

Anti-dependency Arguments

Dependency theories faced numerous criticisms from Marxist theorists claiming that it is contrary to socialist thought. The English author who initiated these objections in the 1970s claimed that capitalism tends to eliminate underdevelopment through the industrialization of the periphery, and that dependency theory failed to recognize that process, which is driven by foreign capital (Warren, 1980: 111–116, 139–143, 247–249). In the 1980s, another British theorist maintained that the take-off of Southeast Asia disproved the main characterization of dependency theory (Harris, 1987: 31–69).

Later, several Latin American intellectuals expressed similar ideas. Some of them revised their earlier writings to highlight the expansion of the periphery under the helm of the transnational corporations (Cardoso, 2012: 31). Others replaced old challenges about dependency theory being insufficiently Marxist with new criticisms of its blindness to the impetus of capitalism (Castañeda and Morales, 2010: 33; Sebreli, 1992: 320–321). All of these critics have moved toward neoliberalism and distanced themselves from the left, but their ideas influenced the new anti-dependency generation.

1 Reformulating the Same Approach

Some more recent critics claim that dependency is an appropriate term to designate situations of technological, commercial, or financial dominance by the most developed countries. However, they believe that the conception left out the contradictory character of accumulation, overlooked the partial industrialization of the Third World, and propounded erroneous stagnationist characterizations (Astarita, 2010a: 37–41, 65–93). From these objections, they deduce the inappropriateness of investigating the laws of dependency with assumptions of a capitalist system differentiated by center and periphery. They consider it more appropriate to deepen the study of the law of value than to build a theory specifically of the backward economies (Astarita, 2010a: 11, 74–75; 2010b).

Other authors object to Marini's abandonment of Marx. They believe he attributed to monopoly capital an arbitrary ability to manage economic variables and obstruct Latin American development (Kornbilht, 2012). Some also believe that dependency theory failed to recognize the primacy of global capitalism over national processes (Iñigo Carrera, 2008: 1–4).

These challenges have appeared in a political framework very different from that which prevailed in the 1970s and 1980s. The attacks are no longer directed at defenders of the Cuban revolution, but at supporters of the radical path led by *Chavismo*. In this context, the debate over the international status of the Latin American countries reappears. Argentina, especially, is seen by several anti-dependencists as a developed economy.

The critics also return to old rejections of the replacement of class antagonisms by accounts of exploitation among countries. They accuse dependency theory of promoting benign modes of capitalism for the periphery (Dore and Weeks, 1979), encouraging local accumulation processes (Harman, 2003), and favoring alliances with the national bourgeoisie (Iñigo Carrera, 2008: 34–36). Some of them claim that this orientation leads to a radicalized nationalism that recreates false expectations of national liberation. They propose adopting internationalist proposals focused on the contradiction between capital and labor (Astarita, 2010a: 99–100).

These views maintain that dependency theory abandoned the prominent role of the proletariat in favor of other popular agents (Harris, 1987: 183–184, 200–202). They object to the negation of, or lack of consideration to, the historical function of the working class (Iñigo Carrera, 2009: 19–20). They believe that the international character of the anti-capitalist project gets diluted, leading back to autarchic proposals for building socialism in one country (Astarita, 2010b). These negative assessments of dependency theory contrast with the convergent views expressed by several endogenist and systemic authors. The anti-dependency arguments are forceful, but are they consistent, valid, and coherent?

2 Interdependence?

The first critics aimed at minimizing the effects of underdevelopment denounced by the dependency theorists. They argued that foreign capital remitted profits after generating a great expansion, and held that the drainage of resources suffered by the periphery was not so severe (Warren, 1980: 111–116, 3–143). However, they avoided looking into the reason why that profit was considerably higher than that of the central economies. Dependency theory never denied the existence of accumulation processes. It only highlighted the obstructions to integrated processes of industrialization introduced by foreign investment.

The objectors argued that social inequalities were the cost required to mobilize entrepreneurial initiative in the debut of development. For them, that inequality tended to correct itself with the expansion of the middle classes

(Warren, 1980: 199, 211). But that portrayal of capitals disembarking in the periphery to the benefit of the entire population contrasted with the facts. The trickle-down they expected never went beyond the collective imagination of the neoclassical manuals. Warren also highlighted the incentive provided by social differentiation for the take-off of the primary sector, leaving out the dramatic plundering of the peasantry imposed by agri-business. He even justified labor informality, repeating absurd accolades to the 'entrepreneurial potentialities' of the marginalized (Warren, 1980: 236–238, 211–224).

These affirmations are in tune with liberal theories that extol a future of well-being as a result of the convergence between the backward and advanced economies. With this idealization of capitalism, they echoed all the mainstream arguments against dependency theory. Warren especially stressed that the dependency approach failed to recognize the mutual influence generated by the new relations of interdependence between the center and the periphery (Warren, 1980: 156–170), but he did not provide any evidence of greater equity in those connections. It was evident that the influence of the United States over Haiti did not have any equivalent in the opposite direction.

A recent presentation of the same argument claims that dependency theory only registers the subordinate status of basic input exporters, without considering the symmetrical bonds suffered by producers of manufactured commodities (Iñigo Carrera, 2008: 29). But do banana exporters play in the same league as their counterparts who specialize in computers? The obsession to highlight only the inequalities that prevail between capital and labor leads to imagining that relations of reciprocity reign in all other areas.

3 Simplified Comparisons

The critics of dependency theory claimed that the strong expansion of the underdeveloped economies of Southeast Asia disproved the pillars of that conception, but Marini, Dos Santos, or Bamberger never claimed that accelerated growth of some backward countries was impossible. They only claimed that this process introduced greater imbalances than those confronted by the advanced economies. With this approach, they analyzed the manufacturing debut of Argentina, the succeeding take-off of Brazil, and the later establishment of *maquilas* in Mexico. In those three cases, they stressed the contradictions of industrial development in the periphery. Far from ruling out any expansion, they investigated the Latin American precursors of what would later occur in the East. Asian development did not disprove the diagnoses of dependency theory.

In more detailed treatments, the critics claimed that South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore showed the unviability of protectionist models that generate waste and high costs (Harris, 1987: 28, 190–192), but this last outcome also did not disprove Marxist dependency theory. On the contrary, it confirmed its objections to the developmentalism of the postwar era and to the ECLAC model, which were made in underlining major challenges to liberalism, which some anti-dependents omit. They praise the waves of liberalization and its impact on Asia, and criticize the more closed economies for not following it (Harris, 1987: 192–194). They forget that the possibilities for greater industrialization were never open to all countries, and did not follow patterns of commercial opening. Dependency theory intuited this situation, observing how globalization harmed the peripheral nations with internal markets of some magnitude (Latin America) while shoring up areas with greater abundance and cheapness of labor power (Asia). While this dependency perspective explained changes in the flows of investment through the objective logic of accumulation, the critics highlighted the trade opening, with messages very close to those of neoliberalism.

The same logic was used to extol the prosperity of certain economies traditionally based on agro-mining. They claimed that Australia and Canada demonstrated how primary product exporters could locate themselves in spaces closer to the center than to the periphery (Warren, 1980: 143–152). However, they never clarified whether those countries represented the rule or the exception of the economies specialized in basic inputs. Marxist dependency theory did not try to fit the great variety of international situations into a simplified center-periphery package. It offered a model to explain the durability of underdevelopment on the bulk of the world's surface, as opposed to post-liberal approaches that denied that cleavage. If that gap is recognized, it becomes possible to put forward a more specific analysis of semi-peripheral structures and subimperial political processes that explain the place of Canada or Australia in the world order.

An updated dependency perspective would allow clarification of those positions, specifying the different levels of analysis of global capitalism. This system includes economic unevenness (development-underdevelopment), global hierarchies (center-periphery), and political polarities (domination-dependence). With this perspective, the place occupied by countries located in positions complementary to the center can be understood.

In contrast to critics with a close relation to neoclassical thought, the Marxist dependency theorists underlined how global capitalism recreates inequalities. They did not characterize these asymmetries as invariable, nor did they conceive a model of pure polar actors, but instead suggested the existence of

a complex spectrum of intermediate situations. With that perspective, they avoided representing any example of development as an imitable path with free-market recipes.

4 Stagnationism?

Some more recent critics agree with their predecessors in the belief that the expansion of Southeast Asia delivered a severe blow to dependency theory (Astarita, 2010a: 93–98). However, they ignore that this development did not affect this approach more than any other of the era. The growth of South Korea and Taiwan generated the same surprise as the later implosion of the Soviet Union or the recent irruption of China. Neither did the objectors assess whether the industrialization of the Eastern economies inaugurated a process that the rest of the periphery could copy. They only reaffirmed that the Eastern take-off showed the non-fulfillment of dependency theory predictions of stagnation (Astarita, 2010b). They went back to an argument that has frequently been expressed as an explanation for the decline of that approach (Blomstrom and Hettne, 1990: 204–205).

But the failure of a particular forecast does not disqualify a form of reasoning. At most, it indicates insufficiencies in the assessment of a context. Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, or Luxemburg formulated many failed prognoses. Marxism offers methods of analysis, not recipes for foretelling the future. It allows more consistent diagnoses of situations than other conceptions, but it does not reveal the events of the future. Predictions make it possible to correct observations in light of what has occurred, and must be judged in function of the general consistency of an approach. They represent only one element for evaluating a given theory.

The stagnationism attributed to dependency theory is a different type of defect, one that implies characterizations that ignore the competitive dynamic of a system governed by cycles of expansion and contraction. A structural freezing of the productive forces is incompatible with the rules of capitalism. That logic was ignored by several theorists of the heterodoxy (Furtado) and by some thinkers influenced by the monopoly capital thesis (the first Gunder Frank), both of which upheld the existence of a permanent blockage of growth. In contrast, dependentist Marxism studied the limits and the contradictions of the periphery in comparison to the center, without identifying underdevelopment with the paralysis of the economy. It underscored that Brazil or Argentina suffered from different and higher imbalances than those present in France or the United States.

The false accusation against Marini of stagnationism was first spread by Cardoso. He stressed his rival's similarity to the economists Lenin had criticized for denying the possibility of capitalist development in Russia (Narodniks). However, the actual object of Marini's analysis disproved that accusation, given that he investigated imbalances generated by the industrialization of Brazil. He did not describe permanent recessions, but rather tensions derived from a significant process of growth.

The mistaken criticism of stagnationism is at times toned down with objections to the omission of the contradictory character of accumulation. In this case, ignorance of widening markets or rising productivities is claimed (Astarita, 2010a: 296). But if Marini had ignored those dynamics, he would not have been able to analyze the particular imbalances of the underdeveloped economies. His contribution lay precisely in replacing generic assessments of capitalism with specific investigations of the imbalances of those regions. He analyzed in detail the realms that his critics excluded.

5 Monopolies and the Law of Value

The characterization of monopolies is seen by the critics as a mistake of dependency theory. They argue that it exaggerates the ability of large companies to harm the peripheral economies by manipulating price formation (Kornblihtt, 2012). However, Marini kept a long distance from the influential theories of monopoly capital of the 1960s and 1970s. Like Dos Santos, he paid more attention to imbalances in the productive sphere than in the financial sphere. His investigations were more focused on the contradictions of accumulation than on price management on the part of the large corporations. Certainly, he took into account how those firms cornered super-profits on a global scale. But he took an approach closer to the Marxist authors who were further away from the monopoly thesis, such as Mandel. In contrast to many Keynesians of his era, he did not attribute to the large corporations the discretionary power to fix prices.

Marini kept a great distance from rudimentary perspectives of monopoly, and also rejected the opposite mystification of competition. That fascination is clearly seen in Warren and Harris, who extolled the merits of competition with characterizations that were very close to the neoclassical treatment. Because of that idealization of competitive capitalism, they failed to recognize the relevance of center-periphery stratification.

Other critics claim that Marini distanced himself from Marx by losing sight of the centrality of the law of value. They propose a return to that concept in order to clarify relations of dependency (Astarita, 2010b). But the question of

underdevelopment is not solved with this type of investigation. Several authors have emphasized that studies at that level of abstraction do not facilitate an understanding of the global cleavage (Johnson, 1981). Additional mediations are needed to those used in *Capital*. In that text, the exploitation (Volume 1), reproduction (Volume 2) or crisis (Volume 3) of the system is analyzed. Marx hoped to treat the international structure (and probably the development gaps) in a volume he never got to. Surely, that investigation would have broadened knowledge of global imbalances in the period of the formation of capitalism. However, it is equally worth remembering that the center-periphery dynamic in the 19th century presented very different characteristics from those that prevailed in the late 20th century. More than the “return to Marx” posited by some analysts (Radice, 2009), clarification of that question requires looking back on the reflections of the Marxist theorists of the last century (see chapters 2 and 3 of this book).

The law of value provides a general principle for explaining prices and a generic theory of capitalist functioning and crisis. None of those dimensions goes far enough to clarify the dynamics of underdevelopment, which requires reasoning at more concrete (and at the same time consistent) levels than those used to capture the logic of value.

6 Underdevelopment as a Simple Fact

Some authors question explanations of underdevelopment centered on the subordination of the periphery. They claim an inverse causality, of dependency situations derived from the underdevelopment of those economies. This interpretation bears a resemblance to the endogenist logic, which attributes international inequalities to the internal contradictions of each country. That approach objected to the primacy of external causes in explaining economic backwardness, highlighting the greater impact of the continuation of oligarchic or semi-feudal forms. In this view, the exactions generated by imperial domination were less determinant than the persistence of pre-capitalist impediments.

The anti-dependency idea, however, is different. It rejects the survival of those features and underlines the presence of totally capitalist realities. Thus, it objects to both the dependency theorists and traditional endogenism. From this perspective, the exponents of these critiques stress the internal capitalist determinants of the profile presented by each country. They also claim that the international insertion of any nation is a result of the way in which it entered the world market (Astarita, 2010a: 296). But, how does that approach explain

the cleavage between advanced and backward economies? Why has that gap persisted over the last two centuries?

One answer points to the international division of labor, in which the more productive forms are concentrated in the central economies and the most rudimentary forms in the periphery (Figueroa, 1986: 11–19, 55–56, 61). Another way of expressing the same interpretation is the well-known description of differentiated specializations in the provision of foods or manufactures by the two types of countries (Iñigo Carrera, 2008: 1–2, 6–9).

However, the verification of that difference does not clarify the issue. While the dependency interpretation attributed underdevelopment to resource transfers, and endogenism to the persistence of pre-capitalist structures, these critics' interpretation is conspicuous by its absence. That perspective seems to accept that the initial cleavage was caused by diverse historical particularities (European feudalism, singularities of English agriculture, European manufacturing transformations, features of the absolutist state, early onset of certain bourgeois revolutions), but it does not explain the contemporary persistence of the lag. What occurred in the 16th–19th centuries is not enough to explain the current reality.

Anti-dependence even lacks the basic answers proposed by neoclassical (obstruction of entrepreneurs) or heterodox (lack of state skills) approaches. It is limited to stating that the advanced and relegated economies differ by their level of underdevelopment. That obvious fact does not explain the qualitative gaps that govern the world order. The contrast between the United States and Japan is not comparable to the abyss that separates both countries from Honduras. Underdevelopment distinguishes the two situations.

The critics reject the role played by drainage of value from the periphery to the center in the reproduction of that lag. But without recognizing the varied forms and intensities of those transfers, there is no way to explain the stability of global polarizations, bifurcations, and hierarchies. Denial of those flows makes any interpretation impossible.

7 Classifications and Examples

Most of the critics treat dependence as an indistinct block, ignoring the huge differences that separate the Marxist and conventional variants of that approach. While Cardoso sees underdevelopment as an anomaly of capitalism, Marini, Dos Santos, and Bamberger characterize the same feature as a characteristic of that system. Some objectors recognize those disagreements and note the inexistence of a common school of thought; yet, after acknowledging these differences, they unify the authors they had distinguished, as if they

formed a more or less radical group of exponents of the same thesis (Astarita, 2010a: 37–41, 17–63).

The greatest confusion appears in the assessment of Cardoso and Marini. The ex-president is presented as a more open theorist than the author of *The Dialectic of Dependence*. His methodology is examined, challenging the Weberian pillars of that approach or the ordering of political relations, rather than his economic analysis (Astarita, 2010a: 65–82). But this does not clarify Cardoso's contribution before his neoliberal turn; nor does it recognize Marini's contribution to understanding the center-periphery relation. It especially forgets that the hostility or affinity of the two thinkers toward revolutionary socialism was not unrelated to these contrasting conclusions. The critics' disregard for that contrast hampers their assessments of both theorists.

Marini contributed concepts (such as the dependent cycle) to understand the continued reproduction of the global gaps. This achievement was correctly perceived in the 1980s by an important analyst (Edelstein, 1981), who stressed the merit of grasping the reasons that impede Latin America from repeating the development of Europe or the United States. He also emphasized that the logic of dependency offers a coherent answer to that limitation.

Moreover, this approach provides great support to numerous national and regional studies of underdevelopment. The devaluing of that contribution leads to many false characterizations by the critics. For example, in analyzing the recurrent failure of attempts at industrialization by the oil economies (Saudi Arabia, Iran, Algeria, Venezuela), one anti-dependency author emphasizes the harmful weight of rentism. He also points to the entrenchment of bureaucracies, inability to use hard currency productively, and a historical pattern of waste (Astarita, 2013c: 1–11).

But none of these endogenous explanations is sufficient to understand the continuity of underdevelopment. The dependency thesis highlights another key aspect: the international division of labor. That subjection generates outflows of capital that are higher than the incomes obtained by oil exports. The oil economies have endured trade deficits, financial decapitalizations, and transfers of funds through profit repatriation or payments for patents, while capital flight and indebtedness exacerbate those imbalances characteristic of dependency. That which is in plain view in any study of those countries is not mentioned by Marini's objectors.

8 Argentina as a Developed Country?

An important corollary of anti-dependency is the portrayal of several Latin American countries as developed nations. That interpretation is especially

applied to the case of Argentina. An exponent of that view harshly questions those who “dogmatically cling to the ideology of a backward country” for not recognizing that Argentina has reached the level of accumulation required by world capitalism (Iñigo Carrera, 2008: 32). But the problem to be solved is the meaning of that expansion and of that international location. It is obvious that Argentina is a big exporter of food products. What needs to be clarified are the implications of that role.

The critics claim that the high magnitude of cattle, cereal, or soy rent determined the incorporation of the country in global capitalism with the status of an advanced economy. But the magnitude of rent is not synonymous with development. It could indicate opposite situations of obstruction to sustained growth. Development is not measured by the amount of export surplus, but by the level of industrialization or the parameters of human development. None of these figures puts Argentina at the top level of the global hierarchy. Rent does not define that classification. While it is a key economic ingredient of Canada, Argentina, and Bolivia, the first of these is recognized as developed, the second as intermediate, and the third as backward.

Throughout all of Argentina's history, there have been intense struggles over the distribution of rents between its agro-mining recipients and its industrial captors. Those rents operated as an indirect support for industrial activities, which never reached levels of international competitiveness or self-sustaining productivity. That outcome illustrates the functioning of an economy that is backward, dependent, and affected by periodic and far-reaching crises. Thus, capitalists avoid investment, protect their funds outside the country, and facilitate the financial appropriation of rent, in detriment to its being channeled to productive use. That mechanism demonstrates the underdeveloped character of Argentina.

The critics see this problem in an inverted form. They prioritize analysis of the most profitable sector, and find the competitiveness of agriculture to be comparable to the prevailing average in Europe or the United States. With this assessment, they conclude by situating Argentina in the league of the developed economies. However, the level of development of a country is not defined by its most profitable branch. Using this criterion, Saudi Arabia and Chile would be placed at the top of the global ranking because of their oil and copper wealth. The high profits of a primary sector are generally an indicator of productive backwardness.

The relegated status of Argentina can be seen right in the agricultural sector. Beyond the controversy over the continuity or reversion of extensive models with limited utilization of capital per hectare, the complete dependence of that model on imported inputs is evident. Those components are supplied by

foreign companies, which reinforce the predominance of crops powered by direct, transgenic, and agro-toxic cultivation. That bond is a clear indicator of underdevelopment (Anino and Mercatante: 2010: 1–7).

Some authors argue that the Argentine economy absorbs the bulk of its rents and generates inflows of funds from the center to the periphery, thereby disproving dependency theory (Kornblihtt, 2012). This characterization recreates the views that appeared in the 1970s with the irruption of OPEC. The capture of oil rent by the economies that generate that surplus led to a diagnosis of extinction of the old subordination of primary exporters to the center. But experience showed the temporary character of that conjuncture; by means of financial payments and trade surpluses, the advanced economies recovered those incomes.

Argentina also went through temporary periods of great absorption of its agro-livestock rent, but its dependent political status accentuated the dissipation of that capture. A country with longer periods of subjection than of autonomy in its international operations has little ability to manage its surpluses. Argentina is far from the anti-dependency portrayal. It is not a developed economy, it does not occupy a central place in the division of labor, and it does not display the strategies of a dominant power.

9 Political Challenges

The critics question the anti-imperialist alignment of the dependency theorists, identifying that view with the abandonment of anti-capitalist positions (Kornblihtt, 2012). However, they do not indicate when and how that desertion came about. No Marxist exponent of that tradition separated resistance to imperial subjugation from its capitalist foundations. They always joined together both of those pillars.

Dependency theory is accused of replacing class analysis with nation-based approaches (Dore and Weeks, 1979). This attitude is associated with erroneous postulates of exploitation between countries (Iñigo Carrera, 2009: 27). But no debate can develop in those terms. Exploitation is exercised by the dominant classes over the wage-workers of any nation. That relation does not extend to the profits obtained by one country at the cost of another in the world market. Since the Marxist dependency theorists never confused these two dimensions, the objection lacks sense.

It is true that in anti-imperialist political propaganda, adherents sometimes use confused terms to denounce the plunder of natural resources or financial drainage. In those cases, they use incorrect names in formulating relevant

denunciations. But anti-dependence suffers from a bigger drawback. Its errors are on the level of concepts, not of terminology.

Marini, Dos Santos, and Bambirra always pointed to capitalists as those responsible for all forms of domination. They never contended that the oppressed classes of the periphery were exploited by their peers in the center. This characterization was only suggested by authors close to Third-Worldism (such as Emmanuel), who picked up on old interpretations about the complacent behavior of the labor aristocracy with regard to imperial actions. The critics also argue that dependency theory promoted national capitalism in the periphery in order to bolster private national capital against foreign companies (Harris, 1987: 170–182). They maintain that it saw the national bourgeoisie as a natural ally in the battle for development (Iñigo Carrera, 2008: 34–36). But these goals were promoted by conservative nationalism or the supporters of developmentalism, not by dependence. Under the impact of the Cuban revolution, that approach adopted a clear attitude of commitment to the socialist project.

The truth is that the Marxist dependency theorists recognized the difference between the ruling classes of the periphery and their counterparts in the center. They rejected the common identity of the two as postulated by a critic of dependence (Figuerola, 1986: 80, 91, 203). Marini, Dos Santos, and Bambirra remembered the subordinate place occupied by the local bourgeoisie in the international division of labor, indicating the consequent existence of more accentuated contradictions and imbalances. From that characterization, they deduced the existence of unresolved national problems in Latin America, and consequently the presence of significant conflicts with imperialism. Dependency theory formulated critiques of the national bourgeoisie from leftist positions opposed to the ideas of Cardoso or Warren. For the liberal exponents of anti-dependence, the verbiage against national capitalism always had a reactionary connotation.

The critics rant against any demand for national liberation, ignoring what has occurred over the last 100 years. All the socialist revolutions in the periphery were connected with demands for sovereignty, from which a dialectic of radicalization developed that culminated in the anti-capitalist roads taken by the revolutions in Yugoslavia, China, and Vietnam. The socialist victory in Cuba also arose from resistance to a puppet dictator of the United States. The objectors forget that those experiences followed a very different route from those foreseen by classical Marxism. Instead of assimilating the lessons of that mutation, they proclaim their anger with what has occurred and erase those sagas from their diagnoses of the world.

It might be thought that the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union (or the greater internationalization of the economy) has altered the close

connection between national and social struggle that predominated in the 20th century. The anti-dependents do not clarify that potential basis for their opinions. But even in that case, it would be evident that the Pentagon and NATO persist as custodians of the oppressive world order. It is enough to observe the destruction of several Middle Eastern states or the disintegration of Africa to note the centrality of imperial action. No socialist process can be conceived if it ignores the priority of that enemy.

Rather than recognizing that threat, the critics accuse dependentism of replacing materialist economic analysis with superficial logics inspired by imperial concepts of domination (Iñigo Carrera, 2008: 29). They undervalue observation of reality in order to extol abstract reflection, forgetting that the reproduction of capitalism is sustained by the use of force. The simple accumulation of capital is not enough to ensure the continual recreation of the system. It needs the additional support of an imperial structure.

The rejection of recognizing the national dimension of the struggle for socialist transformations in the periphery leads to disregard for popular demands. The most recent example of that blindness is the objection to the mobilizations against the foreign debt. One objector to dependentism rejects that cause, denouncing the participation of the local dominant classes in the creation of that debt, and arguing that campaigns against the debt dilute the centrality of the antagonism between capital and labor (Astarita, 2010a: 110–111).

However, they do not explain the difference between these two planes. Payment of the debt affects workers, who suffer wage cuts to settle those liabilities. As demonstrated in Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador between 2000 and 2005, resistance to that outrage challenges the very capitalist system. It is true that the local bourgeoisies have been accomplices in creating that indebtedness, but the crises unleashed by that financial burden corrode the functioning of the state and stifle its exercise of domination. In that context, the debt emerges as an axis of anti-imperialist resistance. The events in Greece in 2015 exemplify that conflict. The creditors forced brutal sacrifices to allow payment of a liability, illustrating the relations of dependence within the European Union. The critics ignore the explosive effects of that subordination.

10 Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg

For the liberal variants of anti-dependence, the return to Marx presupposes reclaiming a devotee of individualism and the forced dissolution of non-Western societies. The author of *Capital* is presented as a defender of empire

who extolled the English contribution to overcoming the backwardness of Africa and India (Warren, 1980: 39–44, 27–30).

But Marx was always in the opposite camp that denounced colonial plunder. He intuited the huge contrast between what was taken from and what was provided to the occupants of the underdeveloped countries. The bloodshed generated by slavery in Africa, or the demographic massacre suffered by the original peoples of the Americas, provided compelling proof of that assessment. In his analysis of Ireland in his mature phase, the German theorist portrayed Britain's obstruction to the industrialization of the periphery and defended popular resistance to the crown (see chapter 1 of this book). This position is unknown to those who claim that Marx praised the development introduced by English railroads in India (Astarita, 2010a: 83–90). They forget that those investments reinforced the subordination of the country as a primary-good producer, and gave rise to an anti-colonial movement that was supported by the German revolutionary.

The anti-dependency criticism of any kind of struggle against that oppression includes severe challenges to connecting the national and social struggles, as espoused by Lenin (Warren, 1980: 83–84, 98–109). The Bolshevik leader promoted that connection in his polemic with Luxemburg, who rejected any form of national separatism, arguing that it harmed proletarian internationalism and the primacy of class demands (Luxemburg, 1977: 27–187). Lenin responded by illustrating how the right to self-determination decreased tensions between the oppressed groups of different nationalities. He pointed to the fraternity achieved between the workers of Sweden and Norway after the peaceful separation of the latter. Lenin defended that right without necessarily approving of the secession of the different countries. His endorsement of each proposal depended on the genuine, majority, or progressive character of that demand (Lenin, 1974b: 26–90).

This is the same distinction that can be established today between fictitious claims (the “Kelpers” of the Falkland/Malvinas Islands), pro-imperial balkanizations (ex-Yugoslavia), or elitist territorial separatisms (northern Italy, Flanders) and legitimate national demands (Kurds, Palestinians, Basques). Anti-dependency repeats the errors of Luxemburg by counterposing national and social demands as if they were antagonistic desires. It recognizes only the centrality of exploitation of wage-workers, without noting the existence of innumerable forms of racial, religious, sexual, or ethnic oppression. All of these lead to the types of resistance that Lenin sought to connect with the proletarian struggle.

Some authors claim that the Russian leader only promoted self-determination on the political level, not extending it to the economic sphere. They accept only that limited application of the concept, and reject any kinship with the

battle for the second independence of Latin America. They believe that proposal contains inappropriate and nationalist economic demands (Astarita, 2010a: 118, 293–296).

But Lenin never accepted those types of abstract distinctions. Thus, he objected to any logic of self-determination based on its economic viability. Instead of speculating on that level of feasibility, he called for assessing by whom, and how, the demand for sovereignty was being propelled, in order to distinguish valid demands from pro-imperial uses of national sentiments (Lenin, 1974a: 99–120, 1974b: 15–25). The battle for the second independence fits with that position of the Bolshevik leader. It takes up the regional objective of full emancipation that was frustrated in the 19th century with the balkanization of Latin America.

By only acknowledging the antagonism between capital and labor, anti-dependency sails on an ocean of abstract internationalism. Thus, it does not perceive the basic differences that oppose progressive and regressive nationalism. That which, in the past, distinguished Mussolini or Theodore Roosevelt from Sandino or Lumumba, today separates the Western right (Trump, Le Pen, Farage) from Latin American anti-imperialism (Chávez-Maduro, Evo Morales). Lenin underlined this distinction in order to delineate political strategies that are not recognized by the critics of dependency theory.

11 Mythical Proletariat

The main political accusation of anti-dependency against its adversaries was that it failed to recognize the leading role of the working class. This omission was attributed to the influence of Third-Worldism or the lumpen-proletariat (Sender, 1980). But those characterizations were not aimed at specifying the leading subjects of a revolutionary process, but at defining paths to capitalist modernization. They looked at the possibility of socialism in strict relation to the growing weight of the working class under the current system, and therefore highlighted the preeminence of the proletariat over other popular actors (Harris, 1987: 183–184, 200–202). With this logic, it assumed that the liberation of the workers would emerge from an opposite process of consolidation of bourgeois oppression. How the exploited could be liberated from a system that consolidated its subjection was an unresolved mystery.

This thesis also emphasized the protagonism of the developed economies, with larger contingents of wage-workers, in the gestation of socialism. In this way, they ignored the fact that in the 20th century revolutions occurred in the regions encumbered by the most acute capitalist imbalances. In that

anti-dependency approach, proletarian leadership did not imply promoting radical changes; on the contrary, it embraced a model of humanitarian socialism configured by means of parliamentary action. It believed that in this way, the West would once again show the rest of the world the path to civilization (Warren, 1980: 7, 24–27).

That perspective repeated the Eurocentric mythology forged by German social democracy and the English Fabians, ignoring the point to which that utopia was disproved by the fierce wars and depressions of the 20th century. With allusions to the rule of the proletariat, they anticipated the socio-liberal libretto of Felipe González and Tony Blair.

The preeminence of the working class was especially extolled as an antidote to the contamination of anti-imperialism. With that anti-nationalist fanaticism, Warren was opposed to the struggle of the Northern Irish (Catholics) against English occupation. He rejected the national unification of the island and approved of the position of the Protestant currents loyal to the British monarchy (Proyect, 2008; Ferguson, 1999; Munck, 1981). That pro-imperialist attitude crowned an imagery of proletarian purity, ascribing to the workers located in the major centers of the West a function of guiding international socialism.

The theories of invariable worker protagonism looked different in Latin America in the 1970s. They were promoted by thinkers identified in militant circles as pure socialists, who opposed any strategy that included anti-imperialist programs or organizations, and promoted revolutionary processes with exclusively socialist dynamics. That approach worked toward the exact recreation of Bolshevism, as against both the stages strategy of official Communism and the extension of the Cuban model favored by dependentist Marxism.

Pure socialism defended a model of worker soviets against the “deformations” introduced by the revolutions of peasant (China, Vietnam) or radicalized middle class (Cuba) preeminence. It held that the replacement of proletarian leadership generated the major contemporary errors of the socialist project. That approach combined dogmatism, political myopia, and great irritation with the course of history. Instead of acknowledging the revolutionary role played by a wide variety of oppressed subjects, it discredited the great anti-capitalist transformations for their deviation from a presupposed sociological-classist path. It assumed that a revolution lacked socialist attributes if the place of the proletariat was occupied by another popular sector. Proponents of this perspective argued with the defenders of the Cuban revolution about the tactics and strategies that should be followed by different countries.

These characterizations of the Latin American proletariat, conceived to advance the paths to gaining power, have disappeared from the current debate.

Criticisms of theories that reduce the role of the proletariat persist (Iñigo Carrera, 2009: 19–20), but are expressed in abstract terms unrelated to real experiences. They no longer refer to forthcoming political events, but navigate in phantasmagoric worlds that are not anchored in worker actions. They expound ideas connected more to philosophical deduction than to political reasoning.

The present-day critics are not tied to the foundations posited by pure socialism. They do not aim to demonstrate the superiority of the proletariat with respect to other oppressed sectors. By breaking away from that pillar, their challenges lack relevance for any battle for socialism. That loss of direction empties their arguments from its old pretension of shoring up the revolutionary tendencies in their dispute with reformism.

An analogous process of evaporation of the critical sense is found in the Marxist economic debates between analysts of the falling rate of profit tendency and underconsumption theorists. In the 1970s, that controversy aroused passions among those who saw the debate as an expression of the battle between revolutionaries and reformists. The first thesis presumably conceptualized the inability of capitalism to achieve improvements, while the latter provided foundations for that possibility. In the present, both theses provide elements for understanding crisis, but they no longer express the political contrasts of the past. Any review of that debate must be situated in the new context. The same thing happens with criticisms of the class omissions of Marxist dependency theory. Those objections are no longer formulated in accordance with the old debates on the leading role of the proletariat in the socialist revolution. Thus, many controversies flutter in a vacuum, with no direction.

12 Globalist Socialism

Another ground on which Marxist dependency theory has been challenged is in the assessment of 20th century attempts at socialism. Some think that this project was doomed to failure from its birth. They do not situate the failure in the bureaucratic totalitarianism of the Soviet Union, but in the mere existence of a model that attempts to skip stages of capitalist maturation (Warren, 1980: 116–117).

Other thinkers attribute the same outcome to the preeminence of national liberation objectives in detriment to socialist goals, arguing that those deficiencies will be overcome in a socialist future preceded by the global expansion of capitalism. They see neoliberal globalization as a promissory foretaste of that future, and extol the international interlinking of the dominant classes (Harris,

1987: 185–200). That perspective identifies the current trend with increasingly homogeneous processes. It assumes that global hierarchies will dissolve, facilitating the direct international introduction of socialism. This diagnosis explains its hostility toward Marxist dependency theory, which underlines the preeminence of opposite tendencies toward global polarization of capitalism.

The portrayal of globalization as a prologue to universal socialism is astonishing for its level of fantasy. It is evident that neoliberal globalization is the most reactionary attempt of the last decades for the preservation of capitalism, and it is ridiculous to assume that inequities will tend to disappear under a model that generates monumental social cleavages on a world scale.

Warren and Harris inverted the basic meaning of Marxism. They transformed a critical conception of capitalism into its opposite. They called for restraint in condemnations of capitalism, forgetting that this challenge is the basic foundation of any socialist project. Their strange model of globalist socialism has disappeared from the political map, but the principles of their approach survive in present-day anti-dependency. By ruling out the national component of the struggle in the periphery, ignoring the progressivism of sovereign victories, and failing to recognize anti-imperialist mediations, that current assumes equivalent anti-capitalist paths in all countries.

While dependentist Marxism conceives of distinct intermediate links for socialist strategy, its critics only offer hopes for the sudden irruption of socialism on a world scale. That assumption of magical simultaneity is implicit in the absence of specific programs for a transition to socialism in Latin America. They reject those paths, arguing that delinking from the world market will recreate illusory variants of socialism in one country (Astarita, 2010b). They do not realize that this strategy was formulated to promote a combined sequence of overcoming underdevelopment and advancing toward social equality. That aspiration was supported by real experiences over several decades. It did not fantasize about magical outbreaks of socialism in all countries through immediate contagion or simultaneous appearance, nor did it expect Western patronage or planetary solutions to be settled in a single round.

It is true that socialism cannot be built in a single country, but that limitation does not imply renouncing the start of that process in the framework prevailing in each circumstance. If the national foundation is ignored and socialism is conceived of as an ultimatum (everywhere at once or nothing), there is no room for developing feasible political strategies. The exotic models of global socialism were also inspired by objectivist variants of Marxism. They reasoned in positivist terms, idolatrizing a pattern of evolution identified with the progress of the productive forces. That criterion led the early critics of dependency to support the expansion of capitalism and to object to any

brakes on that surge. They imagined a growing process of maturation under the leadership of the civilized sectors of the working class. With this logic, they updated the gradualist positivism of Kautsky–Plekhanov into a novel variation of global Menshevism.

The pure socialists also conceived a model of progressive movements in accordance with the impact of each process on the development of the productive forces. They approved of whatever bolstered this development and criticized whatever obstructed it, prioritizing the abstract sphere of economics over the popular struggle.

The followers of that perspective are not able to formulate constructive reflections on the socialist project. They limit themselves to expressing criticisms without proposing positive solutions to the problems under discussion, dodging any suggestion of alternatives to the theories that they criticize. With that ongoing series of rejections, they obstruct the continuity of the fruitful paths opened by dependentism in the 1970s.

