«Why wasn’t Germany England?» – this question raised by Ralf Dahrendorf sums up the underlying assumption of the German Sonderweg thesis. Dahrendorf’s question implies the dichotomy between the model course in «England as the West» and the twisted path in «Germany as the Rest». Thus he posited English history of the universal, normal, democratic course as a yardstick with which to measure German history of the particular, abnormal, fascist aberration. To quote Jürgen Kocka, «through comparisons with England, France, the United States, or simply «the West», they attempted to identify the peculiarities of German history which [...] hindered the long-term development of liberal democracy in Germany and eventually facilitated the triumph of fascism».

Historical peculiarities of German modernity have been explained as the belated nation (die verspätete Nation), the aborted bourgeois revolution, the feudalisation of the bourgeoisie, aristocrats-led industrialisation, the blocked development of parliamentarianism, the illiberal and anti-pluralistic political culture, etc.

In the global trajectory of Marxist historical thought, however, one can find Sonderwege instead of the Sonderweg. Even before World War II, the Köza faction of the Japanese Marxist historiography set a precedent for the post-war Sonderweg thesis by using idioms such as semi-feudal serfdom, parasitic landlordism, «arrested development» of the bourgeoisie, militarist form of finance capital, patrimonial role of the state, and immature modern subjectivity. The Japanese Sonderweg echoed Stalin’s talk of the peculiarity of Chinese capitalism as the coexistence of the developing merchant capital and the feudal vestiges in villages. The East European historiography shared the German peculiarities through the optic of «the first model of

3 Kocka, «Asymmetrical Historical Comparison», 40–50.
underdevelopment». Under this perspective, peasant Eastern Europe was hopelessly undercapitalised and underdeveloped. The peculiarity of East European history continued to be part of the Party historiography, which took the Leninist term of «the Prussian path» of capitalism as a structural default to explain the East European modern.

Thus the «singularity» of the Sonderweg thesis came to be conceptually translated as «particularity». Sonderwege in «the Rest» carried historical equivalents of the German peculiarity through the trope of the «Prussian path», which locates a global project of Marxist historiography in a network of «particularities». In the Marxist schema of world economy, capital occupies the position of the universal, while local conditions equal to the particular. It is in this schematism that «peculiarity» as a «singularity» is transformed into «particularity», which exemplifies the «deviation» from something supposedly «normal» and «universal». As the East European peculiarity has been explicated «in terms of isolation from versus exposure to» fundamental developments in the West, peculiarities of the East Asian histories have been constructed «through the dynamics of attraction to and repulsion from the West». Once translated into the generic «particularity», individual «singularities» are reduced to the question of distance from the core of Europe.

To interrogate the transformation of the peculiarity into the particularity implies a critical review of the temporalisation of historical spaces in a linear development scheme. The Sonderweg thesis accommodates the global historicist time in a twisted form of «first in England, then in Germany». Dwelling on a sequential order of progress, this line of thought sees Germany’s history as a history of lack or deviation in comparison with England as the West. The Eurocentric vision of the Sonderweg thesis consigned the dictatorial and less developed Germany/East to «an imaginary waiting room of history» on the way to the Anglo-American/Western democracy and development. This argument serves as the historical alibi of the modernist...
West because fascism and dictatorship are reduced to manifestations of the generic particularity of the pre-modern «Rest». Thus «West» is exempted from associations with a barbarism defined *ab initio* as pre-modern.

By problematising the *Sonderweg* thesis I will show that both the colonial modernity and *Sonderwege* have been constructed on the Marxist dichotomy between «American path» and «Prussian path» of capitalist development. The postcolonial reading of the *Sonderweg* would subject the Eurocentric conception of the «Prussian path» to the complexity of the hybrid modernity, which would complicate, rather than simply reverse, the narrative of modernisation and Eurocapitalism.\(^\text{13}\) At the same time, it would imply a critique of both Eurocentric Marxism and Third Worldism in compliance with Marxist historicism. Then I will bring a new perspective on the Marxist historiographical debate on colonial modernity versus *Sonderwege* by reconciling David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley’s criticism of the German *Sonderweg* thesis with the postcolonial critique of Marxist historicism.

1. Eurocapitalism and the Colonial Modernity

Geoff Eley’s remark on «the ironies of a British Marxist invoking anti-Marxist revisionist historiographies of the English and French Revolutions against West German anti-Marxists relying on discredited Marxist constructions of British and French history» may sound bizarre.\(^\text{14}\) However, Eley’s observation is intriguing especially because it insinuates the hermeneutical complicity of the Marxist and Whig historiographies of the bourgeois revolution. It gives us a clue to understanding the conundrum that the Russian bourgeoisie, more than any other class, welcomed *Das Kapital* as a scientific certificate to promote capitalism in Russia.\(^\text{15}\) Despite the political antagonism rooted in class differences, both the Marxist and Whig interpretations shared the ideal type of the bourgeoisie, who was supposed to perform the revolution from below and accelerate the nation-building, centralised state formation, democracy, and industrialisation.

The *Sonderweg* thesis had both Marxist and Whig historiographies as the undercurrent of its comparative perspective. The combination of A. J. P. Taylor’s Whig interpretation of German history and German social historians’ Whig conception of English history gave the main impetus to the *Sonderweg* thesis. Marxian perception of the bourgeois revolution and the transition from feudalism to capitalism brought the historical imagery into accordance with the Whig model of the development of capitalism and parliamentary democracy. In the case of the Marxist historicism one can replace the «Eurocentric» with the «capitalocentric» for its emphasis on


\(^{15}\) See A. Resis, «Das Kapital Comes to Russia», in: *Slavic Review* 29 (June 1970).
capitalism as a precondition for the transition to socialism.\textsuperscript{16} However, the capitalocentric view tends to be combined with the Eurocentrism especially when capitalism is believed to evolve endogenously only within (Western) Europe and thus Europe remains the «universal» blueprint.

Although the late Marx recognised the possibility of the multilinear development of capitalism, the West as the model for the normative capitalist development did not lose its dominant strategic position. The historicism in which the Marxian thought rooted, tends to temporalise the historical space on a linear timeline with the capitalist West at the top. Marx’s proclamation in the preface to \textit{Das Kapital} that the «country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future (!)» represents eloquently the unilinear temporalisation of space.\textsuperscript{17} The fact that Marx deleted the exclamation mark from this passage in the second edition of \textit{Das Kapital} (1873) did not mean the denial of the temporalisation of space.\textsuperscript{18} Despite the logical germ of the multilinear development of history in Marx, different paths of human evolution pursue, aim, converge, flow, and meet in a confluence of universal Eurocapitalism. To quote Timothy Mitchell, «the use of the idea of a singular historical time to reorganize the dispersed geographies of modernity into stages of Europe’s past finds its first clear expression in the work of Marx».\textsuperscript{19}

In the Marxian historical schema, the spatial difference between Germany/East/Colony and England/West/Empire coincides with the time difference between backwardness and forwardness. Marx’s frequent use of the prefix «pre» in the pre-capitalist mode of production suggests his linear development scheme. The Marxist controversy over the transition from feudalism to capitalism in \textit{Science & Society} (1950–1953) confirmed the universality of the Eurocapitalism by arguing for the endogenous development of the capitalist mode of production in Western Europe. In his \textit{Studies in the Development of Capitalism} (1946) that initiated the transition debates among Marxist historians, Maurice Dobb tried to discover the genesis of industrial capital in the light of the internal peculiarities of the English agriculture with a focus on the rise of yeomanry and the land expropriation from small peasants.\textsuperscript{20} The upshot was the rise of capitalism was due either to agrarian European forces, as represented by Maurice Dobb, or to commercial European forces argued by Paul M. Sweezy. Whatever the case, it would turn out to be Eurocapitalism.

\textsuperscript{18} For traces of the sophisticated change in Marx on the capitalocentric position see H. Wada, «Marx and Revolutionary Russia», in: T. Shanin (ed.), \textit{Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and the Peripheries of Capitalism}, London 1983, 40–75.
The Marxist Sonderweg comes into being in the womb of Eurocapitalism, which is most revealing in a contribution made by Kōhachirō Takahashi – a Japanese Marxist economic historian. Takahashi explicated Dobb’s «two ways» of capitalist development by contrasting «the classical bourgeois revolution of Western Europe» of England and France with «the erection of capitalism under the control and patronage of the feudal absolute state» in Prussia and Japan. Takahashi’s interest in this transition was initiated by the idea that eighteenth-century Europe was supposed to provide a yardstick for the development of Japanese society, which was shared by the Weberian Hisao Ōtsūka. Both Takahashi and Ōtsūka shared the view that Western Europe embodies the stages of development of world history in their pure and classical form and thus Western European history would provide a template for the analysis of the past and present of Japanese capitalism. In other words, the question of «why wasn’t Japan England?» was the driving force behind their study on the capitalist model in the West. From the same perspective, Korean Marxist historians tried to trace the capitalist development in pre-modern and colonial Korea.

It was Lenin who elaborated «two ways» of the capitalist development, prior to the 1950s’ controversy over the transition. The Leninist formulation of the Prussian path of a «bourgeois-Junker landlord economy» and the American path of a «bourgeois farmer economy» set up a template for the Marxist Sonderweg thesis. For Lenin, the Prussian path epitomised the peculiarity of the capitalist development in Russia. Considering that Russia was the Great Power with the Third World economy in late nineteenth century, the Prussian path may recapitulate the capitalist development in «the Rest». Later, Marxists generalised Lenin’s formula to contrast the «Prussian path» as the aberrant capitalism in «the Rest» with the «American path» as the model capitalism in the West. While Lenin was posing the question of «why wasn’t Russia England?» by elaborating two ways of capitalist development, Antonio Gramsci was tacitly questioning «why wasn’t Italy France?» by designing «passive revolution» to capture the Italian bourgeoisie’s «revolution-restauration».

Marxist historicism shaped by the Sonderweg discourse can be traced back to Marx and Engels. In contrast to the Leninist national self-determination and Maoist Third World revolution, Marx’s writings on the periphery of global capitalism seem to indicate the negligence of the disenfranchised colonial subjects and at the same time the endorsement of the colonialist role of modernisation. Engels was not less

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22 Conrad, The Quest for the Lost Nation, 176.
24 A. Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, New York 1971, 59, 106–114. It is captivating to read that many Marxist intellectuals in both post-colonial Korea and India have conjured up the «passive revolution» as a theoretical lever to define the contemporary political situation.
enthusiastic than Marx in his advocacy of colonialism as a locomotive of modernisation. For instance, Engels saw the failure of the «hopeless» uprising led by the Algerian leader Abd-el Kader against the French colonialism as «an important and fortunate fact for the progress of civilization».

Engels also advocated the American conquest of Mexico «in the interest of civilization», particularly because the «energetic Yankees» rather than the «lazy Mexicans» would give a new stimulus to world trade. It is captivating to read Marx’s long list of «Asiatic» countries covering India, China, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Turkey, Java, Tartars Persia, Russia, Mexico, Peru, Etruscans and even Spain under the Moors.

One can add the Slavs as «historyless people», formulated by Engels in 1848, to Marx’s list of «Asiatic» countries. As an analyst of contemporary politics, Engels predicted that the victory of the Slavic national movements by the Czechs, Croatians and other Southern Slav minorities would subordinate the civilised West to the barbaric East. Then trade, industry, knowledge, and civilisation would be subject to the primitive agriculture of the Slavic serfs. Only Poles were treated as an exceptional case because a Polish uprising would prevent a reactionary Russia from interfering in the European revolution. Certainly it is far-fetched to put Marx and Engels on the same track as the Nazi’s Eastern policy on the Slavic question. However, the question is not whether Marx and Engels were Slavophobic or not. What is to be problematised is that the definition of the Slavs as «historyless people» was justified in the interest of civilisation, trade, industry, and progress.

When news of the Taiping Rebellion reached Europe in 1850, Marx and Engels were pleased with a social upheaval in «the oldest and least perturbable kingdom on earth». According to them, the forthcoming Chinese revolution was not endogenous, but an exogenous revolution brought about by the British bourgeoisie who incorporated a reluctant barbaric people into the world trade and the civilised world. Though Marx was critical of British colonial atrocities, the brutality of British capitalism was deemed a historical necessity to destroy the transformation-resistant idyllic village communities in pre-colonial India. To quote Marx, «England [...] was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about a social revolution.»

Marx’s analysis of British rule in India addresses the inevitability of colonialism and its world-historical

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necessity because capitalist development in India supposedly required colonialism. Bill Warren’s argument for «imperialism as the pioneer of capitalism» seems to carry on the Marxian legacy more than the Leninist theory of national liberation.

Once set in the colonial context, Marxist historicism shaped by the Sonderweg particularism would repeat itself in «Asiatic» countries. Ironically, however, some colonial Marxists designed the Eurocentric unilinear conception of history as a «weapon of criticism» against red Orientalism to view the history of colonies as the stagnant «Asiatic Mode of Production». For instance, Namwoon Paik, the most prominent Marxist historian in colonial Korea, periodised Korean history as corresponding exactly with the Marxist model of development stages: primitive commune, slave economy, (Asiatic) feudalism, and capitalism. Apparently, his intention was to show the trace of Korean history on a par with Western history. By relying on the unilinear schema of world capitalist development, Paik undergirded the view of autogenous capitalism of the colonised Korea against Japanese coloniser’s theory of stasis and stagnancy. Motivated by the desire to overcome the colonialist’s Eurocentrism, Paik invoked a «consequential» Eurocentrism.

It is a historical paradox that liberal developmental economists – rather than contemporary Marxists – in postcolonial Korea have adopted a view closer to Marx and Engels’ on the historical development in Asia. Inspired by the rapid capitalist development especially since the 1960’s in South Korea, developmental economists captured the colonial modernisation under Japanese rule as a precondition for the advent of the semi-advanced capitalism in postcolonial Korea. By applying a comparative approach, they identified two factors for explaining the peculiarity of the swift capitalist development in South Korea: the small peasant economy in traditional societies and the experience of modernisation under Japanese colonial rule.

Their arguments of the Japanese colonial role in spurring modern capitalist development mirror Marx and Engels’s rationale on British colonial rule in India. According to them, «the historical DNA of the rational management accumulated in the small peasant economy» was the driving force behind the colonial modernisation and the rise of Korea to the Asian Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs) in the post-war era.

The political and ideological spectrum of the colonial-modernity narrative is so broad as to enlist different, conflicting and even symmetrically opposing historical schools. All parties involved in the polemic shared the capitalocentric view despite the divergence between the endogenous and the exogenous capitalism. What made this unlikely symbiosis possible on a discursive terrain is the commonality of

a linear developmental trajectory of a Eurocapitalism in transition from feudalism to capitalism. Especially the capitalocentric view immanent in Marxist historicism, be it a unilinear or multilinear development scheme of the history of mankind, gave rise to a Eurocentric vision. Eurocentrism was inevitable in the capitalocentric view according to which capitalism grew organically, evolved peacefully from feudalism in Europe and then disseminated to «the Rest». It is in this capitalocentrism that the hermeneutical complicity between the Marxist and Whig historiographies of capitalism has been nourished.

The crucial flaw common to all these colonial modernity and modernisation narratives, be they Marxian, liberal or colonialist, is their implicit denial of agency of the colonised subalterns; it ascribes the agency of colonial modernity exclusively to an external force, namely, colonialism. Colonial subjects against Western colonialism are treated very often as «pre-political» or «sub-political» historical actors who are ignorant of and even opponents of development in this modernist narrative.37 «Asiatic» social movements as «archaic» forms could be disregarded as the antithesis of progress such as capitalist development, mechanisation of the labour process, industrialisation, centralisation of power, the rise of the nation state, privatisation, etc. When the «history from below» approach brings the issue of colonial modernity into a new light in terms of modernist dominance and power, the Sonderweg thesis, Eurocapitalism and colonial modernity begin to sound different from the saga of progress and development.38

2. Dependency and the Colonial Sonderweg

In parallel with the colonial modernity discourse, there are some allusions to the colonial Sonderweg in Marx and Engels’s writings on the colonial question. The ambiguity in Marx and Engels on this question reveals not a linear trace but a crooked line between colonial modernity and Sonderwege. For instance, Engels reversed his view of the «hopeless» religious uprising in Algeria to pay homage to Abd-el Kader’s valour in 1857 and explicitly sympathised with the Bedouin’s independence movement. At the same time, he raised doubts about the revolutionary potential of the English proletariat. Their embourgeoisement was to shatter Marx and Engels’s belief that the socialist revolution in Britain would drive out all kinds of human oppression. The prospect that the victory of the English working class would bring freedom to India had to be changed when the possibility of a proletarian revolution in Britain faded away.

37 Categories of «pre-political» and «sub-political» were used by E. J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels, Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, New York 1959, 2, 5, 13, and passim.

38 It is true that a certain difference in nuance exists between modernity and modernisation. If modernity means the state-of-being that comes from the long-term interaction of coloniser and colonised, then modernisation is more top-down nuanced in the process of colonisation. But I use both terms depending on the context rather than on semantic definitions.
Engel's encounter with Irish realities opened up the possibility of reformulating the solution to colonial questions. What Engel witnessed during his travel to Ireland in 1856 was different from his and Marx's own forecast that British colonialism would bring progress to colonies. Immediately at the beginning of his journey, Engel recognised that British colonialism destroyed emerging Irish indigenous industries and kept Ireland as a pure agrarian country by imposing upon it the twin roles of commodity markets for English goods and suppliers of raw materials for English industry. What is more, the extra profit from colonial exploitation was believed to bribe the English working class into accepting the reformist agenda of the capitalist regime. Thus, the social revolution in England was no longer a precondition for Irish independence. On the contrary, national liberation of colonies including Ireland became a necessary condition for the social revolution in England.

In short, after 1867, Marx and Engel had to reverse the order of social emancipation in England followed by national liberation in Ireland.39

It is no wonder that «dependency» theoreticians and Third World Marxists began to reinterpret the Marxian legacy of national liberation. Dependency theoreticians were desperate to find the moment of beating red Orientalism in the later development of Marx and Engel's thoughts on «the Rest»: the abandonment of the idea of «England as the model», the overcoming of the prejudice against the peasantry, the recognition of the colonised subjects as agents in their own history and thus escape from the Eurocentrism.40 To copy today's «dependency» theory, what Engel saw in Ireland was the unrequited transfer of capital and surplus from the colony to the metropole through the process of unequal exchange between center and periphery. Dependency theoreticians have put emphasis on colonial plundering rather than on colonial modernisation. They have kept the basic premise that the surplus appropriation from the colony to the metropole lies at the heart of colonialism. According to this view, capitalist development or modernisation of colonies had walked a twisted path represented by «comprador capitalism». Comprador capitalists of (semi-) colonies, in collaboration with the colonisers, were supposedly reminiscent of the Sonderweg image of the German bourgeoisie who «become culturally subordinated within a traditional, authoritarian and aristocratic value system».41

The comprador capitalism was a sort of colonial version of the «Prussian path» to capitalist development and the comprador capitalist was the colonial equivalent of

40 For some attempts to save Marx from the suspicion of Eurocentrism by referring Marx and Engels on Ireland and the late Marx on Russia, see A. Nimtz, «The Eurocentric Marx and Engels and other related myths», in: C. Bartolovich / N. Nazer-

41 Blackburn, Peculiarities, 75.
the feudalised bourgeoisie. Lenin’s formulation: «the bourgeois revolution without bourgeoisie» seemed to fit in the colonial situation where the comprador capitalist lost the revolutionary will and energy. According to Lenin, the Russian bourgeoisie was neither willing to abolish the feudal serfdom nor able to lead the bourgeois revolution. Thus, the Russian proletariat should perform the bourgeois democratic revolution with the slogan of a democratic republic on behalf of and in spite of the bourgeoisie. Through the emphasis on the feudalisation of the bourgeoisie, the primacy of pre-modern traditions, bourgeois monarchists and semi-feudal backwardness in analysing the contemporary Russia, Lenin tried to characterise its capitalist development in Russia as a typical expression of the Prussian model. Lenin’s arguments for the Russian Sonderweg could be easily transferred to the colonial Sonderweg. The Polish Sonderweg is deemed a mediator between the Russian and the colonial Sonderweg.

For example, a representative Polish Marxist historiography reasserts Lenin’s thesis of 1907 according to which the Polish proletariat, aided by the peasants, had to perform the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution and nation-building, for the bourgeoisie and in spite of the bourgeoisie. The peculiarities of the Polish bourgeoisie under the Partition, who made compromises with the foreign absolutist powers can be summed up as the «Prussian path» of Polish capitalism. The Polish Sonderweg could have found its alibi in the second serfdom and feudal reaction in the late sixteenth century and in the peasant emancipation imposed by the Tsar in 1864. Despite all currents in Polish historiography that used the term «under occupation (pod zaborami)» instead of «colony», one can find a thread running from the Polish Sonderweg to the colonial one.

Colonial Sonderweg theoreticians in Korea argued that Japanese colonial rule arrested, deviated and deformed the capitalist development through the political alliance between Korean parasitic landlordism and colonial power. They believed that a miserable but inevitable deviation from the normal course of capitalist development was imposed by Japanese colonialism. Therefore, the origin of the developmental military dictatorship in South Korea should be traced back to Japanese colonial rule that deformed capitalism and obstructed bourgeois liberal democracy. Capitalism in colonial Korea was defined as a type of colonial dependency, deviated from the normal course of capitalist development and modernisation. Allegedly, the peculiarity of this dependency lay in the uneven division of labour between metropole and colony, the absence of bourgeois revolution, incomplete national economy, burlesque modernisation, bureaucratic capitalism, residues of feudal structures,
This supposed peculiarity is similar to that of the German *Sonderweg* and the «Prussian path» in Leninist terms.

As the colonial perversion presupposes the «normality» of the endogenous development of capitalism before the Japanese occupation, the sprout of capitalism as an inverted corollary must have existed in pre-colonial Korea. In this way, the colonial *Sonderweg* implied a reversed chronological order in which colonial plundering seemed to induce the sprout of capitalism in pre-colonial Korea, and this order resulted in the eurocentric perception of Eurocapitalism as a path of universal history. Those who promoted a counter-discourse to this Eurocentric scheme of Korean history by insisting on a different path of non-capitalist development were labelled as proponents of Asiatic stagnation and colonial modernisation. The discourse on the «Asiatic Mode of Production» would annul the nationalist critique of Japanese colonialism by negating the preexistence of capitalism to be plundered by Japanese colonialism. The «Asiatic Mode of Production» was supposed to share Marx and Engels’s classical view on the role of colonialism that was supposed to put an end to the stagnancy of the Oriental societies and to bring the material basis for the development of European capitalism.

In a historical framework, the particularism of the colonial *Sonderweg* could coexist only with the universalism of the pre-colonial capitalist development. The Indian modern historiography is another good example of the coexistence of particularism and universalism. Both conservative imperialists and their nationalist opponents showed «a continued effort to produce a rule of colonial difference within a universal theory of the modern regime of power».

It was a way of incorporating the history of India into the history of Britain by referring to the same framework of universal history. By constructing a consistent narrative of the capitalist development running from the precolonial past to the postcolonial present, the theory of the indigenous capitalism marginalised the role of colonialism and magnified the endogenous development of capitalism. However, it meant a concession to the categorical and explanatory hegemony of the Eurocapitalism by jumping voluntarily into the orbit of the capitalocentric world history.

Instead of the naïve denial of colonial modernisation, the colonial *Sonderweg* discourse in Korea has become more sophisticated so as to differentiate modernity of technology from that of emancipation. According to this version, colonial modernity is reduced to the «technological modernity» exclusive of industrialisation, economic growth and political engineering. The «emancipatory modernity» of democracy, political freedom, human rights, and disenchantment was missing in this technology-bound colonial modernity. Through this sort of modification, the colonial *Sonderweg* becomes more than a simple denial of colonial modernity. But it
returns to the Whig interpretation of the bourgeoisie, capitalism and modernity. Its binary demarcation of modernities of technology and emancipation mirrors the dichotomy between the «Prussian path» and the «American path». Despite its anti-colonialist agenda in historical writings, the colonial Sonderweg discourse set certain basic categories of Eurocentricity such as nation-state, capitalist development and modernity as the template to analyse the colonial situation.

Despite all the Eurocentricity, the colonial Sonderweg thesis is deeply anchored in the Third World Marxism. Its underlying political agenda is the non-capitalist way of development as an alternative to the «mis-development» of colonial modernity. In the Marxist discursive formation of the colonial Sonderweg, the social way of modernisation bypassing capitalism is represented by the modernity of emancipation, while capitalist development imposed by colonialism epitomised the modernity of technology.46 Reducing colonial modernity to modernity of technology, the colonial Sonderweg is shaped by the idea of socialism as an anti-Western modernisation project. Socialism in this sense becomes a means of attaining a modern industrial society and an autonomous nation state in a more effective way than capitalist modernisation. If capitalism connotes a modernisation imposed by Western colonialism, socialism would mean the endogenous modernisation combined with the idea of national liberation.

Thus, socialism turns itself into an ideology for the rapid economic development of countries in which the conditions of normal capitalist development do not exist.47 It was Stalin who elaborated socialism as the «follow and catch up» strategy of peripheries in spelling out the connection between the First Five-Year Plan and strategic concerns of the Soviet regime, which was shared by leaders of the Third Worldism such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Julius Nyerere, Mao Tse-tung, and Kim Il-song.48 Twisted by dependency theory, socialist autarky and Third Worldism, Marxism has become an ideology that advocates the accumulation of capital by the state.49 This critique reminds of Warren’s warning against the developmentalist twist of Marxism into a «modernising nationalism» and «a more suitable industrialising ideology than the ideologies of eighteenth and nineteenth-century capitalist industrialisation» in peripheries.50

Marxist historicism made it possible for the Third World Marxism to work as an ideological weapon to justify the «socialist accumulation of capital» by the state and the «follow and catch up» strategy of the peripheries. However, the nationalist vision

50 Warren, Imperialism, 6.
of socialism in the colonial Sonderweg thesis embedded the Eurocentric conception of civilisation in the anti-Western idea of world order. Colonial Sonderwege never denied the dichotomy between the Western model and the Eastern deviation. Their political message remains anti-Western for its socialist means, but the «follow and catch up» strategy accommodated within the Marxist historicism underlines the Eurocentricity in its goal. This strategy presupposes the temporal order from East to West in sequence and the «first in Europe, then elsewhere» structure of global historicist time. Eventually, the colonial Sonderweg thesis is another form of Eurocentrism which is comparable with colonial modernity and Eurocapitalism.

3. From the National to the Transnational

Colonial modernity and colonial Sonderwege have been sharply diverging on the role of colonialism in pioneering capitalism, colonial modernisation, the sprout of capitalism, small peasant economy, enlarged scale farming, the Asiatic Mode of Production, the agency of colonial subjects, and other minor points. However, both shared the theoretic-historical assumption concerning the dichotomy between the «American path» and the «Prussian path». The strategic position of the West as a model and the East as a deviation in the global historical discourse has remained unshaken. Dahrendorf’s question of «why wasn’t Germany England?» has been ubiquitous in historiographical debates in postcolonial states, which exemplifies the translatability of «singularity» into «particularity» within the Eurocentric «universality». That questioning implies the perspective shift of viewing Eurocapitalism through an inverted telescope from the place of «underdevelopment». However, this does not guarantee the alternative discourse to the Eurocentric history.

Many of the studies on asymmetrical comparison – on which the German Sonderweg thesis is based – presuppose the nation state as a basic unit of analysis and tend to essentialise historical peculiarities, identities, borders, culture, and collectivity of each analytical unit. The essentialisation of national history means fixing similarities and differences among the analytical units of the asymmetrical comparison. Essentialising differences between national histories would result in their hierarchisation within the unified single course of world history. In the case of the German Sonderweg thesis, this hierarchisation evolves from the dichotomy: the West as the model versus the East as the deviation. This evolution has tacitly placed Eurocapitalism as a teleological goal of world history, whether it follows the «Prussian path» or the «American path».

By taking «two ways» of capitalist development as the template to understand one’s own history, national historiography of colonial modernity or Sonderwege in postcolonial states have maintained Eurocentric historicism, temporalising historical spaces in a linear scheme of development.

If world history remains a mere aggregate of national histories, the sequential order of progress from one national history to another inherent in the Sonderweg
thesis seems inevitable. By criticising the classic Sonderweg argument that sees the Kaiserreich and the National Socialism as «pre-modern residues», Jürgen Kocka tried to rescue the asymmetrical historical comparison and the German Sonderweg.\footnote{Kocka, «Asymmetrical Historical Comparison» 45.} A decade later he went further to the suggestion of combining comparative history with the entangled and connected history. His new version of comparative history goes beyond comparison to comprehend historical encounters, interactions, relations, and transfers through comparison.\footnote{Idem, «Comparison and Beyond: Traditions, Scope and Perspectives of Comparative History» in: H.-G. Haupt / J. Kocka (eds.), Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives, New York 2009.} That sounds fairly experimental from a methodological perspective, but even that methodological experiment would remain liminal without the substantial critique of the historicism to temporalise historical spaces in a linear development and thus mark the location of each national history in the hierarchy of the global modernity.

A postcolonial reading of the German Sonderweg demands a radical break with the «authoritarian universalisation» of the comparative history «to make the cultural and historical patterns of capitalist Western Europe the established standards for all human history and culture».\footnote{K. Lindner, «Marx’s Eurocentrism: Postcolonial Studies and Marx Scholarship», in: Radical Philosophy 161 (May/June 2010), 28.} That demand urges us to put world capitalism as a single analytical unit in place of national economy. Transnational history of capitalism sounds more persuasive than «comparative history beyond comparison» because the former gives a vivid account of Eurocapitalism as a product not of the West but of an interaction between «the West» and «the Rest». It means to treat world capitalism not as a sole fixed entity, but as a changing and transforming unit of analysis, influenced by the transfer, interchange, interaction, and mutual relationship. Whether the late Marx saw capitalism as «a changing ensemble of worldwide relations that assumes different forms in specific regional and national contexts»\footnote{Ibid., 37.} or not, is beyond the scope of this article. It is certain, however, that Marx saw the bloody dawn of capitalism in the formation of a worldwide colonial system. Marx adumbrated a history of primitive accumulation, full of conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, and all forms of violence, which was peculiar to Eurocapitalism as a model course in the West.\footnote{Marx, Capital, 1: 895.}

All the arguments in favour of non-Western origins of modernity such as capitalism’s Caribbean origin, monitorial schooling’s Bengal origin, constructing English literature in colonial India and the invention of the Panopticon in Russia’s colonisation of the Ottoman territory do deny the assumption of a singular Eurocentric model of capitalism’s diffusion. This, however, does not mean that applying a simple counter – Eurocentric approach in order to explain the diffusion of modernity is the way forward. Instead, the historical formation of modernity can be grasped from...
the perspective of transnational and transregional interaction. A scrutiny of world capitalism through a transnational point of view would invalidate the dichotomy between West and East, American path and Prussian path, the original and the derived, model and deviation, universality and particularity, normality and peculiarity. The Sonderweg thesis as a «singularity» in the context of German history might be a dead herring, but a postcolonial reading of Sonderwege as «particularities» is still in progress.

ABSTRACTS

A Postcolonial Reading of the Sonderweg: Marxist Historicism Revisted

This article deals with the Sonderweg thesis by reconciling David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley's criticism of the German Sonderweg with a postcolonial critique of Marxist historicism. The global trajectory of Marxist historiography shows that the «singularity» of the Sonderweg came to be conceptually translated as «particularity» within the Eurocentric and capitalocentric «universality». This sublime transmutation of the singularity into the particularity through the Leninist trope of the «Prussian path» implies the temporalisation of historical spaces in a linear development scheme, which accommodates global historicist time in a twisted form of «first in Europe, then elsewhere». A postcolonial reading of the Sonderweg throws light on Marxist historiographical debates on colonial modernity versus Sonderwege by subjecting the Eurocentric conception of the «Prussian path» to the complexity of global modernity.

Eine postkoloniale Lektüre der Sonderwegthese:

eine neue Version marxistischen Geschichtsdenkens


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