

# ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИЯ: ПОЛЕМИКА ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИЙ

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## ON LENIN'S THEORY OF PRE-CAPITALIST SOCIALIST FORMATION\*

*В.И. Ленин предложил свою теорию докапиталистической социалистической формации. По мнению Ленина, традиционное аграрное общество с феодальной патриархальной системой было историческим предшественником докапиталистического социалистического общества. Режим политического развития докапиталистического социализма настаивал на объединении элементов социалистической политической цивилизации, включая культивирование нового социалистического гражданства через демократическую культуру и баланс сил, основанный на демократическом централизме. Самоуправляемый союз трудящихся масс мог бы стать формой развития социализма в будущем.*

### **Ключевые слова:**

*государственный капитализм, демократический механизм, докапиталистический социализм, новое гражданство, самостоятельное объединение рабочих масс, сырьевая экономика.*

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According to the conception proposed by Marx and Engels, several developed countries in this world would reach to the stage of socialism hand in hand after the full development of capitalism. While Lenin had a historical leap, for in practice socialist revolution won victory initially in economically and culturally underdeveloped countries, and proletariat regime was born before the full development of capitalism. Though overpassing the Cafudin valley of the capitalism, the achievements of capitalist civilization could not be overlooked. Lenin focused his later years on the speculation of how to make up for two fundamental elements of socialist development: productivity and democracy. According to Marxist principle of seeking truth from facts and the national conditions of Russia, Lenin proposed with innovation the theory of pre-capitalist socialist formation. A systemic summary of the theory is of great significance for us to clarify Lenin's idea of socialist development and promote new development of contemporary socialism.

### **1. Traditional Agrarian Society with Feudal Patriarchal System: the Historic Predecessor of Pre-capitalist Socialist Society**

Marx and Engels stated, “between capitalism and socialism, there must be a transition. The transition also takes place politically. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the proper way [12, p. 373]. “What we called here as communist society is derived from the capitalist society, so the traces can be detected in all aspects, financially, morally and mentally” [12, p. 363]. Marx and Engels reached these conclusions after the analysis of the conditions of developed capitalist countries. According to them, the birth of a new society had two premises: highly developed commodity economy and political civilization. Limited by the era they lived, Marx and Engels had never imagined that socialist society would be first born in underdeveloped society, but even so, it did offer a guide for Lenin's theory of pre-capitalist socialist formation.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, major capitalist countries entered into the stage of imperialism. Lenin proposed

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creatively according to the characteristics of times and the national conditions of Russia, that proletariat revolution could first take place in one or several underdeveloped countries. October Revolution, or Bolshevik Revolution, successfully helped proletariat seize the power, leaping over the Cafudin valley of the capitalism, achieving the historic transformation of the socialist movement. The new regime grew out of feudal patriarchal agrarian society, with the absence of two fundamental elements proposed by Marx and Engels. Lenin stated, "it is much less developed than the most underdeveloped country in Western Europe in such aspects as organization of the nation, level of civilization, preparation for socialism, and etc. [5, p. 128], which calls for theoretical innovation under the guidance of Maxism and based on the national conditions of Russia.

Lenin analyzed the national conditions of Russia, saying, "Russia has quite a different story, who has much less industrial workers than peasants" [11, p. 445]. "In our country, the proletarians have no superiority to peasants in population and low level of organization. The victory of the revolution lies in the great support from the poor bankrupted peasants" [11, p. 497]. "If peasants remain as peasants, there must be stimulation and motivation in match with the relevant economic situation." [11, p. 4]. Lenin insisted, "the foundation of socialism construction has not yet been available" [5, p. 78]. "We are beginners on the course of socialism, and we will never know how many stages for us to cover during the transition from capitalism to socialism" [5, p. 68].

Lenin realized deeply that traditional agrarian society with feudal patriarchal system was the historic predecessor of pre-capitalist socialist society and based on this, he raised a series of important conclusions about pre-capitalist socialist society.

## **2. State Capitalism and Commodity Economy: The Economic Form of Pre-capitalist Socialism**

In the light of historical reality of pre-capitalist socialism, Lenin insisted that rapid development of productivity was the momentous political issue of socialist countries. "Communism is the combination of soviet regime and electrification, or Russia would still be an agrarian society...We would never get triumph until electrification as foundation is achieved and industry, agriculture and transportation as symbols of modern industry have dramatically developed" [6, p. 156]. However, it would unavoidably be a long journey based on its agrarian predecessor. Lenin thought that this would never come true until the state capital-

ism developed independently and commodity economy gained sufficient cultivation, thus the birth of the economic form of pre-capitalist socialism.

### **2.1 The Gradual Transition to Socialism from the Stage of Independent Development of State Capitalism**

Firstly, essentially, state capitalism is the capitalism under the macro-control of the proletariat regime.

Lenin said that state capitalism "means the capitalism under the supervision and regulation of the proletarian state in a poor agrarian country with sever damaged economy" [11, p. 541]. By this definition, the major form of the state capitalism was non-socialist, which according to him had five economic parts: (1) patriarchal economy, which to a great degree belonged to the peasant economy. (2) small commodity production (including most of the peasants who sold food). (3) private capitalism. (4) state capitalism. (5) socialism. Lenin insisted, "the major struggle happens. Is that the struggle between the state capitalism and socialism? Definitely not! It is rather the mixture of petty bourgeoisie and capitalism struggles with state capitalism or with socialism" [5, p. 121]. During this period, the major forms of social economy were capitalism, small commodity production and socialism and basic social forces were the bourgeoisie, the petty-bourgeoisie (especially peasants) and the proletariat [5, p. 155]. State capitalism had four forms, respectively concession system, cooperative system, sale-by-proxy system and rental system [11, p. 509]. In November of the year 1922, Lenin once again declared, "in a socialist republic country, it seems quite odd that non-socialist elements hold priority to socialist ones. However, we have full realization that in Russia we have socialist agriculture as well as primitive agriculture, the patriarchal one. Thus the economic condition is more complicated than homogenized and highly developed" [11, p. 718]. Of course there was a premise that state capitalism must be supervised and regulated by the proletarian regime.

Secondly, state capitalism is an independent historical stage covering over decades of years' development.

According to Lenin, "the transition to communism, which would take years of preparation, requires a series of phases, like state capitalism and socialism", "or communism would only be a daydream of millions" [11, p. 570]. As a matter of fact, long before the Bolsheviks seized power, Lenin wrote in *The State and Revolution* (1917), socialist society was a comparatively independent social form, distinctively different from the future communist society.

16 In May of the year 1918, Lenin initially put forward the conception of “state capitalism” in *On «left» infantile illness and petty bourgeois*, saying “in soviet regime, state capitalism is the preparatory stage of socialism and is the guarantee of the final triumph of socialism” [5, p. 125], which runs throughout Lenin’s practice of socialist construction. In November of the year 1922, Lenin reaffirmed that “state capitalism is not a form of socialism, but to the current Russia, it is the most appropriate one. To be more specific, we have finished social revolution, and instead of overestimating the foundation of socialist economy, we’ve clearly realized that it may be the best to achieve socialism via state capitalism” [11, p. 660]. Thus safe conclusion can be drawn that the state capitalism, socialism, and communism are three stages of development that are interrelated but with obvious differences. “In countries free from revolution, more time is needed to step out of the situation” [11, p. 454].

## **2.2 Gradual Establishment of the Electrification-Based Productivity with the Commodity Competition Mechanism**

Firstly, Lenin emphasized that commodity economy was an unbridgeable historical stage during the development of human society.

Max once pointed out that “countries with developed industry show to the less developed the vision what the latter would have in future” [9, p. 8], and that “the preparatory period for the development of modern industrialization began with the universal desire of both individuals and countries for the currency” [10, p. 177]. Thus commodity economy is an unbridgeable historical stage during the development of human society. Based on fundamental principles of Marxism and the positive and negative aspects of Russian practice, Lenin deemed that “regular exchange of products is a way of transition from socialism to communism, former with characteristics derived from the fact that peasants take up for the majority of the population of Russia” [11, p. 501]. “Communism and commerce? The two seemingly unrelated concepts are not more unrelated from the economic perspective than communism and agriculture” [11, p. 614]. In May of the year 1921, Lenin formally put forward on the 10th National Congress of the Russian Communist Party that “as major lever for new economic policy, commodity exchange should be given priority” [11, p. 533], “with full investigation of the market” [11, p. 533]. Obviously, the commodity competition mechanism was officially born in Russia.

Secondly, Lenin put forward the macro and micro operation mechanism of commodity economy. Seen from macro perspective,

the new economic policy was essentially the economic form of macroeconomic regulation of the proletarian countries based on the construction of market configuration. On the Third Congress of Comintern from June to July in 1921, Lenin explicitly proposed “market and commerce as foundation” [3, p. 142], and he even put forward that “state capitalism falls back to state’s regulation of commerce and currency circulation” [3, p. 144], with later supplement emphasizing that “reform means activating commerce, small enterprises and capitalism instead of destruction of them with the premise of state regulation” [3, p. 146]. We could make a safe conclusion from the above passage that Lenin had proposed a commodity economic proposition under the control of the proletariat regime. From the micro perspective, Lenin proposed a series of commodity (market) operation mechanism. According to him, “state-owned enterprises adopt the principle of commerce and capitalism, named economic accounting” [11, p. 667], and the symbolic bud of socialism, the cooperative economy should be operated in the way of commodity economy [11, p. 620]. Diverse economic ownerships share the common development, forming a property right structure with diversified market economy. Besides, The Soviet regime also competed in the international market.

## **3. New Mechanism of Citizenship and Democracy: The Politics of Pre-capitalist Socialism**

According to Lenin, the core of socialist democracy is to let the working masses govern the country. Due to some historical reasons, the democracy of pre-capitalist socialism was far from being perfect. Lenin insisted that the bloom of socialism should be based on highly developed democracy. Besides, he put great emphasis on the combination of cultivating successors of democracy and reforming political systems and on the construction of developed socialist political civilization.

### **3.1 The Cultivation of New Citizenship through the Culture and Training of Democracy**

For the Soviet regime was derived from pre-capitalist feudal society, first priority was given to the creation of socialist democratic culture and the cultivation of new citizenship. Lenin emphasized in the following respects:

Above all, socialist citizenship education as a way for enlightenment was the precursor of the cultivation of new citizenship. Lenin pointed out, “all uncivilized phenomena in our life were due to the indulgence of ancient Russian ideas and barbaric Asian habits” [8, p. 348].

The low education level, “only can be raised through long-term education” [2, p. 212]. Lenin in his famous formula of socialism even regarded American national education as an important symbol for socialism. Via education, books, speeches, newspaper and etc., “workers, soldiers and farmers are universally educated and realize the importance of the country governance” [2, p. 66]. Therefore, education for citizenship should not be exclusive to capitalist countries, for which Lenin had proposed the issue of “socialist citizenship education”.

In the second place, the practice of governing the country was the core of the cultivation of new citizenship. Lenin mentioned that working masses should learn to govern the country from the books as well as the political practice. Therefore, the followings were to be done. First, the Party offered the guidance to the working masses for bottom-up inspection. Second, As supreme organ of state power, the Soviet regime should organize, educate and encourage the working masses to govern the country. Lenin pointed out, “in the Soviet regime, the working masses learn to govern the country and organize the nationwide production” [2, p. 76]. Third, the Labor Union, the institution to connect the Party and the working masses, was responsible to cultivate the masses for the country governance. Lenin said, “the workers are doing a very important thing, that is to cultivate proletarian leaders... who in every small place and unit learn to construct and help foster talents that are needed to govern and construct the country” [2, p. 250]. Fourth, mass meetings were held where the masses participated in the discussion of social issues. Lenin said, “the cultivation of the masses should always keep on. Instead, encouragement should be given to them so that they can be responsible for the state governance and economic management. Enough room should be left to them for free and full discussion before appropriate decisions are made” [2, p. 91–92]. The suitable way of discussion was the mass meeting.

In the third place, the self-development of civil group was the foundation of the cultivation of new citizenship. Lenin insisted, “the working masses founded the Soviet regime with their revolutionary passion and creation. Thus the regime aims to fight for the interest of all working masses and guarantee their development” [2, p. 25–26]. Therefore, autonomous organization of the masses should be operated and self-cultivation and development would not be a fantasy. According to Lenin, long-term development of civil society would lead to the final socialist society. The policy of founding and developing the civil society

he proposed aimed to activate all the masses and social groups to be fully creative in a Soviet country where socialist relationship was in domination. Lenin said, “go and see the masses, who are engaged in creative works through organizations and who are fighting for their promising future life. In the countryside, a lot of organizations sprout for farmers get in charge of lands and workers get in charge of factories” [2, p. 61].

### **3.2 The Balance of Power Based on Democratic Centralism**

The Soviet regime was derived from the pre-capitalist feudal society. It was urgent to make up for the democratic foundation. Lenin put extra emphasis on democratic centralism and the balance of power.

#### **3.2.1 Democratic Centralization as the Fundamental Principle of Organizing the Proletarian Regime**

Firstly, democratic centralization is the form of organization for proletarian regime and Party. It “distinguishes itself from bureaucratic centralism as well as anarchism” [2, p. 88–89], which not only ensured that the working people were the masters of the country, but also united them together, showing the superiority of socialist democracy. Lenin said, “the masses have right to promote any workers to the managerial position, which doesn’t mean that we don’t need leaders during collective work. Leader liability system and systems established according to leaders’ will are not encouraged. Without strong will that units all working masses together and work together as exactly as clocks, giant machines and enterprises, railways and other transportations cannot work in an appropriate way” [7, p. 181–182]. Facts prove that the Communist Party is the only power that can fully unit all working masses together and activate them to the full commitment to the socialist construction.

Secondly, according to socialist democracy, the proletarian vanguard got in charge of the country on behalf of the people. On one hand, the development of political democracy was hindered by small-scale peasant economy and related culture. Commodity was born to be fair to all. However, the period in Western Europe when commodity economy enjoyed full development was absolutely absent in Russia. “Russia is no doubt an Asian country which is the most barbaric, underdeveloped with medieval characteristics” [1, p. 45]. The historical condition like a nightmare had severely impeded the course of Russian modernization. Even the democratic system was established, the cultural quality of people was still to be raised. Therefore, Lenin said, “the Soviet regime is governed in principle by the working

18 masses; actually, it is governed by the proletarian Party on behalf of the working masses.” On the other hand, the governance of the country by the proletarian Party on behalf of the working masses was decided by the reality. The old power would never stop the struggle with the Soviet regime. From 1921 to 1924, Lenin adopted an ideal organizational form, “the meeting for representatives of non-Party workers and peasants”, ending in failure. Marx and Engels insisted that the dictatorship of the proletariat was the only proper form during the transition period. In Russia, the vanguard of the working class was exclusive to the Bolshevik Party. Thus essentially, it governed the country on behalf of the working masses.

### **3.2.2 The Balance of Power as the Effective Principle to Guarantee the Operation of Proletarian Regime**

Firstly, organizations of the Party and organizations of the working masses coordinate vertically. Lenin insisted that, proletarian basic organizations have both up-bottom leadership and bottom-up supervision. Without the leadership of proletarian Party, the dictatorship of the proletariat would be phantom. He emphasized labor union consisted of major constructors of the new society, the working masses. Lenin said, “labor union is non-Party, we should be cautious, never requesting the members politically” [2, p. 158]. In terms of staffing, the members of the labor union were encouraged to be the committee members of supreme organ of state power, economic department, factory management and administration. In terms of the national business, labor union encouraged the working masses to political practice to make sure that the working masses be benefited from all the policies to be made, e.g. setting wage and supply standard. Besides, labor union was responsible for the supervision of the Party and the prevention of state bureaucracy.

Secondly, people’s supervision was concentrated on the Party and the state’s highest power. Lenin designed a feasible plan for the supervision. Inside the Party, the Central Supervisory Committee composed of grassroots Party members held the same position as the Central Committee. The Procuratorate of Workers and Peasants composed of the working masses have the right to supervise the state organs. Then the Procuratorate of Workers and Peasants and the Central Supervisory Committee were merged, thus the mechanism of returning supreme right to the working masses. Outside the Party, Lenin designed an effective way to run the power openly. Take Public Reception for example, regulations about the time of public reception were put

up by every Soviet department. The working masses were supposed to get free access to the reception room without any pass [2, p. 171]. Take Mass Meeting System for example, “the real democracy for the working masses is to hold the meeting by themselves...where they get rid of the villains...where they learn to live as they like, fight for their own interest and run the meeting according to the Soviet principle” [2, p. 125]. The Complaint Reporting System was also initiated by Lenin. In addition, Lenin promoted the system environment to fulfill democracy, “the best halls and meeting places are available for the working masses”, “the best printing places are in the charge of workers”, and etc. [2, p. 79–80].

Thirdly, decision making central system and brain-power system cooperate horizontally. The coordinative unity of central system and brain-power system is the symbol of modern political system for decision-making. As a matter of fact, Lenin had designed an effective system. He repeatedly emphasized the role that exerts played in the governance of a country. He insisted that the Party members learn from the experts. He criticized the members in the Party who had overlooked the importance of experts, stressing, “we should remind those writers and officials who show off in front of experts that it is not really a wise testimony of not knowing our own laws” [2, p. 66]. Furthermore, Lenin decided to unit all experts together in the form of State Planning Commission, “and develop it into committee of experts” [2, p. 206]. It had legislative functions and directly contacted with Soviet decision-making departments. Lenin said, “the decisions made by the State Planning Commission should not be overthrown simply by ordinary deliberation, unless there is an extraordinary procedure” [11, p. 750].

## **4. The Self-guided Union of the Working Masses as the Trend of Pre-capitalist Socialism**

Lenin based his proposal of the self-guided union of the working masses on the detailed theoretical exploration of pre-capitalist socialist mode and the practice of socialist construction.

### **4.1 The Cooperation-based Commodity Economy as the Future Economic Operation Mode of the Socialist Society**

Lenin gradually concluded from the practice of new economic policy, that in the future, the operation mode of the socialist economy would be cooperation-based commodity economy.

Firstly, as an important form of state capitalism, cooperation-based economic system



developed, as the label of the transition to socialism. Lenin insisted, “during the transition from state capitalism to socialism, cooperatives facilitate themselves by uniting all the citizens together” [11, p. 507]. “The success of the cooperation policy will enable us to develop small-scale economy, which with voluntary union blooms into large-scale production in a long-run” [11, p. 508].

Secondly, cooperation-based economic system is the economic form of future socialist society. For the development of cooperation-based economic system in the state capitalism, Lenin admitted frankly, “we have totally changed our view of socialism” [11, p. 773]. Facts prove that cooperative is the core of the socialist society. As Lenin had said, “isn’t it what we need? Isn’t it cooperatives, we once despised for doing business that we depend on to achieve the construction of socialism? It is not the whole socialist society thing, but the foundation” [11, p. 768].

Thirdly, commodity economy is the operation mode of future cooperatives. During the 10th National Congress of the Russian Communist Party, Lenin insisted that, “support must be given to the credit business of cooperatives”, “the majority of commodity exchanges is achieved by cooperatives while free legal trade are not excluded”, “market is fully investigated”, and “state-owned enterprises are allowed for lease to cooperatives and other organizations” [11, p. 533]. He deeply realized that the cooperative economy must be transformed into cooperative system in commodity economy. The members of cooperatives “are doing business, a long distance to becoming a civilized business man. They are now doing business in an Asian way, but it may need a whole era for them to be a real businessman doing business as Europeans do” [11, p. 770]. In *On Cooperatives*, Lenin insisted, “cooperatives are everything of socialism and the way to operate is doing business” [11, p. 768].

## 4.2 Labors’ Participation in State Governance: the Maturity of the Socialist Superstructure

Essentially speaking, democracy means “governance and power belonging to the working masses” [4, p. 23]. Facts prove that socialist democracy is the real democracy in which the working masses have the right to be decision-makers. Lenin said, “Socialism is not born according to the superior commands”, and “lively and creative socialism was established by the masses” [2, p. 13]. During the Democratic Revolution, initial stage of regime construction, the period of war-communism-policy, and the period of new economy policy, forms of power changed dramatically and frequently, but Lenin’s ideal of democracy lasted. The moment the Soviet regime was established, Lenin declared that “dear workers, just remember, it is you that are governing the country” [2, p. 18]. On the 7<sup>th</sup> National Congress of Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), Lenin highlighted that “we should decide by ourselves. Citizens should participate in courts and state administration. It’s quite important for us to encourage all the working labors to participate in the governance. It’s a tough task. But socialism will not be fully and truly achieved until millions and millions of working masses take part in” [2, p. 77]. Even after the Bolshevik Party became the only legal Party in Russia, Lenin insisted that the construction of socialism should not only depend on Party members, but on all people. The Communist Party, the vanguard of the proletariat, was guiding the country to socialism. However, it is only a very small part of the whole country [11, p. 509]. “If we defeat capitalism and combine power with peasant economy, we would be undefeatable. Then socialist construction would not only be the business of the Party, but of all people” [11, p. 677].

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