

## **The Clash of Interpretations: World-Systems Analysis and International Relations Theory**

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### **Abstract**

This chapter examines, and critically defends, one of the most ambitious intellectual projects in the human sciences, Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems analysis (WSA), by setting it against major paradigms within the field of International Relations (IR) theory. We begin with an examination of the very different worlds of thought crucial to the formulation of WSA and realist and liberal paradigms, exploring core contrasts in approaches to the appropriate units of analysis, key actors, power, social structures and forces, polarity in the international system, anarchy, warfare, and normative commitments. The second section of the chapter moves from WSA's focus on the international division of labour and the interstate system, to what Wallerstein calls the geoculture, exploring the challenges constructivist and post-modern IR approaches raise around questions of meaning, culture, science, and theorizing. In the final substantive section, more contemporary questions raised by the globalization literature are treated, encompassing contentions about state power, transnationalization, imperialism, class, and the status of socialism. While the field of IR theory raises crucial questions to WSA, the latter continues to provide cogent, compelling challenges, in bold conceptualization and daring hypotheses, to IR theory, continuing to be a productive research programme for scholars in the critical human sciences.

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, we critically explore Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems analysis (WSA), by setting it against arguments from a number of the major paradigms within the field of IR theory. Although realism, liberalism, and constructivism are the principal analytic frameworks in thinking about international relations, significant alternatives, including Marxist and Neo-Marxist theories, have challenged these mainstream paradigms. Marxist approaches to international relations contest conventional IR theory's separation of the political from the economic, insisting that political relations within the international system must be understood as ultimately conditioned – unevenly and contradictorily – by the structure of capital accumulation as a global phenomenon. Anderson (1983) once suggested that the Marxist tradition was unmatched in terms of intellectual scope and moral force. It could be argued that, within that tradition, Wallerstein's project is unrivalled in these terms, extending crucial Marxian claims in a number of novel

directions, constructing a grand theoretical scheme that seeks to map the world as a system from the fifteenth century until today, generating a research programme characterized by 'daring questions and provocative statements' (Therborn, 2000, 266), and driven by a prophetic-utopian passion that vigorously, unbendingly calls for the emancipatory transformation of that system.

A sociologist by trade, Wallerstein's theory-building ambition extended far beyond society, understood in a methodologically-nationalist sense, focussing instead on the realm of world power relations, the sphere of IR theory. With this in mind, we bring WSA into critical conversation with a number of IR theoretical traditions. In section one, we stage an encounter between WSA and two central IR paradigms, realism and liberalism, exploring key discrepancies around units of analysis, agents, structures, and power, as well as certain congruences between these very different worlds of thought. Moving from the terrain of the international division of labour and the interstate system, in section two, we turn to Wallerstein's third major concept, the geoculture, setting WSA into dialogue with constructivist and post-modern IR approaches, around questions of meaning, culture, and science. In section three, we explore more recent challenges posed to WSA around major transformations, such as globalization and the collapse of 'really existing socialism', which seemed to herald a new world in which the analytical and normative underpinnings of Wallerstein's work appeared beset by enormous 'reality problems' (Alexander, 1995), and which were perhaps better apprehended by competing approaches. Our intention throughout is to mount a critical defence of WSA as a compelling framework for making sense of world political and economic life – a still cogent map of power and productive research programme over four decades after the appearance of Wallerstein's first volume of *The Modern World-System*.

### **Foundational Disparities, Competing Worlds of Thought**

In a number of respects, WSA and IR theory emerge from and inhabit very different intellectual and political spaces. One aspect of this spatial separation is disciplinary. Wallerstein and Arrighi, two preeminent WSA thinkers, are sociologists, and WSA is more likely to be encountered in Sociology, Development Studies, or Political Science departments than in IR programmes. In its dominant origins story, Sociology and its new object of analysis, society or the social, is initially located at the intersection of three modern revolutions – the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution – their attendant transformations (science, reason, and progress; democracy, nationalism, and citizenship; industrialization, urbanization, proletarianization), and in the work of three founding fathers, Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. By contrast, IR's foundational story is frequently narrated as an almost timeless meditation on the interactions between different social orders, indebted to a range of pre-modern, early-modern, and modern thinkers (Thucydides, Machiavelli, Grotius, Hobbes, Locke, Kant, Clausewitz) who purportedly understood politics as separated into 'domestic' and 'international'

realms. First institutionalized academically in 1919, IR was initially formed as a practical discipline in the aftermath of the First World War by a first 'great debate' between 'idealists and realists', over the origins of war and peace in international affairs (Bull, 1972; Smith, 1995).

Beyond such convenient fictions, both disciplines were only securely and expansively institutionalized after the Second World War, developing rapidly in the 1960s and '70s, and both were shaped, in various ways, by the War and by the coordinates of the immediate post-War period (Burchill and Linklater, 2013; Wagner, 2001). At that time, within American Sociology, Parsonian structural functionalism exerted significant intellectual influence in approaching the social, while sociological thinking about the world more widely centred on the tradition-modernity polarity, articulated, most prominently, in modernization theory. By contrast, the field of IR theory in the War's aftermath was shaped by signal works by Carr (1942 [1939]) and Morgenthau (1973 [1948]), viewed as telling blows in the self-consciously realist case against 'idealist' and 'utopian' imaginings of a future world order freed, or at least more free, from conflict and violence (Wilson and Long, 1996).

In Carr's critique, the idealist, utopian position coincides with a number of strands of liberal optimism about modernity – internationalism, faith in public opinion, education and reason, the priority of moral principles, the benefits of free trade, evolution and progress, and voluntarism. We find such optimism in the proto-Sociology of Smith and the early Sociology of Spencer and Durkheim, where irrationality, conflict, and violence are viewed as atavistic residues that might, by modern means, be overcome. Exemplary of such liberal optimism, from the vantage point of IR's ancestry, is Kant's 'revolutionist' delineation (as contrasted, in Martin Wight's [1991] famous categorization, to the 'realist' and 'rationalist' traditions) of three central conditions towards perpetual peace: the establishment of republican political orders that would limit power, protect individuals, and express the will of the people; the global multiplication of such orders, which, by expressing rational citizen interests and placing limitations on the actions of leaders, would issue in a zone of peace, a 'pacific union'; and the establishment of cosmopolitan law centred on universal hospitality, encouraging the 'spirit of commerce', which would bind nations together through agreed-upon norms, rational deliberation, and co-operation, and prove materially advantageous to all humanity (Doyle, 1986). The influential early-twentieth century liberal internationalist, Norman Angell, expressed this deep-rooted Kantian faith in the liberal project prior to the inter-war 'Great Debate' when he declaimed that 'physical force is a constantly diminishing factor in human affairs' (1911, 129).

Beyond such origins, we can identify a number of core assumptions characteristic of the liberal paradigm in IR theory. First, as noted, we find a certain Enlightenment-accented optimism about the possibilities for peace, cooperation, and material progress in the modern world of international politics, premised on crucial

institutions, such as constitutional protections of individual rights and liberties, capitalism, democracy, and international law. Second, liberalism in IR is often viewed as taking an 'inside-out' approach, beginning with the preferences, values, and political structures of states and their domestic regimes and moving from here to consideration of the realm of international politics (Burchill, 2013; Moravcsik, 2008; Viotti and Kauppi, 2010). Third, in terms of the physiognomy of states and the conduct of international affairs, liberals frequently hold to a pluralist and interdependent view of politics, considering the role of a number of actors, especially intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations, rather than focussing narrowly on states themselves (Moravcsik, 2008; Viotti, and Kauppi, 2010). Today, such broadly liberal assumptions and commitments undergird a cosmopolitan position that responds positively, though not uncritically, to contemporary globalization, to the possibilities opened by the thickening of international trade, the spread of liberal democratic political systems, and the expansion of human rights discourse (Beitz, 1999; Archibugi and Held, 2011). Such universalist liberal assumptions and values are also in play within more neo-liberal IR positions, which emphasize, above all, the progressive role played by the widening of free market interactions to maximize absolute gains, the expansion of individual liberty, growing wealth, technological progress, and the pacification of world politics by enhancing international institutions to better coordinate multilateral action (Keohane, 1984). We will return to this re-charged liberal optimism in section three.

In Carr's (1942 [1939], 14) canonical formulation, stood against such liberal 'wish-dreams' was a realist view that depicted world politics as a realm of the struggle for power and interests. Such a starting point is, of course, not necessarily inimical to a more sceptical liberalism that underscores limits, human imperfection, and takes a more tragic view of human beings and the world (Beilharz, 1994; Lebow, 2013). Often posing as a tough-minded, world-weary, 'hard ruthless analysis of reality' (Carr, 13), realism was, until the paradigm wars of the 1980s and the more pluralistic period that followed (Burchill and Linklater, 2013), the predominant tradition within IR theory – Wohlforth (2008, 1) commenting that the study of international politics is 'inexplicable without a grounding in realism'.

Political realism frequently suggests a diagnosis of political life that transcends the modern period, and something of a cyclical view of history that keeps faith in the notion of patterns of behaviour that remain constant in human beings and society (Gill, 2008; Lebow, 2013). As noted, realists draw on received readings of much earlier thinkers such as Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes to sustain a thematic emphasis on power struggle as the prime cause of war, the survival of the state as paramount question of international affairs, and the contention that motivated by competition, diffidence and glory, in the absence of a strong central authority, life is inevitably a war of all against all (Donnelly, 2013; Lebow, 2013; Viotti and Kauppi, 2010). Above all, perhaps, realism has sought to make the idea of 'balance of power'

the most prominent principle of IR theory, the key to explaining how order is maintained in international politics (Smith, 1986). In Wohlforth's view (2008), realism advances four central propositions. First, realists contend that politics is about human beings in groups (Carr, 123), such groups requiring solidarity for cohesion, and such cohesion generating conflict with other groups. The most important of such collectivities, and the crucial unit of analysis for IR, are sovereign states (Carr, 290; Waltz, 1979, 94). Typically, states are viewed in a uniform way, as 'unitary actors' (Waltz, 1979, 118) situated in the same structural context and exhibiting recurrent patterns of behaviour influenced primarily by external factors such as the distribution of power in the international system – contrary to the inside-out orientation of liberalism. Neo-realists such as Waltz (1979, 96) contend that these units share a 'functionally undifferentiated' character in terms of their interactions within the international system, and offensive realists like Mearsheimer (2014) suggests that states, should be treated as akin to 'billiard balls' (18) of different size whose positions relative to one another is the only change accommodated by the international system. Against the more polyarchical interpretation of liberals, then, realists tend to argue that other actors – international organizations, corporations, social movements, say – lack the independence (functional similarity) of states in exercising power (Viotti and Kauppi, 2010).

Second, states as unit-level actors are understood to act in an ineliminably egoistic manner, according to self-interest (Wohlforth, 2008). For 'classical' realists, this egoism is the 'result of forces inherent in human nature' (Morgenthau, 1973 [1948], 3), with human beings depicted as restlessly striving to maximise their wealth, status, and power, in absolute or relative terms. For structural realists, on the other hand, the constraints of the material structure of the international system are key to explaining this egoism; in recasting Waltz's neo-realism, however, later structural realists suggest a central role for social, economic, environmental and military interactions, in addition to political interactions, in shaping the system in which states act (Buzan, Jones and Little, 1993; Mearsheimer, 2013; Waltz, 1979). The centrality of this assumption of egoism within realism has often led realists to adopt rational-actor social scientific approaches in thinking the maximizing of utility in conflict and competition, power and advantage in world politics, through the language of balance of power, deterrence, security-dilemma theory, and the like, which are derived from calculations of interests (Lebow, 2013; Viotti and Kauppi, 2010).

A third proposition concerns the crucial structural feature inclining states as rational, unitary actors towards egoism – anarchy (Wohlforth, 2008). That is, the absence of a strong central authority above the units in the realm of international politics makes conflict and warfare a permanent possibility and state security or survival a perpetual challenge. As Waltz (1979, 102) expresses this, 'Among states, the state of nature is a state of war'. In such an anarchic situation, a fourth realist proposition, power politics, becomes central. As Morgenthau (1973 [1948], 27) contended,

'International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power'. The absence of a central authority in the international system, the possession of military capacity by all states, and the uncertainty regarding other states' intentions, mean that the key to survival is the accumulation of power, understood as a zero-sum game (Mearsheimer, 2014). For realists, power is understood as Weberian power over (Gill, 2008), 'anything that establishes and maintains the control of man over man' (Morgenthau, p. 9), but is glossed in various ways: in Carr, as military power bolstered by economic power and power over opinion; in Waltz, power as capabilities, which he understands as economic power and military might (Lebow, 2013); in Mearsheimer (2013; 2014), as tied to population and wealth, but, above all, about 'relative military capacity' (2014, 5).

These points taken together indicate that even if states are thought of as unitary actors, it is clear not all states are equally capable in the struggle for power. Realism, then, tends to focus on the Great Powers, as those with the 'largest impact on what happens in international politics' (Mearsheimer, 2014, 5). The ubiquitous pursuit of power has a pronounced impact on the relative capabilities of states, which means that the balancing of power between 'major' and 'minor' players will characterize the international system's structure at any given time – with different combinations of the uneven distribution of power between states resulting in unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar systems. Here, contemporary realists disagree about the thrust of state interests – towards maintenance of the status quo or the pursuit of hegemony (however unlikely that prospect is) – and over evaluations of whether bipolarity or multipolarity is most conducive to reducing conflicts and enhancing the stability of an anarchic system (Mearsheimer, 2013; 2014; Waltz, 1979). There are, as well, important discrepancies within realist thinking – often pitched as a division between classical and neo-realism – over the role of norms and institutions in world affairs, even if realism has come to be associated predominantly with a scepticism about morality and norms as controlling factors (Carr; Donnelly, 2013; Lebow, 2013; Mearsheimer, 2014).

Both of these foundational IR paradigms share a common constitutive premise with WSA, namely, that the modern world system has been decisively structured around and by the state as the primary political actor and form of political organization in the interstate system, even as the state has undergone transformations in some aspects while remaining stable in others (Wallerstein, 2011d). Beyond this shared supposition, however, the two paradigms provide quite striking contrasts to the WSA approach to international politics, in terms of guiding assumptions, core propositions, and normative commitments, as well as a number of perhaps surprising affinities. A first, crucial point of separation is that Wallerstein's thought is unthinkable outside of the tradition of Marxist historical sociology, a tradition at a great distance from both liberalism and realism in IR theory inasmuch as these paradigms shy away from the radicality of Marxism's system-transforming hopes. Nevertheless, even here, we could mention two broad convergences: first, the

priority given by both Marxists and realists to conflicts between groups, centred on power; second, the progressivism and optimism about modernity that Marxism shares with certain strands of liberalism – Marxism, in Therborn's (2008) estimation, as modernity's loyal opposition.

On this last, while, as Jameson (1984) notes, Marx sought to think modernity as progress and catastrophe all at once, Marx and Marxism are often taken to task for presenting a teleological philosophy of History, in which even the worst aspects of capitalism's universalization are represented, ultimately, as progress. The other side of such a tendency can be found in Marx's (1887, 712) insistence that 'capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt', and in his journalistic work, in which Marx would weigh in in a more nuanced manner on world affairs, with a strategic eye on the prospects of socialism. More aligned with this latter set of emphases, in what Hobsbawm (1995) calls the age of Empire, a number of third generation Marxian thinkers (Lenin, Luxemburg, Hilferding, Bukharin) pioneered systematic theories of imperialism that raised profound questions about the progressive dynamics of capitalism – monopoly, war, crisis, super-exploitation of subject peoples, the taming of certain sectors of the working class – suggesting the advent of something like capitalist decadence.

Such questioning was notably taken up and developed in the post-War Latin American context, the backdrop, together with Third World rebellion, to dependency theory's challenge to modernization verities. This, along with the 'world-revolution of '68', was the crucible in which WSA was formed (Goldfrank, 2000). Alongside early work on African independence movements and the influence of dependency thinking, Wallerstein's thought was shaped by encounters with German historical economy and, especially, Braudel's school of French historiography. These influences are to the fore in two major contributions from 1974 – the first volume of *The Modern World-System* and a long article in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. In this work, Wallerstein breaks from the canonical Sociological narrative concerning the advent of modernity, and from Sociology's societal unit of analysis. Breaking, too, from orthodox Marxist accounts of the genesis of capitalism, Wallerstein insisted that the story must begin earlier – in 'the long sixteenth century', 1450-1640. Additionally, a new, total unit of analysis, Wallerstein argued, was required – the world-system – which emerges in this period. This world-system is, above all, a world-economy – the 'basic linkage between the parts of the system is economic' (Wallerstein, 1974, 15) – and the character of the world economy is capitalist: a single division of labour, a world market, production for sale and profit, and, fundamentally, the core system dynamic of the endless accumulation of capital, which shapes all aspects of social organization (Wallerstein, 1980a; 2005). Expanding on Frank's metropolis-satellite pairing, Wallerstein contends that the accumulation of capital entails the movement of wealth between three tiers of the world-economy's division of labour: core (strong states, variety and specialization in profitable monopolized production), periphery

(weak states and engaging in labour-intensive, lower-ranking and less profitable production), and semi-periphery (situated between exploiters and exploited). This appropriation of wealth through unequal exchange is mobile and conflictual, and, over time, this struggle entails something of a circulation of elites (Wallerstein, 1974; 2005). The modern interstate system constitutes a subsystem of the world-system, and interactions between states entail a complex balance of power process involving not only political and military capabilities but, even more crucially, deeply intertwined economic and commercial capabilities. In this scheme, the uneven distribution of power manifests as the subordination of relatively weaker peripheral states to the dominant core states, playing out the social division of labour and associated class antagonisms of the capitalist world-economy at the international level. Here, WSA clearly parallels neorealism's emphasis on the distribution of capabilities between different states as the main explanatory variable in structural or system-level analysis of international developments. As Wallerstein (1974b, 399) puts it, in other words, capitalism and a world-economy of 'multiple polities' or states in an anarchic system 'are obverse sides of the same coin'.

In canonically Marxian fashion, then, in WSA power is understood, first and foremost, as economic power – a hierarchical division of labour, exploitation of working classes by ruling classes, but hierarchy and exploitation also lifted upwards and extended to the level of states. Furthermore, and again in orthodox Marxian terms, states are understood in an instrumental way, functioning, domestically, to ensure the interests of ruling groups against subalterns, and, at a world-systemic level, as a 'means of assuring certain terms of trade in economic transactions' (Wallerstein, 1974, 16) in the battle between different owner-producers in the world-economy (Wallerstein, 1980b, 114). What Wallerstein's concept of the international division of labour is for economics, a second major concept, the interstate system, is for politics. At the apex of power in the interstate system is a hegemonic state. This hegemonic state is viewed by Wallerstein in characteristically functionalist terms, as maintaining stability within the system, a power that is 'able to establish the rules of the game in the interstate system, to dominate the world-economy (in production, commerce, and finance), to get their way politically with a minimal use of military force (which however they had in goodly strength), and to formulate the cultural language in which one discussed the world' (Wallerstein, 2005, 58). This hegemony, while necessary, is temporary – because it is expensive and abrasive, because others tend to catch up (innovations and monopolies do not last), and because of struggles within a fundamentally conflictual system (Wallerstein, 2005). Historically, for Wallerstein (1974, 1980b), there have been three hegemonies within the world-economy: first the United Provinces, rising in the last half of the sixteenth century, and dominant from about 1625-1675; then, after a struggle for hegemony between Britain and France, Britain, decisively from 1815; then, after a further struggle between America and Germany, America from 1945.



Frequently criticized as static and reifying, WSA is deeply concerned with identifying and theorizing transformation within the world-system. Transformation is connected, most crucially, to the struggle between those who dominate and those who are dominated within the system – classes, status groups, business organizations, different tiers of states – but this struggle is fundamentally shaped, too, by cyclical rhythms and secular trends operative within the world-system (Wallerstein, 1980b; 2005). Secular trends include geographical expansion, commodification, the mechanization of production, and proletarianization, while cyclical rhythms refer to the inevitable contradiction between supply and demand, and capitalism's movement between A and B phases of expansion and contraction. During phases of contraction, especially in periods of intensive struggles for hegemonic succession, conflict frequently rises, and, here, thinkers within the WSA paradigm have sought to incorporate reflection on the relative autonomy and effectivity of the military dimension in international affairs (for instance, Chase-Dunn, 1998; Chase-Dunn and Grimes, 1995).

The contrasts separating WSA and archetypal IR liberalism are striking – Wallerstein rejecting an endogenous starting point in the analysis of world affairs, assumptions about the polyarchic character of liberal democracy, as well as any hint of liberal optimism concerning the beneficence of market interactions or international norms and organizations. Another contrast appears with the work of neo-liberal institutionalists, headed by Robert Keohane. Keohane contends that traditional forms of liberalism in international relations have not sufficiently emphasized the degree to which international institutions and their corresponding regimes and rules both affect and give expression to shared expectations about appropriate behaviour in the international system. The condition of interdependence thus means, for Keohane at least, that international regimes can facilitate cooperation (and reduce transaction costs) between autonomous participants in the system even in the absence of a hegemon, thereby creating a non-hegemonic 'liberal order' in the world political economy (Keohane, 1984). The encounter between WSA and realism is perhaps more interesting, because it has been suggested (see, for instance, Gill, 2008) that there are striking congruences here: a map of the world centred on the struggle for power between multiple groups; a zero-sum and materialist conception of that contested power; the crucial place accorded to anarchy and, potentially, hegemony. Because of his italicization of exogenous factors and of the struggle within and across the tiers of the world-system, Wallerstein, for instance, frequently read ongoing world politics in a manner that converged significantly with the materialist, interest-driven, rational-actor, statist, and Great Power-centric optics of realism (Davenport, 2011).

However, there are fundamental discrepancies between these paradigms. For example, while anarchy is a central assumption shared with realism, anarchy in the world-system, for Wallerstein, is, most centrally, the anarchy of capitalism. The role of the hegemon is crucially linked to taming the effects of such anarchy, and, again,

Wallerstein's contentions about hegemony in the modern world-system differ substantially from the predominant realist analyses of bi- or multi-polarity. Structural realism only accounts for the operation of 'self-help' interstate rivalry, on the one hand, while WSA, on the other, reveals how dominant core states also have a common interest in keeping the world-system relatively stable so that they may collectively exploit the weaker states in the periphery (Wallerstein, 2005, 56). These differences are, though, auxiliary to the most crucial point of separation between WSA and realism – the conceptualization of power. Here, Wallerstein (1980a, p. 20) grants the realm of formal politics a 'certain autonomy', in stark contrast to Morgenthau's (1973 [1948], 5) foundational claim about politics as 'an autonomous sphere of action'. Mersheimer's (2014, 12) contention, 'Power is the currency of great-power politics ... What money is to economics, power is to international relations', expresses the gulf in interpretations. For WSA, this equation reifies world politics as a domain separable from the economic and occludes the social basis of power relations (Gill, 2008), which are to be found in relations of exploitation within the international division of labour. WSA also places, much more convincingly than either realism or liberalism in IR, unequal power among states within historical context. Between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, European powers jostled in their imperial rivalries not only to dominate vast swathes of the non-European world, but also to drag these parts of the world into the capitalist world-economy. Reflecting on the particular historical circumstances of this coercive process of global expansion, Wallerstein (2011d, 129) pointedly observes that incorporation 'into the capitalist world-economy was never at the initiative of those being incorporated'. The asymmetric power relations characterizing contemporary international relations between states of the core, semi-periphery and periphery must be understood as a product of social interconnections during a long globalizing process, culminating in a decisive geographical and occupational division of labour throughout the modern world-system. Wallerstein's historical observations about how hegemonic powers secured their geopolitical ascendancy prior to the great waves of formal decolonization –therefore making it impossible for newly independent states to de-link from the world economic system – raise questions not just about the realist view that unequal power applies at all times and under all conditions, but also the liberal assumption that deeply structured power relations of domination and inequality can be remedied by incremental institutional reform, commercial integration, and modification of individual behaviour. We will take up the question of the adequacy of this modified base-superstructure schema, as well as the normative discrepancies that divide Wallerstein's utopianism from realism and liberalism, in the following two sections.

### **Meaning, Culture, Science**

As with the political realm, Wallerstein, in rather orthodox Marxian fashion, treats the cultural sphere as somewhat superstructural to the international division of labour. Such questions are addressed by Wallerstein's third major conceptual tool,

the geoculture, the realm of the structures of knowledge. Wallerstein (2011a, xvi) defines geoculture as ‘a set of ideas, values, and norms that were widely accepted throughout the system and that constrained social action thereafter’. The dominant modern geoculture, according to Wallerstein, is the centrist liberalism that emerged after the French Revolution, whose gradual triumph over the other main contending ideologies of ‘conservatism’ and ‘radicalism’ played a privileged role in the formation of the world-system’s political economy (especially through the various ideologies of ‘development’ propelled by the scramble for overseas territories). As the source of ‘values that are widely shared throughout the world-system, both explicitly and implicitly’ (Wallerstein, 2011a, 177), liberalism (and liberal developmentalism) has served as a cultural-symbolic subsystem helping to bind, normalize, legitimize and transmit the social reproduction of the inherently inequitable world-system – at least, that is, until the events of 1968 unleashed new anti-systemic movements that increasingly have challenged liberalism’s reign. Considered across Wallerstein’s work, but most extensively in the fourth volume of *The Modern World-System* (Wallerstein, 2011a) the geoculture encompasses consideration of the role of ideas, values, and norms, of culture, and of science, the focus of this section. Here, we stage a confrontation between WSA and approaches in IR theory that are more oriented to the realm of culture. While the English School of IR theory underscores the importance of common norms, values, and moral purposes, as a sort of compromise between realism and idealism (Burchill and Linklater, 2013), in accenting solidarity, co-operation, and regulation by way of notions of international society and a possible world society (Bull, 1977), we will focus on the more pronounced cultural turn in IR theory represented by constructivist and post-modern paradigms, which offered profound challenges to the IR mainstream from the 1990s.

According to the constructivists, too much in mainstream IR theory had been taken as fixed and given, as the result of purely and narrowly-understood material forces (Hurd, 2008). What such assumptions had neglected was the meaningful and socially and relationally constructed character of IR’s objects of analysis. Drawing on Durkheim’s prioritization of the social and relational and Weber’s interpretative approach, as well as Nietzsche’s suspicion about the elements of power invested in knowledge and truth claims (Ruggie 1998), constructivists have sought to move beyond the static assumptions operative within IR theory, so as to better grasp particularity and change (Fierke, 2013). Constructivism emphasizes process rather than fixity, interaction, and, crucially, the importance of intersubjective webs of meaning, in shaping central components of IR theorizing, such as interests and identity (Hurd, 2008). Thus, while Wendt (1995), for instance, admits to sharing a number of Mersheimer’s realist axioms, the structures neo-realists focus upon, he argues, are not solely explicable by way of the distribution of material capabilities. Instead, these structures can only be apprehended through an investigation of shared understandings, expectations, knowledges, and ideas. Material resources, for

instance, only acquire meaning through shared knowledge, as illuminated by the question of why 500 British nuclear weapons would be viewed as less threatening to US interests than five such weapons possessed by North Korea (Wendt, 1995). The real and objective social structures that IR thinkers reflect upon exist and are made by meaningful social practices, and these are irrevocably connected to and dependent on shared knowledge (Wendt, 1995). Here, social life, including the realm of international affairs, is 'ideas all the way down' (Wendt, 1995, 74). Material forces alone (in realism or Marxism), examined through the optic of rational choice, within a context of anarchy (without consideration, say, of the difference between an anarchy of allies and one of enemies), with identity and interests taken as given – all of these assumptions make for an impoverished, one-dimensional framing of world politics. Indeed, Wendt (1992) goes further and argues that, contra neorealism, anarchy 'is what states make of it', since representations as cultural factors acquire meaning only through social interaction. Moreover, transformations in international politics bolster the case for such a relational, meaning-centred, and social approach to IR – for instance, the changing meaning of sovereignty under pressure from the spread and deepening of human rights discourse (Fierke, 2013; Hurd, 2008).

Sometimes, though not always, constructivists have been critical of the hitherto dominant IR theory approach to science itself, challenging the positivist alignment between the human sciences and the physical hard sciences – for instance, a correspondence theory of truth, falsification assumptions in theory building, and a hard distinction between facts and values (Hurd, 2008; Viotti and Kauppi, 2010). This post-positivist stance sparked major debates within the field of IR in the 1990s, and coincided with post-modern challenges across the human sciences. While few thinkers self-describe as post-modern (preferring, say, post-structuralist, post-colonial, or critical theory), because of the baggage the term carries –relativism, irrationalism, nihilism – we use the term to capture a host of challenges around science and theorizing, from the 1980s.

Frequently responding to social transformations located in the 1960s and '70s, post-modern like constructivist approaches typically underscore the processual, constructed, and meaningful making of social life, against static, deterministic, and objectivist assumptions. Taking a more sceptical stance towards a naively-conceived admiration of science, post-modern thought tends to shift towards a more neutral and relativistic focus on discourse, following the pioneering work of Foucault in insisting upon the inseparable intertwining of power and knowledge. Such a problematic shifts from the notion of singular truth, to a consideration of how certain discourses come to function powerfully as truths, and it entails a thoroughgoing reflexivity about the always situated and constructed nature of scientific research – encouraging, for example, a critical vantage point on the founding categories and story-lines of IR theory itself. Post-modern (and post-structural) IR theories are hardly monolithic yet they do, nevertheless, exhibit a basic 'family resemblance' in challenging and deconstructing the empirical-rationalist methods, and thus self-

understanding, of mainstream IR theory. Rob Walker (1993), for instance, problematizes the 'inside/outside' dualism on which IR notions of sovereignty and anarchy – and with them the realist and liberal dichotomy of either 'outside-in' or 'inside-out' explanations – depend as their axiomatic foundation.

Core to the post-modern challenge has been the identification of a variety of what McLennan (1996) ironically refers to as the 'sins' of modernist theorizing – determinism, essentialism, foundationalism, reductionism, universalism, functionalism, and totalization. Such modernist propensities in theory-building are deemed intellectually flawed, in suggesting the possibility of sure foundations for knowledge and timeless truths, and they are often deemed morally dangerous, often in line with Foucault's critique of the exclusionary, oppressive, normalizing, and surveilling character of modern discourses around mental illness, medicine, criminal justice, and sexuality. In this respect, postmodern IR theory has radicalised Foucault's critique of political modernity, suggesting that the practices of contemporary liberal politics and global governance are driven by the hierarchical logics of biopolitics rather than realist geopolitics; the result is a globalization of norm and exception, of security and insecurity configured around circumscribed forms of life subject to the dominating liberal gaze, rather than the constitution of universal justice (Dillon and Reid, 2009). Post-modern thought, then, has a predominantly deflationary cast to it, captured in Lyotard's (1984) famous characterization of the post-modern condition as one of incredulity towards grand-narratives of progress and emancipation.

In the 1980s and 1990s, these post-modern challenges generated a lot of heat and light, critics charging that post-modern thought was corrosive of the quest for rational, useable knowledge, and that it abandoned the role of the human sciences in improving human lives. Many of these attacks mistook the thrust of post-modern thought, which, above all, emphasized the limits of thought and action and frequently entailed a normative commitment to the recognition and protection of difference. Nevertheless, such challenges are arguably inimical to a number of established theoretical paradigms, including realism, liberalism, and WSA. How does WSA fare under scrutiny from these culturalist and post-modern challenges?

Wallerstein's (1991a; 1991b; 1995; 1998; 1999a; 1999b; 2000a; 2004b; 2010b [1976]) thought has been significantly shaped by the assumptions of critical theory, which include a post-positivist view of science, the irremediable shaping of knowledge in general by social relations, the connection between theory and emancipation, and the rejection of the possibility of any pure, formal rationality, separate from substantive rationality. Long calling for a reorganization of the sciences (Wallerstein, 1999b; 2000a; 2000b), Wallerstein (1991a; 1991b; 1995; 1997; 2000a; 2004a) is frequently rather welcoming of a number of post-modern emphases. This is utterly unsurprising in the case of post-modern-inflected critiques of Eurocentrism in the human sciences. That is, the post-colonial 'provincialization of Europe', the attention

to the connection between power and knowledge in thinking about the Third World, the questioning of modernization theory's progressivist optimism about development – such thrusts are core to Wallerstein's work from the start. However, Wallerstein's (1997; 2006a) strong commitment to more contemporary criticisms of Eurocentrism in the human sciences is viewed by McLennan (1998; 2006) as troublesome. For McLennan, the charge of Eurocentrism has created a moralistic and irrationalist climate of debate; it is burdened by the genetic fallacy; it separates those in the critical human sciences from universalist aspirations, from the quest for truer, more objective knowledge (the need to keep questions of the true and good somewhat separate), from secular humanism and progressivist politics. Strong commitment to the anti-Eurocentrism case, that is, appears to undercut the type of politics, and also theory, that are indispensable to Wallerstein's enterprise.

In a similar way, Wallerstein's (1991a and b; 1995, 1997; 1998; 2000a; 2004a) endorsement of certain post-modern positions can appear to be wildly out of step with the functionalist, determinist, universalizing, and totalizing character of WSA. Clearly, for instance, WSA draws heavily from the language of a structural functionalism that Wallerstein otherwise sought to consign to the dustbin of history. Wallerstein reads significant elements within the world-system – states, the semi-periphery, the geoculture, the hegemonic power, for instance – in terms of the reproduction of the system as a whole. In a similar way, the world-system in WSA is comprehended as an expressive totality, arguably underpinned by a determinist base-superstructure schema, however modified. And, surely, the intent of WSA is unmistakably universalist – Wallerstein (2006a) emphasizing, in fact, not the end to universalism but a more universalist universalism – and totalizing, perhaps more so than any other theoretical paradigm in the human sciences. Such guiding assumptions seem irrevocably at odds with post-modern emphases on contingency, the scaled-down analysis of fragments, and anti-essentialism (Therborn, 2000).

Such tensions are very much in evidence in a collection of essays on WSA, from thinkers in the post-modern and post-colonial humanities. In a series of respectful but critical contributions, a number of core objections are repeatedly broached: the 'almost theological omnipotence' of the system in Wallerstein (Palumbo-Liu et al, 2011, 10); the reduction of 'many independent spaces to just three positions' (Moretti, 2011, 70); the way in which events, actions, and movements do not 'appear on Wallerstein's screen as more than blips', and 'Everything is (or threatens to become) system' (Robbins, 2011, 54, 55). In a rather impatient reply, Wallerstein reinforces this sense of incompatibility, despite his embrace of the post-modern, scholarly signs of the collapse of the liberal consensus: what social sciences need to do, says Wallerstein (2011b), is *explain the capitalist world-system*: 'It has its history, its structure, its contradictions, its prospects. I try to study this directly. Others study it implicitly. I think it might help us all if the latter reflected more openly on what it is they are really doing' (226).

Such obduracy will hardly please post-modern sceptics, but a number of critical responses on Wallerstein's behalf are in order. For a start, to insist on the crucial role of economic power is an essential corrective to the marginality of such power in realist and liberal thinking. Underscoring this role does not imply a trans-historical economic reductionism, so much as an insistence on the deterministic dynamics of capitalism itself, the dull and continual pressure exerted by profit, growth, and competition on all spheres of life, towards the autonomization and prioritization of the market realm. In addition, as McLennan (1996; 2006) has pointed out, many of the post-modern charges against modernist social theory are possibly contradictory, incoherent – can we, for instance, theorize contingency? Is not any specificity still an abstraction from greater possible specificity? – or corrosive of the theoretical enterprise as a whole. On this last, reductionism, determinism, and universalism are perhaps constitutive, ineradicable features of theoretical explanation itself. While post-modern-inflected critique has raised crucial queries about the theoretical enterprise and about modernity more widely, at times, the post-modern enterprise can be overwhelmingly negative and paralyzing (McLennan, 2000), or it can amount to little more than a rather banal observation that the world is green, while theory is grey (McLennan, 2006). Certainly, the concept geoculture, as developed by Wallerstein (see 2011a), is rough and ready, or, more critically, underdeveloped in foregrounding conflict and contradiction in the cultural-symbolic framework (such as identities of class, race, and sex) within which the world-system operates; and even in a WSA thinker, such as Friedman (1995; 2000), who has sought to chart these waters in a more nuanced way, the analysis remains at a high level of generality. Nevertheless, we think it is worth underscoring, as Mann (1993) notes, that the function of theory is to provide us with a set of tools that aid in description, explanation, and evaluation, allowing us to impose some investigative order on what otherwise would be a multitudinous mess. Perhaps, here, the tools developed by WSA might be enriched with others found within other Marxian IR paradigms, considered below.

### **Globality, Imperialism, Liberalism, Socialism Today**

It is often suggested that realism suffered a significant setback with the collapse of 'really existing socialism' and the coming of a new age of globalization (for instance, Donnelly, 2013). The fall of the Soviet Union, in particular, appeared to dislocate a discourse built upon the assumption of an irretrievably bipolar or multipolar world. Furthermore, the apparent intensification of world connectedness from about the same time, seemed to be transforming the world, including the bases and operation of power (Held and McGrew, 2002). Commentators such as Ohmae (2000), for instance, suggested that realism's exclusive focus on state-centredness was becoming a 'nostalgic fiction', with the state's discrete sovereignty declining amidst the appearance of new global actors and processes. A more 'transformationalist' view, on the other hand, held that while states were not withering, an extensive pluralization of power was now occurring, states becoming qualitatively changed

elements within a new, diverse network of power, alongside non-governmental organizations, international institutions, multinational corporations, local governments, regional organizations, armed transnational gangs, and other forces (Castells, 1997; Held and McGrew, 2002).

If the collapse of socialism and the growth of globalization challenged realism's explanatory purchase on international reality, such transformations seemed to herald a dramatic comeback for liberalism through the 1990s, often in the form of a neo-liberalism wedded to free trade, market efficiency, the removal of trade barriers, regional specialization, and a regulatory framework of governance within which individual risk and competition can be generated. Most famously framed by Fukuyama (1992) as the moment of the 'end of history' – liberal democracy in the political sphere ('rational recognition') and free market capitalism in the economic sphere ('rational desires') – through the 1990s, the period of 'happy globalization' (in Outhwaite and Ray, 2005, 19) saw neo-liberalism arrogate globalization to forge a set of finance-driven, interrelated market societies. With globalization and neo-liberalism thereby dovetailing, neo-liberals during the 1990s hailed the pacifying, democratizing, and wealth-creating possibilities of unrestricted markets. Meanwhile, on a rather different normative register, a liberal cosmopolitanism, often critical of the disembedding of economics and the lagging of global politics relative to the global economy, found much to be hopeful about in the emergence of global civil society and growing advocacy for global distributive justice (Caney, 2005).

The reinvigoration of liberal hopes for markets, liberal democracy, human rights, and internationalism, alongside contemporary globalization, raise important critical questions for WSA. Is WSA, along with realism, too state-centric to offer insights into a world in which state power is declining and transnational networks are playing an increasingly important role in social life? Here, are three broad tiers enough to encompass the vast complexity of the world of globalization (Sanderson, 2005)? Is the static immiseration position inherited from dependency theory adequate when faced with the rising power, say, of the BRICS nations since the mid-2000s (Nadkarni and Noonan, 2013)? Is Wallerstein's (2000b; 2003) long-time insistence that we are in an 'age of transition', marked by the irrevocable decline of American hegemony, not falsified by the collapse of the socialist bloc and a now unipolar moment in world affairs? And after the events of 1989-1991 in the East, does Wallerstein's socialism belong to a bygone era, as the communist challenges disappear from our collective horizons? We examine these and related questions below.

In the face of the escalation of globalization-talk from the 1990s, Wallerstein remained unmoved. While we may be seeing the intensification of world connectedness, for Wallerstein, such globalization is not new, but is a crucial dimension of the world-system since its initial emergence around 1450, and a founding presupposition of WSA. Viewed through Wallerstein's *longue durée* optic, contemporary globalization-talk is ideological in the critical sense – 'a term of



political exhortation' (Wallerstein, 2000c, 28). More widely, little that has happened since the late 1980s has fundamentally shifted Wallerstein's assessment of the contemporary modern world-system: the system remains, above all, a capitalist world-economy, whose fundamental dynamic is the endless accumulation of capital; America remains the hegemonic power in the system, though this power is in decline (Wallerstein, 2006a); liberalism remains the dominant geoculture, though it too is in its death throws (Wallerstein, 1995); states continue to struggle to move up tiers within the international division of labour; the movement between these tiers, for instance, in the case of contemporary China, is no more remarkable or unusual than the historical movement from peripheral to core status of the US (Chase-Dunn and Grimes, 1995); the expansion of financial flows or the shifts to new leading products are cyclical trends repeated over the course of hundreds of years.

Notwithstanding such continuities, the landscape of the contemporary world-system is unique in a number of ways, in Wallerstein's estimation. Here, as Chase-Dunn and Inoue (2011, 407) suggest, Wallerstein has leant towards the 'apocalyptic and ... millenarian'. In particular, a number of trends are reaching asymptotes that are exacerbating crisis tendencies in the system: the de-ruralization of the world, and the impossibility of running away from growing workers' power; the growing costs of inputs – for instance, because of ecological exhaustion; the rising infrastructure bill; the burdensome costs associated with growing democratization (health, education, and guaranteed life-time income); a first-time reversal of the modern tendency of growing state power (Wallerstein, 1995; 1999a); and the absence of any likely hegemonic replacement for a declining US power (Wallerstein, 2005; 2006a; 2010; 2011c). The world-system, in short, appears to have reached a terminal point, a new moment of decadence, or of bifurcating futures – socialism or barbarism (Wallerstein, 2000c; 2004b).

From the 1970s, a number of competing Marxian accounts took issue with WSA – for instance, Brenner's (1977) charge that Wallerstein had focussed on the division of labour and exchange, at the expense of class and production. In more recent years, as Keucheyan (2013) notes, within the field of critical theory, we see the flourishing of a number of novel accounts of imperialism, at some remove from WSA. One bloc within this literature insists that, with the collapse of 'really existing socialism', we have entered a period of decisive American unipolarity. Compelling variations on this theme can be found in, say, the work of Panitch (2000), Petras and Veltmeyer (2001), Harvey (2003), and Anderson (2017). Here, the very pivot and axis of everything encompassed by contemporary globalization is American power, in its various forms. At a quite other pole, drawing on the unorthodox Marxian tradition of Italian workerism, Hardt and Negri (2000; 2004) argue that in the 1990s, a new decentred and deterritorializing logic and structure of rule or sovereignty – Empire – emerged. Beyond classical imperialism, we find a new global moment of the domination of Capital, bereft of a central place of power – 'the coming Empire is not

American and the US is not its centre' (2000, 384) – with power itself mutating towards rule over social life as a whole ('biopower').

In a somewhat converging, but more conventionally Marxist analysis, Robinson (2011a; 2011b; 2018) argues that the emergence since the 1970s of a new global capitalism has rendered WSA's territorial conception and simple international division of labour-interstate system analysis outmoded. A new transnational faction of the capitalist class has emerged hegemonic, its interests utterly beyond any particular nation state. America, of course, remains militarily dominant, but its interventions (such as in Iraq) cannot plausibly be seen as imperial in the older sense; these are, rather, expressive of a new transnational capitalist imperialism (Robinson, 2018). Alongside the transnationalization of capital and the formation of a transnational capitalist class, we see too, Robinson argues, an emergent transnational state apparatus, encompassing institutions such as the WEF, WTO, IMF, International Bank of Settlements, UN, European Central Bank, and the G7. This incipient transnational state does not mean the death of the nation state, which still has a function in the accumulation of capital, but such states are increasingly becoming nodes and transmission belts in a wider transnational system of capital accumulation.

More cautious around globalizing transformations but making some aligned analytical suggestions is the neo-Gramscian work of Cox (1983) and Gill (2008). Seeking to apply Gramsci's conceptual vocabulary – hegemony, intellectuals, historic bloc, war of position, passive revolution – to the field of IR towards more careful, nuanced conjunctural analyses, these thinkers underscore the constant, conflictual making and remaking of world order. Seeking to break from the instrumentalism and economism of orthodox Marxism, Cox and Gill view states not as mere functional tools of pre-constituted ruling classes, but, instead, as sites of the struggle. Hegemony is one possibility arising from such struggle, but the concept is used in a manner quite distant from WSA, to signify a particular intertwining of economic, political, and cultural-ideological power. The concept historic bloc is connected and provides an alternative to the base-superstructure problematic. Rule, under these lights, is more clearly an ongoing, turbulent set of processes, neo-Gramscian analyses focussing, above all, on the relations of force in concrete situations. In practice, this approach tends to lead to more differentiated and complexified accounts than those characteristic of Wallerstein – seen, for instance, in Cox's (1983) analysis of hegemony at the international level from the mid-nineteenth century until the 1960s, or in Gill's (2008) account of the constellation of forces in play in contemporary globalization. Critical of Wallerstein's mechanical and economic explanatory efforts, as well as of the thesis of waning US power, Gill (2008) seeks to foreground struggle in an ongoing war of position in the social transformation of US hegemony 1945-65, which subsequently comes undone. Yet if the dominance of American hegemonic power waned briefly, it was again reinforced through the language and values of a neo-liberal capitalism appropriating the concept of

'globalization' as an ideological cover and obscuring the division of the world into core and periphery (cf. Wallerstein, 2003). From below, neo-Gramscian analysis appears as well to offer greater attention to the existence of counter-hegemonic forces, in an ongoing war of position, addressing what, according to Wallerstein's detractors, is a major flaw in his schema, because WSA's logic of explanation lies with the system, its dominant poles, and its imperatives regarding the maintenance of the world-system's highly hierarchized status quo (Martin, 2000).

How does Wallerstein's work fare under these critical gazes? Against some of the critiques emerging from the contemporary globalization literature (Sanderson, 2005), WSA does not deny the efficacy of endogenous dimensions in the positioning of states within the international division of labour, and neither does Wallerstein deny movement across tiers within the world-economy or argue for a static immiseration position. Instead, WSA foregrounds the indispensability of often-underexamined exogenous factors, and it insists on the permanence of polarizing tendencies within the world-economy, a position that is still widely and solidly defended within the literature on global inequality today (see, for instance, Arrighi, 2002; Chase-Dunn, 1998; Mann, 2013; Nolan and Zhang, 2010; Pieterse, 2005; Therborn, 2011; 2012; Wade, 2007). Similarly, Wallerstein is attentive to major changes over the life-span of the world-system – such as shifting regimes of labour, leading products, production processes, balances between productive and financial capital, and conflicts between different factions of capital.

With respect to political power, while Wallerstein acknowledges a contemporary break from the world-systemic tendency towards the growth of state power, the short shrift he gives to death of the state/pluralization of power arguments might be viewed as a sober counterweight to chronocentric globalist rhetoric. As Mann (2013) – no great supporter of WSA – says, states remain the 'entrenched regulators' in a system still led by Northern states. Regarding the political realm, too, against long-running charges (see, for instance, Skocpol, 1977) around Wallerstein's iron-clad economic determinism, in concrete analyses – for instance, on neo-conservative-led military intervention (Wallerstein, 2006b) – Wallerstein clearly lends military and political factors a healthy degree of autonomy. On the issue of hegemony, there is dispute even within the WSA paradigm (Amin, 1994; 2003; Arrighi, 2009), and the question of the polarity and prospects of our moment is an incredibly complex war of gods, around which various measurements of power provide little resolution, and in which Wallerstein's position of declining US dominance remains a respectable option. Nevertheless, a broadening of the concept, in a Gramscian direction, we think, offers important advantages.

From outside of the IR house of power, contestatory social movements are viewed by Wallerstein as able to shape the world-system, in ways conflictual to the interests of Capital. This is clearly spelt out in Wallerstein's treatment of both the anti-systemic movements in the period 1945-1968 – decolonization and increased

sovereignty for poorer nations, the spread of communism to embrace a third of the world's population by 1970, the rising living standards and improved protections for labour under the social democratic consensus in the West – and the impact of the world-revolution of 1968 in the decline of these movements, the rise of new anti-systemic forces, and the concomitant challenge posed to liberalism as geoculture (Amin et al., 1990; Arrighi et al., 1989; Wallerstein, 1991a; 1991b; 1995; 2002a; 2004a). Regarding frequent criticisms centred on the way in which Wallerstein's totalizing and functionalist optics minimise the role of struggle, Wallerstein, while not engaging in detailed analysis (see, though, Arrighi and Silver, 1999 and Silver, 2005, for a more detailed WSA treatment), has continually argued the constitutive place of class and status group contestation, within and across state boundaries – these categories not approached in a reified way as 'eternal essences' but, instead, as constantly forming, dissolving, and re-forming (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991; Wallerstein, 1980a; 2011a), always positioned against a backdrop of the changing world-economy. In this regard, Wallerstein's position and its ties to the ideational power of geoculture is not dissimilar to constructivism's understanding that conceptions of power and hegemony are as much about self-created identities and ideologies or historically conceived (and contested) roles as about material attributes and circumstances – thereby highlighting the reciprocal influence of and relationship between structure and agency in the shaping of the world-system. Taking these arguments in a more Gramscian dimension allows us to interpret structures as historical products of recurrent patterns of actions and expectations – that is, representations of particular configurations of forces (material capabilities, ideas, and institutions) interacting within a structure – which are socially constructed and 'become part of the objective world by virtue of their existence in the intersubjectivity of relevant groups of people' (Cox and Sinclair, 1996, 149).

An important last stop concerns Wallerstein's undiminished socialism – the moral-political engine driving his entire intellectual enterprise – which, for some critics, presents an insuperable problem. In particular, as the horizon visible in the period of the construction of WSA faded – Third Worldism, the New Left, the institutional power of Marxism – and end of history, death of utopia, socialism as totalitarianism narratives took hold in the West, a supremely confident, recharged liberalism consigned this aspect of Wallerstein's thought to the dustbin of history – Sanderson (2005 p. 204), for instance, saying of Wallerstein's socialism that it is time to put away such 'foolish things'. Over a decade later, though, especially after the Global Financial Crisis, Wallerstein's refusal to yield has, we suggest, proven far-seeing. The widespread return of vigorous (if often still small) further Left emphases and forces frequently appear close to the unorthodox, radically democratic, pluralist socialism charted by Wallerstein (1991a; 1991b; 1995; 2002b), as against the vanguardist Leninism or statist social democracy he was critical of. The seeds of such a socialism were, for Wallerstein (2000b; 2002b; 2004b), visible in what, in later years, he referred to as the 'spirit of Porto Alegre'.

## Concluding Comments

Developed over four decades, Immanuel Wallerstein's WSA still stands strong, when set against competitor maps of the world issuing from the dominant schools of thought in IR. Pioneering a deeply historical and global framing of world affairs, WSA is a paradigm of vast ambition, and its bold conceptualization continues to offer both a framework for fruitful research and a map of power that informs activism. While the IR paradigms we have touched upon provide important vantage points from which to raise pressing questions – about the role of non-economic factors in thinking power, about the limits of knowledge, about the shaping of the world by human actors in struggle, and about the changes wrought by contemporary globalization – Wallerstein's project still speaks urgently and in illuminating ways to those concerned with world affairs and looking to gain distance from both formalist liberalism and dehistoricized realism. On this score, Balakrishnan (2011) suggests that the shift from something like a 1990s end of history moment to the current moment of world turmoil vindicates the global and *longue durée* lenses that Wallerstein has so stubbornly worn. Similarly, after the negativity and self-scrutiny of the post-modern moment (McLennan, 2000), it is perhaps clear that, as Wallerstein (2004a, 189) has argued, there is no escaping macronarratives: 'The only question is whether we are putting forward a defensible macronarrative'. WSA's capacious macronarrative is arguably unrivalled on the Left as a fluent, encompassing alternative to those of triumphant globalism, the clash of civilizations, and far-Right identitarianism.

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