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Uneven and Combined Development in the *Longue Durée*: Beyond World-System Analysis?

Eric Mielants

Anievas and Nişancioğlu's text, *How the West Came to Rule*, attempts to offer not only an insightful critique of a contemporary consensus within Orthodox Marxist historiography, but also explores the incomplete narratives embedded within postcolonial studies and world-system analysis. In this contribution I argue that they succeed more in the former challenge than in the latter and suggest that a careful analysis of recent world system research is really less Eurocentric than Anievas and Nişancioğlu claim. Extending their analysis into the present would make their theoretical model less divergent from Wallerstein's approach than they suggest. As they point out, a myopic and biased interpretation of the Rise of the West is not only related to a rigid adherence to obsolete theoretical models, but also to the creation of separate disciplines within the modern university system which tends to (re)produce Eurocentric epistemology about past, present and future conditions.

Anievas and Nişancioğlu (hereinafter "A & N") have written a provocative book on some of the major questions underpinning social science such as: where does capitalism come from? How has it expanded? Why is the world divided into poor and wealthy areas? I interpret their scholarly achievement as an overdue intellectual endeavor that attempts to historicize an overly rigid, quantitative and positivistic political science tradition of which the field of International Relations is a rather ambiguous part (e.g. p. 57). The few political science studies that have embraced an outright historical analysis to answer the origins of our present socioeconomic and political system (see for example Spruyt 1994, and to a lesser extent Buzan and Little 2000), have focused primarily, if not exclusively, on the European experience using European data sets as well as examples¹. This type of Eurocentrism, endemic not only to political science but also within the fields of sociology and history (e.g. Emigh 2008 or Zmolek 2013), was something A & N also endeavored to correct, for which they should be applauded.

What I fail to comprehend, however, is why the authors stake out an eccentric middle ground between Orthodox Marxism (which they label Political Marxism) in the tradition of Robert Brenner and Ellen Wood on the one hand, and World System Theory on the other. The criticism they articulate towards Orthodox Marxism (pp. 22-32) is irrefutable: it is a problematically outdated Eurocentric and overtly formulaic meta narrative “obliterating the histories of colonialism, slavery and imperialism” (p. 24) with its rigid emphasis on the productive sphere and exploitation of wage labor. Such criteria would actually lead to the conclusion that many contemporary nation-states are not part of the capitalist world economy (or that the Dutch VOC and the British Empire also were not, several hundred years ago). Such a doctrinaire line of reasoning could also be used to suggest that contemporary Communist Parties should support (neo) liberal forces in parts of Africa and Latin America in order to bring about capitalism in those countries in order to later overthrow it, as these societies are currently stuck in a pre-modern stage of development or older pre-capitalist modes of production.

The subsequent charge that A & N formulate against postcolonial studies is also quite understandable (pp. 33-40), specifically in light of its focus on the cultural sphere and the deconstruction of western historiographies without offering a coherent alternative interpretation of capitalist development.

What is more surprising to this reviewer are the accusations formulated against World System Theory (e.g. pp. 16-22), which I argue follow from an incomplete and rather very selective reading of this school of thought. First of all, Wallerstein (2002) has repeatedly argued that he has *not* developed a theory but rather, a mode of analyzing complex historical processes, as well as a protest against 19th century paradigms. I will therefore refer to this intellectual tradition as World System *Analysis* (hereinafter WSA) instead of world system theory (WST). WSA is an approach altogether not dissimilar to that of the authors when they state that “uneven and combined development is not a theory in itself. It is rather, a methodological fix – or more precisely, a ‘progressive problem-shift’ – within the broader research programme of historical materialism” (p. 61). The focus of WSA on unequal exchange and unequal geopolitical power relations with all its consequences, including its emphasis on studying households (e.g. Smith and Wallerstein 1992; Dunaway 2013) or the world-economy as opposed to the nation-state (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1982), is at times much closer to A & N’s point of view than they are willing to admit.

Their assertion that WSA overlooks non-Western forms of resistance (p. 17), or treats the world outside of Europe as a “passive periphery” (p. 92) is rather remarkable. From its inception WSA, with its holistic approach on world inequality and the resistance it generated, has focused on transnational movements outside of Europe, or more

broadly outside the core zone of ceaseless capitalist accumulation (e.g. Wallerstein 1975).² The whole point of subsequent WSA studies on anti-systemic movements (e.g. Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein 1989; Amin, Arrighi, Frank and Wallerstein 1990; Silver 2003) as well as research undertaken by Research Working Groups active in the Fernand Braudel Center at the State University of New York at Binghamton (e.g. Martin 2008), of which Immanuel Wallerstein was its long-time director, was to illustrate the relational aspect of anti-systemic movements in the context of the global expansion of the capitalist world economy. The statement therefore that in WSA, non-Western movements or regions of the world are considered “passive” (p. 17) or slaves characterized as “docile and submissive” (p. 154) and merely experiencing the global forces of capitalist accumulation without them being assigned an important role in determining how the modern world system evolves, is without merit. An even cursory reading of the dozens of edited volumes published in the Political Economy of the World System annual series, of which Wallerstein is the editor, would have proved this accusation does not stand: Samman and Al-Zo’by (2008) on Islam and the Orientalist World System, Korzeniewicz and Smith (1996) on Latin America and the World Economy, or Ganesh (2009) on The Rise of Asia and the Transformation of the World-System, all included analyses that provide agency to multiple non-Western actors (movements, individuals, countries) and in doing so, implicitly or explicitly problematized Eurocentrism by emphasizing its negative impact on conventional social science scholarship. Furthermore, ever since C.L.R. James, a significant epistemological and analytical (and not just semantic) distinction has been made between the concepts of “the slaves” and “the enslaved”, so it is surprising that A & N continue to use the term slave in a book that accuses others of not bestowing enough agency upon people living (or having lived) in the non-west.

To make matters worse, A & N lump Andre Gunder Frank and Barry Gills’ analysis (1990) with that of Arrighi’s (1994) under the same large world system umbrella (p. 20). But Andre Gunder Frank the dependency theorist of the 1960s was not the same as Andre Gunder Frank the world system theorist of the 1980s, nor was Andre Gunder Frank’s work in the 1990s, denounced in the Review of the Braudel Center by both Arrighi and Wallerstein, that of someone who still used a similar theoretical framework or analytical concerns. By the time his magnum opus *ReOrient* (1998) came out, even the word “capitalism” had become completely meaningless to him. Like his former intellectual comrade in arms Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who by then was re-elected president of Brazil, he could have claimed “Forget everything I have ever written”.

A & N do have a point when they fault both Arrighi (p. 224) and Wallerstein for an insufficiently detailed and theorized explanation of the transition debate when they

argue that “it is possible to see commercialization, divisions of labor, incorporation and core and periphery throughout all of human history” (p. 21). WSA as a school of thought, however, has subsequently identified the crucial variable which makes a transition to a ceaseless accumulation of capital possible. As Arrighi (1994:11) points out, “the most important aspect of this much-neglected transition is the unique fusion of state and capital”. This process started in the medieval period when city states were the power containers (Mielants 2007) whose mode of accumulation was gradually emulated by the incipient interstate system that followed in the ‘early modern’ period. The point is, of course, to recognize how “transformations in the social relations of production” (p. 234) were not caused by various nebulous market forces, spontaneously emerging out of the blue similar to Athena bursting out of Zeus’ head, but by acknowledging how state interventions facilitated this process by colonization, levying tribute of a wide variety of taxes, coerced labor or protection of various monopolies (see p. 237), thereby forcing people in the periphery into the newly created market. This is precisely what WSA scholarship has been trying to emphasize over numerous decades: what brings about a transition to capitalism is not a mere quantitative increase of trade or “intensified patterns of capital accumulation” (p. 289, fn. 73), but how wealthy merchants were capable of becoming a power elite by taking advantage of and ultimately grafting themselves onto the state apparatus, strategies from which they would greatly benefit, especially when compared to other areas of the world (Mielants 2007).

In addition, the various ways in which global capital has been interacting with peripheral labor in the past as well as in the present is a complex issue which continues to be researched by scholars using world system concepts (e.g. Raman 2010). Unlike a rigid theory, WSA continues to be reformed, updated and appropriated by various scholars in multiple disciplines (e.g. Hall 2000).

What A & N seem to miss, ignore, or perhaps dislike about WSA’s presupposition rather than explanation of the “presence and functioning of the market” (p. 224) is that the overall analysis of capitalism is not undertaken in Eurocentric ‘stagism’ from merchant to industrial capitalism but instead, is rooted in a research agenda framed around what is called ‘historical capitalism’ (Wallerstein 2011) which looks at how the market has been constructed politically as well as defined ideologically in Polanyi’s (1944) sense. Real capitalists, as opposed to ideal types found in transhistorical theories, have always invested in more than just enterprises relying on wage labor, as this was and continues to be only one source of ceaseless capital accumulation. In addition, large firms operating in strong states within the core zone of the world economy have traditionally been keen to embrace monopolistic super profits ³ (Wallerstein 1991a) as well as the *rhetoric of free trade* when it happens to be to their

advantage (most notably in the cases of Dutch, British and US hegemony). Just as Portugal was a 17th century semi peripheral power which embraced the notion of a *mare clausum* (p. 233), the Soviet Union in the middle of the 20th century was also in favor of a highly protectionist strategy with more overt governmental intervention. Both were, however, operating within the logic and constraints of the capitalist modern world system.⁴ Similarly, large capitalist enterprises have been operating on an international scale for generations. What counts as international trade is, after all, sometimes little more than intra-firm bookkeeping between different affiliates of the same multinational organization which can deploy various strategies to accumulate capital directly as well as indirectly (or avoid taxation) through reliance on various forms of exploitative strategies unrelated to wage labor. What WSA scholars therefore argue is that both wage labor and coerced labor are intrinsically linked through state supported companies and firms that operate globally in a capitalist world economy.⁵ If one understands that substantial amounts of wage labor exists in the core zones of capital accumulation precisely because of capital's relation with non-wage labor practices in the periphery, one realizes the need to analyze not only the tree but the entire ecosystem of the forest in which it grows. If not, one risks committing the same intellectual mistake as neoclassical economists who only study the market according to their own definition, missing the so-called informal sector that accounts for over 75% of all jobs in many peripheral countries. Yet instead of looking at the historical similarities and continuities over several centuries of global capitalist accumulation, A & N insist that "colonialism explains the emergence of capitalism as a mode of production" (p. 244) in a stage-like manner while ignoring or dismissing how it has been historically intertwined throughout history until this very day. A & N also argue that WSA "conflate[s] commerce and markets with capitalism" (p. 249) thereby "naturalizing capitalism's existence". But if anything, WSA critiques the capitalist market by exposing the rigid Eurocentric meta narratives of its creation as an inevitable process somehow delinked from political power over the market place, which is as simplistic as it is erroneous. Political power, as expressed by the interstate system, which controls borders and enforces mobility (or lack thereof) through citizenship, cannot be delinked from the creation of the particular kind of market economy we call capitalism⁶. One can define political power in the global economy as "territorialized sovereign centers of capital accumulation" (p. 259) or strong states within the core zones of the modern world system which implement particular policies domestically as well as abroad from which they benefit,⁷ but this is only a matter of stylistic description.

Quite regularly throughout the text, A & N accuse "World System Theory" of being "ahistorical" (p. 172) or confined to "Eurocentric spatiotemporal limits" (p. 94). A close reading of their text reveals them, however, paradoxically relying on the studies

produced by world system scholars, whether it is praising Philip McMichael's notion of incorporated comparison in chapter 2, or referring to the work of Immanuel Wallerstein, Resat Kasaba or Calar Keyder in chapter 4 or even more so the detailed analysis provided by Giovanni Arrighi in chapters 6 and 7 (as well as that of Dale W. Tomich).⁸

The denunciation of WSA is all the more remarkable as A & N occasionally use its terminology: "Europe's colonization of the Americas and the ideological apparatuses it spawned marked the embryonic origins of the 'global colour line' that would subsequently evolve with capitalism's development into a *world system* of imperialist domination" (p. 128) (italics mine).

On the one hand A & N want to open up traditional Marxist historiography and force it to recognize the significant contributions of and interactions with the non-West. Yet on the other hand they continue to insist that although racialized workers all over the world "increasingly become oriented towards and integrated into international trading markets and circuits of capital [... they] remained governed by pre-capitalist 'laws of motion'" (p. 131). This theoretical confusion is preferred over recognizing the existence of a capitalist global division of labor in which "a diversity of labor forms (slavery, serfdom, wage labor, petty commodity production) co-exist and are organized by capital as a source of production of surplus value through the selling of commodities for a profit in the world market" (Grosfoguel 2007: 216). Instead A & N prefer to reject the notion of "an abstract homogenizing totality" (p. 325, fn 84) of the capitalist world economy and, in doing so, remain encapsulated in a Eurocentric debate as to how the slave-based mode of production and a plantation economy remain within the proper exegesis of Marxist terminology (see Schalkwijk 2012).

While I can only applaud their theoretical move away from methodological nationalism, embedded in much conventional social science research, A & N 's embrace of a nebulous and ambiguous concept labeled 'the intersocietal' as the "proper unit of analysis" (p.53) does not advance things all that much. I would argue that a proper unit of analysis would be the capitalist world-economy as a whole, which would lead to an interesting debate as to how, where and when various parts of the world resisted incorporation and exploitation. Moreover, their focus on the 'intersocietal' is more an attempt to correct Eurocentric outdated historical sociology with its traditional explanations of endogenous developments, than a genuine exploration of mutual interactions in a dialectic fashion, which the concept intersocietal would after all imply. Their claim, for example, that the Pax Mongolica "kick-started the developmental trajectory that eventually led to the rise of capitalism in Europe" (p. 77) seems to suggest the agency is a one-directional flow. While the Pax Mongolica (and the lack of further Mongol expansion into Europe) was indeed very important, we learn nothing

about the activities of Europeans in the Mongol Empire. Although they theorize about the impact of the 14th century Black Death -which they refer to as the unification of the globe by disease (p. 88) - in Europe, there is not a single sentence about its notable impact over Central or East Asia. Similarly, in chapter 4 on the Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry, A & N bestow all agency on the Turks, labeling them as “the whip of external necessity” bringing about “a structural shift to Atlantic trade and Northwestern European dominance” (p. 94), in the process treating Europe as a rather passive area instead of focusing on the truly symbiotic relationship between the two geocultural zones of Christendom and Islam. The impact of European powers on the Ottoman Empire is underplayed to say the least, and the decline of the Mediterranean overstated, both processes analyzed in great detail by the world system approach of the Turkish scholar Faruk Tabak (2008) who is curiously lacking from their references. While the impact of Ottoman pressure on the Habsburgs and its unintended consequences of “giving Northwestern European states the structural geopolitical space in which modern state-building practices and the formation of capitalism could take place” (p. 94) along with an emphasis on often underappreciated connections (e.g. Ottoman imagery featured by Italian Renaissance painters) are welcome corrections to the Eurocentric scholarship of auto-development (p. 107), the uneven treatment is jarring: we learn scarcely anything of Europe’s specific impact on the Ottoman trajectory, turning the dialectic into a one sided and uneven meta narrative. While they criticize postcolonial studies early on in the book, their own approach regarding the non-West reveals too little about it and does not produce novel knowledge or insights from a subaltern perspective. Replacing Brenner with Trotsky is not a radical anti-Eurocentric epistemological move. In this context, it is perhaps unsurprising that, though patriarchy is mentioned in passing (p. 123; p. 221), gendered labor relations inherent to the function of a global capitalist economy remain completely unexplored and the ‘wages of whiteness’ (Roediger 2007) that materialize in the colonial centers of global capital accumulation are also left under-theorized (see Smith 1988).⁹

While racism and slavery feature prominently, as they should, in analyzing the 17th and 18th century *capitalist* world economy, the statement that “through the colonial encounter on the American continent and its attendant colonial rivalries the institutional and legal structures of modern territorial sovereignty were *first formed*” (italics mine) is a highly contentious one. Notions of territory in combination with citizenship were already in place during the medieval period of the inter-city state system (Mielants 2007), but only replicated on a significantly larger scale in the ‘early modern’ period.¹⁰

To a certain degree A & N remain encapsulated in the stagism inherent to Eurocentric thought (embedded in the Enlightenment offshoots of both classical liberalism as well as Marxism)¹¹ as indicated by their focus on the gradual evolution of

modes of production over time, the evolution of primitive capital accumulation to 'real' capitalism and the use of value laden temporal terminology such as 'the privilege of backwardness'. A & N continue the traditional Marxist as well as Whiggish historiography of focusing on "the peculiar development of the English state" (p. 117) as well as the subsequent Industrial Revolution, and the notion that England was able to 'skip over' a *developmental stage* of a 'strong tax-appropriating bureaucratic state' (p. 118). As such, some methodological nationalism, so thoroughly dismissed by the authors throughout the book, manages to surreptitiously creep back in. Specifically, capitalism and the Industrial Revolution *in England* remain the primary focus of what actually needs to be explained (albeit by exogenous forces): "if it were not for the specifically international conditions created by Europe's expansion into the Atlantic, it is likely that capitalism would have been choked off by the limits of English agrarian capitalism" (p. 152). Though Chapter 5 is subtitled "The Atlantic Sources of European Capitalism", the meta narrative's focus on colonies and slave plantations is really all about "jumpstarting the engine of industrial accumulation" (p. 165) as explained through practices of reinvestment. As such, sugar, coffee and tobacco produced by the enslaved are all about "fuelling the British Industrial Revolution" (p. 166), crucial to their "industrial take-off in the 18th century" (p. 167). The very use of the "take-off" concept popularized by Modernization Theorist Walt Rostow (1962) is indicative of how A & N, despite their noble and worthwhile intentions, do not offer a clear-cut break from Eurocentric terminology.

What A & N call 'uneven and combined development' in a slave-based mode of production (p. 62) is in essence coerced working conditions in a capitalist world economy, analytically comparable (though far from identical) to contemporary processes of highly coerced labor arrangements such as sweatshop conditions. When they reject WSA as having an excessive focus on "the sphere of circulation (trade and exchange)" (p. 168), their counterpoint is of course to focus on production, as if the latter can somehow be separated from the former. A World System scholar would agree that "our understanding of labour, and of exploitation under capitalism, requires a more expansive definition than one restricted exclusively to wage labour. To be clear, none of this is to argue that capitalism would exist or even survive without wage labour". But a World System scholar would add that the opposite is also true: without the ongoing exploitation of unfree labor in various forms throughout the world economy, capitalism would not be able to exist either (Wallerstein 1979, p. 149). One hundred percent of the labor force working full time for wages is a practical impossibility. So what exactly makes a nation-state capitalist? When 51% of the work force is employed for wages in the private sector? Though A & N are correct in criticizing WSA in terms of its theorization of the transition from feudalism to capitalism in the 'long sixteenth century',

the authors never explicitly reveal when capitalism emerges in England, or Europe for that matter, though we can infer from the book that they are in agreement with Marx on this issue. The Marxist ideal of the (white) working class male toiling in the hidden abodes of production is of course exactly that: an ideal type to understand how exploitation occurs in specific regions of the world economy at a particular moment in time, but it is not a blueprint for how the rest (that is the majority) of the world's labor force will look like by the 22nd century. This is not to deny the validity of an analysis centered on production, but it is only a partial one, incomplete without the analysis of circulation (and vice versa).

In chapter 7 A & N move on to explore the 'classical bourgeois revolutions', but it could be argued that this hardly a genuinely anti-Eurocentric approach. The Dutch Revolt¹² as well as the English and French Revolutions are seen through the prism of the 'intersocietal' but these are almost entirely European developments in which, astonishingly, the 'rest' of the world practically vanishes from the text, with the exception of one single page on the Haitian Revolution. Not even the American Revolution is mentioned in this context. The Marquis de Lafayette and Thomas Paine would have been amazed.

In conclusion, A & N have written a stimulating and highly provocative book, but like any text it is not without its shortcomings. Most notable is that despite their desire to attack the epistemological foundations of Eurocentrism (such as Orthodox Marxism), they remain encapsulated in a similar intellectual conundrum. Their reliance on Trotsky's notions of 'historical *necessity*' (a deterministic and stagist-like term), 'privilege of historic *backwardness*' (italics mine) and stage-like processes of modes of production (p. 62) are good examples of Eurocentric terminology that infect their overall analysis. Though intended to force Orthodox Marxists to acknowledge the existence of the 'rest' of the world in their traditional way of thinking, A & N do not completely break with this tradition, leading to a somewhat confusing theoretical analysis in which a "feudal-cum-capitalist 'West' is juxtaposed with a tributary 'East'" (p. 260). Again, these appear as ideal typical devices with some heuristic value, but with limitations in terms of their historical specificity and complexity. At best, the authors may convince some Marxists that an important variable in explaining the mysterious transition in England was related to slavery and the wider Atlantic economy, allowing it to overcome the limits of English agrarian capitalism. If this is really all what they wanted to achieve then perhaps they have succeeded in their endeavor. But revealing complex interrelations in a genuinely dialectic way that allow us to scrutinize actual interdependence of numerous regions all over the world (e.g. Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997), thereby transcending stage-like mono causal narratives inherent in Eurocentrism is not something they ultimately deliver. Perhaps the notion of uneven combined

development is too vague and not developed enough in a sufficiently consistent and sophisticated manner. Perhaps the intersocietal is not completely fleshed out in the non-Western cases presented. Perhaps the lack of a truly internationalist historiography in terms of wide ranging bibliography of non-Western sources also contributes to undermining their overall laudatory anti-Eurocentric effort. That these co-authors, coming from different parts of the world and inclined to embrace interdisciplinary scholarship, have not managed to completely break with Eurocentrism suggests the inherent difficulty in creating a new historical social science which does not rely on concepts and epistemology created by 19th century white western male scholars. Perhaps this implies transcending the definition of capitalism, as originally conceived as an exclusively if not primarily economic phenomenon (Grosfoguel 2007), and expanding it to a socioeconomic system of unequal power hierarchies that not only include the international division of labor to facilitate the ceaseless accumulation of capital, but also epistemic, sexual, gendered, racialized and religious structures as well as forms of political authority and technological control. While critics of WSA have correctly suggested that the perspective was initially somewhat 'economistic' in terms of orientation (e.g. Wallerstein 1974), it has subsequently expanded into the analysis of culture (Wallerstein 1991b), racial formation (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991; Quijano and Wallerstein 1992) and beyond, including important environmental history (e.g. Moore 2003).

Ultimately, one can argue that interpreting the past has more to do with the present than the actual past, and that it can have important ramifications on how one envisages the future. Arguing that the continuing exploitation of wage laborers is the 'prime mover' behind the transition to capitalism has serious theoretical implications both for a contemporary analysis of global capitalism (see Robinson 2014), but also, as A & N acknowledge at the end of their book, for political implications as well (p. 281; p. 368 fn 10). If we as social scientists, public intellectuals and activists want to address the multiple and complex ways in which global capitalism functions, and in which race, class and gender are entangled processes, we have to be able to provide a coherent analysis of how this system has operated, continues to operate and, in all likelihood will operate in the near future. Providing the different connections to link what happened between past and present is important, but even more so is revealing the interconnections between various parts of the capitalist world economy today so as to create more awareness between those who have relatively well numerated salaries in the core and those who toil in the periphery, as both can be considered different segments of the global proletariat.¹³ By illuminating past and present connections, one can hope to contribute to an urgently needed global debate not only on the correct interpretations of distant events, but also about contemporary issues such as social,

political and economic entanglements and ethical responsibilities, hopefully leading to much needed reflection on potential joint collective actions to create a more equal and democratic world. According to Wallerstein (1998; 2004) the capitalist world economy, like any other biological or socioeconomic and political structure, has a beginning, an expansionary phase, a period of mature stability and ultimately a period of decay and unraveling characterized by ever more instability. The 21st century is, he argues, a period that will see the end of the capitalist modern world system and in the coming decades of ever more chaos and uncertainty another system will replace it, which could be potentially better or also far worse. Small actions, which he calls the butterfly effect, may have large consequences and compared with several decades ago, public opinions and choices may actually matter more than ever as the current system is in a profound crisis. A rethinking of current socioeconomic, political, environmental, racial and gendered practices should, he claims, go in tandem with a fundamental rethinking of how we undertake non-Eurocentric social science research (Wallerstein 2000; 2003). One can only hope that the artificial division of labor in the western university system (in which economists study the market, political scientists study governments and elections, historians study the past, and sociologists study civil society and social problems, each with their own jargon and respective academic journals), will ultimately be overcome by a different and more inclusive way of studying the world's past, present and future state of affairs. I remain convinced that a reformed WSA remains, for now, the best method to achieving this elusive but worthwhile goal.

Notes

¹ There are of course some notable exceptions such as Modelski and Thompson (1996) but they typically avoid a theoretical debate about the specific origins of capitalism / modernity.

² This early edited volume included contributions on modern Turkey, International Worker's Movements, The Movement of Arab Unity, a Latin American perspective and a comparison of "Working Class Movements in the advanced and third world countries" as well as chapters on African Revolutions and the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

³ A & N mention the monopolization of nutmeg, mace and cloves under Dutch hegemony. One can think of contemporary *de facto* as well as legal monopolies such as patents and copyright protections under US hegemony.

⁴ It is worthwhile mentioning that in the 1970s and 1980s, long before anyone considered the possible disintegration of the Soviet Union, WSA insisted the 'communist' polity was not located outside the capitalist world economy but was an integral part of it, albeit very protectionist.

⁵ In chapter 7 A & N briefly admit as much by writing that the "history of violent coercion of unwaged labour was crucial to embedding and systematically reproducing the wage-labour relation in Europe itself" (p. 221) which is precisely what WSA has always argued: the global division of labor functions in such a way that wage labor dominates in core zones of the

capitalist world economy, whereas coerced forms of labor, expressed in multiple ways, dominate in the periphery and this is a relational as well as a racialized process. Similarly, later on they argue that the “(re)production of systematic inequalities and power hierarchies within and between societies is a necessary consequence of the expansionary, competitive logic of capital accumulation” (p. 324, fn 60) and that “in Europe, governments often provided merchants with considerable resources and state backing” (p.257) which comes quite close to the explanatory theoretical framework used in WSA.

⁶ On this point see Wallerstein (2010).

⁷ A & N rightly mention India’s forced de-industrialization (p. 262) by British military and political power. But rather than focusing on colonial policies in South Asia as a stepping stone towards the industrialization of Britain (pp. 261-275) (always the locus of conventional Eurocentric scholarship), one would be better served by emphasizing similar processes of political intervention in the marketplace undertaken in different parts of the periphery by various strong states in the core zone of the capitalist world economy and illuminating the parallels between contemporary and past practices.

⁸ In this regard A & N do mention that it might “seem opportunistic for us to draw on a tradition we have been at pains to criticize” (p. 225) though I would more be inclined to call it rather inconsistent.

⁹ If patriarchy is indeed “constitutive” of the emergence of capitalism, as A & N assert (p. 282) at the very end of their study, one cannot find any information or references in their text that would actually support this statement.

¹⁰ For an important study on the links between the transatlantic ‘slave’ trade, state formation and international trade with Europe and Asia from a world system perspective, see Nimako and Willemsen (2011).

¹¹ For an elaboration on this theme see Mielants (2016). Though A & N rightly condemn “Eurocentric stadial thinking” (p. 128) and refer to Modernization Theory in footnote 55 on p. 323, they do not seem to acknowledge how their own Marxist focus continues this tradition, though from a very different angle.

¹² 1573-1574 is called “a decisive moment in the history of the Dutch revolt” (p. 189). I would argue that the decades that follow, 1575-1595 are much more crucial to bring about Dutch independence after the subjugation of Flanders in the aftermath of the siege of Antwerp (1585). The point of this paper, however, is not to start an ongoing debate about the specific minutiae of historical revolts, or events, which Fernand Braudel rightly dismissed as *histoire événementielle*, but to raise larger questions about the overall theoretical contribution of the book so I will not elaborate this argument any further.

¹³ At the very end of their conclusion, A & N open up the notion ‘proletarian’ to note this refers “not just wage-labourers but subaltern classes too” (p. 368, fn. 11).

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