such an engagement also deserves critical academic scrutiny, which is beyond the scope of this article.

How do developing nations compel these institutions and Global North countries to commit to adjustment? Amin was instrumental in delinking theory. The theory is explained in the following section.

### ***Amin's delinking strategy: an alternative solution to development***

I have supported, and still continue to support, the point of view according to which "underdevelopment" (a relative term) is the obverse side of "development", that is to say, the two sides of the expansion – unequal by nature – of capital. The development of countries at the periphery of the world – capitalist system, consequently, passes through a necessary "break" from this world capitalist system – a "delinking" – that is to say, the refusal to submit national-development strategy to the imperatives of "globalization" (Amin 1987, 435).

While the theories of *dependency* and *underdevelopment* are used as explanatory shorthand for unbalanced economic relationships, our article uses a delinking strategy as a framework to untangle the Global South from being bound by global economic structures. According to Amin (1987; 1982), delinking rejects the idea of emulating Western capitalism, and instead advocates an alternative development path that emerges from the national interests of the concerned countries (Amin 1987, 1982). Its goal is "the refusal of Global South countries to submit their national development strategy to the imperative of globalization" (Amin 1987, 435; 1982). In our view, the delinking strategy was one of the first initiatives to decolonise the economic framework for development by challenging existing global economic systems and structures. It calls for prioritising the Global South's development strategies and priorities rather than relying on external forces for progress and direction (Amin 1987, 1982).

In "A Note on the Concept of Delinking", Amin (1987) argued that delinking fundamentally requires altering the specialisation and division of labour that the Global North imposed on the Global South through imperialism and colonial domination. He clearly stated that delinking is *neither autarky nor isolationism* (Ajl 2021; Amin 1987; Kamata 2020). It is a development strategy that shifts from feeding the capitalist economic system to one in which peripheries develop

production based on their needs, including food and productive forces such as knowledge, technology, and machinery, through investment in education and linking it to industry (Kamata 2020). Specifically, delinking requires (1) aggressive industrialisation, (2) agricultural transformation, (3) nationalising of important businesses, and (4) regulating of trade and financial activities through active state intervention (König 2018). Such an approach was described by Amin as an “autocentric” economy and “radical decolonization” by John Saul (2018). The cultural revolution in China has been seen as typifying and idealising delinking (Ajl 2021; Macheda and Nadalini 2021). While Amin may not have anticipated how China developed, some evidence supports the idea that China took an “auto-centric” development path, only engaging with global capitalism when it was in a strong position to do so (Cross and Zeilig 2018). In addition, in their analysis, Samir Amin in *Beijing: Delving into China’s delinking policy*, Macheda and Nadalini (2021) also reiterate that the rise of China as a global actor of influence is due to its application of a delinking strategy, from which Amin abstracts to develop his model (Ajl 2021). This is evident when they assert that: “this article seeks to prove the correctness of Samir Amin’s view regarding the delinking strategy pursued by China” (Macheda and Nadalini 2021, 121).

Amin argues that adopting a delinking strategy would allow the Global South to reshape global systems in alignment with national development interests (Amin 1987; Kamata 2020; Macheda and Nadalini 2021). He argued that instead of conforming to the dictates of the global capitalist system, the Global North should be compelled to integrate into the development agendas set by the South (Amin 1987). This is because they require labour, raw materials, and markets to sell their industrial products. The Global South can overcome its inherent exploitation and underdevelopment by asserting national sovereignty and rejecting subservience in the global capitalist system (Amin 1987). Amin calls for a paradigm shift in which the Global South takes control of its economic destiny and challenges the structural inequalities perpetuated by the Global North.

One of the main criticisms of Amin’s argument is that he advocated socialism and anti-capitalism (Smith 1982; Smith and Sender 1983). We contend that people often become emotionally reactive when discussing ideological differences, and that there can be no compromise or middle ground. Kamata captures this well when he asserts that: “there were those, out of sheer ignorance and naivety, who thought that delinking meant absolute autarky. There were those who understood what Amin meant, but out of utter ideological differences they chose to deliberately distort and caricature the concept” (Kamata 2020, 69). Calling for a delinking strategy and demanding that the national development strategies of nations are not subject to external actors is appropriate and, we would add, a moral and just way of engaging with development if we are genuinely interested in a development that is beneficial to local people.

Careful examination of Amin’s work revealed that he advocated for equal benefits for all members of society, including inclusive political and economic systems. Therefore, it is not farfetched for critics to accuse him of being a socialist. However, this is not problematic. This system facilitates the development and relatively equitable distribution of resources based on individual needs. In contrast, capitalism inevitably leads to exploitation and exacerbates inequality (Amin 1982, 2011a; Hickel 2017). Capitalism is driven by competition, and the belief that individuals possess certain skills and services. Consequently, proponents argue that these forces should be allowed to act freely. However, without considering power and historical patterns, this results in unequal access to resources and opportunities (Amin 1982, 2011a; Hickel 2017). As (Nicholls 2019) argued, Amin’s proposition shaped the NIEO, which was influenced by both liberal capitalist and socialist ideas.

Amin’s belief in sharing the benefits accumulated by Global North countries acknowledges the historical exploitation of labour, ideas, and resources from the Global South. He argued that this exploitation played a significant role in enabling the development of technology and its success in the Global North. Amin criticises the idea of retaining these technological advancements solely for the benefit of the Global North as an act of injustice (Amin 1987). He believes it is necessary to distribute these benefits more equitably to ensure that the Global South has access to the advancements and opportunities created by their contributions. However, Amin issued a cautionary

note regarding the transfer of technological developments that are not neutral to cultural influence. They carry the values of the cultures from which they originate (Amin 1987). When presented to other people and cultures, they may inadvertently promote the superiority of the culture from which they emerge (Amin 1989, 2014). This led Amin to suggest that elements of racism or racial superiority are embedded in the dissemination of technological advancements. He highlighted the need for awareness and sensitivity toward potential cultural biases that may accompany the sharing of knowledge and technology to avoid perpetuating inequalities and discrimination.

In summary, we reiterate that although Amin was at the margins of the direct NIEO debates because of his disagreement with its nature, his ideas profoundly shaped the thinking of those debating it. Furthermore, delinking ideas about industrialisation, agricultural transformation, nationalising key industries, and regulating trade and financial activities through active state intervention are relevant today.

### ***Amin after the NIEO***

The NIEO failed to fulfil its objectives. As Amin said: “The truth is, however, that the “negotiations” initiated since the oil crisis of 1973 and the adoption in 1974 of the Charter on a New International Economic Order have been effectively fruitless” (Amin 1982, 435). This is exemplified by the numerous comparable initiatives that have emerged after its implementation. Nevertheless, Amin continued to write unapologetically even after his proposal for delinking was not incorporated into the NIEO, as he had envisioned. He continued reiterating his position on delinking and the distorted development trajectory of Africa as evidence that the “working from within” mantra did not work either (Amin 1977). In his post-NIEO scholarship, Amin unequivocally articulated that the Western world and its institutions had either dismissed NIEO or had a twisted interpretation. This determination was established through negotiations and refusal to meet the stipulated demands. Either there was a complete refusal to take the NIEO recommendations on board, or their understanding of it was somehow different from what the framers envisaged. These two processes were pivotal areas for his work and the focus of this section.

On the matter of deliberate misinterpretations of the NIEO, Amin noted that:

Imperialist monopolies have a peculiar interpretation of the “New Order.” For them, it is a matter of making more profit from the cheap natural resources of the Third World through the relocation of fragments of productive processes controlled transnationally by them. (Amin 1982, 433–434; 1976c)

The Global North and its institutions employ a distinct strategy without any intention of supporting Global South countries in establishing integrated industrial systems. For instance, global contract manufacturing models and international production networks emerged in the 1990s, when multinational production and distribution companies established branches in various contexts (Lanza et al. 2019). This phenomenon has been influenced by several factors, including globalisation, the availability of inexpensive labour, the market for manufactured goods, and the reduction of trade barriers (Anderson 2016; Lanza et al. 2019; Thomsen 1995). Even though there might be some advantages to this for some countries, for example, the technological revolution in China – the outsourcing of production and distribution to other countries – was conducted in such a manner as to enable parent companies in developed nations to maintain their dominance (Amin 1982, 1976c). This helped them continue their firm grip over global capital and Amin named this strategy *redeployment*. According to Amin, redeployment is not fundamentally different from the economic framework at the time (and now), except for the superficial efforts to establish subsidiary companies in developing countries (Amin 1982, 1976c). However, it is crucial to determine who benefits from establishing subsidiary companies.

The answer is evident – multinational corporations (MNCs) and their owners – as they enjoyed protectionist measures such as free trade zones, where instead of transferring capital to countries in the Global South, they redirected capital through pricing and repatriated profits to their parent

companies, predominantly located in the Global North (Amin 1982, 1979b). Moreover, they receive tax exemptions for goods and services based on how they structure their subsidiary companies' establishments (Amin 1982). In addition, they have access to raw materials and an inexpensive workforce (Anderson 2016; Lanza et al. 2019; Thomsen 1995). We need to question how this benefits the Southern countries. We contend that there is a power to play. While MNCs have largely gone off the global agenda, Mickler's viewpoint in this special issue indicates that Amin and the NIEO are right to focus on them. An emerging scholarly and public debate has arisen concerning the profit-shifting practices of MNC, particularly about the transfer of profits from developing contexts to tax havens (de la Feria 2024; Fei, Moltoni, and Romeo 2021; Riccardi 2021). These discussions, which scrutinise tax obligations, could enhance transparency and increase resource mobilisation for the development of developing countries. These discussions reached a critical juncture in 2021, when approximately 100 countries agreed to impose a 15% tax on MNCs, thereby rendering both tax havens and the home countries of these corporations jointly accountable for collecting such taxes (Johannesen 2022). This is a significant step that could prove beneficial for countries in the South, as subsidiary companies established within their jurisdiction often evade paying the required taxes, leading to vast volumes of money being stolen (Arnold 2013; UN 2023). Other benefits of a global corporate tax include the potential for an automatic increase in tax payments by firms operating in low-tax jurisdictions, deterrence of firms from engaging in profit shifting, enhancement of resources for development through corporate taxation, and, ultimately, mitigation of the constraints imposed by international tax competition (Johannesen 2022). This enables countries to redistribute resources more effectively to their citizens (Johannesen 2022).

### ***Amin's ideological influence***

In this section, we delineate Amin's ideological influence across three principal domains: intellectual contributions, policy development, and practical applications. We substantiate our assertions by referencing a range of specific examples from both scholarly sources and grey literature.

### ***Intellectual influence***

Drawing from the discourse presented thus far, it is evident that Amin's intellectual legacy is significant as his writings profoundly influenced theoretical insights (Bagchi 2020; Bhuiyan and Ghose 2019; Emmanuel 2020; Folsom 1985; Gumede 2023; Hensman 1976; Kvangraven 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) categorises his intellectual contributions into three main segments: (1) epistemologically informed frameworks that shape modern patterns of centre-periphery relationships, (2) the intersection of Marxism and decoloniality, which reinforces a radical critique of capitalism, and (3) the application of such critiques to Pan-Africanism and decolonisation, which consistently challenges imperial and capitalist internationalisation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021, 50). These influences extend beyond national boundaries, and are evident in the establishment of academic institutions and platforms dedicated to intellectual exchange, debate, and research. Three prominent examples of such institutions are the Third World Forum, World Forum for Alternatives, and CODESRIA. The Third World Forum brought together African, Asian, and Latin American leaders, as well as intellectuals. The World Forum for Alternatives promotes progressive views, equal development, welfare, independence and cultural respect for countries in the Global South. CODESRIA is a Pan-African research organisation that aims to foster an independent Pan-African scientific community. These institutions influence intellectual discourse and serve as important centres for scholarship and policy discourse.

Prominent scholars, including renowned political theorist Mahmood Mamdani and decolonial scholar Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, are members of CODESRIA and have been influenced by Amin's work. In his retrospective homage to Samir Amin, following his passage in 2018, Mahmood Mamdani commended Amin's substantial intellectual contributions that empowered scholars to

engage in and view development on a global scale. Mamdani states: “He introduced an entire generation of young scholars, myself included, to think of underdevelopment in historical terms” (Mamdani 2018, para 4). Inspired by Amin’s ideas, Mamdani, as the Director of the Makerere Institute for Social Research (MISR), a research institute par excellence in Kampala, Uganda, and Africa, incorporated Amin’s ideals into the training of emerging scholars, particularly doctoral candidates (Mamdani 2018).

Another significant contribution of Amin, which continues to influence intellectual discourse, is the concept of decolonisation (Emmanuel 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2023, 2021). As discussed earlier, Amin’s notion of delinking is considered a pioneering work in economic decolonisation. Scholars such as Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni have drawn upon Amin’s concepts to advance the study of decolonisation (Anugwom 2023; Emmanuel 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2023, 2021). They highlighted the epistemological and practical reorientation of African economies to be retrofitted to the needs of their people.

As articulated in the Introduction section, Amin’s contributions instigated the publication of a special issue after passing through tributes. This collection encompasses six contributions, each elucidating the distinct influence of Amin’s ideas on the scholarship and thoughts of the authors. This is in addition to the independent engagement with Amin’s work across various fields, including political economy, decolonisation, and Marxism, which we have highlighted in the introductory section. This engagement includes both proponents and critics of the theory. We regard these engagements and their ideas as the intellectual hallmarks of profound influence.

### ***Influence on regional blocs’ development***

In terms of development, Amin’s ideas can be seen to have influenced some initiatives in Africa and elsewhere. According to Cox (1979, 293), “Amin sees the alternative road for the LDCs in terms of cooperation among themselves in raw materials exchange and in the development and sharing of technology”. He advocated among African leaders, as he was called to advise Thomas Sankara of Burkina (Mamdani 2018) and as an economic planning advisor for Niger’s President Hamani Diori (Sylla 2021). For example, contemporary and earlier African leaders initiated and formed regional and continental blocs to trigger development and ease the movement of goods, services, and people. The African continent currently has eight of these blocs, which is supported by article 3, objective (c) of its constitution, which states that “accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent” (African Union 2000, 5). It recently created the world’s largest trade zone, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which brought together 55 African Union and eight regional economic communities. Its main goal is to remove trade barriers and promote intra-African trade (AfCFTA 2024; African Union 2000; Mirito 2021). Eliminating import duties has the potential to cause intra-African or south-south trade, which could displace north-south trade. This initiative is part of the long history of regional integration efforts in Africa, starting in pre-colonial times (African Union 2000; Mirito 2021). The success of AfCFTAs and other regional integration initiatives determines whether they can effectively promote development in African nations (African Union 2000). The African Union Agenda 2063, which promises an inward-looking perspective and prioritises Africa’s needs, is a crucial strategic decision recently made by African leaders. The South-South focus and cooperation certainly speak to Amin’s delinking agenda, as these countries within the region are taking agency to determine what is in their interests.

Recent studies have demonstrated how northern countries continue to drain from the Global South through unequal exchange engagement (Hickel et al. 2022). This makes the cry for deglobalization and delinking louder. According to Bello, deglobalization “aims to promote effective economics, which strengthens social solidarity by subordinating the operations of the market to the values of equity, justice, and community and by enlarging the range of democratic decision-making in the economic sphere” (Bello 2022, 22). The de-globalisation paradigm posits that the adoption of both neoliberalism and centralised bureaucratic socialism has proven ineffective.

Instead, it advocates embracing and promoting diversity, drawing inspiration from principles observed in nature (Bello 2008, 2022). This is consistent with the concept of delinking proposed by Amin. However, proponents of de-globalisation, such as Bello, deny such a connection or make no mention of Amin. Nonetheless, the primary focus of de-globalisation on meeting national or country-specific needs is similar to Amin's ideas.

### ***Influence on policy and practice***

Amin's delinking strategy was not merely a conceptual framework; it also encompassed specific policy directives and practices. For instance, Amin advocated currency sovereignty for French West Africa, which, following independence, remained tethered to the CFA franc (Sylla 2021). France established a single currency in its former colonial territories to maintain control over wealth and power. Amin served as a policy-planning advisor to Niger's President Hamani Diori, with whom he collaborated to combat monetary colonialism (Sylla 2021). As an alternative to the CFA franc, Amin proposed the ambitious economic integration of the West African region grounded in mutually supportive national currencies (Sylla 2021). Although this proposal encountered resistance from France and other entities, Amin persistently campaigned to abandon the CFA and adopt a single currency for the West African sub-region (ROAPE 2024; Sylla 2021). Today, the proposed ECO, which is the name of the single currency, builds on Amin's foundational work. Again, in delinking, Amin advocated for an agrarian revolution in Africa, which was culturally and contextually relevant using their own rules (Ajl 2021; Gumede 2023). Gumede states, "Samir Amin's agrarian revolution proposal points to the idea of designing and implementing inward-looking and 'home-grown' approaches that display a clear link between social and economic policies" (Gumede 2023, 448). Several African countries have adopted this approach. For example, some scholars have opined that Amin's ideological influence on the agricultural policies of North African countries such as Egypt and Tunisia draw from his theory of delinking (Ajl 2021, 2019, 2018).

### **Conclusion**

This article discusses the ideas of Samir Amin, who analysed global development inequality and proposed delinking as a framework for a more equitable world. We argue that although Amin was a critic of NIEO, his ideas influenced its formation but not in the complete way he had hoped for. Unlike many other scholars in his field, Amin has identified problems and proposed solutions. Given the current state of global inequality, particularly between the Global South and Global North, revisiting and reevaluating Amin's ideas is worthwhile. The integration of Global South countries into a Eurocentric global system has hindered their ability to prioritise independent development, which is flawed by its assumptions, organisation, and implementation. Amin stated that such a Eurocentric global order would not lead to development in most parts of the Global South. By contrast, the development of the Global North has resulted in the corresponding underdevelopment of countries in the Global South, as their labour, raw materials, and human resources are undervalued and exploited, which has become more apparent since the COVID-19 pandemic. This exploitation can be traced back to the long history of colonisation, the slave trade, and unequal trade.

Amin's delinking strategy advocated the rejection of Western capitalism and the pursuit of an alternative development path based on national interests. It challenges existing global economic systems and structures, aiming to prioritise the Global South's development strategies rather than relying on external forces. Although Amin was optimistic and inspired by the availability of surplus labour, resources, and markets, he acknowledged the challenges, particularly for smaller countries such as Ghana, as highlighted at the beginning of this article.

This article highlights the importance of radical ideas in developmental research. It emphasizes the adoption of innovative and bold academic approaches to bring about meaningful change.

Amin's work serves as a prime example of this approach. Despite his passing and opposition, Amin's ideas continued to impact intellectual discourse within academic institutions and the knowledge-based platforms he helped create. Furthermore, his ideas influenced economic policies within and beyond the African continent, as demonstrated in this study. Amin's scholarship, with its distinct focus on macro-level development and the intricate dynamics among various development actors, deserves closer examination in development studies because of its profound influence on the developmental landscape.

## Note

1. A Rebel in the Marxist Citadel: Tributes to Samir Amin <https://roape.net/2018/08/21/a-rebel-in-the-marxist-citadel-tributes-to-samir-amin/>

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## Author contributions

Matthew Mabefam: Conception and design of study, Acquisition of data, Analysis and/or interpretation of data, Writing— original draft, Writing— review & editing. John Ebotui Yajalin: Conception and design of study, Writing— review of subsequent drafts.

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## Data availability statement

This article is conceptual and based on publicly available information

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