JOURNAL OF WORLD-SYSTEMS RESEARCH

ISSN: 1076-156X | Vol. 31 Issue 2 | DOI 10.5195/JWSR.2025.1304 | jwsr.pitt.edu

Wallerstein after '68

Marxism and the Making of *The Modern World-System*

Sam Chian
Independent Scholar
samchian1@gmail.com

Abstract

This article examines the intellectual foundations of Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems analysis, focusing on the formative period of the late 1960s and 1970s. It traces how Wallerstein's evolving engagement with Marxism—shaped through dialogue and debate with contemporary scholars—contributed to the development of his theoretical framework. Rather than treating Marxism as a fixed doctrine, Wallerstein approached it as a method of critical inquiry, adapting and extending it to better account for the historical dynamics of the capitalist world-economy. By situating his work within key academic debates of the era, the article highlights the central role Marxist thought played in shaping both his conceptual innovations and his enduring political commitments.

Keywords: Capitalism, Marxism, Samir Amin, Dependency Theory, Unequal Exchange, Imperialism

New articles in this journal are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 United States License.

This journal is published by Pitt Open Library Publishing.

...like all great thinkers, there was the Marx who was the prisoner of his social location and the Marx, the genius, who could on occasion see from a wider vantage point. The former Marx generalized from British history. The latter Marx is the one who has inspired a critical conceptual framework of social reality.
—Immanuel Wallerstein (1974b: 393)

Debates over Immanuel Wallerstein's relationship to Marxism have circulated since the publication of his landmark work, *The Modern World-System*, in 1974. From the outset, even his critics were sharply divided: some, like Ernesto Laclau (1977), argued that Wallerstein strayed too far from Marxist orthodoxy, while others, such as Aristide Zolberg (1981), criticized him for remaining too closely tethered to Marxist categories.[1] Despite these early controversies, subsequent scholarship has largely avoided sustained engagement with the specifics of Wallerstein's relationship to historical materialism. Although many studies have explored aspects of his life and intellectual legacy, a focused analysis of his place within the Marxist tradition remains conspicuously lacking.

This article takes up that neglected terrain by foregrounding the "long 1970s" as a decisive period in Wallerstein's intellectual and political formation. In doing so, it argues that Wallerstein's relationship to Marxism was not incidental or peripheral to his project, but central to it. It follows from my earlier article, "Immanuel Wallerstein as Africanist: From Modernisation to Marxism in the 1960s" (Chian 2025a), published in *Review of African Political Economy*, which examined the decisive role of Wallerstein's work in and on Africa. That article traced how his immersion in African decolonization movements, his intellectual exchanges with figures such as Frantz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, Amílcar Cabral, and Samir Amin, and his political engagement during the student uprisings at Columbia University in 1968, catalyzed his departure from modernization theory and pushed him toward a Marxist-inflected critique of capitalism. It demonstrated that the foundations of world-systems analysis were forged not in abstraction but through Wallerstein's close engagement with anti-colonial struggles, class dynamics, and systemic inequality on the African continent. Given that period has already been covered, the present article does not revisit those developments in detail. Instead, it turns to what followed: Wallerstein's deepening engagement with Marxism in the years after 1968, and the ways in which his work challenged and extended the meaning of historical materialism in a world-systemic frame.

While a handful of biographical accounts have touched on this topic, including those by Goldfrank (2000), Williams (2020), Calhoun (2023), and Jacob (2023), they have tended to understate the degree to which Wallerstein's project was shaped by Marxism.[2] Of these,

[1] In spite of criticizing Wallerstein for his supposed deviation from Marxism, less than a decade later, Ernesto Laclau himself would openly move away from Marxism, becoming a leading figure in the emergence of "post-Marxism" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

[2] There also exists an Italian-language intellectual biography of Wallerstein by the sociologist Orlando Lentini (1998), *La scienza sociale storica di Immanuel Wallerstein*. This work has not been translated, and information about its

Goldfrank's account, initially published in 1988 and expanded in 2000, remains the most comprehensive. It presents Wallerstein as "very much a materialist" (Goldfrank 2000: 187) and firmly situates world-systems analysis within the Marxist tradition. However, as its primary objective is to elucidate the development and method of world-systems analysis, it leaves out much of the detail regarding Wallerstein's sustained engagement with Marxist thought.

Williams (2020: 38), for his part, acknowledges Wallerstein's proximity to Marxist thinkers, but ultimately opts to categorize his work within the broader field of "radical political economy," portraying him as "ambivalent about Marx" and more concerned with critiquing Marxism's shortcomings than building upon its insights. Calhoun's (2023) analysis centers on Wallerstein's role within U.S. sociology and his challenge to disciplinary orthodoxy, largely bypassing his conceptual debts to the Marxist tradition. Jacob's (2023) brief account minimizes these connections even further, reducing Marxism to a background presence and offering only a single, indirect mention of its influence.

Taken together, these accounts tend to understate the extent to which Wallerstein's work developed through a continuous, if critical, dialogue with Marxism as a mode of analysis oriented towards historical transformation, class dynamics, and the structural logic of capitalism on a world scale. The argument advanced here is both simpler and more direct: Wallerstein was a Marxist, and his theoretical innovations, however heterodox, ought to be understood within the long tradition of Marxist thought. He did not adhere to "orthodox Marxism," nor did he conceal his disagreements with various strands of Marxist theory. But to equate critique with distance is to misread the dialectical nature of his project. From the late 1960s onward, Wallerstein not only drew on Marx's foundational concepts and theoretical framework but did so consistently through the lens of Marx's mode of inquiry.

To disassociate Wallerstein from Marxism is not a neutral act of academic taxonomy; it is a political move. On one level, such a move risks sanitizing his radical critique, reducing it to a set of technical tools that can be used without regard for their revolutionary implications. On another, it invites a form of intellectual myopia: one that abstracts world-systems analysis from the very history of class struggle and anti-imperialism that gave rise to it.

The sections that follow trace Wallerstein's theoretical trajectory through the long 1970s, examining how he adopted, adapted and debated elements from the Marxist tradition. In doing so, the article reasserts the centrality of Marxism to his project—not as dogma, but as a living method shaped by history, and as a political commitment oriented toward the structural transformation of the world-system itself.

contents remains unavailable in English, leaving it largely inaccessible to non-Italian readers. It is also not cited by any of the works mentioned above.

Unthinking Sociology

In the two decades following the Second World War, historical sociology entered a prolonged period of eclipse. Within the mainstream of American sociology, the field became increasingly detached from historical inquiry, subordinated instead to an ahistorical functionalism whose chief architect was Talcott Parsons. Parsonian sociology, with its emphasis on equilibrium, normative integration, and abstract systems, proved ill-suited to grasping the turbulent histories and contradictions of capitalist development. The parallel rise of what C. Wright Mills ([1959] 2000) famously termed "abstracted empiricism," exemplified by Paul Lazarsfeld and the Columbia school, further narrowed the field, privileging quantitative data collection and methodological formalism at the expense of theoretical and historical depth. Mills ([1959] 2000), who served as an early mentor to Immanuel Wallerstein, criticized both tendencies in his now classic work *The Sociological Imagination*.[3]

Across the Atlantic, the intellectual climate in Western Europe was no more hospitable to historical approaches. There, the ascendancy of structuralism, especially in its Saussurean and Lévi-Straussian variants, recast language, culture, and ideology as systems governed by internal codes, largely autonomous from material history. Even Marxist thought was not immune: the structuralist Marxism of Louis Althusser and the early writings of Roland Barthes similarly downplayed historical development in favor of static models and synchronic analysis.

Yet this intellectual landscape began to shift by the close of the 1960s. The anti-colonial uprisings of the period and growing dissent within the capitalist core created the conditions for a revival of historical thinking within the social sciences. In this moment of ferment, a renewed historical sociology emerged, animated by a desire to reconnect social analysis with the *longue durée* of capitalist transformation, state formation, and class struggle. At the forefront of this turn were scholars such as Barrington Moore Jr., Eric Hobsbawm, Perry Anderson, Charles Tilly, and Immanuel Wallerstein.

Wallerstein's intervention was, however, singular in both scope and ambition. Where others sought to reintroduce time into sociological inquiry, Wallerstein insisted that space, too, must be rethought. His world-systems perspective challenged not only the temporal abstractions of structural functionalism but also the methodological nationalism embedded in modernization theory. Against the dominant orthodoxy, which treated nation-states as isolated units progressing linearly through preordained stages of development, Wallerstein proposed a radical reconceptualization: capitalism, he argued, must be understood as a historical social system, one that from its inception was global in reach and dependent upon the unequal integration of core, periphery, and semiperiphery.

The hegemony of modernization theory in the postwar academy was a reflection of Cold War imperatives. Figures like Seymour Martin Lipset (1959) and Walt Whitman Rostow (1971) advanced visions of capitalist development tailored to the ideological needs of the United States

[3] For a deeper analysis of Immanuel Wallerstein's formative intellectual influences during his first decade at Columbia University, see Chian (2025b).

in its global struggle with socialism and decolonizing movements. Lipset's (1959) "modernization hypothesis" famously argued for a causal link between economic growth and "stable" democracy, positing that countries could only achieve the latter through the former. Rostow, in his 1960 work *The Stages of Economic Growth*, subtitled with pointed clarity as "A Non-Communist Manifesto," outlined a teleological model of development in which all nations moved, more or less inevitably, through a series of stages toward capitalist maturity. "The stages-of-growth," Rostow (1971: 2) declared, "constitute an alternative to Karl Marx's theory of modern history."

Yet this framing of Marxism, which Rostow and others deployed as a foil, bore little resemblance to Marx's own thought, which never proposed a strict unilinear theory of stages (Dobb [1942] 2001; Hobsbawm [1964] 2011). Such a rigid historical sequence was codified much later, notably in the widely disseminated Soviet textbook *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course* (Central Committee of the C.P.S.U.(B.), [1938] 1939), which contributed to the emergence of what Wallerstein (1976b: 345) would deride as "the Stalinist version of developmentalism." This framework was however drawn from earlier antecedents, as similar deterministic formulations had already been advanced by Second International theorists like Georgi Plekhanov and Karl Kautsky (Löwy [1981] 2010). It was precisely this theoretical lineage, marked by its fatalistic view of "progress" and its Eurocentric accommodation to imperialist hierarchies, that shaped Wallerstein's critique of Second International Marxism.

By the latter half of the 1960s, Wallerstein's faith in modernization theory had already begun to erode, shaken by a decade of close engagement with the African continent (Chian 2025a). Yet it was the global upheavals of 1968, as he would later attest, that dealt the decisive blow (Wallerstein and Lemert [2012] 2016). Anti-imperialist uprisings, student revolts, and ideological ruptures of that year exposed the bankruptcy of modernization theory as both an analytic framework and a political project. With that break came an equally sharp disillusionment with developmentalism, the economic corollary of modernization theory. The real-world constraints facing postcolonial states made clear that their problem was not a lack of development, but their subordinate position within a world capitalist system. "Developing countries," Wallerstein (1971: 361) observed, "do not have external colonies to exploit and they are faced with preexisting industrial states with the power and the will to intervene in their internal affairs. This is the problem of imperialism."

By this point, Wallerstein's thinking had moved decisively into the orbit of Marxist and anti-imperialist critique. His work in the late 1960s and early 1970s increasingly intersected with the dependency theorists and the tradition of imperialism analysis centered around *Monthly Review* (The Editors 2019). Central to this perspective was the insistence—shared by thinkers such as Samir Amin and Andre Gunder Frank—that imperialism was not a late or accidental development of capitalism, but a fundamental and enduring component of its historical existence. As Samir Amin ([2002] 2004: 7) put this argument, implicitly critiquing Lenin's phraseology, "Imperialism is not a stage—not even the highest stage—of capitalism: It has always been inherent in capitalism's expansion." So firmly did Wallerstein come to view imperialism as a structural feature

of capitalism that, by the late 1970s, he largely abandoned the term itself—not to deny its reality, but to emphasize its systemic permanence. This same critique informed his later opposition to the concept of "globalization," which he labeled a "deception," seeing it merely as a contemporary rebranding of traditional Modernization theory (Wallerstein 2000a, 2011e).

Wallerstein's (1967, 2004d) early critique of neoclassical developmentalism was shaped in part by the work of Raúl Prebisch and his colleagues at the UN Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) in the 1950s. Prebisch's central contention, that international trade was structurally imbalanced, exposed the asymmetries between developed and underdeveloped economies. The industrial "center" (developed nations), he argued, secured terms of trade that systematically disadvantaged the primary-producing "periphery" (developing nations). This insight formed the basis of what would later be formalized as the theory of unequal exchange. In *Accumulation on a World Scale* Amin (cited in Brolin 2007), openly acknowledged his intellectual debt to Prebisch the ECLA tradition, even as he radically extended its logic.

Wallerstein, likely via Amin, similarly acknowledged the significance of Prebisch's center-periphery dichotomy as an analytical frame. Yet he remained critical of the political and theoretical conclusions drawn by Prebisch. Whereas Prebisch and his allies saw import substitution industrialization (ISI) as a path toward autonomous development, Wallerstein rejected such solutions along with the broader modernization paradigm. Developmentalism, he argued, suffered from two principal flaws: it was mechanistic rather than dialectical, and it relied on prefabricated models of progress instead of adapting political praxis to concrete historical realities (Wallerstein [1975] 1979c).

Though his categories and findings were later taken up by some Marxists, Prebisch's assumptions were rooted in Keynesianism, and his structuralist developmentalism, despite certain overlapping conclusions, does not appear to have been directly influenced by Marxist political economy (Love 1980). Prebisch's center-periphery concept was however likely drawn from the once-Marxist Werner Sombart, as well as the Romanian economist Mihail Manoilescu (Brolin 2007). Nevertheless, Prebisch's concepts, together with the "longer view" analysis of the Marxist economist Paul Baran, helped lay the groundwork for the emergence of dependency theory in the 1960s (Hopkins 1982).[4]

In his pioneering 1957 book *The Political Economy of Growth*, Baran ([1957] 1973: 267–268) posed the question: "...why is it that in the backward capitalist countries there has been no advance along the lines of capitalist development that are familiar from the history of other capitalist countries…?" Against the culturalist assumptions of dominant development theories, Baran insisted that underdevelopment was not a result of traditionalism but a direct product of the structural constraints imposed by imperialist exploitation. In this, Baran overturned the Eurocentric teleology embedded in Marx's oft-cited assertion that "The country that is more developed

[4] From his appointment at Stanford in 1948 until his death in 1964, Paul Baran was likely the only openly Marxist economist to hold a faculty position at a U.S. university (Foster 2000).

industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future" (Marx, cited in Foster 2007).[5]

Baran's work would prove highly influential on André Gunder Frank (1966), who synthesized its core insights with those of emerging Latin American theorists to articulate his foundational "development of underdevelopment" thesis. Arguing against the linear assumptions of modernization theory, Frank contended that underdevelopment in the global South was not a stage to be overcome but a structural outcome of the same historical processes that produced development in the global North. His formulation was explicitly taken up by Wallerstein (Wallerstein [1974] 2011a) in the first volume of *The Modern World-System*.

The Latin American dependency theorists, commonly referred to as *dependistas*, were a group of primarily Marxist economists and sociologists who, during the 1960s and 1970s, developed a critique of international economic relations grounded in the structural realities of peripheral underdevelopment. Among the most prominent were Ruy Mauro Marini ([1973] 2022), who introduced the concepts of "super-exploitation" and "subimperialism," and Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1972), noted for his theory of "dependent development." As Theotônio dos Santos (1970: 231) succinctly put it, dependency refers to "a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected."

Wallerstein's conception of imperialism was deeply shaped by the work of French economist Arghiri Emmanuel's 1969 book *Unequal Exchange: A Study of the Imperialism of Trade*, which Wallerstein frequently cited (Wallerstein 1979a; Hopkins and Wallerstein 1982).[6] Emmanuel ([1969] 1972b) argued that international trade between countries with vastly different wage levels facilitates a systematic transfer of surplus value from the periphery to the core. Commodities produced in low-wage economies (typically in the periphery) are exchanged for goods produced in high-wage economies (in the core), creating an inherently unequal structure of exchange. This wage-based disparity, he contended, acted as a major barrier to development in the periphery: "By transferring, through non-equivalent exports, a large part of its surplus to the rich countries, [the poor country] deprives itself of the means of accumulation and growth" (Emmanuel, ([1969] 1972b: 131).

Notably, in *Unequal Exchange*, Emmanuel (cited in Galtung 1980: 195) observed that, "the forecasts of Marxism, which have begun to show signs of losing reality within the context of the industrial nations, are being realized to perfection on the scale of world economy [sic]."

[5] It is worth noting that Marx never fully developed a theory of geographical inequality or uneven development in his works. While interregional exploitation was not a primary focus, he did acknowledge the possibility that "one nation can grow rich at the expense of another" (Marx [1848] 1910: 226). Marx intended to address international trade and the world market in the projected fifth and sixth volumes of *Capital*, but these were never completed. His engagement with these themes remained largely confined to the preparatory notes and fragments associated with the third volume (Marx [1858] 1983).

[6] In 1972, Wallerstein shared an early draft of what would become his landmark essay, "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System," with Arghiri Emmanuel (1972a), who replied warmly, writing: "I really liked your papers and I completely agree with you on the main points."

Wallerstein (1985: 379–380) would later articulate a similar sentiment, arguing that "...underdevelopment is a concept that opens the door to analyses which alone will be able to confirm the essential thrust of Marx's insight into world-historical development, and most specifically into the historical processes of the capitalist mode of production."

In the late 1960s, Wallerstein's engagement with dependency theory deepened, particularly as he began to explore its historical dimensions. This shift was shaped by his reading of a distinctive set of Marxist historians, most notably those affiliated with the British journal *Past & Present*, including Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm, R. H. Tawney, Victor Kiernan, and Rodney Hilton (Goldfrank 2000).[7] Perhaps most pivotal, however, was his encounter with the work of Polish economic historian Marian Małowist (Wallerstein [2002] 2004c). Małowist influenced Wallerstein in two key ways. First, his research on sixteenth century Eastern Europe, particularly the "second serfdom" in Poland, helped Wallerstein ([1974] 2011a) grasp how peripheralization and labor coercion were not remnants of feudalism, but products of early capitalism itself, thus suggesting that core-periphery relations had structured capitalism from its inception. Second, through Małowist, Wallerstein was introduced to Fernand Braudel's ([1949] 1972) monumental *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*.

Braudel, a central figure of the second generation of the Annales School (following Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, whom Wallerstein had read during his doctoral studies in Paris), would become a foundational influence. Most significantly, Braudel introduced Wallerstein to the concept of the *économie-monde* (world-economy), and to the idea of multiple social timescales—particularly the *longue durée*, or structural time—which became essential to Wallerstein's ([2002] 2004c) historical method. As Braudel ([1987] 1993: 34) put it, "It is the contrasts between the realities observed on different timescales that makes possible history's dialectic." His emphasis on long-term structures and material factors, such as climate, geography, trade patterns, helped Wallerstein see capitalism not merely as an economic system but as a world-system with deep historical roots.

Equally important was Braudel's reconceptualization of capitalism. Unlike conventional accounts that associated capitalism with competitive markets, Braudel saw it as driven by monopolies and elite control, describing it provocatively as a system of the "antimarket" (Wallerstein 1991: 354). Braudel ([1969] 1980) also championed history's place among the social sciences, in contrast to those who confined it to the humanities. He pursued not just interdisciplinarity, which he likened to "a legal marriage between two neighboring sciences," (Braudel, cited in Aguirre Rojas [2005] 2016a: xxxv) but rather what he called "a sort of generalized promiscuity" (Braudel, cited in Aguirre Rojas [2005] 2016a: xxxv) among

[7] *Past & Present* drew considerable inspiration from the *Annales* approach to history and maintained a longstanding, mutually respectful relationship with the journal (Hill, Hilton, and Hobsbawm 1983).

disciplines—an ethos that Wallerstein would fully embrace in his own synthesis of history and social theory.[8]

Wallerstein would ultimately extend Braudel's skepticism toward rigid disciplinary boundaries to the point of questioning the very existence of his own field. In a letter featured in the November 1971 edition of *The American Sociologist*, Wallerstein (cited in el-Ojeili & Hayden, 2023: 1) asserted that

> [t]here is no such thing as sociology if by sociology we mean a "discipline" that is separate and distinct from anthropology, political science, economics, and history.... They are all one single discipline which I suppose we may call social science.

Wallerstein's shift away from modernization theory toward Marxism was not merely coincidental with his growing disillusionment with sociology as a bounded discipline. It was a logical extension of his evolving worldview. The difficulty of demarcating Marxist sociology from Marxist economics, political theory, or philosophy, as many scholars have noted, points to the integrative and holistic character of Marxist analysis itself. This entanglement reflects the comprehensive framework through which Marx approached social reality, making it difficult to assign him to a specific discipline or even categorize him as "multidisciplinary." Marx's intellectual project was instead, as Samir Amin (2010: 9) has contended, the "beginning of the radical critique of modern times," a legacy Wallerstein consciously carried forward.

The Roots of Modernity

Despite Immanuel Wallerstein's eventual position as an inveterate critic of modernization theory, it was the premises of that very paradigm that initially led him to explore the origins of capitalism, culminating in his 1974 magnum opus, *The Modern World-System*. Motivated by his growing dissatisfaction with prevailing literature on the comparative study of national societies, combined with his foray into the world of the sixteenth century, Wallerstein ([2002] 2004c: 87–88) set out in the late 1960s to investigate what he would later call a "bad idea." He hypothesized that since the African states he had been studying were "new nations," it must mean that by looking into the "development" of European nations when they too were "new nations" (Wallerstein [1974] 2011a: xviii) some five centuries earlier, insights could be derived about Africa's potential for following similar paths.

Over the course of his research, however, Wallerstein concluded that sixteenth century Europe could not be compared to twentieth century Africa in any meaningful sense, due to their vastly different material circumstances and structural positionings. Although his original premise

[8] Wallerstein (1999c: 22) was also influenced, though to a lesser extent, by historian William H. McNeill, particularly in relation to cultural dimensions of world history and the role of "mythistory" in shaping societies. The influence was mutual; McNeill (1990) later acknowledged the value of Wallerstein's world-systems approach in the 25th anniversary preface to *The Rise of the West*.

was admittedly misguided, it fortuitously led him to crucial discoveries about the very essence of the capitalist system's mode of operation. Partly influenced by Samir Amin's ([1970] 1974) *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment*, Wallerstein realized that from its very inception capitalism had constituted a world-economy, thereby negating the validity of analyzing the system as circumscribed by individual nation-states (Valiani 2021).[9] This, in turn, made him conscious of the fact that since their institutionalization in the middle of the nineteenth century, the social sciences had, whether explicitly or implicitly, been structured around the framework of the nation-state (Wallerstein 2004d).

In mainstream social science, the state was regarded as possessing internally coherent political, economic, cultural, and various other unities—each understood to function independently and to evolve along parallel trajectories. Observing the intrinsic interconnectedness and interdependence of capitalist nations, Wallerstein came to see such an approach as fundamentally flawed, as he understood social action to occur within the framework of larger "historical systems." His unit of analysis would therefore not be the nation-state, but rather the entire *world-system*.

This newfound perspective was first presented to the public in his 1973 presidential address to the African Studies Association, wherein he stated towards its end that "Africa is today part of a single world-system, the capitalist world-system, and its present structures and processes cannot be understood unless they are situated within the social framework that is governing them" (Wallerstein 1973: 10).[10] Such a profound shift in approach, termed Wallerstein's "Copernican move" by Georgi Derluguian (2015: 457), involved recognizing that the modern world-system represents a departure from previous types of world-systems, due to its manifestation as a *capitalist world-economy*. Understanding the modern world thus necessitates grasping the historical processes of the capitalist world-economy's creation, functioning, and expansion.

The concept of *world-economy* is meant to indicate that capitalism, unlike other historical systems, contains "a single division of labor within which are located multiple cultures…but which has no over-arching political structure" (Wallerstein 1976b: 348). Rather than being held together by a centralized polity, the world-economy's political superstructure takes the form of a comprehensive *interstate system* (Wallerstein 1984b). States incorporated into this system do not retain autonomous political trajectories; instead, their structures are embedded within and shaped by the broader interstate framework (Wallerstein [1989] 2011c).

As a consequence, pre-existing states face three possible paths: evolving into entities that fit within this interstate framework, being supplanted by new political formations that conform to this system, or merging into an existing state within the interstate system. This economically governed political superstructure is precisely what makes possible the increased transfer of surplus "from

[9] Amin's book, released in French in 1970, derived from his 629 page doctoral dissertation completed in 1957, coinciding with the year Baran published *The Political Economy of Growth* (Ahmad 2019).

[10] As Gregory P. Williams (2023) has pointed out, while Wallerstein first detailed his conception of the modern world-system in his 1973 presidential address to the ASA, signs of this fully formed idea were already present in an earlier article of his on Amílcar Cabral and the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC).

the lower strata to the upper strata, from the periphery to the center, from the majority to the minority" (Wallerstein [1974] 2011a: 15–16), on a scale unseen in prior economic systems.

In contrast to his mentor Fernand Braudel, who viewed history as comprising multiple coexisting world-economies functioning as autonomous entities, serving as the foundations for European-cum-global capitalism, Wallerstein ([1980] 2011b) posited that a singular capitalist world-economy emerged in sixteenth-century Europe and its American dependencies, standing as the sole entity of its kind. While Braudel identifies the thirteenth century Italian city-states as the birthplace of capitalism, Wallerstein, aligning more closely with Marx, argues that this transition occurred in the "long sixteenth century," spanning roughly from 1450 to 1640 (Wallerstein [1980] 2011b; Aguirre Rojas [2005] 2016b).

From that point onward, the spatial boundaries of the world-economy expanded, and its structural tendencies deepened through successive waves of development, ultimately leading to the global system we observe today. Wallerstein ([2002] 2004c) understands previous societal systems to have been either *world-empires* or *mini-systems*, a typology he attributes to the economic sociologist Karl Polanyi. While these categories are Wallerstein's (2004d) own conceptual innovations, they draw inspiration from Polanyi's ([1957] 1992) tripartite model of economic integration: reciprocity (which Wallerstein equates with mini-systems), redistribution (the organizing principle of world-empires), and market exchange (the foundation of world-economies).

In the essay where Polanyi ([1957] 1992: 39) outlines these forms, he emphasizes that they "do not represent 'stages' of development," as "no sequence in time is implied." He further notes that "several subordinate forms may be present alongside of the dominant one, which may itself recur after a temporary eclipse" (Polanyi [1957] 1992: 39). This insight, particularly the notion that older societal structures can resurface, would come to inform Wallerstein's evolving views on the prospects for socialism.

The *dependistas* and Wallerstein shared a broadly similar understanding of global geographical polarization, though they employed slightly different terminologies. Some, like Samir Amin, referred to the "center" and "periphery" to describe international divisions, while others, like André Gunder Frank, used the terms "metropole" and "satellite" to characterize the relations between dominant and subordinate regions (Chase-Dunn, et al. 2020). Due to the hierarchical connotation implied by the term *center*, Wallerstein instead adopted the term *core* to describe a multicentric zone comprising a group of dominant states. A key innovation in his framework was the introduction of an intermediate category: the *semi-periphery*. Though distinct in content, this concept bears a resemblance to Ruy Mauro Marini's notion of "subimperial" states and Johan Galtung's "go-between nations" (Wallerstein 1974a).[11]

Within this three-tiered structure, core and peripheral activities are distinguished by their roles in global commodity chains. Coined by Terence Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein (Hopkins and

[11] Although formulated around the same time, Wallerstein's tripartite division of the world is entirely unrelated to the "Three Worlds Theory" of the Communist Party of China, initially introduced by Deng Xiaoping in 1974. For more information on this theory, see Yee (1983).

Wallerstein 1977: 128) in the 1970s, the term commodity chain refers to the path a product takes from its initial point of production to its final point of consumption, with the goal of "trac[ing] back the set of inputs that culminated in this item." Viewed through this lens, core activities are those which yield disproportionately high returns, while peripheral activities offer low returns along this chain. As there are no *semiperipheral* activities according to Wallerstein (2004d: 29), these regions are understood to be areas with "relatively even mix" of core and peripheral activities. He did, however, emphasize that the division of states into core, semi-periphery, and periphery should be understood as a heuristic device—an analytical simplification rather than a fixed taxonomy (Wallerstein 2000b).

The early dependency theorists posited that the core regions necessarily held the world's industrial base, in contrast to the peripheries which remained largely non-industrialized. Raúl Prebisch (1950) famously argued that this dynamic inherently led to deteriorating terms of trade for underdeveloped nations, due to factors like technological advances in manufacturing and lower income elasticity of demand for primary commodities. Wallerstein (1979a) expanded on this foundation by situating it within the broader structure of the international division of labor, incorporating insights that aligned more closely with Arghiri Emmanuel's theory of unequal exchange. Emmanuel ([1969] 1972b: xxx), diverging from earlier thinkers such as Prebisch, contended in his book *Unequal Exchange* that the conventional understanding of underdevelopment through terms of trade was fundamentally flawed, calling it "an optical illusion." Instead, he located unequal exchange in the global wage differentials between core and peripheral workers, arguing that it was the exploitation of cheap labor in the periphery, rather than mere trade imbalances, that served as the primary driver of persistent underdevelopment.

That core regions exploit peripheral regions through colonialism and subsequent forms of neocolonial domination, underpinned by some form of unequal exchange, had been accepted by quite a few Marxists. However, in contrast to the viewpoints put forth by economists like Arghiri Emmanuel or Ernest Mandel, who located the origins of unequal exchange in the wage differentials that emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Wallerstein ([1983] 1996) argued that such wage disparities have been embedded in the capitalist world-system since its inception. Tracing what Samir Amin (1975: 46) called "the early roots of unequal exchange," Wallerstein ([1983] 1996) pointed to earlier instances of this phenomenon predating those commonly acknowledged, such as Western Europe's active underdevelopment of Poland in the sixteenth century.[12] For Wallerstein, unequal exchange was not a historical byproduct of capitalism but one of its foundational features: a permanent structural mechanism enabling the continuous transfer of surplus from periphery to core.

Some scholars have noted parallels between the views of Rosa Luxemburg and Wallerstein on imperialism, particularly in their shared perspective on the continuous nature of "primitive accumulation" (Balibar 2021: 45). Others have argued that it is in fact Nikolai Bukharin, the

[12] In his glowing review of *The Modern World System* published in *Monthly Review*, Samir Amin (1975: 43) called the book "a powerful, synthesized, overall vision which has none of the defects of a unilateral thesis." He went on to assert, "We therefore consider that this is an outstanding contribution to historical materialism" (Amin 1975: 43).

Bolshevik revolutionary and Marxist theorist, whose ideas most closely anticipate the world-systems approach (Chirot and Hall 1982; Chase-Dunn [1989] 1998). This similarity is chiefly attributed to Bukharin's (cited in Chirot and Hall 1982: 88–89) distinct focus on the unequal division of labor across nations, articulated in his 1915 work *Imperialism and World Economy*, where he writes:

> The cleavage between "town and country," as well as the "development of this cleavage," formerly confined to one country only, are now being reproduced on a tremendously enlarged basis. Viewed from this standpoint, entire countries appear to-day as "towns," namely, the industrial countries, whereas entire agrarian territories appear to be "country."

Understanding the world-economy to comprise a single international division of labor led Wallerstein (1974b) to the recognition that modes of labor control were merely different mechanisms for extracting surplus value, rather than the defining features of alternative social systems. All labor power integrated into the global circuit of capital was, in his view, commodified, and hence subject to the law of value (Wallerstein 1974b). As such, labor forms traditionally considered external to capitalism, such as serfdom in Eastern Europe and slavery in the Americas, were within the framework of capitalism's relations of production. On this basis, Wallerstein (Wallerstein 1974b: 390) rejected the classical conception of successive developmental stages, proposing instead that "if we are to talk of stages, then—and we should talk of stages—it must be stages of social systems, that is, of totalities."

Entering the Fray

When publishing *The Modern World-System*, subtitled *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, Wallerstein ([1974] 2011a) was consciously inserting himself into the longstanding Marxist debate on the emergence of capitalism. Decades later, he described his intellectual positioning as follows: "...conceptually what I was doing was putting together the core-periphery antinomy with Braudel's *longue durée* and *économie-monde*, and linking it to the Paul M. Sweezy pole of the transition debate" (Wallerstein, 2004b: 222).

The Dobb-Sweezy debate, a significant mid-century exchange between Marxist economists Maurice Dobb and Paul Sweezy, centered on the historical transition from feudalism to capitalism. In *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, Dobb (1946) argued that the decline of feudalism was driven primarily by internal factors—class struggle, economic inefficiencies, and resistance from below—rooted within the feudal mode of production itself. Sweezy (Sweezy, et al. [1976] 1978), in his critical response, contended that these internal dynamics were insufficient to explain the rise of capitalism, and instead emphasized the crucial role of long-distance trade and the growing power of urban merchant capital. Where Dobb (1946) offered an empirically grounded, nation-centered analysis, Sweezy (Sweezy, et al. [1976] 1978) advanced a more theoretical,

international account that stressed the impact of exogenous economic forces on domestic social relations.

Building on the Dobb-Sweezy debate, the so-called Brenner Debate emerged in the late 1970s, initiated by the historian Robert Brenner. Rejecting commercialization and world-market explanations, Brenner (1976) insisted that capitalism arose not from trade but from historically specific class relations in the English countryside. The transformation of feudal property relations into a tripartite structure of landlords, capitalist tenants, and wage laborers, he argued, laid the groundwork for sustained increases in productivity and accumulation (Brenner 1976). In this account, it was the reconfiguration of surplus extraction within agrarian society, not the growth of commerce, that marked the real rupture with the feudal order.

In a subsequent polemical piece, Brenner (1977) directly targeted Wallerstein, Frank, and Sweezy, whom he grouped under the label "neo-Smithian" Marxists. His critique centered on what he saw as their displacement of class relations from the core of economic history. Although these theorists sought to refute the optimistic developmental assumptions of Adam Smith, Brenner argued that they inadvertently reproduced the linear and commercialist logic of classical political economy. The result, in his view, was an alternative theory of capitalist emergence that mirrored the very "progressist" narrative it aimed to transcend (Brenner 1977).

Although Wallerstein challenged the notion that wage labor is the defining feature of capitalism, he consistently underscored the importance of situating the capitalist world-system within its historical class dynamics. In fact, *The Modern World-System* (Wallerstein [1974] 2011a) contains many original insights into the nature of the world's class structure in the long sixteenth century. Yet class analysis never assumes a central place in the overarching framework of the volume—a point that led some Marxists, most notably Robert Brenner, to criticize Wallerstein for sidelining the role of class struggle in the genesis of the capitalist mode of production. While it is true that *The Modern World-System* does not offer a comprehensive theoretical treatment of class, as Wallerstein (1995b) pointed out elsewhere, neither does Marx's *Capital*.

Even so, Brenner's (1977) grouping of Wallerstein with Paul Sweezy and André Gunder Frank under the label of "neo-Smithian Marxism" glosses over important differences. His charge that their work displaced class relations from the core of historical explanation arguably held more weight in the case of Frank than in that of either Wallerstein or Sweezy. As John Bellamy Foster (1986: 177–178) has noted, Frank's interpretation of Paul Baran's underdevelopment-thesis significantly downplayed the importance of internal class dynamics and "class-based accumulation," reflecting what Foster describes as a "Schumpeterian-like view of suppressed industrial entrepreneurship." Foster contrasts this with Amin's more rigorous application of Baran's analysis, which retained an emphasis on class dynamics—something Foster deems essential to any materialist account of development.

Frank's neglect of class-based accumulation was not a passing omission. It foreshadowed a deeper paradigmatic break. By the early 1990s, Frank had abandoned the category of capitalism altogether, proposing instead the existence of a 5,000-year-old world economy with China at its center, which he termed simply "the world system" (Frank and Gills 1993). In adopting this view,

Frank (1998) broke decisively with Wallerstein and other world-systems thinkers with whom he had previously aligned. He rejected the idea, central to both Wallerstein and Marx, that the modern world-economy emerged around 500 years ago with western Europe at its core, arguing instead that such a position was not merely incorrect but fundamentally Eurocentric. Modes of production, he now claimed, were no longer analytically relevant, and he dismissed capitalism itself as a mere "figment of [Marx's] imagination" (Frank, cited in Wallerstein 1999a: 369).

Wallerstein ([1974] 2011a: xxix), for his part, argued that by ignoring the role of productive relations and abandoning the concept of capitalism, Frank had basically arrived back around to the "circulationist" premises of neoclassical economics. As for the charge of Eurocentrism, Wallerstein (1974b: 400) responded that his own framework traced the rise of northwest Europe not to cultural superiority, but to a series of historical contingencies—what he termed "accidents." Frank, by contrast, failed to explain this shift altogether, leaving the reader with no alternative but to infer precisely the kind of European exceptionalism he claimed to oppose (Wallerstein 1999a).

Another major critique of *The Modern World-System* came from the neo-Weberian sociologist Theda Skocpol (1977), who charged Wallerstein's analysis with being overly economistic and teleological. Her central concern was that by collapsing the political and economic spheres into a single analytical domain, Wallerstein underestimated the capacity of states for autonomous action and disproportionately emphasized economic determinants. Contrary to Skocpol's belief in distinct logics governing the market and the state, Wallerstein ([2002] 2004c) sought to demonstrate that a single, unified logic operates across the entire world-system. He did, however, not view the state simply as "a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (Marx and Engels [1848] 1978: 475). Instead, his perspective leaned slightly more towards that of Nicos Poulantzas in the Miliband-Poulantzas debate on the nature of the capitalist state, recognizing the "relative autonomy of the state," due to there being "so many versions of 'bourgeoisie' or 'middle classes' that it is hard to argue that any one of them actually controls the state in the direct mode of the Marxist aphorism" (Wallerstein 1988a: 98).[13]

Regarding the relationship between the economy and politics under capitalism, Wallerstein's position broadly aligned with that of the classical Marxists. As Rosa Luxemburg (cited in Magdoff 1970: 237) succinctly put it:

> …political power is nothing but a vehicle for the economic process. The conditions for the reproduction of capital provide the organic link between these two aspects of the accumulation of capital. The historical career of capitalism can be appreciated only by taking them together.

At the same time, Wallerstein ([2003] 2004a) was acutely critical of simplistic economic reductionism. He opposed interpretations grounded in what he called "crude Marxism," in which a "one-to-one short-term correlation between economic gain and political position" (Wallerstein

[13] For a more detailed discussion of Skocpol's critiques of Wallerstein, as well as his relation to other theories of the state, see Garst (1985).

[2003] 2004a: 94) is presumed. As he put it, "crude Marxism never works, because nothing is one-to-one and the short term is, as Fernand Braudel said, 'dust'" (Wallerstein [2003] 2004a: 94).

Wallerstein ([1980] 2011b) further developed his views on the role of state structures in capitalism in *The Modern World-System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600–1750*, published in 1980. In this volume, he introduced the concept of the "interstate system," formalized with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, as a constitutive feature of the modern world-system. Alongside this, he elaborated the notion of state "hegemony," defined as "a short moment in time when a given core power can manifest *simultaneously* productive, commercial, and financial superiority over *all other core powers*" (Wallerstein [1980] 2011b: 39), a position which Wallerstein argued the United Provinces were the first to hold.

While, for Raúl Prebisch (1950), the defining characteristic of a center state within his structuralist framework was its advanced industrial base and capacity for capturing the returns on rises in productivity, for Wallerstein (2004d), the defining characteristic of a core state is its level of *strength*. According to Wallerstein ([1980] 2011b), a state's strength correlates with how its "owner-producers" perform in the global economy, which he proposes five political measures of: first, "mercantilism," reflecting state aid to compete internationally; second, "military power," indicating a state's impact on others' competitive abilities; third, "public finance," assessing how well a state mobilizes resources without diminishing profits; fourth, "bureaucratic efficiency," measuring the swiftness of tactical decisions; and fifth, the political balance among owner-producers, meaning their capacity for forming a "hegemonic bloc" as per Gramsci, crucial for overall state stability. This fifth element, which he alternatively calls "the politics of the class struggle," he believed to be "the key to the others" (Wallerstein [1980] 2011b: 113).

In keeping with Marx, Wallerstein understood class struggle as the driving force of historical change under capitalism. Yet his conception of class formation, particularly the twin processes of proletarianization and bourgeoisification, was distinctive. Though these ideas figured implicitly in his early work, it was only in the decades that followed that he gave them more sustained, if somewhat unsystematic, attention (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1982; Balibar and Wallerstein [1988] 1991). What stands out, however, is not the novelty of the terminology but the way in which he employed it, always within a Marxian methodological frame. Nowhere is this clearer than in his treatment of capitalist class structures. Rejecting Weberian approaches that rely on static ideal types—a tendency he saw many self-identified Marxists unwittingly adopting—Wallerstein insisted on viewing classes as historically situated and in constant motion (Wallerstein 1979b).[14] As he put it plainly: "class analysis loses its power of explanation whenever it moves towards formal models and away from dialectical dynamics" (Wallerstein 1975: 367). For Wallerstein,

[14] Marx never established definitive criteria for assigning individuals to particular social classes. This point is underscored by the infamously abrupt ending of the manuscript for the third volume of *Capital* ([1894] 1981), which breaks off right when it seems to broach the topic of class more concretely. Still, what Marx does offer is a powerful and suggestive formulation rooted in his broader dialectical method. As he writes, "The specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producers determines the relationship of domination and servitude, as this grows directly out of production itself and reacts back on it in turn as a determinant." (Marx [1894] 1981: 927).

class was not a category to be pinned down but a relation to be traced through the unfolding contradictions of the world-system.

Beyond Marx, Through Marx

In the opening chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon ([1961] 2004: 5) called for Marxist analysis to be "slightly stretched" when dealing with matters concerning colonialism. This injunction was one Wallerstein took seriously, who not only embraced it within the context of colonialism, but also expanded its application to broader analyses. Wallerstein's intellectual foundations were significantly shaped by a diverse range of Marxists who, like Fanon, approached Marx's writings not as sacred dogma but as a methodological point of departure. Among them was the Hungarian philosopher György Lukács ([1919] 1972), who infamously argued in *History and Class Consciousness* that one could, in principle, reject all of Marx's specific conclusions and still be deemed an "orthodox" Marxist, so long as one adhered to Marx's method (Sweezy [1942] 1956).

Lukács's ([1919] 1972) conceptualization of orthodoxy was not predicated doctrinal fidelity but was rather anchored in a rigorous methodological commitment—specifically, to a totalizing, dialectical, and historically grounded analysis of social reality. Wallerstein's own methodological stance was firmly in this tradition. He characterized his approach as employing a "dialectical mode of analysis" (Wallerstein [1975] 1979: 64), within which the "law of value" was understood to be the central governing principle of capitalism (Wallerstein 1999b: 20–21), and in which the examination of the "world class struggle" was indispensable for apprehending its vicissitudes (Wallerstein 1980a: 124). Evaluated within this context, Wallerstein's intellectual project can be firmly situated within the contours of an orthodox Marxism.

However, Wallerstein's understanding of Marxist orthodoxy diverged sharply from that of Lukács. Whereas Lukács ([1919] 1972) defined orthodoxy in terms of adherence to a core method, Wallerstein (2011a) used the term to denote a set of tendencies he found analytically inadequate within much of Marxist scholarship. These included: one, a commitment to methodological nationalism (Wallerstein 2011a); two, a restricted view of the historical agents of class struggle, specifically regarding the definition of the proletariat (Wallerstein 2011a); three, the classification of the underdeveloped world as occupying a "prebourgeois" stage of development (Wallerstein 1974b); four, an adherence to a progressive, or "Whig," interpretation of history (Wallerstein 2004d); five, the belief that the factory system is a *sine qua non* of capitalism (Wallerstein 200d4); and six, a preference for a "productionist" over a so-called "circulationist" model of capitalism (Wallerstein 2004d). He regarded figures such as Maurice Dobb and Robert Brenner as notable proponents of such "orthodoxy," characterizing their work as reflective of an "England-centered Marxism" (Wallerstein 2004d: 103).

Perhaps the most egregious example, in Wallerstein's view, of this limited orthodoxy was found in the work Bill Warren, a Marxist theorist and long-time member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Since the early 1970s, Warren had argued that colonialism and imperialism

played a historically progressive role in the development of the global South (Foster 2019). His influential posthumous work *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism* (Warren 1980) took this claim even further, by essentially trying to prove the opposite of Frank's (1966) "development of underdevelopment" thesis, prompting Wallerstein to remark that its aim appeared to be "to show how Marxism leads you straight into modernization theory" (Aguirre Rojas [2005] 2016b: 113). Warren (1980) rejected dependency theory altogether, attributing its rise to what he saw as a deviation introduced by Lenin's ([1917] 1939) *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* and codified in the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920. In contrast, Wallerstein (1967a: 16–17) regarded that same congress as a key moment of theoretical advance, particularly for its recognition of the structural relationship between "oppressed nations and oppressor nations"—a formulation he saw as breaking decisively with earlier Eurocentric assumptions in Marxist strategy.

Marxism is far from monolithic, encompassing a variety of tendencies and schools of thought. Wallerstein viewed this diversity not merely the result of different interpretations but also as a reflection of the tensions present in Marx's writings themselves (Aguirre Rojas [2005] 2016b). For Wallerstein (1970), Marx's foremost contribution was providing a method of analysis rather than a fixed worldview, allowing for its integration into numerous perspectives. Hence, he would wryly observe, "one can find Marxists on every side of every question" (Wallerstein [1980] 2011b: 7). Later in his career, Wallerstein (1988b) often invoked the notion of "two Marxes," a concept he attributed to Moroccan historian Abdallah Laroui.[15] Within this interpretive duality, Wallerstein clearly aligned himself with one Marx over the other, frequently associating the less favored version with what he termed "orthodox Marxism." While he refrained from labelling the alternative perspective, his own theoretical practice made clear his commitment to a more historically flexible, world-systemic reading of Marx.

Perhaps the clearest articulation of Wallerstein's (1985) own understanding of Marxism appeared in his essay "Marx and Underdevelopment," originally presented at the newly established Fondazione Istituto Gramsci in 1983. Written as a subtle rejoinder to his Marxist critics, who had accused him of downplaying class dynamics and of favoring a "circulationist" framework over an analysis rooted in productive relations, the essay aimed to show that Marx could be read quite differently (Wallerstein and Lemert [2012] 2016). Drawing on a broad range of Marx's writings, Wallerstein demonstrated the possibility of an alternative interpretive tradition, one that undergirds and legitimates his own world-systems approach. His point, however, was not to reclaim Marx from his opponents by proving them unfaithful to some canonical line. Consistent with his earlier claim that there are "many Marxes," he dismissed the idea of a "true Marx" as analytically unhelpful (Wallerstein 1970, 1985). [16]

[15] Although written before Wallerstein (1984a) first employed the expression "the two Marxes," his usage bore no relation to Alvin Gouldner's (1980) conceptualization of "the two Marxisms."

[16] Wallerstein also pointed out that Marx, like other classical writers, has often been misread or misquoted. As he sardonically remarked, "if you try hard enough, you can make Marx into an advocate of capitalism and [Adam] Smith into a Marxist" (quoted in Schouten 2008: 2).

What is of particular significance is that in "Marx and Underdevelopment" Wallerstein (1985: 388) outlined what he regarded as "the six major theses of the Marx corpus," which, in his view, "quite adequately" account for the historical development of the capitalist system:

> Thesis 1: "Social reality is a process of ceaseless contradictions, which can only be apprehended dialectically."
> Thesis 2: "Capitalism is a process of ceaseless accumulation of capital, which distinguishes it from precapitalist modes of production."
> Thesis 3: "Capitalism as an historical system involves the transformation of the productive processes such that they create surplus-value which is appropriated by bourgeois in order to accumulate capital."
> Thesis 4: "Capitalism over time polarizes the social organization of life such that more and more persons are grouped as either bourgeois or proletarians, and that the proletariat suffers immiserization."
> Thesis 5: "In a capitalist world, the state is an instrument of capitalist oppression; socialism involves the withering away of the state."
> Thesis 6: "The transition from capitalism to socialism cannot be evolutionary; it can only be revolutionary. To believe otherwise is utopian in the negative sense of that term."

Wallerstein (1985), however, attached a crucial caveat to how these theses should be interpreted. If Marx's ideas were merely taken to be applicable within the confines of state boundaries and relevant mostly to urban, wage-earning industrial workers under the employ of the private industrial bourgeoisie, he warned, "then these ideas will be easily demonstrated to be false, misleading, and irrelevant and to lead us down wrong political paths" (Wallerstein 1985: 388–389). In contrast, if they are viewed from the perspective of a "historical world-system, whose development itself involves 'underdevelopment,' indeed is based on it, they are not only valid, but they are revolutionary as well" (Wallerstein, 1985: 389).

To this list, Wallerstein (1985: 393) added a seventh thesis, "one about which Marx was unequivocally wrong." This final thesis was the belief that capitalism represented historical progress over prior systems and would necessarily give way to a classless society. As he pointedly observed, "This is socialism utopian, not socialism scientific" (Wallerstein 1985: 393).

Interestingly, the way in which Wallerstein addressed this error in Marx's work was by drawing on yet other parts of the Marx corpus. He suggests, for example, that the end of capitalism would not necessarily usher in socialism; instead, it could pave the way for alternative class-based systems (Wallerstein 1982). In this way, Wallerstein drew on Marx's own open-ended ontology to challenge and revise some of Marx's conclusions.[17] While Wallerstein's viewpoint might seem at variance with Marx's overall vision in the *Manifesto*, which suggests a communist horizon, it is worth recognizing that Marx also introduced the possibility of "common ruin" as another potential

[17] On Marx's open-ended critique and its implications for historical analysis, see Foster (2018).

outcome (Marx and Engels [1848] 1978: 474). Wallerstein's position thus aligns with a longer tradition of Marxist thought, most notably Rosa Luxemburg's (Luxemburg [1915] 2004: 321) famous formulation of the historical crossroads: "socialism or barbarism."[18]

Wallerstein was, if not more critical of capitalism than Marx, certainly less inclined to acknowledge its supposed virtues. While *The Communist Manifesto* famously celebrates the dynamism and civilizational achievements of the bourgeoisie, no such admiration is to be found in Wallerstein's writings. He not only rejects the idea that capitalism is historically progressive but also refuses to view it as the lesser evil when compared to previous systems. For Wallerstein (1980b: 180), capitalism represents the worst social system humanity has yet devised. As he starkly put it, capitalism is "peculiar moral aberration…a system in which the benefits for some have been matched by a greater exploitation for the many than in all prior social systems."

To counter claims about the progressive character of capitalism, Wallerstein turns to two different yet somewhat related concepts from classical Marxism: the immiseration thesis and the labor aristocracy. His use of these ideas is both direct and unapologetic. In *Historical Capitalism* (Wallerstein [1983] 1996: 100), he makes his position clear: "The argument is simple if audacious. I wish to defend the one *Marxist* proposition which even orthodox Marxists tend to bury in shame, the thesis of the absolute (not relative) immiseration of the proletariat." His argument is that, when analyzed across the *longue durée* and at the scale of the world-system, the condition of direct producers has, in aggregate, deteriorated—both materially and in terms of broader social well-being.

At the same time, capitalism's structural tendency toward polarization has allowed a minority within the global working class to improve their standard of living. This is not a sign of capitalism's benevolence, Wallerstein (2003) contended, but a consequence of the system's deeply uneven development and the unequal distribution of surplus value. This layer, frequently theorized by Marxists under the rubric of the "labor aristocracy," benefits materially from the exploitation of the global majority.[19] Wallerstein (2003: 156, 163) himself chose to describe this group as "the middle strata" or "the cadres of the system," estimating that they make up roughly 20 percent of the world's population. Their relative privilege, far from disproving the system's brutality, is integral to how it reproduces itself: a global capitalism that sustains itself by offering select sectors a stake in its continuation, while deepening the immiseration of the rest.

The influence of Marx and Marxism on Wallerstein was evident not only in his methodology, conceptual framework, and political orientation, but also in the specific problems that preoccupied

[18] It is worth noting that the oft-cited phrase commonly attributed to Luxemburg, "socialism or barbarism," and which she herself credited to Friedrich Engels, has no known source in Engels' extant writings. Ian Angus (2014) suggests that Luxemburg may, perhaps unknowingly, have been paraphrasing Karl Kautsky, who, in an 1892 pamphlet, warned that society must "either move forward into socialism or fall back into barbarism."

[19] Although commonly associated with Lenin's writings, the concept of a privileged layer within the proletariat was initially articulated by Engels in 1885, two years after Marx's death (Hobsbawm 1970). Nevertheless, the essence of this concept can arguably be traced back to Marx's own writings, such as in an 1870 letter where he remarked on how English workers benefited materially from national divisions within the working class (Marx [1870] 1975).

his intellectual agenda. A 1976 article offers revealing insight in this regard, as it inadvertently foreshadowed the trajectory of much of his subsequent work. In this piece, Wallerstein (1976a) identified three critical but underdeveloped areas within classical Marxism: the problem of *transition* between different modes of production, the phenomenon of *uneven development*, and the persistent *lags* within the superstructure—all of which, he noted, had been recognized by Engels and presumably also by Marx. He argued that Marxist responses to these dilemmas historically fell into three camps. First were the so-called "vulgar Marxists," who ignored these complexities entirely, drifting toward a kind of Smithian economism. Second were the "ex-Marxists," who, overwhelmed by the intricacies involved, abandoned Marxism altogether in favor of Weberian categories. But a third tradition, which included, in Wallerstein's view, Lenin, Mao, and Gramsci, recognized these tensions as integral to the Marxist project and sought to address them directly.[20]

As his body of work makes clear, the very challenges Wallerstein highlighted in the mid-1970s would remain at the heart of his intellectual enterprise for the rest of his life. His investigation of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, foundational to *The Modern World-System I* (Wallerstein [1974] 2011a), laid the groundwork for his later engagement with the question of capitalism's own demise. The problem of uneven development, or what he more commonly termed the polarization of the world-system, was a central theme of his world-systems analysis, and already present in his earlier studies on Africa. And from the late 1980s onward, Wallerstein turned his attention to superstructural phenomena, including "geoculture," ideology, and the broader organization of knowledge. This shift was especially marked in *The Modern World-System IV* (Wallerstein 2011d), which broke with the earlier volumes' structural focus to explore the historical development of liberalism and the consolidation of a global geoculture aligned with the capitalist world-economy in the wake of the French Revolution.

At the heart of Wallerstein's critique of Marx was what he considered Marx's failure to fully break from his Enlightenment liberal heritage (Aguirre Rojas [2005] 2016b). Wallerstein believed that Marx's work was characterized by a persistent tension between what he termed "the two Marxes": on the one hand, the Marx rooted in classical political economy; on the other, a more incisive Marx, the historical social scientist, who transcended economic categories to offer a systemic critique of the modern world (Cisneros Sosa 1998). According to Wallerstein, Marxism has continually grappled with the risk of reducing itself to a radical variant of social liberalism. The challenge, as he saw it, was to preserve the dialectical and historical materialist core of Marx's

[20] While acknowledging the contributions of Lenin, Mao, and Gramsci, Wallerstein (1992, 1995a) also offered pointed critiques of the movements that developed in their names. He found Gramsci's writings to be intellectually valuable but believed they ultimately contributed to the transformation of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) into yet another variant of social democracy (Aguirre Rojas [2005] 2016b). Leninism, Wallerstein (1995a) argued, began as a revolutionary break from the reformist nationalism of Second International Marxism but gradually degenerated into a form of developmentalist liberalism. As for Maoism, although it initially sought to rectify the limitations of inherited Leninist doctrine, it was swiftly overturned within China and dispersed internationally into a fragmented set of often contradictory interpretations (Wallerstein 1992).

method without allowing it to regress into economistic or reformist tendencies (Aguirre Rojas [2005] 2016b).

Building on this critique, Wallerstein's world-systems perspective aimed to address the theoretical limitations he identified in Marx's original framework by expanding and adapting it. Such an approach resonates with the position outlined by Lukács ([1919] 1972) in "What is Orthodox Marxism?," particularly the idea that the essence of Marxism lies not in specific conclusions but in dialectical materialism as a method. Wallerstein ([1989] 2011c: 51) articulated this stance explicitly in *The Modern World-System III*, where he wrote:

> Marx had one major fault. He was a little too Smithian (competition is the norm of capitalism, monopoly a distortion) and a little too Schumpeterian (the entrepreneur is the bearer of progress). Many twentieth-century Marxists no longer share these prejudices, but they think that this is because capitalism has evolved. Once, however, one inverts these assumptions, then the use of a dialectical and materialist framework for analysis pushes one to a very different reading of the history of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, even of the nineteenth, than Marx himself made for the most part.

Conclusion

As Samir Amin (2010) often emphasized, to be a Marxist means beginning with Marx, but not stopping at Marx (Wallerstein 2018). To do otherwise would simply lead to analyses that remain "confined to exegesis of Marx's texts" (Amin 2010: 13). A similar sentiment is echoed in the first volume of the *Modern World System*, where Wallerstein ([1974] 2011a) makes it clear that he has much more concern for following the "spirit of Marx" than showing faithfulness to the letter of Marx's arguments. This distinction reflects what he understood to be Marx's own openness, exemplified in his remark to the leaders of the French *Parti Ouvrier* that "If this is Marxism, what is certain is that I am not a Marxist" (Wallerstein [1983] 1996: 8; Musto 2018). Far from a casual aside, Wallerstein insisted that this statement be taken seriously and be seen as emblematic of Marx's refusal to be confined by dogma.

This tension between the letter and the spirit of Marxism was not only a recurring theme in Wallerstein's thought but also a practical guideline for his scholarship. In his widely cited essay "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System" (Wallerstein 1974b), he used this distinction to defend the work of Paul Sweezy and Andre Gunder Frank against critics like Maurice Dobb and Ernesto Laclau, arguing that the former adhered more closely to Marx's method, even if not to all his conclusions.

Wallerstein's Marxism was consistently critical; he rejected the idea of treating Marx's writings, or any text, as sacrosanct. Rather than adhering to orthodoxy, he approached Marxism as a historical social scientist: building upon, reinterpreting, and, when necessary, challenging its foundations. Yet his critique was always rooted within the tradition itself. His aim was not to move past Marxism, but to use its mode of inquiry to construct a comprehensive and logically coherent framework capable of grappling with the complexities of the modern world-system. In doing so,

Wallerstein advanced a vision of Marxism that is both grounded and generative—inviting us to see it not as a closed system, but as a living, open-ended tradition of critical inquiry.

About the Author: Sam Chian is a teacher and independent scholar based in Oslo, Norway. He holds a master's degree in sociology from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). His work explores modern world history and Marxist theory, and his recent article on Immanuel Wallerstein's career as an Africanist was published in *Review of African Political Economy*.

Disclosure Statement: Any conflicts of interest are reported in the acknowledgments section of the article's text. Otherwise, authors have indicated that they have no conflict of interests upon submission of the article to the journal.

References

Aguirre Rojas, Carlos Antonio. [2005] 2016a. "Immanuel Wallerstein and the Critical 'World-Systems Analysis' Perspective." Pp. ii–xxxv in *Uncertain Worlds: World-Systems Analysis in Changing Times*, by Immanuel Wallerstein, Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, and Charles Lemert. Translated by George Ciccariello and José A. Mota Lopes. New York: Routledge.

_____. [2005] 2016b. "The World-Systems Analysis Perspective: An Interview with Immanuel Wallerstein." Pp. 1–100 in *Uncertain Worlds: World-Systems Analysis in Changing Times*, by Immanuel Wallerstein, Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, and Charles Lemert. Translated by George Ciccariello and José A. Mota Lopes. New York: Routledge.

Ahmad, Aijaz. 2019. "Introduction." Pp. 7–20 in *Only People Make Their Own History: Writings on Capitalism, Imperialism, and Revolution*, by Samir Amin. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Amin, Samir. [1970] 1974. *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment*. Translated by Brian Pearce. Ney York: Monthly Review Press.

_____. 1975. "The Early Roots of Unequal Exchange." *Monthly Review* 27(7):43–47. https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-027-07-1975-11_5

_____. [2002] 2004. "Globalism or Apartheid on a Global Scale?" Pp. 5–30 in *The Modern World-System in the Longue Durée*, edited by Immanuel Wallerstein. New York: Routledge.

_____. [1977] 2010. *The Law of Worldwide Value*. 2nd ed. Translated by Brian Pearce. New York; Monthly Review Press.

Angus, Ian. 2014. "The Origin of Rosa Luxemburg's Slogan 'Socialism or Barbarism.'" *Climate & Capitalism*, October 22. Retrieved April 16, 2025 (https://climateandcapitalism.com/2014/10/22/origin-rosa-luxemburgs-slogan-socialism-barbarism/).

Baran, Paul A. [1957] 1973. *The Political Economy of Growth*. London, UK: Penguin Books.

Balibar, Étienne. 2021. "Bifurcation in the 'End' of Capitalism." Pp. 43–70 *in The Global Left: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, by Immanuel Wallerstein, Étienne Balibar, James K. Galbraith, Johan Galtung, Nilüfer Göle, Pablo González Casanova, and Michael Wieworka. Translated by Lara Vergnaud. New York: Routledge.

Balibar, Étienne, and Immanuel Wallerstein. [1988] 1991. *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. Translated by Chris Turner. London, UK: Verso.

Braudel, Fernand. [1949] 1972. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. Vol. 1, 2nd rev. ed. Translated by Siân Reynolds. New York: Harper & Row.

_____. [1969] 1980. *On History*. Translated by Sarah Matthews. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

_____. [1987] 1993. *A History of Civilizations*. Translated by Richard Mayne. London, UK: Penguin Books.

Brenner, Robert. 1976. "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe." *Past & Present* 70(1):30–75. https://doi.org/10.1093/past/70.1.30

_____. 1977. "The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism." *New Left Review* 104:25–92. Retrieved (https://newleftreview.org/issues/i104/articles/robert-brenner-the-origins-of-capitalist-development-a-critique-of-neo-smithian-marxism).

Brolin, John. 2007. *The Bias of the World: Theories of Unequal Exchange in History*. Doctoral dissertation, Human Ecology Division, Lund University. Retrieved April 16, 2025 (https://lup.lub.lu.se/record/25251).

Calhoun, Craig. 2023. "Immanuel Wallerstein and the Genesis of World-Systems Analysis." *Journal of World-Systems Research 29*(2):257–285. https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2023.1197.

Central Committee of the C.P.S.U.(B.). [1938] 1939. *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*. New York: International Publishers.

Chase-Dunn, Christopher. [1989] 1998. *Global Formation: Structures of the World Economy*. 2nd ed. Rowman & Littlefield.

Chase-Dunn, Christopher, Jackie Smith, Patrick Manning, and Andrej Grubacic. 2020. "Remembering Immanuel Wallerstein." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 26(1):4–8. https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2020.995.

Chian, Sam. 2025a. "Immanuel Wallerstein as Africanist: From Modernisation to Marxism in the 1960s." *Review of African Political Economy* 52(183):63–81. https://doi.org/10.62191/ROAPE-2025-0001.

_____. 2025b. "Immanuel Wallerstein at Columbia University: C. Wright Mills, Karl Polanyi, and the Frankfurt School in Postwar America." *Journal of the History of Ideas Blog,* March 31. Retrieved April 16, 2025 (https://www.jhiblog.org/2025/03/31/immanuel-wallerstein-at-columbia-university-c-wright-mills-karl-polanyi-and-the-frankfurt-school-in-postwar-america/).

Chirot, Daniel, and Thomas D. Hall. 1982. "World-System Theory." *Annual Review of Sociology* 8:81–106. http://jstor.org/stable/2945989.

Cisneros Sosa, Armando. 1998. "1968: Entrevista con Immanuel Wallerstein." *Sociológica* 13(38):205–213.

Derluguian, Georgi. 2015. "Spaces, Trajectories, Maps: Towards a World-Systems Biography of Immanuel Wallerstein." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 21(2):448–459. https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2015.14.

Dobb, Maurice. 1946. *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

_____. 2001. "Marxism and the Social Sciences." *Monthly Review* 53(4). https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-053-04-2001-08_3. (Originally published in 1942).

The Editors. 2019. "Notes from the Editors, November 2019." *Monthly Review* 71(6). https://doi.org/10.14452/mr-071-06-2019-10_0.

Emmanuel, Arghiri. 1972a. "[Letter to Immanuel Wallerstein]." *Unequal Exchange*. Retrieved April 12, 2025 (https://unequalexchange.org/2023/12/05/letters-emmanuel-wallerstein-exchange/).

_____. [1969] 1972b. *Unequal Exchange: A Study of the Imperialism of Trade*. Translated by Brian Pearce. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Fanon, Frantz. [1961] 2004. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press.

Foster, John Bellamy. 1986. *The Theory of Monopoly Capitalism: An Elaboration of Marxian Political Economy*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

_____. 2000. "Paul Alexander Baran (1910–1964)." Pp. 36–43 in *A Biographical Dictionary of Dissenting Economists*, 2nd ed., edited by Philip Arestis and Malcolm C. Sawyer. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

_____. 2007. "The Imperialist World System: Paul Baran's Political Economy of Growth After Fifty Years." *Monthly Review* 59(1):1–16. https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-059-01-2007-05_1.

_____. 2018. "Marx's Open-Ended Critique." *Monthly Review* 70(1). https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-070-01-2018-05_1.

_____. 2019. "Late Imperialism." *Monthly Review* 71(3). https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-071-03-2019-07_1.

Frank, Andre Gunder. 1966. "The Development of Underdevelopment." *Monthly Review* 18(4). https://doi.org/10.14452/mr-018-04-1966-08_3.

Frank, Andre Gunder, and Barry K. Gillis, eds. 1993. *The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand?* New York: Routledge.

Frank, Andre Gunder. 1998. *ReORIENT: Global Economy in the Asian Age*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Galtung, Johan. 1980. "'A Structural Theory of Imperialism'—Ten Years Later." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 9(3):181–196. https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298800090030201.

Garst, Daniel. 1985. "Wallerstein and His Critics." *Theory and Society* 14(4):469–495. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00159251.

Goldfrank, Walter L. 2000. "Paradigm Regained? The Rules of Wallerstein's World-System Method." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 6(2):150–195. https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2000.223.

Gouldner, Alvin W. 1980. *The Two Marxisms: Contradictions and Anomalies in the Development of Theory*. London: Palgrave.

Hill, Christopher, Rodney H. Hilton, and Eric J. Hobsbawm. 1983. "Past & Present. Origins and Early Years." *Past & Present* 100:3–14. https://doi.org/10.1093/past/100.1.3.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 1970. "Lenin and the 'Aristocracy of Labor.'" *Monthly Review* 21(11):47–56. https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-021-11-1970-04_4.

_____. [1964] 2011. "Marx on Pre-Capitalist Formations." Pp. 127–175 in *How to Change the World: Reflections on Marx and Marxism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Hopkins, Terence K. 1982. "The Study of the Capitalist World-Economy: Some Introductory Considerations." Pp. 9–38 in *World-Systems Analysis: Theory and Methodology*, edited by Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Hopkins, Terence K. and Immanuel Wallerstein. 1977. "Patterns of Development of the Modern World-System." *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 1(2):111–45. Retrieved (https://www.jstor.org/stable/40240765).

Hopkins, Terence K. and Immanuel Wallerstein, 1982. *World-Systems Analysis: Theory and Methodology*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.

Jacob, Frank. 2023. "Wallerstein 2.0: Thinking and Applying World-Systems Theory in the 21st Century." Pp. 7–32 in *Wallerstein 2.0: Thinking and Applying World-Systems Theory in the 21st Century*. Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript Verlag. https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839460443-001.

Laclau, Ernesto. 1977. *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism*. London, UK: New Left Books.

Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe. 1985. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London, UK: Verso.

Lenin, Vladimir I. [1917] 1939. *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline*. New York: International Publishers.

Lentini, Ota. 1998. *La scienza sociale storica di Immanuel Wallerstein*. Milan, Italy: FrancoAngeli.

Lipset, Seymour M. 1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy." *American Political Science Review* 53(1):69–105. https://doi.org/10.2307/1951731.

Love, Joseph L. 1980. "Raúl Prebisch and the Origins of the Doctrine of Unequal Exchange." *Latin American Research Review* 15(3):45–72. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0023879100033100.

Lukács, Georg. [1919] 1972. "What is Orthodox Marxism?" Pp. 1–26 in *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, translated by Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Luxemburg, Rosa. [1915] 2004. "The Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis in German Social Democracy." Pp. 312–41 in *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, edited by Peter Hudis and Kevin Anderson. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Löwy, Michael. [1981] 2010. *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development: The Theory of Permanent Revolution*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.

Magdoff, Harry. 1970. "Militarism and Imperialism." *The American Economic Review* 60(2):237–42. Retrieved (http://www.jstor.org/stable/1815812).

Marini, Ruy M. [1973] 2022. *The Dialectics of Dependency*, edited by Amanda Latimer and Jaime Osorio. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Marx, Karl. [1848] 1910. "On the Question of Free Trade." Pp. 206–27 in *The Poverty of Philosophy*. Chicago, IL: Charles H. Kerr & Co.

_____. [1880] 1968. "Gloses marginales au programme du Parti ouvrier allemande" ["Marginal Notes on the Programme of the German Workers' Party"]. In *Marx and Engels Correspondence*. New York: International Publishers. Retrieved April 16, 2025 (https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/05/parti-ouvrier.htm#n5).

_____. [1870] 1975. "Marx to Sigfrid Meyer and August Vogt In New York [Letter]." Pp. 220–24 in Marx and Engels Selected Correspondence. New York: International Publishers. Retrieved April 16, 2025 (https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1870/letters/70_04_09.htm).

_____. [1894] 1981. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 3*, translated by David Fernbach, edited by Friedrich Engels. London, UK: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review.

_____. [1858] 1983. "Marx to Ferdinand Lassalle, 22 February [Letter]." Pp. 268–71 in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 40. London, UK: Lawrence & Wishart.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. [1848] 1978. "Manifesto of the Communist Party." Pp. 469–500 in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

McNeill, William H. 1990. "The Rise of the West after Twenty-Five Years." *Journal of World History* 1(1):1–21. Retrieved (https://jstor.org/stable/20078455).

Mills, C. Wright. [1959] 2000. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Musto, Marcello. 2018. "Read Karl Marx! A Conversation with Immanuel Wallerstein." *Truthout*, March 24. Retrieved April 16, 2025 (https://truthout.org/articles/read-karl-marx-a-conversation-with-immanuel-wallerstein/).

Prebisch, Raúl. 1950. "The Economic Development of Latin America and Its Principal Problem." *Economic Bulletin for Latin America* 7(1):1–23.

Rostow, Walt W. 1971. *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, 2nd ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Santos, Theotônio Dos. 1970. "The Structure of Dependence." *The American Economic Review* 60(2):231–36. Retrieved (http://www.jstor.org/stable/1815811).

Schouten, Peer. 2008. "Theory Talk #13: Immanuel Wallerstein on World-Systems, the Imminent End of Capitalism and Unifying Social Science." *Theory Talks*. Retrieved April 16, 2025 (http://www.theory-talks.org/2008/08/theory-talk-13.html).

Skocpol, Theda. 1977. "Wallerstein's World Capitalist System: A Theoretical and Historical Critique [Review of *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of*

the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century, by Immanuel Wallerstein]." *American Journal of Sociology* 82(5):1075–90. Retrieved (http://www.jstor.org/stable/2777814).

Sweezy, Paul M. [1942] 1956. *The Theory of Capitalist Development: Principles of Marxian Political Economy*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Sweezy, Paul, Maurice Dobb, Kohachiro Takahashi, Rodney Hilton, Christopher Hill, Georges Lefebvre, Giuliano Procacci, Eric Hobsbawm, and John Merrington. [1976] 1978. *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, edited by Rodney Hilton. London, UK: Verso.

Valiani, Salimah. 2021. "Onward To Liberation!—Samir Amin and the Study of World Historical Capitalism." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 27(2):566–85. Retrieved (https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2021.1014).

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1967. *Africa, the Politics of Unity*. New York: Vintage Books.

_____. 1970. "Frantz Fanon: Reason and Violence." *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 15:222–31. Retrieved (http://www.jstor.org/stable/41035178).

_____. 1971. "The State and Social Transformation: Will and Possibility." *Politics & Society* 1(3):359–64. https://doi.org/10.1177/003232927100100304.

_____. 1973. "Africa in a Capitalist World." *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 3(3):1–11. https://doi.org/10.2307/1166701.

_____. 1974a. "Dependence in an Interdependent World: The Limited Possibilities of Transformation within the Capitalist World Economy." *African Studies Review* 17(1):1–26. https://doi.org/10.2307/523574.

_____. 1974b. "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16(4):387–415. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0010417500007520.

_____. 1975. "Class-Formation in the Capitalist World-Economy." *Politics & Society* 5(3):367–75. https://doi.org/10.1177/003232927500500304.

_____. 1976a. "American Slavery and the Capitalist World-Economy [Review of *Time on the Cross. Vol. 1: The Economics of American Negro Slavery. Vol. 2: Evidence and Methods—a Supplement*; *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, by Robert William Fogel, Stanley L. Engerman, and Eugene D. Genovese]." *American Journal of Sociology* 81(5):1199–1213. Retrieved (http://www.jstor.org/stable/2777569).

_____. 1976b. "A World-System Perspective on the Social Sciences." *The British Journal of Sociology* 27(3):343–52. https://doi.org/10.2307/589620.

_____. 1979a. *The Capitalist World-Economy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

_____. 1979b. "Class Conflict in the Capitalist World-Economy." Pp. 283–93 in *The Capitalist World-Economy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

_____. [1975] 1979c. "The Present State of the Debate on World Inequality." Pp. 49–65 in *The Capitalist World-Economy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

_____. 1980a. "Friends as Foes." *Foreign Policy* 40:119–31. https://doi.org/10.2307/1148344.

_____. 1980b. "The Future of the World-Economy." Pp. 167–80 in *Processes of the World-System*, edited by Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

_____. 1982. "Crisis as Transition." Pp. 11-54 in *Dynamics of Global Crisis*, by Samir Amin, Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank, and Immanuel Wallerstein. New York: Monthly Review Press.

_____. 1984a. "Marx and History: Fruitful and Unfruitful Emphases." *Thesis Eleven* 8(1):92-101. https://doi.org/10.1177/072551368400800107.

_____. 1984b. "Patterns and Prospectives of the Capitalist World-Economy." *Contemporary Marxism* 9:59-70. Retrieved (http://www.jstor.org/stable/29765801).

_____. 1985. "Marx and Underdevelopment." Pp. 379-395 in *Rethinking Marxism: Struggles in Marxist Theory: Essays for Harry Magdoff & Paul Sweezy*, edited by Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia.

_____. 1988a. "The Bourgeois(ie) as Concept and Reality." *New Left Review* 167:91-106. Retrieved (https://newleftreview.org/issues/i167/articles/immanuel-wallerstein-the-bourgeois-ie-as-concept-and-reality).

_____. 1988b. "The Modern World-System As A Civilization." *Thesis Eleven* 20(1):70-86. https://doi.org/10.1177/072551368802000105.

_____. 1991. "Braudel on Capitalism, or Everything Upside Down." *The Journal of Modern History* 63(2):354-361. Retrieved (http://www.jstor.org/stable/2938489).

_____. 1992. "The Concept of National Development, 1917-1989: Elegy and Requiem." *American Behavioral Scientist* 35(4-5):517-529. https://doi.org/10.1177/000276429203500409.

_____. 1995a. "Three Ideologies or One? The Pseudobattle of Modernity." Pp. 72-92 in *After Liberalism*. New York: The New Press.

_____. 1995b. "Review of: 'The Long Twentieth Century' by Giovanni Arrighi." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 1(1):423-425. https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.1995.54.

_____. [1983] 1996. *Historical Capitalism with Capitalist Civilization*. London, UK: Verso.

_____. 1999a. "Frank Proves the European Miracle." *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 22(3):355-371. Retrieved (http://www.jstor.org/stable/40241462).

_____. 1999b. "States? Sovereignty? The Dilemmas of Capitalists in an Age of Transition." Pp. 20-33 in *States and Sovereignty in the Global Economy*, edited by David A. Smith, Dorothy J. Solinger, and Steven C. Topik. London, UK: Routledge.

_____. 1999c. "The Heritage of Sociology, the Promise of Social Science Presidential Address, XIVth World Congress of Sociology, Montreal, 26 July 1998." *Current Sociology* 47(1):1-37. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392199047001002.

_____. 2000a. "Globalization Or The Age Of Transition?: A Longterm View of the Trajectory of the World-System." *Asian Perspective* 24(2):5-26. https://doi.org/10.1353/apr.2000.0026.

_____. 2000b. "World-Systems Analysis." Pp. 129-148 in *The Essential Wallerstein*. New York: The New Press.

_____. 2003. "Democracy: Rhetoric or Reality?" Pp. 149-169 in *The Decline of American Power: The U.S. in a Chaotic World*. New York: The New Press.

_____. 2004a [2003]. "France is the Key." Pp. 91-96 in *Alternatives: The United States Confronts the World*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

_____. 2004b. "The Scholarly Mainstream and Reality: Are We at a Turning Point?" Pp. 219-228 in *Modern World-System in the Longue Durée*, edited by Immanuel Wallerstein. New York: Routledge.

_____. 2004c [2002]. "The Itinerary of World-Systems Analysis; or, How to Resist Becoming a Theory." Pp. 83-108 in *The Uncertainties of Knowledge*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

_____. 2004d. *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

_____. 2011a [1974]. *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (Edition with a New Prologue). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

_____. 2011b [1980]. *The Modern World-System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750* (Edition with a New Prologue). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

_____. 2011c [1989]. *The Modern World-System III: The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy, 1730-1840s* (Edition with a New Prologue). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

_____. 2011d. *The Modern World-System IV: Centrist Liberalism Triumphant, 1789-1914*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

_____. 2011e. "Structural Crisis in the World-System: Where Do We Go from Here?" *Monthly Review* 62(10):31-39. https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-062-10-2011-03_2.

_____. 2018. "Samir Amin: Comrade in the Struggle." Retrieved April 16, 2025 (https://iwallerstein.com/samir-amin-comrade-in-the-struggle/).

Wallerstein, Immanuel and Charles Lemert. 2016 [2012]. "A Discussion of the Itinerary of World-Systems Analysis and Its Uncertainties." Pp. 101-149 in *Uncertain Worlds: World-Systems Analysis in Changing Times*, by Immanuel Wallerstein, Carlos A. Aguirre Rojas, and Charles Lemert. New York: Routledge.

Warren, Bill. 1980. *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism*, edited by John Sender. London, UK: New Left Books.

Williams, Gregory P. 2020. *Contesting the Global Order: The Radical Political Economy of Perry Anderson and Immanuel Wallerstein*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

_____. 2023. "From Africa to the World: The Sources of Wallerstein's *The Modern World-System*." Pp. 15-36 in *The Anthem Companion to Immanuel Wallerstein*, edited by Patrick Hayden and Chamsy El-Ojeili. London, UK: Anthem Press.

Yee, Herbert S. 1983. "The Three World Theory and Post-Mao China's Global Strategy." *International Affairs* 59(2):239-49. https://doi.org/10.2307/2619937.

Zolberg, Aristide R. 1981. "Origins of the Modern World System: A Missing Link." *World Politics* 33(2):253-81. https://doi.org/10.2307/2010372.