

Continuities and Transformations in the Evolution of World-Systems

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This paper discusses continuities and transformations of systemic logics and modes of accumulation in world historical evolutionary perspective and the prospects for systemic transformation in the next several decades. It also considers the meaning of the recent global financial meltdown by comparing it with earlier debt crises and periods of collapse. Has this been just another debt crisis like the ones that have periodically occurred over the past 200 years, or is it part of the end of capitalism and the transformation to a new and different logic of social reproduction? I consider the contemporary network of global counter-movements and progressive national regimes that are seeking to transform the capitalist world-system into a more humane, sustainable and egalitarian civilization and how the current crisis is affecting the network of antisystemic movements and regimes, including the Pink Tide populist regimes in Latin America and the anti-austerity movements. I describe how the New Global Left is similar to, and different from, earlier global lefts. The point is to develop a comparative and evolutionary framework that can discern what is really new about the current global situation and that can inform collectively rational responses.

Introduction

I employ three different time horizons in the discussion of continuities and transformations:

1. 50,000 years;
2. 5,000 years;
3. 500 years.

Hall and Chase-Dunn (2006; see also Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997) have modified the concepts developed by the scholars of the modern world-system to construct a theoretical perspective for comparing the modern system with earlier regional world-systems. The main idea is that sociocultural evolution can only be explained if polities are seen to have been in important interaction with each other since the Paleolithic Age. Hall and Chase-Dunn (2006) propose a general model of the continuing causes of the evolution of complexity, technology and hierarchy within polities and in linked systems of polities (world-systems). This is called the iteration model and it is driven by population pressures interacting with environmental degradation and interpolity conflict. This iteration model depicts basic causal forces that were operating in the Stone Age and that continue to operate in the contemporary global system (see also Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997: ch. 6; Fletcher *et al.* 2011). These are the continuities.

The most important idea that comes out of this theoretical perspective is that transformational changes in institutions, social structures and developmental logics are

Globalistics and Globalization Studies 2013 36–55

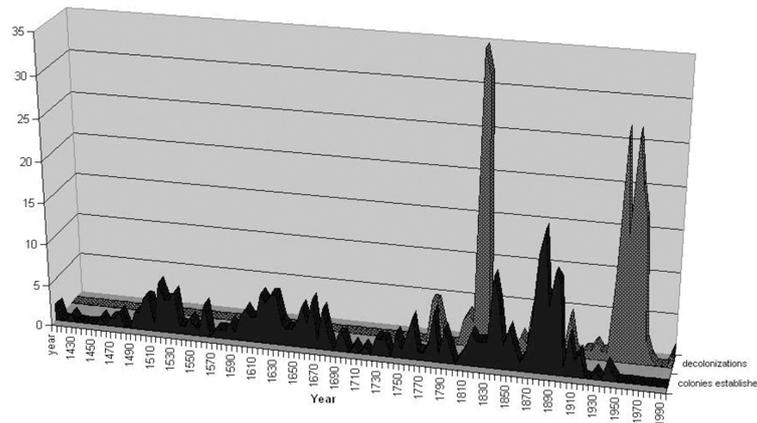
brought about mainly by the actions of individuals and organizations within polities that are **semiperipheral** relative to the other polities in the same system. This is known as the *hypothesis of semiperipheral development*.

As regional world-systems became spatially larger and the polities within them grew and became more internally hierarchical, interpolity relations also became more hierarchical because new means of extracting resources from distant peoples were invented. Thus did core/periphery hierarchies emerge. Semiperipherality is the position of some of the polities in a core/periphery hierarchy. Some of the polities that are located in semiperipheral positions became the agents that formed larger chiefdoms, states and empires by means of conquest (semiperipheral marcher polities), and some specialized trading states in between the tributary empires promoted production for exchange in the regions in which they operated. So both the spatial and demographic scale of political organization and the spatial scale of trade networks were expanded by semiperipheral polities, eventually leading to the global system in which we now live.

The modern world-system came into being when a formerly peripheral and then semiperipheral region (Europe) developed an internal core of capitalist states that were eventually able to dominate the polities of all the other regions of the Earth. This Europe-centered system was the first one in which capitalism became the predominant mode of accumulation, though semiperipheral capitalist city-states had existed since the Bronze Age in the spaces between the tributary empires. The Europe-centered system expanded in a series of waves of colonization and incorporation (see Fig. 1). Commodification in Europe expanded, evolved and deepened in waves since the thirteenth century, which is why historians disagree about when capitalism became the predominant mode of accumulation. Since the fifteenth century the modern system has seen four periods of hegemony in which leadership in the development of capitalism was taken to new levels. The first such period was led by a coalition between Genoese finance capitalists and the Portuguese crown (Wallerstein 2011[1974]; Arrighi 1994). After that the hegemons have been single nation-states: the Dutch in the seventeenth century, the British in the nineteenth century and the United States in the twentieth century (Wallerstein 1984a). Europe itself, and all four of the modern hegemons, were former semiperipheries that first rose to core status and then to hegemony.

In between these periods of hegemony were periods of hegemonic rivalry in which several contenders strove for global power. The core of the modern world-system has remained multicentric, meaning that a number of sovereign states ally and compete with one another. Earlier regional world-systems sometimes experienced a period of core-wide empire in which a single empire became so large that there were no serious contenders for predominance. This did not happen in the modern world-system until the United States became the single super-power following the demise of the Soviet Union in 1989.

Fig. 1. Waves of Colonization and Decolonization since 1400 – Number of colonies established and number of decolonizations (data from Henige 1970)



The sequence of hegemonies can be understood as the evolution of global governance in the modern system. The interstate system as institutionalized at the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 is still a fundamental institutional structure of the polity of the modern system. The system of theoretically sovereign states was expanded to include the peripheral regions in two large waves of decolonization (see Fig. 1), eventually resulting in a situation in which the whole modern system became composed of sovereign national states. East Asia was incorporated into this system in the nineteenth century, though aspects of the earlier East Asian tribute-trade state system were not completely obliterated by that incorporation (Hamashita 2003).

Each of the hegemonies was larger as a proportion of the whole system than the earlier one had been. And each hegemony developed the institutions of economic and political-military control by which it led the larger system so that capitalism increasingly deepened its penetration of all the areas of the Earth. After the Napoleonic Wars, in which Britain finally defeated its main competitor for system-wide hegemony, France, global political institutions began to emerge over the tops of the Westphalian international system of national states. The first proto-world-government was the Concert of Europe, a fragile flower that wilted when its main proponents, Britain and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, disagreed about how to handle the world revolution of 1848. The Concert was followed by the League of Nations and then by the United Nations and the Bretton Woods international financial institutions (The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and eventually the World Trade Organization).

The political globalization evident in this trajectory of global governance evolved because the powers were in heavy contention with one another for geopolitical predominance and for economic resources, but also because resistance emerged within the polities of the core and in the regions of the non-core. The series of hegemonies, waves of colonial expansion and decolonization and the emergence of a proto-world-state occurred as the global elites struggled with one another with resistance from below. The waves of decolonization were accompanied by slave revolts, the rise of the labor movement,

the extension of citizenship to men of no property, the women's movement and other associated rebellions and social movements.

These movements affected the evolution of global governance in part because the rebellions often clustered together in time, forming what have been called '*world revolutions*' (Arrighi *et al.* 1989). The Protestant Reformation in Europe was an early instance that played a huge role in the rise of the Dutch hegemony. The French Revolution of 1789 was linked in time with the American and Haitian revolts. The 1848 rebellion in Europe was both synchronous with the Taiping Rebellion in China and was linked with it by the diffusion of ideas, as it was also linked with the emergent Christian Sects in the United States. Nineteen seventeen was the year of the Bolsheviks in Russia, but also the same decade saw the Chinese Nationalist revolt, the Mexican Revolution, the Arab Revolt and the General Strike in Seattle led by the Industrial Workers of the World in the United States. Nineteen sixty-eight was a revolt of students in the U.S., Europe, Latin America as well as Red Guards in China. Nineteen eighty-nine was mainly in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but important lessons about the value of civil rights beyond justification for capitalist democracy were learned by an emergent global civil society (Kaldor 2003).

The current world revolution of '20xx' (Chase-Dunn and Niemeyer 2009) will be discussed as a contemporary instance of global struggle. The big idea here is that the evolution of capitalism and of global governance is importantly *a response to resistance and rebellions from below*. This has been true in the past and is likely to continue to be true in the future. Boswell and Chase-Dunn (2000) contend that capitalism and socialism have dialectically interacted with one another in a positive feedback loop similar to a spiral. Labor and socialist movements were obviously a reaction to capitalist industrialization. U.S. hegemony and the post-World War II global institutions were importantly spurred on by the World Revolution of 1917 and the waves of decolonization.

Time Horizons

So what does the comparative and evolutionary world-systems perspective tell us about continuities and transformations of systemic logic? And what can be said about the financial meltdown of 2008 and the contemporary world revolution from the long-run perspective? Are recent developments just another bout of financial expansion and collapse and hegemonic decline? Or do they constitute or portend a deep structural crisis in the capitalist mode of accumulation? What do recent events signify about the evolution of capitalism and its possible transformation into a different mode of accumulation?

50,000 Years

From the perspective of the last 50,000 years the big news is demographic and ecological. After slowly expanding, with cyclical ups and downs in particular regions, for millennia the human population went into a steep upward surge in the last two centuries. Humans have been degrading the environment locally and regionally since they began the intensive use of natural resources. But in the last 200 years of industrial production ecological degradation by means of resource depletion and pollution has become global in scope, with global warming as the biggest consequence. A demographic transition to an equilibrium population size began in the industrialized core countries in the nineteenth

century and has spread unevenly to the non-core in the twentieth century. Public health measures have lowered the mortality rate and the education and employment of women outside of the home is lowering the fertility rate. But the total number of humans is likely to keep increasing for several more decades. In the year 2000 there were about six billion humans on Earth. But the time the population stops climbing it will be 8, 10 or 12 billion.

This population big bang was made possible by industrialization and the vastly expanded use of non-renewable fossil fuels. Fossil fuels are captured ancient sunlight that took millions of years to accrete as plants and forests grew, died and were compressed into oil and coal. The arrival of peak oil production is near and energy prices are likely to rise again after a long fall. The financial meltdown of 2008 was related to these long-run changes in the sense that it was brought about partly by sectors of the global elite trying to protect their privileges and wealth by seeking greater control over natural resources and by over-expanding the financial sector. But non-elites are also implicated. The housing expansion, suburbanization, and larger houses with fewer people in them have been important mechanisms, especially in the United States, for incorporating some of the non-elites into the hegemonic globalization project of corporate capitalism. The culture of consumerism has become strongly enconced both for those who actually have expanded consumption and as a strong aspiration for those who hope to increase their consumption to the levels of the core.

5,000 Years

The main significance of the 5,000-year time horizon is to point us to the rise and decline of modes of accumulation. The story here is that small-scale human polities were integrated primarily by normative structures institutionalized as kinship relations – the so-called *kinship-based modes of accumulation*. The family was the economy and the polity, and the family was organized as a moral order of obligations that allowed social labor to be mobilized and coordinated, and that regulated distribution. Kin-based accumulation was based on shared languages and meaning systems, consensus-building through oral communication, and institutionalized reciprocity in sharing and exchange. As kin-based polities got larger they increasingly fought with one another and those polities that developed institutionalized inequalities had group selection advantages over those that did not. Kinship itself became hierarchical within chiefdoms, taking the form of ranked lineages or conical clans. Social movements utilizing religious discourses were important forces of social change within these small-scale polities. Kin-based societies often responded to population pressures on resources by ‘hiving-off’ – a subgroup would emigrate, usually after formulating grievances in terms of violations of the moral order or disagreements regarding spiritual knowledge. But migrations were mainly responses to local resource stress caused by population growth and competition for natural resources. When new unoccupied, or only lightly occupied but resource-rich, lands were reachable the humans moved in to them, eventually populating all the continents except Antarctica. Once the land was filled up a situation of ‘circumscription’ emerged in which the costs of migration were higher because unoccupied or lightly occupied land was no longer available. This raised the level of conflict within and between polities raising the mortality rate and serving as a demographic regulator (Fletcher *et al.* 2011). In these circumstances

technological and organizational innovations were stimulated and successful new strategies were strongly selected for by interpolity competition, leading to the emergence of complexity, hierarchy and a new logic of social reproduction based on institutionalized coercion.

Around five thousand years ago the first early states and cities emerged in Mesopotamia over the tops of the kin-based institutions. This was the beginning of the tributary mode of accumulation in which state power (legitimate coercion) became the main organizer of the economy, the mobilizer of labor and the accumulator of wealth and power. Similar innovations occurred largely independently in Egypt, the Yellow (Huang-Ho) river valley, the Indus river valley, and later in Mesoamerica and the Andes. These developments are a strong case of the phenomenon of parallel evolution in which similar forces cause the emergence of similar innovations in social structure. The tributary mode of production evolved as states and empires became larger and as the techniques of imperialism, facilitating the exploitation of distant resources, were improved. This was mainly the work of *semiperipheral marcher states* (Alvarez *et al.* 2011). Aspects of the tributary mode (taxation, tribute-gathering, accumulation by dispossession) are still with us, but they have been largely subsumed and made subservient to the logic of capitalist accumulation based on profit-making. Crises and social movements were often involved in the wars and conquests that brought about social change and the evolution of the tributary mode.

The tributary mode became the predominant logic of social reproduction in the Mesopotamian world-system in the early Bronze Age (around 3000 BCE). The East Asian regional world-system was still predominantly tributary in the nineteenth century CE. That is nearly a 5,000-year run. The kin-based mode lasted even longer. All human groups were organized around different versions of the kin-based modes in the Paleolithic, and indeed since human culture had first emerged with language. If we date the beginning of the end of the kin-based modes at the coming to predominance of the tributary mode in Mesopotamia (3000 BCE) this first qualitative change in the basic logic of social reproduction took more than 100,000 years.

500 Years

This brings us to the capitalist mode, here defined as based on the accumulation of profits returning to commodity production rather than taxation or tribute. As we have already said, early forms of capitalism emerged in the Bronze Age in the form of small semiperipheral states that specialized in trade and the production of commodities. Dilmun, in the Persian Gulf, was a sovereign state that specialized in the carrying trade between Mesopotamia and the Indus civilization during the middle Bronze Age (about 2500 BCE). It was not until the fifteenth century CE that capitalist accumulation became predominant in a regional world-system (Europe and its colonies). Capitalism was born in the semiperipheral capitalist city-states, but in Europe it moved to the core with the rise of the Dutch hegemony. The forerunners that further evolved capitalism (the modern hegemons) were former semiperipheral polities that rose to hegemony. Economic crises and world revolutions were important elements in the emergence and evolution of capitalism and global governance institutions.

Thus, in comparison with the earlier modes, capitalism is yet young. It has been around since the middle Bronze Age (2500 BCE), but it took about four millennia to become the predominate developmental logic in a world-system. On the other hand, many have observed that social change in general has speeded up. The rise of tribute-taking based on institutionalized coercion took more than 100,000 years. The rise of capitalism took four millennia from its emergence in the Bronze Age to its becoming the predominant mode of social reproduction in Europe. Capitalism itself speeds up social change because it revolutionizes technology so quickly that other institutions are brought along, and people have become adjusted to more rapid reconfigurations of culture and institutions. So it is plausible that the contradictions of capitalism may lead it to reach its limits much faster than the kin-based and tributary modes did.

Transformations between Modes

For Immanuel Wallerstein (2011[1974]), capitalism started in the long sixteenth century (1450–1640), grew larger in a series of cycles and upward trends, and is now nearing ‘asymptotes’ (ceilings) as some of its trends create problems that it cannot solve. Thus, for Wallerstein, the world-system became capitalist and then it expanded until it became completely global, and now it is coming to face a big crisis because certain long-term trends cannot be accommodated within the logic of capitalism (Wallerstein 2003). Wallerstein's evolutionary transformations come at the beginning and at the end. There is a focus on expansion and deepening as well as cycles and trends, but no periodization of world-system evolutionary stages of capitalism (Chase-Dunn 1998: ch. 3). This is very different from both the older Marxist stage theories of national development and Giovanni Arrighi's depiction of successive (and overlapping) systemic cycles of accumulation. Wallerstein's emphasis is on the emergence and demise of ‘historical systems’ with capitalism defined as ‘ceaseless accumulation’. Some of the actors change their positions, but the system is basically the same as it gets larger. Its internal contradictions will eventually reach limits, and these limits are thought to be approaching within the next five decades.

According to Wallerstein (2003), the three long-term upward trends (ceiling effects) that capitalism cannot manage are:

- 1) the long-term rise of real wages;
- 2) the long-term costs of material inputs; and
- 3) rising taxes.

All three upward trends cause the average rate of profit to fall. Capitalists devise strategies for combating these trends (automation, capital flight, job blackmail, attacks on the welfare state and unions), but they cannot really stop them in the long run. Deindustrialization in one place leads to industrialization and the emergence of labor movements somewhere else (Silver 2003). The falling rate of profit means that capitalism as a logic of accumulation will face an irreconcilable structural crisis during the next 50 years, and some other system will emerge. Wallerstein calls the next five decades ‘The Age of Transition’.

Wallerstein sees recent losses by labor unions and the poor as temporary. He assumes that workers will eventually figure out how to protect themselves against globalized market forces and the ‘race to the bottom’. This may underestimate somewhat the difficulties

of mobilizing effective labor organization in the era of globalized capitalism, but he is probably right in the long run. Global unions and political parties could give workers effective instruments for protecting their wages and working conditions from exploitation by global corporations once the national and North/South issues that divide workers are overcome.

Wallerstein is intentionally vague about the organizational nature of the new system that will replace capitalism (as was Marx) except that he is certain that it will no longer be capitalism. He sees the declining hegemony of the United States and the crisis of neoliberal global capitalism as strong signs that capitalism can no longer adjust to its systemic contradictions. He contends that world history has now entered a period of chaotic and unpredictable historical transformation. Out of this period of chaos a new and qualitatively different non-capitalist system will emerge. It might be an authoritarian (tributary) global state that preserves the privileges of the global elite or it could be an egalitarian system in which non-profit institutions serve communities (Wallerstein 1998).

Stages of World Capitalist Development: Systemic Cycles of Accumulation

Giovanni Arrighi's (1994) evolutionary account of 'systemic cycles of accumulation' has solved some of the problems of Wallerstein's notion that world capitalism started in the long sixteenth century and then only went through repetitive cycles and trends. Arrighi's account is explicitly evolutionary, but rather than positing 'stages of capitalism' and looking for each country to go through them (as most of the older Marxists did), he posits somewhat overlapping global cycles of accumulation in which finance capital and state power take on new forms and increasingly penetrate the whole system. This was a big improvement over both Wallerstein's world cycles and trends and the traditional Marxist national stages of capitalism.

Arrighi's (1994, 2006) 'systemic cycles of accumulation' are more different from one another than are Wallerstein's cycles of expansion and contraction and upward secular trends. And Arrighi (2006) has made more out of the differences between the current period of the U.S. hegemonic decline and the decades at the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century when British hegemony was declining. The emphasis is less on the beginning and the end of the capitalist world-system and more on the evolution of new institutional forms of capitalist accumulation and the increasing incorporation of modes of control into the logic of capitalism. Arrighi (2006), taking a cue from Andre Gunder Frank (1998), saw the rise of China as portending a new systemic cycle of accumulation in which 'market society' will eventually come to replace rapacious finance capital as the leading institutional form in the next phase of world history. Arrighi did not discuss the end of capitalism and the emergence of another basic logic of social reproduction and accumulation. His analysis is more in line with the 'types of capitalism' and 'multiple modernities' literature, except that he is analyzing the whole system rather than separate national societies.

Arrighi sees the development of market society in China as a consequence of the differences between the East Asian and Europe-centered systems before their merger in the 19th century, and also as an outcome of the Chinese Revolution. His discussion of

Adam Smith's notions of societal control over finance capital is interesting, but he is vague as to what the forces that can counter-balance the power of finance capital might be. In China it is obviously the Communist Party and the new class of technocratic mandarins. This is somewhat similar in form to Peter Evans's (1979) discussion of the importance of technocrats in Brazilian, Japanese and Korean national development, though Arrighi does not say so.

Arrighi also provides a more explicit analysis of how the current world situation is similar to, and different from, the period of declining British hegemonic power before World War I (see summary in Chase-Dunn and Lawrence 2011: 147–151).

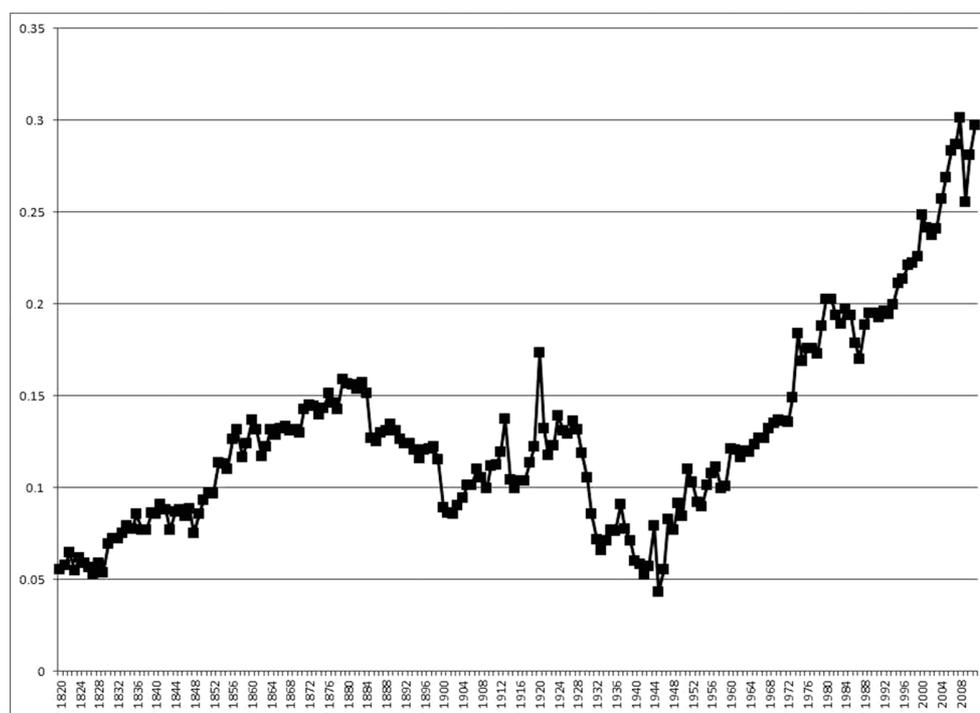
Wallerstein's version is more apocalyptic and more millenarian. The old world is ending. The new world is beginning. In the coming systemic bifurcation what people do may be prefigurative and causal of the world to come. Wallerstein agrees with the analysis proposed by the students of the New Left in 1968 (and large numbers of activists in the current global justice movement) that the tactic of taking state power has been shown to be futile because of the disappointing outcomes of the World Revolution of 1917 and the decolonization movements (but see below).

Economic Globalization

Regarding the issue of whether or not the recent meltdown is itself a structural crisis or the beginning of a long process of transformation, it is relevant to examine recent trends in economic globalization. Is there yet any sign that the world economy has entered a new period of deglobalization of the kind that occurred in the first half of the twentieth century?

Immanuel Wallerstein contends that globalization has been occurring for five hundred years, and so there is little that is importantly new about the so-called stage of global capitalism that is alleged to have emerged in the last decades of the twentieth century. Well before the emergence of globalization in the popular consciousness, the world-systems perspective focused on the world economy and the system of interacting polities, rather than on single national societies. Globalization, in the sense of the expansion and intensification of larger and larger economic, political, military and information networks, has been increasing for millennia, albeit unevenly and in waves. And globalization is as much a cycle as a trend (see Fig. 2). The wave of global integration that has swept the world in the decades since World War II is best understood by studying its similarities and differences with the waves of international trade and foreign investment expansion that have occurred in earlier centuries, especially the last half of the nineteenth century.

Wallerstein has insisted that U.S. hegemony is continuing to decline. He interpreted the U.S. unilateralism of the Bush administration as a repetition of the mistakes of earlier declining hegemonies that attempted to substitute military superiority for economic comparative advantage (Wallerstein 2003). Many of those who denied the notion of U.S. hegemonic decline during what Giovanni Arrighi (1994) called the 'belle epoch' of financialization have now come around to Wallerstein's position in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008. Wallerstein contends that once the world-system cycles and trends, and the game of musical chairs that is capitalist uneven development, are taken into account, the 'new stage of global capitalism' does not seem that different from earlier periods.

Fig. 2. Trade Globalization 1820–2011: World Imports as a Percentage of World GDP

Sources: Chase-Dunn *et al.* 2000; World Bank 2012.

Fig. 2 is an updated version of the trade globalization series published in Chase-Dunn *et al.* (2000). It shows the great nineteenth century wave of global trade integration, a short and volatile wave between 1900 and 1929, and the post-1945 upswing that is characterized as the ‘stage of global capitalism’. The figure indicates that globalization is both a cycle and a bumpy trend. There have been significant periods of deglobalization in the late nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century. Note the steep decline in the level of global trade integration in 2009 and the recovery by 2011.

The long-term upward trend has been bumpy, with occasional downturns such as the one shown in the 1970s. But the downturns since 1945 have all been followed by upturns that restored the overall upward trend of trade globalization. The large decrease of trade globalization in the wake of the global financial meltdown of 2008 represents a 21 % decrease from the previous year, the largest reversal in trade globalization since World War II. The question is whether or not this sharp decrease represents a reversal in the long upward trend observed over the past half century. Was this the beginning of another period of deglobalization?

The Financial Meltdown of 2007–2008

The financial crisis of 2008 has generated a huge scholarly literature and immense popular reflection about its causes and its meaning for the past and for the future of

world society. Chase-Dunn and Kwon (2011) attempt to determine the similarities and differences between this and earlier periods of dislocation and breakdown. They note that financial crises have been business as usual for the capitalist world-economy for the past several centuries. The theories of a 'new economy' and 'network society' were mainly justifications for hyperfinancialization. The big difference this time around is the gargantuan size of the bubble and the greater dependence of the rest of the world on the huge U.S. economy and the U.S. dollar sector. The somewhat successful reinflating of the global financial bubble by the government-funded bail-out of Wall Street did not resolve basic structural problems, but it did avoid (so far) a true collapse, deflation, and the wiping out of the bloated mass of paper securities that have constituted the financial bubble.

The World Revolution of 20XX

The contemporary world revolution is similar to earlier ones, but also different. My conceptualization of the New Global Left includes civil society entities (individuals, social movement organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs)), but also political parties and progressive national regimes in Latin America. It is important to understand the relationships among the antisystemic movements and the progressive populist regimes that have emerged in Latin America in the last decade, as well as the Arab Spring that began in Tunisia in December of 2010 and the anti-austerity movements that have emerged in some of the second-tier core countries (Greece and Spain). We understand the Latin American 'Pink Tide' regimes to be an important part of the New Global Left, though it is well-known that the relationship between the transnational social movements and these regimes are both supportive and contentious.

The boundaries of the progressive forces that have come together in the New Global Left are fuzzy and the process of inclusion and exclusion is ongoing (Santos 2006). But the rules of inclusion and exclusion that are contained in the Charter of the World Social Forum, though still debated, have not changed much since their formulation in 2001.¹

The New Global Left has emerged as resistance to, and a critique of, global capitalism (Lindholm and Zuquete 2010). It is a coalition of social movements that includes recent incarnations of the older social movements that emerged in the nineteenth century (labor, anarchism, socialism, communism, feminism, environmentalism, peace, human rights) and movements that emerged in the world revolutions of 1968 and 1989 (queer rights, anti-corporate, fair trade, indigenous) and even more recent movements such as the slow food/food rights, global justice/alterglobalization, antiglobalization, health-HIV and alternative media (Reese *et al.* 2008).² The explicit focus on the Global South and global justice is somewhat similar to some earlier instances of the Global Left, especially the Communist International, the Bandung Conference and the anticolonial movements.

¹ The charter of the World Social Forum does not permit participation by those who attend as representatives of organizations that are engaged in, or that advocate, armed struggle. Nor are governments, confessional institutions or political parties supposed to send representatives to the WSF. See World Social Forum Charter <http://wsf2007.org/process/wsf-charter/>.

² The Transnational Social Movement Research Working Group at the University of California-Riverside has studied the movements participating in the World Social Forum since 2005. The project web page is at <http://www.irows.ucr.edu/research/tsmstudy.htm>.

The New Global Left contains remnants and reconfigured elements of earlier Global Lefts, but it is a qualitatively different constellation of forces because:

- 1) there are new elements;
- 2) the old movements have been reshaped; and
- 3) a new technology (the Internet) is being used to mobilize protests and to try to resolve North/South issues within movements and contradictions among movements.

There has also been a learning process in which the perceived earlier successes and failures of the older Global Lefts are being taken into account in order to not repeat the mistakes of the past. Many social movements have reacted to the neoliberal globalization project by going transnational to meet the challenges that are obviously not local or national (Reitan 2007). But some movements, especially those composing the Arab Spring, are focused mainly on regime change at home. The relations within the family of antisystemic movements and among the Latin American Pink Tide populist regimes are both cooperative and competitive. The issues that divide potential allies need to be brought out into the open and analyzed in order that cooperative efforts may be enhanced and progressive global collective action may become more effective.

The Pink Tide

The World Social Forum (WSF) is not the only political force that demonstrates the rise of the New Global Left. The WSF is embedded within a larger socio-historical context that is challenging the hegemony of global capital. It was this larger context that facilitated the founding of the WSF in 2001. The anti-IMF protests of the 1980s and the Zapatista rebellion of 1994 were early harbingers of the current world revolution that challenged the neoliberal capitalist order. And the World Social Forum was founded in 2001 explicitly as a counter-hegemonic project *vis-à-vis* the World Economic Forum (an annual gathering of global elites founded in 1971).

As we have discussed above, world history has proceeded in a series of waves. Capitalist expansions have ebbed and flowed, and egalitarian and humanistic counter-movements have emerged in a cyclical dialectical struggle. Polanyi (1944) called this the double-movement, while Boswell and Chase-Dunn (2000) have termed the 'spiral of capitalism and socialism'. This spiral describes the undulations of the global political economy that have alternated between expansive commodification throughout the global economy, followed by resistance movements on behalf of workers and other oppressed groups. The Reagan/Thatcher neoliberal capitalist globalization project extended the power of transnational capital. This project is nearing its ideological and material limits. It has increased inequality within some countries, exacerbated rapid urbanization in the Global South (so-called *Planet of Slums* [Davis 2006]), attacked the welfare state and institutional protections for the poor, and led to the global financial crisis of 2008.

A global network of counter-movements has arisen to challenge neoliberalism, neoconservatism and corporate capitalism in general. This progressive network is composed of increasingly transnational social movements as well as a growing number of populist governments in Latin America – the so-called Pink Tide. The Pink Tide is composed of populist leftist regimes that have come to state power in Latin America, some of which advocate dramatic structural transformation of the global political economy and world civilization.

An important difference between these and many earlier Leftist regimes in the non-core is that they have come to head up governments by means of popular elections rather than by violent revolutions. This signifies an important difference from earlier world revolutions. The spread of electoral democracy to the non-core has been part of a larger political incorporation of former colonies into the European interstate system. This evolutionary development of the global political system has mainly been caused by the industrialization of the non-core and the growing size of the urban working class in non-core countries (Silver 2003). While much of the 'democratization' of the Global South has consisted mainly of the emergence of 'polyarchy' in which elites manipulate elections in order to stay in control of the state (Robinson 1996), in many Latin American countries the Pink Tide Leftist regimes have been voted into power. This is a very different form of regime formation than the road taken by earlier Leftist regimes in the non-core. With a few exceptions earlier Left regimes came to state power by means of civil war or military coup.

The ideologies of the Latin American Pink Tide regimes have been both socialist and indigenist, with different mixes in different countries. The acknowledged leader of the Pink Tide as a distinctive brand of leftist populism is the Bolivarian Revolution led by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. But various other forms of progressive political ideologies are also heading up states in Latin America. Indigenist and socialist Evo Morales is the president of Bolivia. The Fidelistas in Cuba remain in power. The Brazilian Workers' Party is still an important player, though its elected presidents have been pragmatic politicians rather than revolutionary leaders. In Chile social democrats were in power from 1990 until 2010. Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the FMLN in El Salvador have elected national leaders. Argentina bravely and unilaterally restructured its own debt obligations in 2005. The President of Peru is a leftist. And several European-style social democrats lead some of the Caribbean islands.

Most of these regimes are supported by the mobilization of historically subordinate populations including the indigenous, poor, and women. The rise of the voiceless and the challenge to neoliberal capitalism seemed to have its epicenter in Latin America before the emergence of the Arab Spring. While there are important differences of emphasis among these Latin American regimes, they have much in common, and as a whole they constitute an important bloc of the New Global Left. I agree with William I. Robinson's (2008) assessment of the Bolivarian Revolution and its potential to lead the global working class in a renewed challenge to transnational capitalism.

The rise of the left has engulfed nearly all of South America and a considerable portion of Central America and the Caribbean. Why has Latin America been the site of both populist Leftist regimes and most of the transnational social movements that contest neoliberal capitalist globalization up until recently? Latin America as a world region is the home of a large number of semiperipheral countries. These countries have more options to pursue independent strategies than the mainly peripheral countries of Africa do. But some of the Pink Tide countries in Latin America are also peripheral. There has been a strong regional effect that has been absent in Africa and Asia. The Pink Tide phenomenon and the anti-neoliberal social movements have been concentrated in Latin America because the foremost proponent of the neoliberal policies has been the United States. Latin

America has long been the neocolonial 'backyard' of the United States. Most of the people of Latin America think of the United States as the 'colossus of the North'. The U.S. has been the titular hegemon during the period of the capitalist globalization project. Just as the propensity to strike is the greatest in company towns because the power structure has a single pinnacle, so has the political challenge to neoliberalism been strongest in that region of the world in which the U.S. is the most prominent. Both Africa and Asia have a more complicated relationship with former colonial powers and with the U.S. hegemony.

President of Venezuela Hugo Chavez was perhaps the most vocal advocate of an alternative to global capitalism, and his advocacy was greatly aided by the massive Venezuelan oil reserves. The *Banco del Sur* (Bank of the South) that Chavez has founded, for example, has been joined by several Pink Tide nations and seeks to replace the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in sponsoring development projects throughout the Americas. The goal is to become independent of the capitalist financial institutions headquartered in the Global North.

The early Structural Adjustment Programs imposed by the International Monetary Fund in Latin America in the 1980s were instances of 'shock therapy' that emboldened domestic neoliberals to attack the 'welfare state', unions and workers parties. In many countries these attacks resulted in downsizing and streamlining of urban industries, and workers in the formal sector lost their jobs and were forced into the informal economy, swelling the 'planet of slums' (Davis 2006). This constitutes the formation of a globalized working class as described by Bill Robinson (2008). In several countries the swollen urban informal sector was mobilized by political leaders into new populist movements and parties, and in some of these the movements were eventually successful in electing their leaders to national power, creating the Pink Tide regimes. Thus did neoliberal Structural Adjustment Programs provoke counter-movements that eventuated in the Pink Tide regimes.

The very existence of the World Social Forum owes much to the Pink Tide regime in Brazil. The Brazilian transition from authoritarian rule in the 1980s politicized and mobilized civil society, contributing to the elections of leftist presidents. One of these was Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a famous Brazilian sociologist who was one of the founders of dependency theory. The Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, where the first World Social Forum meetings were held, had been a stronghold for the Brazilian Workers' Party. The World Social Forum was born in Porto Alegre with indispensable help from the Brazilian Workers' Party and its former leader who had been elected President of Brazil, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva. The political trend of the Pink Tide was an important element in context and conditions that allowed for the rise of the World Social Forum.

The relations between the progressive transnational social movements and the regimes of the Pink Tide have been both collaborative and contentious. We have already noted the important role played by the Brazilian Workers' Party in the creation of the World Social Forum. But many of the activists in the movements see involvement in struggles to gain and maintain power in existing states as a trap that is likely to simply reproduce the injustices of the past. These kinds of concerns have been raised by anarchists since the nineteenth century, but autonomists from Italy, Spain, Germany and France now echo these concerns. And the Zapatista movement in Southern Mexico, one of the sparks that ignited the global

justice movement against neoliberal capitalism, has steadfastly refused to participate in Mexican electoral politics. Indeed the New Left led by students in the World Revolution of 1968 championed a similar critical approach to the old parties and states of the Left as well as involvement in electoral politics. As mentioned above, Immanuel Wallerstein (1984b, 2003) agrees with this antistatist political stance. This antipolitics-as-usual has become embodied in the Charter of the World Social Forum, where representatives of parties and governments are theoretically proscribed from sending representatives to the WSF meetings (see Footnote 1 above).

The older Leftist organizations and movements are often depicted as hopelessly Eurocentric and undemocratic by the neo-anarchists and autonomists, who instead prefer participatory and horizontalist network forms of democracy and eschew leadership by prominent Leftist intellectuals as well as by existing heads of state. Thus when Lula, Chavez and Morales have tried to participate in the WSF, crowds have gathered to protest their presence. The organizers of the WSF have found various compromises, such as locating the speeches of Pink Tide politicians at adjacent, but separate, venues. An exception to this kind of contention is the support that European autonomists and anarchists have provided to Evo Morales's regime in Bolivia (*e.g.*, López and Turrión 2006). Many of the activists in the Occupy movement that began in New York City in the Fall of 2011 had a similar attitude toward formal organization and hierarchy. The movement described itself as 'leaderless' and focused on direct democratic decision-making in face-to-face groups.

Latin America has been the epicenter of the contemporary world revolution. If the movements and the progressive regimes could work together this would be an energizing model for the other regions of the globe. The challenges are daunting but the majority of humankind needs organizational instruments with which to democratize global governance and the World Social Forum has been designed to be the venue from which such instruments could be organized.

The Meltdown and the Counter-Movements

What have been the effects of the global financial meltdown on the transnational social movements and the progressive national regimes? The World Social Forum slogan that 'Another World Is Possible' seems far more appealing now than when the capitalist globalization project was booming. Critical discourse has been taken more seriously by a broader audience. Marxist geographer David Harvey has been interviewed on the BBC. The millenarian discourses of the Pink Tide regimes and the radical social movements seem to be at least partly confirmed. The 'end of history' triumphalism and theories of the 'new economy' seem to have been swept into the dustbin. The world-systems perspective has found greater support, at least among earlier critics such as the more traditional Marxists. The insistence of Wallerstein, Arrighi, and others that U.S. hegemony is in long-term decline has now found wide acceptance.

On a more practical level, most of the social movement organizations and NGOs have had more difficulty raising money, but this has been counterbalanced by increased participation (Allison *et al.* 2011). The environmental movement has received some setbacks because the issue of high unemployment has come to the fore. The Copenhagen

environmental summit was largely understood to have been a failure. The wide realization that energy costs are going to go further up has increased the numbers who support the further development of nuclear energy, despite its long-run environmental costs. But the Japanese earthquake and Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear meltdown of 2011 has led to the declaration of a non-nuclear future by the German government. And the radical alternative of indigenous environmentalism has gotten a boost (Wallerstein 2010). The World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, held in Cochabamba, Bolivia in April of 2010, discussed a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth, a World People's Referendum on Climate Change, and the establishment of a Climate Justice Tribunal. The meeting was attended by 30,000 activists from more than 100 countries, and was financially supported by the governments of Bolivia and Venezuela.

Arab Spring, European Summer and the Occupy Movement

The movements that have swept the Arab world since December of 2010 are also part of the world revolution of 20xx and they may yet play a role in the New Global Left.³ As in earlier world revolutions, contagion and new technologies of communication have been important elements. And as in earlier world revolutions, rather different movements stimulated by different local conditions converged in time to challenge the powers that be. But the Arab Spring movements have been rather different from the global justice movements. Their targets have mainly been authoritarian national regimes rather than global capitalism. Demonstrators have used *Facebook* to organize mainly peaceful protests that have succeeded in causing old entrenched regimes to step down. The countries in which these movements have succeeded are not the poorest countries in Africa and the Middle East. Rather they have been semiperipheral countries in which a large mobilizable group of young people had access to social media. In most cases the old autocrats had been trying to implement austerity programs in order to be able to borrow more money from abroad and this set the stage for the mass movements. But the Arab Spring movements have not explicitly raised the issues of austerity and global financial dependency.⁴

The issues raised by the Arab Spring movements were mainly about national democracy, not global justice. But the example of masses of young people rallying against unpopular regimes in 2011 spread to the second-tier core states of Europe. Both Spain and Greece saw large anti-austerity demonstrations that were inspired by the successes of the Arab Spring. And in these cases the connection with the global financial crisis is even more palpable. The austerity programs were the conditions imposed by global finance capital for reinflating the accumulation structures of these countries of the European second-tier core. The popular anti-austerity rebellions might provoke an even deeper financial collapse if investors and their institutional agents lose faith in the ability of the system to reproduce the existing structures of accumulation. And anti-austerity movements have also spread to the core states, where severe fiscal crises have led to the dismantling of public services. The rise of the Occupy movement in New York City in 2011 and its rapid

³ The World Social Forum will be held in Tunisia in 2013.

⁴ The NATO intervention in Libya illustrated both the illegitimacy of the Gaddafi regime and of the nascent global state that deposed him.

spread to even small towns in the USA and to cities all over the world shows that popular resistance to global finance capital is indeed widespread (Chase-Dunn and Curran-Strange 2012).

Conclusions

So do recent developments constitute the beginning of a terminal crisis of capitalism or just another systemic cycle of accumulation? As mentioned above, predominant capitalism has not been around very long from the point of view of the succession of qualitatively different logics of social reproduction. But capitalism itself has speeded up social change and its contradictions do seem to be reaching levels that cannot be fixed. Declarations of imminent transformation are useful for mobilizing social movements, but an even greater contribution would be a clear specification of what is really wrong with capitalism and how these deficiencies can be fixed.

Regarding a new systemic cycle of accumulation, Arrighi's bet on the significance of the rise of China also needs clarification. As he has said, other countries have not experienced the trajectory that produced 'market society' in China, so how can forces emerge elsewhere that could counter-balance the power of national and global finance capital. And what kinds of forces could do this?

The rise of the anti-austerity movements in Spain and Greece and the Occupy Wall Street movement in the USA may portend the emergence of strong and effective anti-capitalist social movements in the core. The Occupy and anti-austerity movements interestingly borrowed tactics from the Arab Spring, including the use of social networking for organizing revolt and camping in central public spaces. The Occupy movement probably improved President Obama's chances for re-election by shining a spotlight on the growing inequalities within the USA and further movements of this kind might inspire the re-elected Obama administration to more energetically push for re-industrialization of the USA. This could slow or even reverse the USA economic decline. But the movements and the regime would have to overcome the still-strong legacy of Reaganism-Thatcherism, the political muscle of Wall Street and the Tea Party right-wing populists and disgruntled white voters who see the rise of Hispanic voting as a threat. Continued political stalemate in the USA is the most likely outcome, and this will result in the continued slow decline of U.S. hegemony. This is not surprising from the point of view of world-systemic cycles of hegemonic rise and fall.

But things seem more interesting in the semiperiphery and the Global South. So far the United States has not used much muscle in opposition to the rise of the Pink Tide in Latin America. Expensive U.S. military involvements in the Middle East and Central Asia have continued, and these may partly explain the relative inaction in Latin America. Can the progressive transnational social movements and the left populist regimes of the Pink Tide forge a coalition that can move toward greater global democracy? Could the emergent democratic regimes in the Arab world and protests against the austerity imposed by finance capital in the European second-tier core lead to a situation in which a strong force for global social democracy would challenge the powers that be? As in earlier world revolutions the institutions of global governance are likely to be reshaped by forces from below. Hopefully a more democratic and collectively rational global commonwealth can

emerge without the violence and totalitarianism that was so prevalent in the first half of the twentieth century.

Both a new stage of capitalism and a qualitative systemic transformation are possible within the next three decades, but a new stage of capitalism is more likely. The evolution of global governance occurs when enlightened conservatives implement the demands of an earlier world revolution in order to reduce the pressures from below that are brought to bear in a current world revolution. We think that the most likely outcome of the current crisis and world revolution will be some form of global Keynesianism in which part of the global elite forms a more legitimate and democratic set of global governance institutions to deal with some of the problems of the 21st century.

If U.S. hegemonic decline is slow, as it has been so far, and if financial and ecological crises and conflicts between ethnic groups and nations are spread out in time then the enlightened and pragmatic conservatives will have a chance to build another world order that is still capitalist but meets the current challenges at least partially. But if the perfect storm of calamities (Kuecker 2007; Kuecker and Hall 2011) should all come together in the same period the movements will have the chance to radically change the mode of accumulation to a form of global socialism.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to Roy Kwon, Anthony Roberts and Kirk Lawrence for help with this paper.

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