



The kick off

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To cite this article: Mamdouh Habashi (2019): The kick off, Globalizations, DOI: [10.1080/14747731.2019.1656437](https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2019.1656437)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2019.1656437>



Published online: 23 Aug 2019.



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ABSTRACT

Samir Amin's call for the establishing of a fifth international is timely, urgent and necessary. This essay explores some key questions that should be debated by those seeking to create the new international: including the appropriate organizational form; membership; and decision making procedures.

KEYWORDS

Imperialism; Fifth International; Samir Amin; global revolution; crisis of capitalism

Samir Amin, a leading scholar and co-founder of the world-systems tradition, died on August 12, 2018. Just before his death, he published, along with close allies, a call for 'workers and the people' to establish a 'fifth international' [<https://www.pambazuka.org/global-south/letter-intent-inaugural-meeting-international-workers-and-peoples>] to coordinate support to progressive movements. To honor Samir Amin's invaluable contribution to world-systems scholarship, we are pleased to present readers with a selection of essays responding to Amin's final message for today's anti-systemic movements. This forum is being co-published between Globalizations [<https://www.tandfonline.com/rglo>], the Journal of World-Systems Research [<http://jwsr.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/jwsr/issue/view/75>] and Pambazuka News [<https://www.pambazuka.org/>]. Additional essays and commentary can be found in these outlets.

PROLETARIER ALLER LÄNDER, VEREINIGT EUCH!
PROLETARIANS OF ALL COUNTRIES: UNITE!

Samir Amin's publication of his 'founding' paper on 17/7/17 was a historic event in every sense of the word. Not only because it summarizes the situation on the front of the struggle between imperialism and the forces of revolution at the global level with a high degree of precision and clarity, but because it launches a new phase in this struggle qualitatively different from all that preceded it.

Since the idea of the establishment of the Fifth International began to crystallize about a decade ago and my insistence on Samir Amin is increasing day by day to complete this paper, until the urgency in recent years reached the degree of a nerve saw. Samir Amin, always a perfectionist in his work, was not hesitant in his conviction of the idea itself but about the timing of its emergence.

For the first time in history, the forces of the global revolution began to take the lead in their struggle against imperialism, armed with the experience and lessons of the history of former

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*This paper was the contribution of Mamdouh Habashi in the Second World Congress on Marxism, organized by and held in the University of Peking, May 5th & 6th 2018 and can be only understood in connection with the paper of Samir Amin 'It is imperative to reconstruct the Internationale of workers and peoples' of 17.07.2017.

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‘Internationals’, moving from reaction to action, from defense to attack, ... no exaggeration in this description.

The task is difficult, ... difficult, complicated and complex, but it has no alternative for the real revolutionary forces. We are talking here about the ‘process’ of building the Fifth International, which may take years. For this process to begin with steady and constant steps, it must have a ‘motor’ or a steering committee.

This committee will be formed from 10 to 15 parties of those which are the first convinced of the task. It would start with a preparatory meeting to launch the first ‘Brain Storming’ among the attendees to consolidate:

- (A) the points of agreement and disagreement, but more importantly
- (B) the expected problems and obstacles of the process.

(A) The points of agreement and disagreement

- Do the participants of this very first meeting have to discuss the a.m. paper of Samir Amin first to find out all points of agreement or possibly disagreement of its analysis of our today’s world?
- Would it be preferable for the process to have a preamble of the paper presenting a profile of the former Internationals with their successes and failures without losing the original goal of the process?
- The process should eliminate the opportunistic currents in the left – in the north and in the south – which still do not want to see imperialism in the policies of Europe and Japan and limit imperialism in the United States, not to mention the forces that do not see the existence of imperialism at all.
- After the political analysis of the current situation in the world of today on the paper, a road map to establish the 5th International has to be presented, at least for the first steps of putting the foundation; i.e. when, how, where and with whom the first meeting with the required BRAIN STORMING will be held.
- The oligarchy of financial market capitalism and political oligopolies rule the world of today with a totalitarian dictatorship which is getting deeper and deeper. The new international is the most accurate expression that this crisis is an L- and not U-shape one.
- The unwillingness or ability of the ruling bourgeoisie of the peripheries in general to have any degree of independence.
- The BRICS Group pursues pragmatic opportunistic policies that do not live up to the challenge, as they resist hegemony but not capitalism, not even its neoliberal form.
- The deepening of the crisis of global capitalism does not mean that it is nearing its demise, as much as it means the intensification of its violence and aggression.
- Due to its internal contradictions, the global financial system will face a new collapse in the coming years. The next collapse may be more severe than that of September 2008. The global left must prepare itself to confront this situation with the new International to put forward a global alternative and chart a roadmap out of capitalism rather than out of the Crisis of capitalism. The missing of an ‘International’ in 2008 has led to a decline in the performance of the global left in facing the crisis instead of getting the most benefit out of it.
- The great popular uprisings in the peripheries (Egypt is a clear example) are going back to what is worse. If the 5th International did exist and had been active and effective in January 2011, it would have changed the course of history.

- The left of the centers is in general lagging behind both, in its strength and in its discourse to face the globalization of the financial market.
- The differences between the attitudes and tactics of the left forces in the world vary deeply despite the high degree of agreement on understanding and analyzing the global situation.
- I do not see a moment more urgent than today to begin thinking about the creation of the new 'International'.

The mission is certainly tough but the journey of a thousand miles begins with a step and all the projects that have changed the world have started as dreams.

(B) The expected problems and obstacles of the process

- The differences between left-wing currents in the world will continue, but we must use them as enrichment and deepen the dialogue rather than fight it, if there is a solid basis for agreement on the strategic issues.
- Of course, the new International will not replace the local struggles, but it will definitely give it the compass and the necessary political support, which may increase the efficiency of these local and regional struggles.
- Collective imperialism has globalized its command since the middle of the twentieth century, while the forces of progress have abandoned this basic weapon.
- The World Social Forum WSF was an attempt to globalize the struggle, but despite all the successes it has achieved the struggle today needs something much more effective and structured.
- The relationship between the national and the international must be addressed and treated from a revolutionary perspective.
- What is the role of the 'revolutionary' party today in the peripheries and – especially – in the centers? And how this party would carry out its goals under the conditions of the Western 'parliamentarism'?
- The New International is the only way to universalize and globalize the struggle for the 'Common Good of Humanity' as a first step towards a socialist perspective, otherwise it would be just wishful thinking.
- In this concern, I have to emphasize that we are talking here about establishing an 'ORGANIZATION' and not any kind of forum or discussion collectives.
- I believe that the basic or most difficult task of the process 'Kick Off' is not primarily to prove the utmost necessity of establishing the International but to answer the unavoidable questions how to manage the organization in the new circumstances ... such as:
 - What is the most appropriate organizational form between the 'Forum' and the 'Com-Intern'?
 - Should it include Marxist parties only? Or also other kinds of organizations? How do we define selection criteria?
 - How do we deal with the presence of more than one Marxist party in a country?
 - How will decisions be taken, by consensus? unanimous? Or by voting?
 - How will it solve the problem of the political 'weight' of the different parties, organizations or countries? Will it be the same voice for each party; the Socialist Popular Alliance in Egypt and the Communist Party of China, for example?
 - The previous question leads us to the need to invent a mechanism to avoid the domination of a country or a party on the International ... How?

Dear Comrades and Friends,

This is my appeal to you all to contribute. We all need your active suggestions and innovative ideas to start the process. Please feel free to contact me, even with negative your critiques, which could be also quite constructive.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Mamdouh Habash is a member of the board of the Arab and African Research Centre and a Vice President of the World Forum for Alternatives. He is a co-founder of the Egyptian Socialist Party and since 2015 head of the international office of the SPA Socialist Alliance Party. He has written widely on political Islam; the European left and the Arab-Israeli conflict; and problems of democracy and secularization in the Arab countries.