

# MYTHS, STATE EXPANSION, AND THE BIRTH OF GLOBALIZATION

---

A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

JON D. CARLSON



# Myths, State Expansion, and the Birth of Globalization

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Myths, State Expansion, and the Birth of Globalization

A Comparative Perspective

Jon D. Carlson

palgrave  
macmillan



MYTHS, STATE EXPANSION, AND THE BIRTH OF GLOBALIZATION

Copyright © Jon D. Carlson, 2012.

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2012 978-0-230-12088-4

All rights reserved.

First published in 2012 by

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN® in the United States – a division of

St. Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Where this book is distributed in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world, this is by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-29902-7

ISBN 978-1-137-01045-2 (eBook)

DOI 10.1057/9781137010452

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Carlson, Jon D., 1969–

Myths, state expansion, and the birth of globalization : a comparative perspective / Jon D. Carlson.

p. cm.

1. Nation-state and globalization—History. 2. State, The—History.  
3. Imperialism—History. I. Title.

JZ1316.C37 2012

320.1—dc23

2011025269

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by MPS Limited, A Macmillan Company.

First edition: January 2012

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To Kymm, who has had an abiding interest in this project from the very beginning, boldly venturing into the unknown; and of course Jossia and Alexandra—who remind me daily of what is truly important.

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Contents

List of Figures	viii
Acknowledgments	ix
1 Broadening and Deepening: Systemic Expansion, Incorporation, and the Zone of Ignorance	1
2 New World Empires and Otters: The Scramble for Nootka Sound, the Northwest Passage, and the China Trade	37
3 West Africa and the Rise of Asante: Rivers of Gold, a Short Route to China, and the Globalization of Labor	75
4 Ethiopia and the Middle East: The Red Sea Trade, Prester John, and Christians in the Muslim World	115
5 Japan and the Far East: Zipangu, Roofs of Silver, and the Lure of the Orient	145
Conclusion: Myths, Incorporation, and Systemic Expansion	173
Notes	201
References	211
Index	233



# List of Figures

1.1	Arenas of change leading to incorporation	19
1.2	Spatial boundaries of world-systems	23
1.3	Typography of incorporation	27
2.1	Typography of incorporation, Nootka Sound	69
3.1	Asante incorporation: typography of incorporation	109
4.1	Abyssinian incorporation: typography of Abyssinian incorporation	140
5.1	Japanese incorporation: typography of incorporation	169
C.1	Spatial boundaries of world-systems	179
C.2	Modified typography of incorporation	182

# Acknowledgments

As with any academic enterprise, this book is the product of long hours and much outside inspiration and assistance. Friends, colleagues, and family have all played a supportive role, and I apologize upfront for any that I forget to specifically name.

This book began in an earlier iteration as my Ph.D. dissertation at Arizona State University. It originated in a graduate seminar on world-systems taught by Pat McGowan, in which the issue of labor—specifically slave labor—posed an intriguing challenge. Without the guidance and motivation of Pat, the dissertation would undoubtedly have suffered an ignominious fate. I am deeply indebted to him for the mentoring and role-modeling that he has provided. I also owe the other members of my dissertation committee, Roxanne Doty and Michael Mitchell, an equally heartfelt thank you. Even though you may not know it, you continue to guide my teaching and academic enterprise. I hope you find this book to be sufficiently meritorious as to be granted some shelf space; else I imagine it will also make a fine doorstep. The Department at ASU supported conference travel and additional research while early drafts of chapters were being written, so additional thanks to Pat Kenney, Rick Herrera, and Bob Youngblood—all of whom played an administrative or supervisory role in keeping me on task as a graduate student. I trust this will help keep me in the category of “good” graduates, and one that occasionally merits mention as a successful product of the department. And finally, a sincere thank you to the many other members of the graduate student cohort at ASU. The discussions, collegiality, and shared experience has transformed into some lasting friendships that I deeply value, though I am bad at saying as much.

Research was undertaken and substantial portions of what would become chapters 3, 4, and 5 were written while I was in residence as a Helen Wallis Fellow at The Map Library, of The British Library. The Fellowship provided desk space, administrative support, and staff-level access to collections, and I cannot recommend the Wallis Fellowship

enough. There is truly something special about being able to ask for a 400-year-old atlas, be able to pore over it, and breathe in the spicy aroma of distant shores. It is an addictive privilege, as digital or print reproductions never give these resources their adequate due. If anyone is doing research that even tangentially relates to cartography with an international dimension, I encourage you to apply. At least visit The Map Library if you are in London. Accordingly, Map Librarian Peter Barber and the staff at the library were gracious, welcoming, and wonderful to work with. While there are no maps reproduced in this book, I link those that are referenced through an online appendix (<http://works.bepress.com/jondcarlson/>). I do hope this book proves to be at least a small testament to the Helen Wallis Fellowship. It is an experience I fondly carry with me, and an opportunity I will continue to advocate.

This book is also a testament to the benefits of sharing an airport shuttle with strangers. While attending a conference in Chicago, I had the good luck of sharing a shuttle ride from Midway with Nick Kardulias, who happened to be attending a different conference. In the course of asking about my area of study, it came out that he also did work with world-systems analysis. Furthermore, he invited me to the conference and introduced me to Tom Hall, whose work I was drawing heavily upon. So Nick, thank you for the helping hand you offered to a graduate student that wasn't even one of your own, thank you for the free copy of your book, and also for introducing me to Tom. I suspect a free copy of this book will find its way to you in the mail. Tom Hall has also continued to be a supportive reader and external sounding board, even as he transitions into retirement. I appreciate the opportunity to run into him at International Studies Conferences or ASA meetings. He and Chris Chase-Dunn have been foundational to my own work, and their intellectual imprint is to be found throughout this work. As a prolific scholar, Chris continues to be an inspiration.

Beyond Arizona State University, this book has benefited from my employment at a number of institutions. The dissertation was finished and defended during my first semester teaching at Monmouth College. Ira Smolenski and Farhat Haq were gracious in their tolerance, support, and friendship. Revisions and conference activity also took place while I was at Rockford College, and I am much appreciative of their underwriting of the venture. More currently, I owe a debt of gratitude to the University of California, Davis and Merced. It has been a boon and a blessing to be able to work in the best public university system in the world; the students and faculty make me a better teacher and a better academic. And I offer preemptive thanks to Dean Mark Aldenderfer for the money I am going to ask for to offset indexing costs. The colleagues and friends at UC Merced

have made it a productive time, and it is a community of engaged scholars that I value deeply. The lecturer's union, UC-AFT Local 6366 has also supported teaching-related conference travel, some of which relates to this volume. The money is not as important as the solidarity, but both are much appreciated in trying economic times. And of course, thanks are due to the Political Science Program, particularly Steve Nicholson and Tom Hansford, for keeping me gainfully employed every year. They have seen UC Merced grow from its inception, and I hope I have been a productive part of that growth.

Finally and most importantly, I owe such a debt of gratitude to my wife Kymm that I doubt I will ever adequately compensate. She has lived with this project since before the finished dissertation, and consequently with my academic neuroses. In spite of this, she still decided to marry me. I owe much of what I have accomplished to her support, stability, and encouragement. Together we have embarked on our own incorporative enterprise, and I am blessed to have her as a partner. I am better for it. I cannot imagine my life without her or our two wonderful girls, Jossia and Alexandra. They are mythic, in all the best ways. It is to the three of them that I dedicate this book.

## CHAPTER 1

---

# Broadening and Deepening: Systemic Expansion, Incorporation, and the Zone of Ignorance

Nothing is so firmly believed as what is least known.

Michel de Montaigne, essayist (1533–1592)

This work is intended to be “read” on at least three levels. Broadly, this is an attempt to bring a historical perspective to the current discussion around globalization. Many of the “new” problems of globalization are not new, and we are able to see historical analogues to these problems by examining the expansion of the Westphalian, or European, state system. Challenges to the state that are becoming more apparent, many which fall under the rubric of globalization, have traditionally been masked by the existence of the Westphalian system itself. States, by their nature, are predicated on control: control of people, economic activity, communication, and even on ways of thinking about what is right and wrong. Coercion and control, whether overt or subtly passive, is the very essence of a state. The ability of states to mask or manage traditional problems is breaking down, and these are the issues commonly associated with “globalization” in its many forms, be it economic, sociocultural, political, or environmental.

Yet these problems of globalization are not new. What is new is the ability or inability of government to mediate between the spheres of the social and economic. To more clearly see how these relationships were established, it is helpful to pull back the layers of accumulated historical detritus and actually look at the initial process of formation. We can see how the present system, the one plagued by the problems of globalization, emerged and became established. And we can recognize that most of the new problems

we face are not new at all, but ongoing issues that have been dealt with, managed, suppressed, or otherwise channeled for hundreds or thousands of years. As different peoples, religions, cultures, and competing understandings of the world come into contact with one another, there is tremendous potential for disagreement over right and wrong, what is considered desirable or undesirable, social practices like monogamy or polygamy, “appropriate” gender roles, political status of groups, the creation of entirely new social groupings, the proper basis for governing authority, and even what constitutes one’s very identity. All the given assumptions of day-to-day life become malleable and uncertain. This moment of contact is both an exciting and deeply disturbing moment.

On a more specific level, this work offers an opportunity to reevaluate the ability of international relations (IR) theory to describe, prescribe, or otherwise serve as intellectual guideposts for good social science in a rapidly changing world. In particular, this work is a call for an intellectual shift away from traditional state-centric power issues as the dominant frame for perceiving international politics, toward a more interdisciplinary approach to understanding international sociopolitical behavior. This allows us to understand a dominant theme in modern IR—globalization—by understanding the roots of globalization. It is an attempt to situate the globalization *problematique* within a body of theory that has more intellectual tradition, traction, and capacity to handle the challenges of globalization: neo-Marxism paradigmatically, world-systems analysis (WSA) more specifically (cf. Gills and Thompson 2006). Because of its focus on issues of class, capital accumulation, property-as-power, and transnational movements, WSA offers value-added to the globalization debate, and thereby adds value to IR theorizing.

In turn, this hopefully renewed theoretical “debate” between what has been a dominant neoliberal discourse promoted largely by the West (in defense of the Westphalian system-established status quo) and a supposedly dead body of neo-Marxist theory, can be used to understand the disconnect between the global north and the global south. This may also be seen as reinvigorating a debate of the 1970s, which gave rise to the notion of “globalization,” about rival accounts of the processes by which peoples and states were becoming more intertwined (cf. Modelski 1972; Wallerstein 1974; Keohane and Nye 1977).

This work also applies to a wider body of IR, if one is open to questioning the history behind the emergence of things like the state, property rights (who owns what and why), notions of right and wrong (and how these are even determined), or what the “proper” role of a citizen is (e.g., happy consumer, obedient worker, party member, citizen-soldier, or engaged social activist). As such this work is explicitly social constructivist, and in a globalized world any

IR scholar must give proper credence to the social underpinnings of their object of study, else they risk being culturally and historically bound, and negligent with regard to the externalizable validity and prescriptive nature of their work.

As a means of achieving these two purposes, gain insight into globalization and invigorate the present state of IR theorizing, this work is an unapologetic refinement and expansion of WSA. This is a third level at which one may approach this work: contributing to the literature on world-systems research. Accordingly, I use the process of incorporation and systemic expansion as a means of engaging “globalization.”<sup>1</sup> Specifically, I examine the concept of the “external arena” and its relation to the international system as an expanding whole. The goal is to rethink the absorption of new regions (“states,” proto-states, and peoples) into the world-system in order to understand the processes of systemic expansion (and thus, globalization) more completely.

This is a positive critique of both Wallerstein’s analysis of incorporation (European, state-centric, “inside-out”) and Hall’s analysis of incorporation (external, indigenous peoples, “outside-in”). This work also supports the “pulsation” thesis of world-systems (Hall 1987, 1989, 2005; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997; Beaujard and Fee 2005), offering insight for future cross-systemic study: are zones along system borders repeatedly incorporated as they fall in and out of neighboring systems, or are they mere geographic sociocultural bridges between systems? Accordingly, several cases also apply to research on “contested peripheries” (Allen 1992, 1997, 2005; Cline 2000; Hall 2005). Such peripheries have “geographical, political and economic implications, since the affected region lies between two larger empires, kingdoms or polities established to either side of it” (Cline 2000:7).

I ask the broad question: “What drives the expansion of the global state system?” It seems natural to assume that the status of being “internal” or “external” to the international system may be a source of debate, as does the way in which this status is represented. Further, status and transitions of status (for peoples, societies, states, and other groupings) are likely to be highly contentious. This prompts a narrower question: “What is the nature of incorporation into the system?” Understanding this dynamic is more salient, since the “moment” of incorporation can occur over a period of 100 or more years, and can involve vast geographic regions. A region does not just become part of the system, *something*—some change—must occur. One must get a “close-up” view of the actual *process* of the system expanding. By gaining a clear understanding of this fundamental process, one may broadly critique existing explanations of state behavior and the expansion of the modern global system.

An accurate understanding of the external arena and its concomitant incorporation into the system are fundamental to the understanding of the process behind the expansion and growth of the modern global system—commonly now referred to with the catch-all phrase “globalization.” I use WSA to examine and explain the process of incorporation into the system. This world-systems explanatory outlook should be contrasted to other systemic-level explanations of expansion (e.g., Waltzian neorealism, Bull’s international society). By paying attention to the process underlying expansion, one may critique realist explanations of expansion (e.g., Snyder 1991), supplement other approaches to understanding systems change (e.g., Spruyt 1994), and increase our understanding of the social and discursive nature of present systemic alterations of global order (e.g., Hardt and Negri 2000; Said 1978 [2003], 1994). A world-systems approach frees us from four primary problems that plague much of traditional IR research: state-centrism, the treatment of politics as an autonomous subject of study, a temporal scope of analysis limited to the recent past, and a tendency toward Eurocentrism (cf. Denmark 1999). It is my argument that an explicitly world-systems approach provides a more nuanced and insightful explanation of how European-style political structures either *emerge from* or *are inserted into* peripheral regions than is currently provided by IR literature. This is the very essence of systemic expansion.

### I. Regarding International Relations

In IR theory there is an ever-present ebb and flow of ideas, which results in a shifting swell in the prevailing tide of current theory. A prime example is provided by tracing the evolution of IR theory from political realism, to a neorealist “refinement,” through a realist backlash, and finally to a cry for alternative considerations characterized by the agent-structure debate and the emergence of postmodernism. Social constructivism may be viewed as a response to mainstream IR critiques of the deconstructive element of the postmodern attack on mainstream IR theory: what are we left with after we unpack assumptions and deconstruct our field of study? Recognition that much of what we study is a tacitly social-agreed-upon “reality.”

Morganthau (1978 [2007]) serves as much of the contemporary basis for modern classical realism. Political realism was “refined” with a more “structural” approach to international politics provided by Waltz (1979). In this “neorealist” approach, the system becomes paramount, and is understood in context of the observable action or attributes of its constituent units (states). Though neorealism (aka “structural realism”) has been roundly debated and criticized as a theory (cf. Keohane 1986), neorealism and world-systems have



been recognized as primary influences in the academic discourse on IR, especially when one attempts a systems-based approach to understanding global behavior (Wendt 1987). Recent work by “reflexive realists” (cf. Lebow 2003; Lang 2002; Williams 2005; Steele 2007, 2008) attempts to outline the social and ethical aspect of classical realism. Indeed, the underlying realist concern with concepts of “power” and “interests” has long lent credence to criticisms that these ideas were too “woolly” to use effectively in the pursuit of social “science.” Even Morgenthau (1978:11, emphasis added) posits that “the kind of interest determining political action in a particular period of history depends upon the political *and cultural* context within which foreign policy is formulated.” Similarly, the same observations apply to the concept of power: “Its content and the manner of its use are determined by the political and cultural environment” (Morgenthau 1978:11). The very underpinnings of realism are social in nature, and modern scholars are exploring this self-referencing, closed-loop, “reflexive” and social aspect of realist IR theory.

Wendt (1987:344) views world-systems’ understanding of structure as a “progressive problem shift over neorealism.” As a research program, WSA has a diverse network of scholars and a theoretically rich body of literature that continues to be refined. This is such the case that one may readily agree with Wendt that “these efforts have helped to move world-system theory away from the excessive functionalism evident in his [Wallerstein’s] early contributions and, perhaps, in my portrayal of world-system theory” (1987:348, parenthetical reference added). So, while neorealism has stagnated and been largely supplanted by domestic realist explanations, which are themselves under attack by reflexive realists, WSA has continued to evolve as an active research program, per the Lakatosian notion of scientific progress.

So why is it important to take a systemic approach to international politics? Quite simply, part of the reason has to do with the ontological challenges posed by “globalization.” Just as states as units of government are having trouble controlling various challenges of globalization, states as units of analysis and theories predicated on such units prove insufficient. The context within which states “act” (which begs the state-as-actor fallacy: individuals in positions of power act and make decisions, states as discrete entities do not) is inherently a social systemic one. As such, there are rules, expectations, goals, conflicting interests, and numerous motivations that incentivize action. States do not exist in a vacuum. So, to understand state behavior (which is to say human behavior) one must embrace a comprehensive approach, a systemic understanding of action and reaction, force and opposition, and desire and revulsion. Further, as states are one of a myriad of “actors” (e.g., intergovernmental organizations,

nongovernmental organizations and nonstate actors, transnational corporations, social movements, and peoples), states as units are less apt as the primary unit of analysis, and increasingly *primus inter pares*: first among equals. Accordingly, explanatory power accorded to a state-focused approach is decreasing, and intellectual leverage is increasingly found by looking at other agents in the global systemic environment. How these various agents interact is a social behavior, and framed by systemic structures, so an approach that allows for consideration of these factors is paramount. A world-systems approach is well suited to this task.

## II. World-Systems Analysis

Much like the world-system's historical development, the application of the world-systems approach has expanded and encompassed many different areas of academic concern. In fact, there are so many variations on the world-systemic approach that it has long ceased to be a single "theory," and is more accurately referred to as a Lakatosian "research programme," or a "paradigm" in the traditional Kuhnian sense. According to Kuhn (1970), a paradigm is more general than a theory, and may in fact contain many competing theories that strive to disprove and supplant one another. It is more a set of guiding assumptions that allows for theory development, and provides a framework within which researchers can evaluate theories and the questions that are derived from them. Therefore, it is hardly a stretch of Kuhn's usage to say that the world-systems approach has achieved the status of a "paradigm."

In contrast, Lakatos (1970) recognizes that all great scientific theories are engulfed in an "ocean of anomalies" from the moment of their inception. Instead of discarding an individual theory once it has proven inadequate, Lakatos places emphasis on sequences of historically related theories. In his "methodology of scientific research programmes," Lakatos suggests that a "research programme" fills the role of providing a unit of scientific appraisal that maintains its identity while it changes. In essence, "a research programme is the sum of the various stages through which a leading idea passes" (Larvor 1998:51). This "leading idea" provides the "hard core" of the research program, which is the set of commitments that cannot be abandoned without abandoning the research program altogether. Around this core, there is a "protective belt" of auxiliary hypotheses that serve to shield the core from falsification. This belt of auxiliary hypotheses is continually changing. This change takes place in response to empirical findings, but also according to a research program's "heuristic"—the set of problem-solving techniques that guide a scientist engaged in a particular research

program. Thus, within the realm limited to IR theory, a world-systems approach may accurately be described as a “research program.”

As with any paradigm, a diverse body of literature has developed around the world-systems approach. Furthermore, in a Lakatosian sense, it is imperative to fully understand how a world-systems approach compares with other paradigms or research programs. As Lakatos (1970:179) argues: “Purely negative, destructive criticism, like ‘refutation’ or demonstration of an inconsistency does not eliminate a programme. Criticism of a programme is a long and often frustrating process and one must treat budding programmes leniently.” So, not only should we take a “lenient” view toward world-systems as an emergent program, but it is also imperative to recognize that any criticism that this inquiry generates (either of contending bodies of theory or of world-systems theory itself) is to be taken as a *constructive* criticism. This constructive criticism, with the help of rival research programs, then produces real scientific progress.

### ***A. Addressing Globalization***

Globalization has become a largely meaningless buzzword, or at least a word with so many meanings that its coherence has become clouded. One can say that a central feature of the appeal of globalization is that many contemporary problems cannot be adequately studied at the level of nation-states, but need to be seen in terms of global processes (cf. Sklair 1991, 1999). In this way, “globalization” also reflects an ontological challenge to the study of IR; if one does not understand the process that shapes the object of study, one is at a loss when explaining the assumptive inferences that go into model building. Support for a world-systems approach is made even more pertinent if one acknowledges that “globalization is not just a ‘current thing’ but has been going on for centuries or, in some views, millennia” (Hall 2000a:6). Indeed, intercontinental economic integration (“economic globalization”) has been a long-term trend since the great chartered companies of the seventeenth century (Chase-Dunn 1999). Arrighi (1999:199; see also Hirst and Thompson 1996) echoes this reevaluation of the notion of globalization as “recent” by pointing out that “a world-encompassing economy sharing close to real-time information first came into existence not in the 1970s but the 1870s, when a system of submarine telegraph cables began to integrate financial and other major markets across the globe in a way not fundamentally different from today’s satellite-linked markets.”

Interestingly, some realist scholars also recognize that “Globalization is not new . . . Challenges to the authority of the state are not new . . . Transnational flows are not new” (Krasner 1994:13; quoted in Burch

2000:194). Instead, these factors have always comprised the traditional Westphalian system. As Burch (2000:194) notes, “Krasner thus transforms the realist simile of states as billiard balls to states as whiffle balls, but most of the realist worldview endures.” While Krasner may be correct, he misses the point. Indeed, for Lakatos, this would serve as a prime example of realists reconstructing the “protective belt” of theory in an attempt to save the “hard core” of realism. While these factors may have been part of the traditional state system, the *degree* of globalization, the *volume* of transnational flows (especially financial flows), and the resulting challenges to the authority of the state *are* new. Their increased relevance is seriously eroding the traditional realist explanation of the system, and actually serves as an argument *for* alternative explanations that hold more water than do “whiffle balls.” WSA is such an alternative systemic explanation.

Recent work by Sassen (2008) illustrates the interconnectedness of history, the nation-state, and “modern” challenges to the state as illustrated by globalization. Including a discussion of economic, political, and cultural dimensions, Sassen argues that we are living through an “epochal transformation,” and that many of the current challenges to the state captured under the rubric of globalization may be conceived as trends toward “denationalization.” Denationalization is itself influenced by what happened when the nation-state was built, and the exigencies present that led to its rise as a central feature in the global system. As states are predicated on control, the movement toward a fluid, interactive global economy (and society) is inherently one of reduced control, and therefore reduced saliency for the nation-state.

One can see the outlines of an “epochal transformation” with a quick examination of the literature dealing with various debates within globalization. For example, various readers on globalization (cf. Held and McGrew 2007; Lechner and Boli 2007) usually include discussion of various *types* of globalization. These focus on economic aspects of globalization, political or national-international tensions, sociocultural conflicts—often related to media or communications innovation, and “new” threats posed by globalization in areas associated with the environment, global disease, or similar ecological challenges (e.g., invasive species, extinctions, biodiversity, resource depletion). And there is usually a discussion of resistance or possible globalized futures. In short, the globalization debates generally include discussion of four broad categories that coincide with fields of study in the social sciences: political dimensions, economic aspects, sociocultural dimensions, and “other,” such as the environment.

There are ready historical analogues for *all* of these challenges of globalization, including potential strategies for resistance or negotiation. Upon contact between societies, as we see in the four case studies here, the deep

taproot of globalization may be unearthed. This initial, almost immediate, alteration in economic, social, or political spheres upon cross-cultural contact is what I refer to as “*protoglobalization*.” It begins even before regions are traditionally considered part of the international system. Protoglobalization is important, in part to distinguish the initial stages of globalization from modern conceptualizations (however imprecise) associated with globalization, but also because it allows us to recognize the historically integral nature of globalization. If we use protoglobalization as an analogue, we may more fully expose the impact agency and individual decision-making has with regard to the challenges posed by the modern debates on globalization. Human action matters, and in the very early stages of systemic expansion characterized by protoglobalization, it is easier to see the impact of individual human agency with more clarity.

### ***B. Toward Unidisciplinarity***

The world-systems approach undermines the contrived classical lines of division within social sciences, as it sets out to study the system as a dynamic whole, eschewing the division of the world into individual groups or organizations. Notably:

Anthropology, economics, political science, sociology—and history—are divisions of the discipline anchored in a certain *liberal conception of the state* and its relation to functional and geographical sectors of the social order. They make a certain limited sense if the focus of one’s study is organizations. They make none at all if the focus is the social system (Wallerstein 1974:11, emphasis added).

Instead of a “multidisciplinary” approach, the study of a social system requires a “unidisciplinary” approach, and is inherently open to social constructivist theorizing. WSA adapts this unidisciplinary outlook and provides an interactive and dynamic paradigm for understanding global history and political behavior in a context that is not explicitly state-centric.

Perhaps as evidence of its unidisciplinary nature, the world-systems approach has grown to have a considerable cross-disciplinary following. Thomas Hall<sup>2</sup> (1999c:3; see also 2000a:9; Grimes 2000) observes:

Researchers working from different theoretical bases within the world-systems perspective have addressed many new subjects. Geographers have done a great deal of work on spatial aspects of world-systems relations and dynamics.<sup>3</sup> Some of the new topics are: cyclical processes in the world-system; the roles

of women, households and gender in the world-economy<sup>4</sup>; the consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union; cities in the world-system; the role of culture in the world-economy<sup>5</sup>; the environment; and subsistence. Many case studies offer fine-grained analyses of the complex functioning of the world-system with respect to: slavery, agrarian capitalism, peasants, revolutions, recent changes in east Asia, and relations with nonstate or aboriginal peoples in the world economy.

Not surprisingly, many of these same topics are recurrent themes in international studies literature. In addition, anthropologists (Wolf 1990:594; Blanton et al. 1997) use world-systems as a way of cumulating anthropological knowledge and explanation for cultural phenomena. At the very least, it seems that a world-systems approach provides an invaluable *lingua franca* in a situation where academics often miss out on the cross-pollination of ideas due to the tendency to talk past scholars in other disciplines (and often in their own). Unfortunately, some scholars (e.g., Burch 2000) still seek to “inform a new vocabulary” of change, instead of opening themselves to readily available bodies of work with extant “vocabularies” in which many scholars are currently fluent.

While there is a recognized difficulty in applying WSA to precapitalist settings, it has been modified for such (cf. Pailles and Whitecotton 1979; Schneider 1977; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1991). This arena of research is especially fruitful for our purposes. By looking at a precapitalist system, and what happens when a precapitalist system and agents of a capitalist or “modern” world-system meet, we gain an understanding of not just the precapitalist societal interactions, but also an improved understanding of social and political “evolution.” It is this interaction between groups that has appealed to researchers in the field of sociology, as a world-systems approach appears to have ready application to the concept of social evolution. It is not a stretch to recognize the ready application to the realm of international politics. The processes of the system should be manifest *throughout* the system, even on the frontiers or peripheries. By studying these systemic processes on the periphery, they are more clearly perceived, as much of the “noise” of the systemic core is absent. Thus, by understanding the frontier, we are able to understand the system as a dynamic whole.

### III. Systemic Expansion and State Creation

It is the desire to understand how the system evolves and expands that is at the heart of this work. Theories “explaining” the development of sovereign states and the sovereign territorial state system provide a rich source

for debate. Scholars argue that sovereign territorial states (STS) emerged because they were more “efficient” than other political arrangements in the international system (Spruyt 1994, 2000), or because local elites opted for a new property rights “contract” (North 1981). Others take the approach that non-European polities were “quasi-states” that lacked the empirical political and economic capacity to emerge as fully functioning sovereign states in the international community (Jackson 1990), or that tribal societies “exploded from within” because they were unable to compete in the expanding Eurocentric system (Doyle 1986). On a systemic level, it is argued that STS emerged as a manifestation of a universal international society that began among European states and was gradually extended to non-European states “when they measured up to criteria of admission laid down by the founder members” (Bull 1984:123). An alternate explanation of expansion argues that interest groups may appropriate strategic concepts as an ideology, and then use it to promote expansion and colonization for “security” (Snyder 1991).

However, in a critique of this revisionist wave of literature as applied to West Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Warner (1999:235, emphasis added) argues:

[F]irst, that the “quasi-states” present in these areas prior to colonization were stronger and more “state-like,” at least judged by conventional European standards, than is often acknowledged; second, that among their attributes was the ability (all-important according to this second wave of literature) to sustain and promote commerce; and third, that as a consequence, they did not collapse by virtue of their own “weakness” but were *deliberately destroyed by Western states acting at the behest of merchants and officials* who sought not a general property rights regime capable of supporting commerce, but economic regimes that privileged their *own* commerce.

While not writing from a world-systems perspective, Warner’s case studies (1998, 1999) make obvious the economic underpinnings of socioculturally motivated political decisions, which are manifested ultimately in military conflict. Local elites did not opt for new “contracts,” nor did tribal societies disintegrate, nor were they inefficient pseudo-states that were unable to compete with Europeans. Instead, in these cases it seems that the local polities were *too efficient* and competed *too well* with European trading interests. At least in this instance, private, economic interests, not state-level power-struggles or systemic supranational factors, drove political change. This is in sharp contrast to the explanation of state formation and systemic expansion put forth by the scholars above. Views that neorealism and neoliberalism are

the “proper” ways to investigate global affairs seem equally questionable (Krasner 1994:17, 1999:6, in Burch 2000:183). This is the type of insight one can gain by actually looking at historical cases in detail.

Other scholars echo these criticisms. Webb (1975) contends that state formation is based on an interaction of commercial and military factors, and Chase-Dunn (1981) maintains that the interstate system is more accurately portrayed as the political side of capitalism, not an autonomous system. Therefore, to understand the system we must reject any artificial differentiation of social, economic, or political spheres (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1993, 1997; Wallerstein 1974, 1991, 1998b). Building on this, others argue for the need to pay greater attention to the institutions associated with the capital-accumulation process (Arrighi 1994), and how this is related to the emergence of global powers (Arrighi and Silver 1999). Yet others claim that we need to extend our historical reach beyond the recent emergence of the STS to understand how the global system actually operates (Abu-Lughod 1989; Gills and Frank 1991). Some scholars, the author included, feel that we must study social interactions *before* states insert their power structures, if we are to recognize the processes of political and social change (Hall 1987). Indeed, what does one do if the primary object of one’s study—the state—is increasingly irrelevant?

The nature of WSA provides a broad field of ready comparison to other schools of thought in political science. Shannon (1996:1–22) provides an excellent overview relating the emergence of world-systems theory from problems with structural-functionalism, modernization theory, and Classical Marxism. While there may be a certain degree of “intellectual” opposition to a world-systems approach because of these Marxist roots, it is not a serious problem. First, a considerable amount of opposition to neo-Marxist approaches is simply a visceral reaction based on the linking of all Marxist theory to the ideological aspects of the Cold War. Marxism as an intellectual theory has been erroneously connected to the failures of Soviet Communism. This is in no way a practical application or critique of Marxism *qua* theory. Rather, it is more accurately what Derrida (1994:87) refers to as the “spirit of Marxism” that continues to “haunt” the neoliberal hegemonic discourse.<sup>6</sup> By stridently disavowing these neo-Marxist ghosts, the hegemonic discourse not only confirms the “haunting,” but also betrays a concern with the “specter of communism” yet to come. Or perhaps more accurately, the mere possibility that something *other* than the established neoliberal order either exists or can be conceptualized as a basis of competing legitimacy is scary enough.

Second, world-systems scholars are a diverse bunch and do not necessarily accept many of the detailed claims of Marx’s theory. There is certainly an emphasis on the dynamics of class, inequality, and the forces of capitalism.



However, this relates to Marxism as theory much in the same way Keynesian economic theory relates to the liberal free-trade approach of Adam Smith; both are refinements of prior theory in an effort to make them more applicable to current global situations. Thus, in a very broad sense both may be seen as a revision of the “protective belt” of theory in a Lakatosian research program. As a related third point, the issues centrally related to the world-systems outlook—such as global inequality—are growing in importance in the global political environment. It makes sense to utilize a body of theory that already deals with issues such as polarization, instead of trying to retrofit a diametrically opposite theoretical approach. Fourth, simply put: in certain important respects Marx was right. Developed nations *are* shifting policy and values (e.g., Inglehart 1997; Inglehart and Welzel 2005) to include what may be termed “socialist” positions, albeit within a capitalist framework. This is not to say that the European model of a full-blown “welfare state” is what the future holds. Rather, it seems that states will be increasingly responsible for dealing with issues produced by social inequality, but that these issues will be created within an internationally responsive (as opposed to domestically responsive) market system. The world-systems approach is actually a *more* viable approach for understanding these current political and economic processes because of its neo-Marxist outlook.

Understanding the incorporation process is the linchpin to understanding systemic dynamics of expansion and dominance. A world-systems approach provides the framework for a more complete and satisfying explanation of how the international system expands. A world-systems approach allows one to address not only traditional political aspects, but economic factors and sociocultural factors of systemic expansion.

#### IV. Incorporation and the World-System

Many scholars have extended the world-system beyond the temporal scope originally proposed by Wallerstein (1974). Abu-Lughod (1989, 1993; see also Fitzpatrick 1992) argues that the modern world-system may be traced back to the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, and is a result of the withdrawal of the East, rather than the rise of the West. Frank and Gills (1993; cf. Frank 1990, 1999; Gills and Frank 1991) push the temporal boundary, echoing Abu-Lughod’s claim but proposing a 5,000-year-old system. Chase-Dunn and Hall one-up Frank and Gills by attempting to extend world-systems theory some 10,000 years into the past, to the Neolithic revolution, though they admittedly had to “stretch some concepts considerably” (Hall 1999c:7). The world-system approach is also used to study long-term social change in more “recent” historical eras, though still