

MARXISM AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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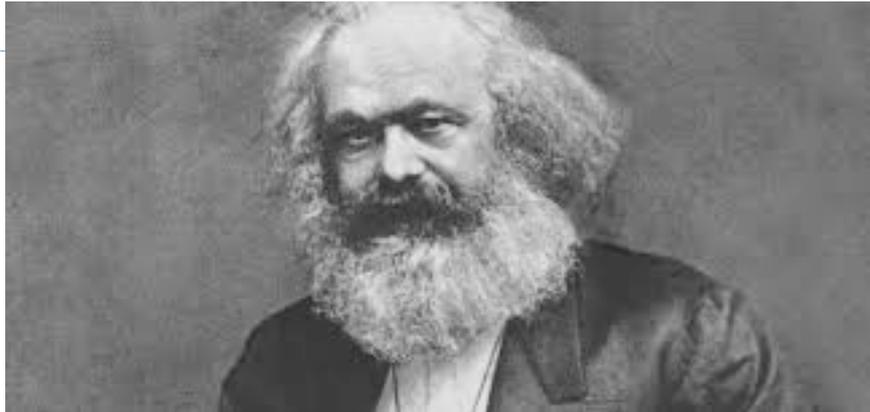
Outline

Key terms and propositions within Marxism

Marxism and IR: What is the relevance of Marxism today? Is Marxism helpful to explain current IR issues and processes?

Criticisms to Marxist theory within IR





- ▶ Karl Marx (1818-1883), witnessed Industrial Revolution (1760-1840)
- ▶ Questions the uneven impacts of capitalism on welfare distribution, inequalities created
- ▶ Marxism: A theory of capitalism, Marxist theory of Capitalism



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- ▶ Marxism is not primarily concerned with formation of states or the relations btw them
 - ▶ Tries to understand origins and functioning of capitalism
 - ▶ How **capitalist mode of production** and **sovereign state systems** emerged?
 - ▶ Revolutionary approach:
 - ▶ Organise “proletariat” into a politically revolutionary movement to encounter the unequal effects of capitalism which were accelerated by Industrial Revolution.
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- ▶ Economic development is the motor of history
 - ▶ The central activity of society is economic production

Does Marx reduce everything to economy? Is Marxism economic reductionist?



Key terms and propositions

- ▶ emphasis on totality → social world has to be analysed as a totality
- ▶ academic division of social world into different areas of inquiry – history, philosophy, economics, political science, sociology, IR – is not helpful
- ▶ none can be understood without the knowledge of the others – the social world has to be understood as a totality



Key terms and propositions

- ▶ mode of production → capitalist mode of production

- a. everything involved in production – raw materials, machines and labour – has an exchange value and thus has a **price**

- b. **means of production** – such as factories, raw materials – are owned by one class – the capitalists

- c. **workers** have to sell their labour to the capitalist class in order to survive



Historical Materialism

- ▶ **Historical materialism** – a materialist conception of history → changes in IR is explained as “reflection of the economic development of society”
- ▶ Human and their material conditions, needs for “survival”
- ▶ Material conditions can be changed by action of human beings
- ▶ These material conditions are historical , they can change over space and time.



Historical Materialism

- ▶ A method of social inquiry
- ▶ Society is made up of structured relations between social groups with different and conflicting interests-
“classes”
- ▶ Society is made up of “classes”
- ▶ Mode of production:
 - ▶ Two main classes:
“**Bourgeoisie**” and “**Proletariat**”



Capitalist Accumulation

- ▶ **Source of surplus:**

- ▶ Amount of value that a worker can produce in one day is greater than the value of their own labour-power, which has become a commodity.
- ▶ Capitalist pays the worker the wage in return for their labour-power



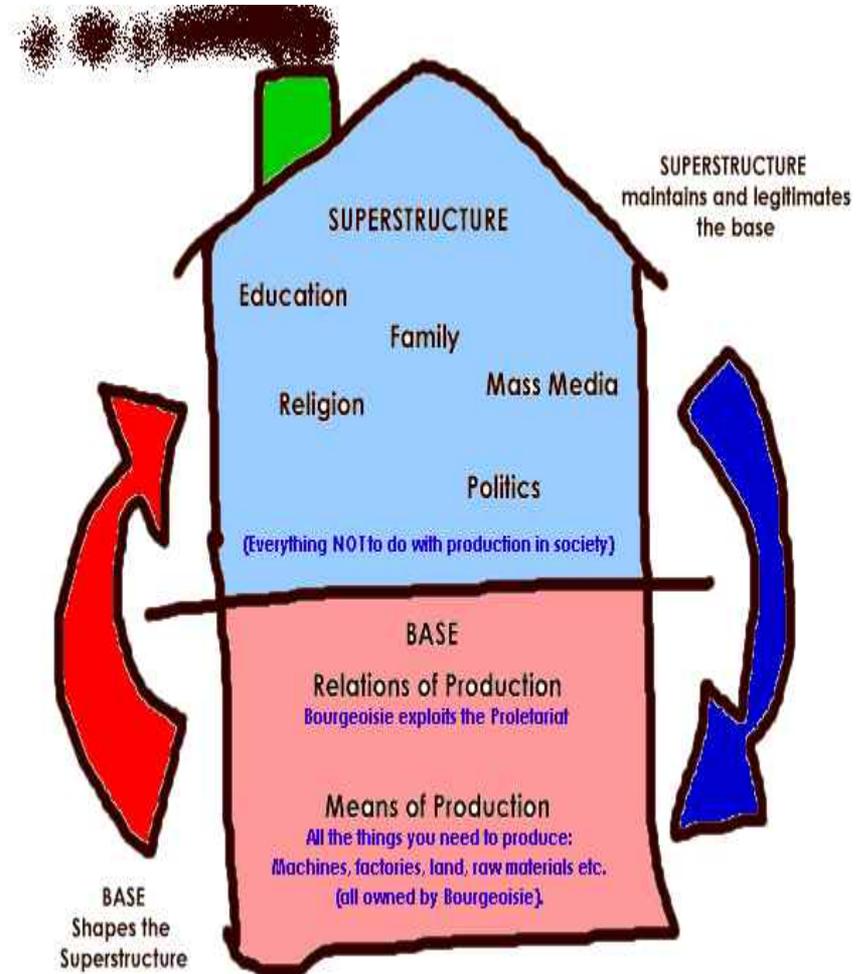
Sells the commodities and gets the surplus

He ends up with more and he started off with (accumulation!)



Key terms and propositions

- ▶ Base/superstructure model
→ developments of the economic base determine political and ideological spheres!!!
- ▶ “the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general” Marx (1859), Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy



Marxism and IR

- ▶ 20th century IR in historical perspective
 - ▶ Predominantly Western discipline: Anglo-American
 - ▶ Influenced by context of Cold War
 - ▶ Focused on: state security, international order, diplomatic relations, international organizations
 - ▶ Little attention to **International Political Economy**
- ▶ 1970s emphasis on IPE, then post-modernism, critical approaches



Marxism and IR

- ▶ emphasis on structure
- ▶ the structure of global capitalist system is decisive in approaching major issues in international relations such as wars and/or treaties
- ▶ Realists' conceptualizations of “anarchy”, “power” or “international society” of English School, they are all illusions and myths about the world.



Key terms and propositions

- ▶ Class → both at the national and international level!
- ▶ Contrary to liberals which argue that there is harmony of interests in society → Marxists hold that society is systematically prone to class conflict
- ▶ ‘the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle’ Marx and Engels (1848), Communist Manifesto
- ▶ What is the main axis of class conflict in capitalist societies?



IR and Marxism

- ▶ How would Marxism then explain some of the problems within the IR as a discipline
- ▶ War and peace
- ▶ Conflict and cooperation
- ▶ Structure
- ▶ Agency



IR and Marxism

- ▶ “Marxism was once regarded as having little value for students of international relations” (Andrew Linklater)
- ▶ “the challenge of Marxism to established patterns of thought, and to the existing state system, has led to its exclusion from the academic domain” (Fred Halliday 1994: 47).

Why?

- ▶ institutional barriers
 - ▶ main concern of Marxism such as social classes and modes of production resonates less with the major concerns of IR!
 - ▶ “the fact that IR is almost wholly silent on what Marxism has taken as the central category of modern social analysis, namely capitalism, is itself indicative” (Fred Halliday 1994: 48).
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IR and Marxism

- ▶ change in time

A powerful tool to understand inequality and oppression in world system

Third World studies – especially since 1970s → emphasis on developing a critical approach vis-a-vis global forms of dominance and dependence

Marxism contribution → major concerns of IR such as war, peace, nationalism and the state cannot be understood in isolation from class inequality, systems of production and technological revolutions

Marxist contribution → to understand globalisation – there is a different understanding of the ‘international sphere’ in Marxism – not limited to relations between states but as a structure of ‘economic and social relations’



Modern State System

- ▶ Marxists argue that we need a global concept of “citizenship”. States exclude non-citizens from benefits and access to labour and resources
- ▶ Everyone from all over the world are united in their oppression by capitalism but the modern state system separates them and sets them against each other, people should be freed (or emancipated) from this status.
- ▶ Movement of people, migration was existing long before capitalism, but capitalism shapes those movements in conjunction with the creation of borders and economic productivity.



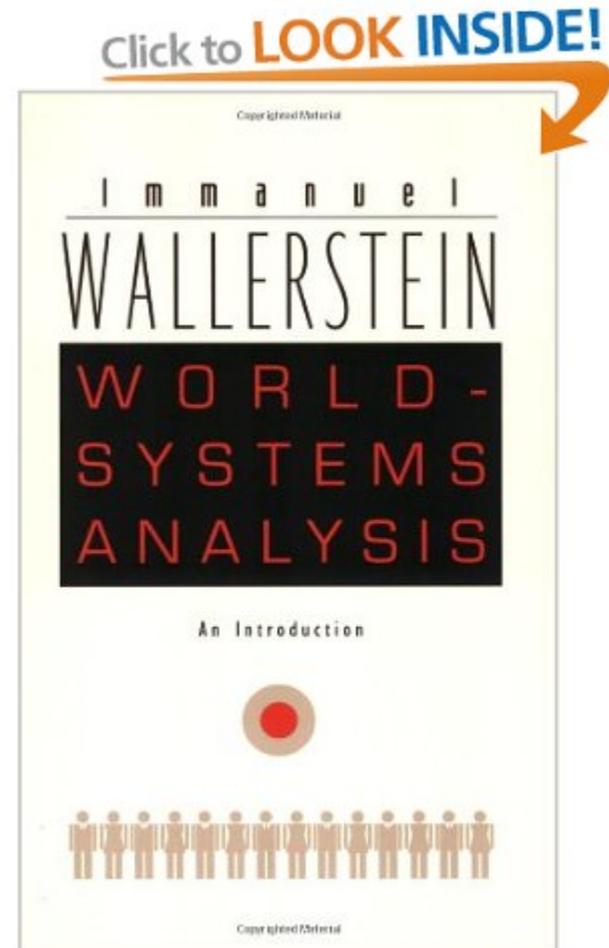
Modern State System

- ▶ Movement of people, migration was existing long before capitalism, but capitalism shapes those movements in conjunction with the creation of borders and economic productivity.
- ▶ The construction of modern borders is determined and shaped by the development of capitalism to sustain itself.



World Systems Approach

- ▶ Immanuel Wallerstein
- ▶ All politics takes place within the framework of a capitalist world economy
- ▶ States are not the only important actors rather social classes are also very important
- ▶ Location of these states and classes determines their relations and interaction



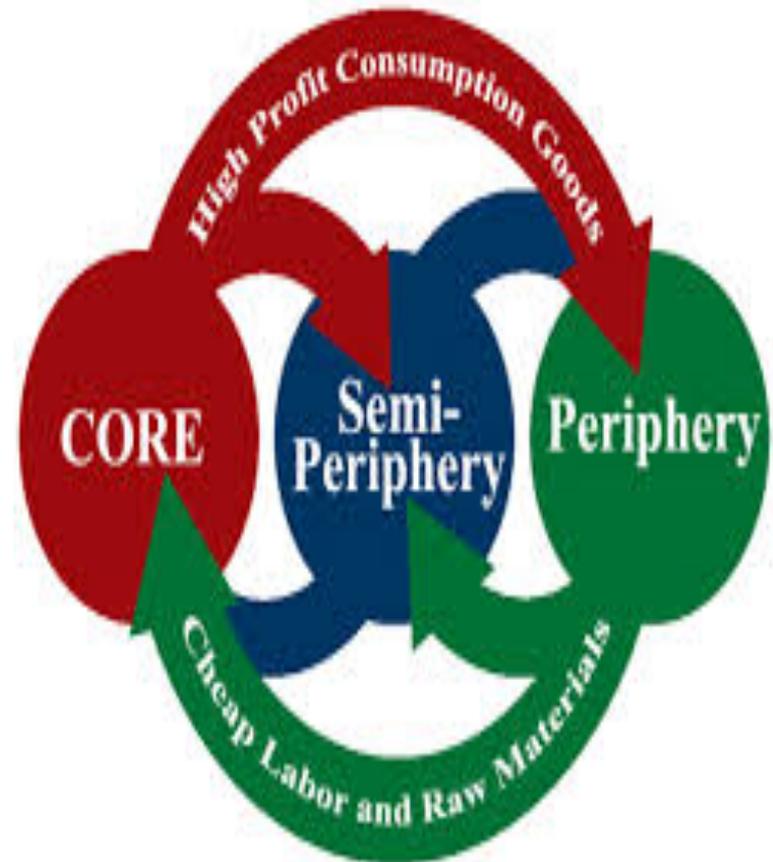
World Systems Approach

- ▶ Wallerstein
- ▶ current world system emerged in Europe around 16th century
- ▶ its driving force is capitalism: “a system of production for sale in a market for profit and appropriation of this profit on the basis of individual or collective ownership”
Wallerstein
- ▶ Relations between “core” and “periphery” is based on exploitation of periphery → a process through which wealth is drained from periphery to core → as a result the rich getting richer and poor getting poorer



World Systems Theory

- ▶ Wallerstein added a 'semi-periphery' category to the traditional core-periphery economic zones
- ▶ semi-periphery → has an intermediate role possessing characteristics of both core and periphery
- ▶ a hybrid industrial base → a zone for industries that no longer profitably produce in core e.g. textile & automotive



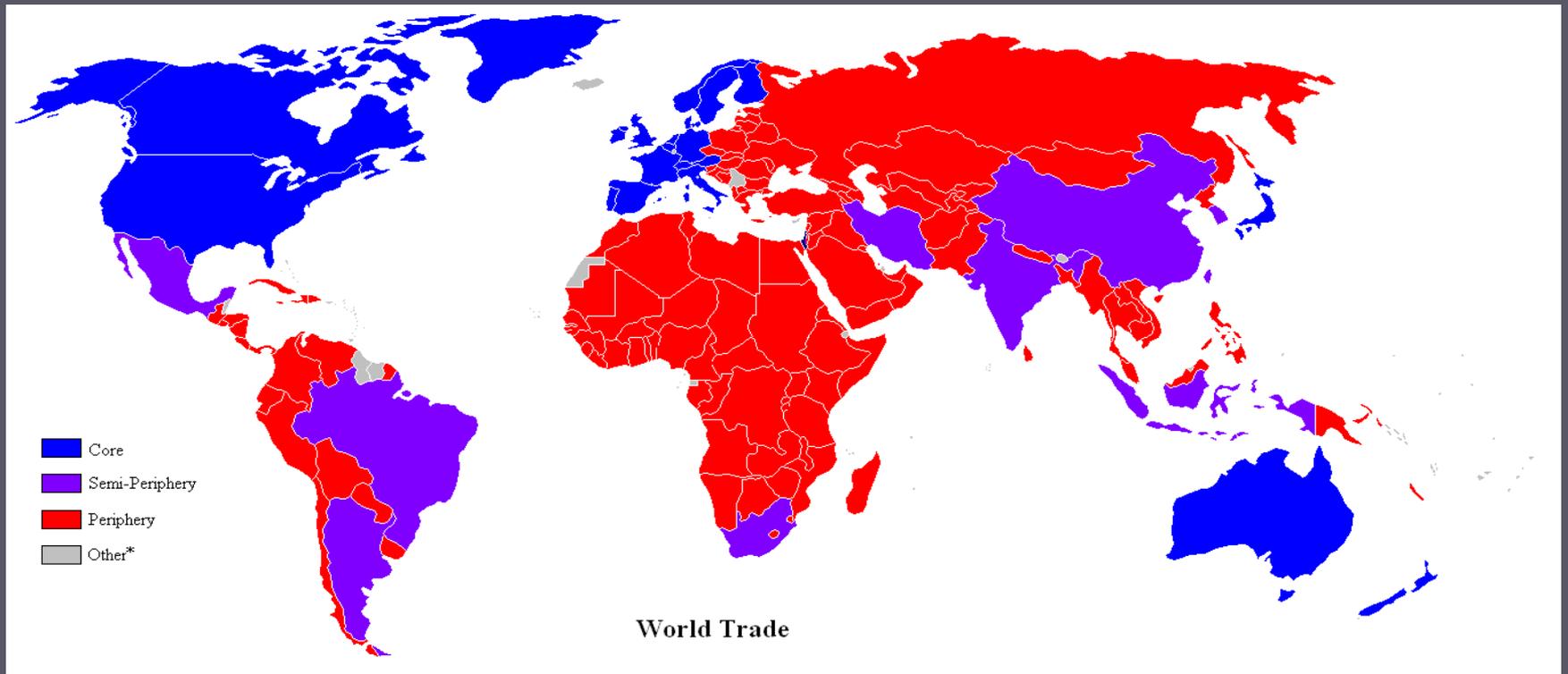
Wallerstein's World System Theory Model

▶

World systems theory

- ▶ The relations of dependency
- ▶ Uses broader units than “states”, these units are world systems
- ▶ Relations of dependency and inequality are essential to capitalism and cannot be easily reduced.



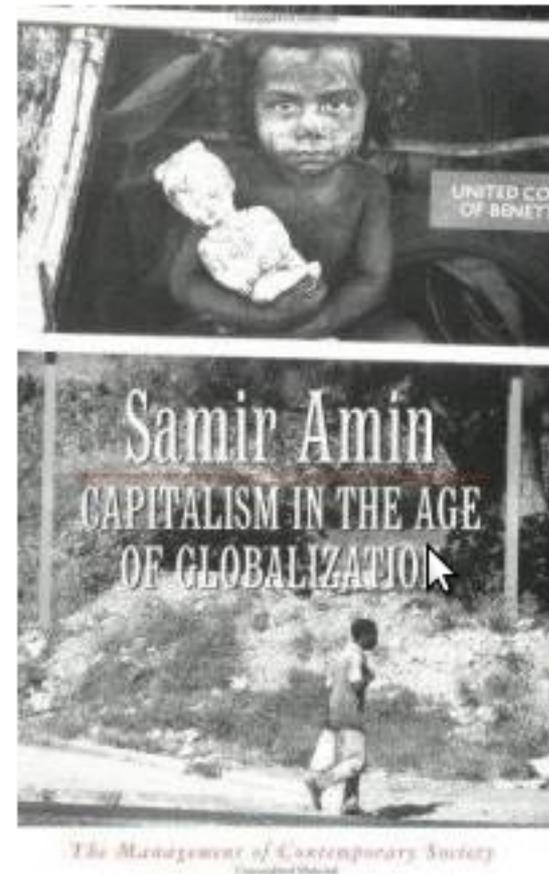
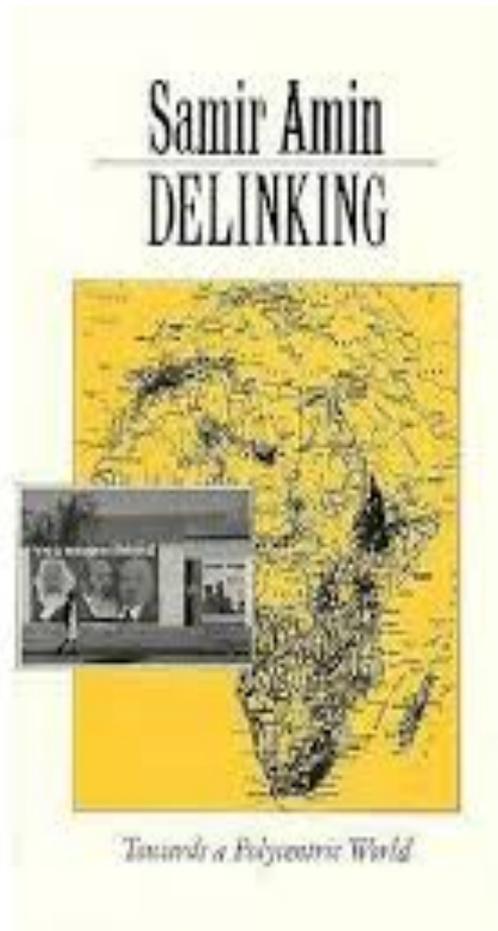


Core: democratic governments; high wages; import raw materials and export manufactures; high investments; welfare services

Periphery: non-democratic regimes; export raw materials and import manufactures; low wage levels; no welfare services

Semi-periphery: authoritarian governments; export and import manufactures and raw materials; low wages; low welfare services

World System Theory



Criticisms

- ▶ economic determinism → to what extent political actors, events or the state can be understood in relation to socio-economic structure of society
- ▶ To what extent the spheres of political and ideological are secondary to the economic
- ▶ Ultimately economic mode of production (base) determines broader social and political spheres (superstructure)



Criticisms

- ▶ Due to economic reductionism
 - Marxists ignore crucial aspects of IR such as → nationalism, balance of power and the role of geopolitics or geopolitical competition in IR
- ▶ Nationalism has proven superior to class loyalties in mobilizing masses among oppressed and oppressors alike
- ▶ Marx assumed that relations between states is `secondary` to class struggle



Criticisms

- ▶ class reductionism (the need to historicize ideas!)
- ▶ Marxism reduces agency to classes; ignoring other actors and political subjectivities due to their emphasis on relations of production
- ▶ To what extent the agency to stimulate change in IR is labour? What happened to industrial labour?



Criticisms

- ▶ To what extent capitalism is superseded by socialism – this idea proved immature
- ▶ Working class as the main agency in creating change in society?

