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Stratification in World-Economy: Semiperiphery and Periphery



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Introduction

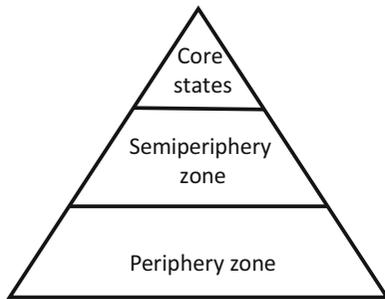
The idea that we live in a highly unequal global political economy is hardly insightful; yet, the suggestion that given its mode of accumulation the *modern capitalist world-system* cannot exist without this inequality might seem controversial. Still, the exploitative practices of those at the top (core) of the world-system hierarchy, on those at the very bottom (periphery) and middle (semiperiphery) are hard to ignore. In the world-system, *core* countries benefit the greatest from the surplus derived from *global commodity chains* while *peripheral zones* see no benefit. The economic activities of core countries are capital-intensive as opposed to the labor-intensive ones of peripheral areas. Factoring into this, is the fact that the *core* countries engage in reproductive accumulative strategies compared to the primary accumulative strategies of the periphery.

However, conceptualizing the modern capitalist world-system in terms of core-periphery can be misleading as it overlooks the *semiperiphery*,

which engages with both types of accumulation strategies and capable of profiting from global commodity chains. The semiperiphery is exploited by the core but also engages in the exploitation of the periphery through *unequal exchange* (Wallerstein 1974a). According to Immanuel Wallerstein, there is a small group of core states at the top of the stratified world-system, a medium-sized semiperipheral zone, and a large peripheral zone exploited by both strata at the top (see Fig. 1).

In this global structure and system, unequal exchange is enforced by the strong states on the weak. Furthermore, unequal exploitative trade practices by the core that are masked by market processes and backed by existing military and political systems facilitate a semi-stable world-system, at least, according to Immanuel Wallerstein. Conversely, Albert Bergeson (1990) contends that unequal exchange in trade (and/or long commodity chains) do not construct the core-periphery hierarchy, but rather, it is the core-periphery domination relationship that makes unequal exchange possible and reproduced throughout the system (1990, p. 74).

Still, this system of unequal exchange in the world-economy means that core countries maintain their position by taking advantage of low labor cost in the periphery and the semiperiphery with a net effect of increased capital resources in the core. If the goal of capitalism is to continuously expand a system of production to maximize profit, then Wallerstein's thesis that unequal



Stratification in World-Economy: Semiperiphery and Periphery, Fig. 1 Tripartite organization of the world-system

exchange is necessary for the proper functioning of the modern capitalist world-system is plausible. Although one of the implications of all of this is a semi-rigid system, none of the above means that peripheral and semiperipheral zones are completely devoid of agency.

In fact, this chapter will advance the idea that despite empirical evidence to support a strong structural pull toward a tripartite world-system, (a) over the last 50 years there has been a particular type of mobility within the trimodal system – a growing semiperiphery, and declining periphery; (b) the semiperiphery, which participates in exploitative practices like core countries, continues to maintain the tripartite system, while at the same time being the zone in which significant technological and organizational change has historically occurred; (c) there is still a certain amount of unevenness, with peripheralization and semiperipheralization occurring throughout the tripartite world-system. This is called *nestedness*, an example of which is found in the work of Wilma Dunnaway (1996). Who exploits whom, then, becomes an interesting starting point to discuss the stratified world-economy.

The chapter begins with a discussion of stratification in the modern world-system, building on the idea of system hierarchy; followed by an examination of the semiperiphery in the context of a rising China; and periphery with sub-Saharan African region as an example. Then the discussion is broadened to discuss the unevenness of peripheral and semiperipheral development as

exemplified by the Appalachian region of the United States.

Stratification

In the context of this chapter, we propose that global stratification implies a hierarchical system. Yet, peripheral, semiperipheral, and core zones do exist outside of hierarchical systems. Hierarchical core-periphery systems involve domination and exploitation, as opposed to core-periphery differentiation which implies networks of systemic inter-polity interaction (Chase-Dunn and Grell-Brisk 2016; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997). For hierarchy to emerge, the capability of domination and exploitation must be present and the modern capitalist world-system offers such a situation. Therefore, this chapter's focus is primarily on the modern world-system but does acknowledge that world-systems did exist in the pre-modern world as described by Christopher Chase-Dunn (1989) and Chase-Dunn and Thomas Hall (1995).

According to Wallerstein, hierarchy emerged in the long sixteenth century because of the capitalist system that developed in Europe. However, other scholars have long argued that the modern capitalist world-system and historical political economy as conceived by Wallerstein was historically limited (Abu-lughod 1989, 1993; Gunder Frank and Gills 1993a), even Eurocentric (Gunder Frank 1998; Gunder Frank and Gills 1993b), and asserted that the world-system(s), *even capitalist ones*, existed prior to the sixteenth century and outside of Europe (Abu-lughod 1989, 1993; Anievas and Niancolu 2015; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1995; Gunder Frank and Gills 1993a). As an example, using primary and secondary source evidence, Janet Abu-lughod (1989) describes the emergence of an extensive trade and capitalist world system between 1250 and 1350 long before Wallerstein's modern capitalist world-system.

Andre Gunder Frank, like Abu-lughod, conceived of a capitalist world system that was acutely different than Wallerstein's. He maintained that a world system existed much earlier than the long sixteenth century, with China occupying the center. His *World Accumulation*

(1978) laid the groundwork for much of his later scholarship (although he later levies claims of Eurocentrism at that particular work). In it, he maintained that there has been *one* continuous process of capital accumulation in recent centuries including the preindustrial capitalist societies. Feudal modes of accumulation or concepts such as primary accumulation were not useful. He reasoned that preindustrial capitalism generated long economic cycles in which a geographical external expansion phase occurred, including the extension of trade and commerce. However, this eventually led to a crisis phase. The expansion phase induced external transformation and the crisis phase led to internal transformation leading to development or underdevelopment in particular regions. In *ReOrient*, Gunder Frank took Abu-lughod's claims about the world-system a bit further, noting that the world economic system was centered in Asia; and not only was China at the center, but that Europe occupied the peripheral economic zone (Gunder Frank 1998). He argued that this was due to the size of China's economy relative to all the other world regions and the fact that for centuries, China held a trade surplus and most of the world's silver.

This was not a new argument for Gunder Frank, who had made earlier similar claims, along with his colleague Barry Gills (Gunder Frank and Gills 1993a). Gunder Frank also expressed another particular point that echoed and expanded earlier arguments made by Abu-lughod: that the rise of the West only occurred after the decline of the East and only due to Europe's exploitation of American money/silver and Europe buying into Asian wealth. Therefore, for Gunder Frank, the rise of contemporary China was simply a return to a Sinocentric world system (Gunder Frank 1998).

In any case, conceptions of world-system hierarchy is based on the idea of unequal exchange originally put forth by Arrighi Emmanuel (1972) and Ernst Mandel (1975) –suppressing wages in peripheral regions allowed for exploitative trade practices by the core. Furthermore, market processes mask these exploitative practices which are further reinforced by the political systems in both the core and the periphery but also by the

semiperiphery. For Wallerstein, the mode of accumulation in capitalist countries is profit maximization which requires the continued expansion of the size of the division of labor and that requires unequal exchange. Giovanni Arrighi (1990) notes that Emmanuel (1972), Mandel (1975), and Wallerstein's (1974c) unequal exchange was not so much about where a country was located in networks of trade (as advanced by network analysis scholars), as it is about trade that is based on different wage levels for the same rate of productivity and profit. This means that the regions with the higher wage levels will benefit the most from these trade activities giving rise to a hierarchy comprising of a small core, middle semiperiphery, and bottom large periphery. To put it in other words, in the populous periphery, laborers work long hours with extremely low wages compared to the core and even the semiperiphery.

Although Wallerstein, like many other development and modernization theorists in the 1970s, held that unequal exchange was the primary means with which the world-system structure remained highly differentiated; Arrighi (1990) has argued that unequal exchange was only the start. He contends that unilateral transfers of labor, both voluntary (immigration) and involuntary (labor of slaves and prisoners of war), contributed to the formation and continued reproduction of the world-economic system and structural hierarchy. So did unilateral transfers of capital resources both voluntary (financialization) and involuntary (extortion of capital from colonies) (Arrighi 1990). Using the example of Japan and Korea, Arrighi notes that unequal exchange and unilateral transfers of labor and capital resources work both to polarize and depolarize the world-system hierarchy.

Arrighi raises a salient point. Even in a highly unequal and stratified world-system, there is some ability to move both up and down the hierarchy. However, this movement is limited particularly in terms of mobility from periphery to semiperiphery (and vice versa) or semiperiphery to core (and vice versa). It was previously held that industrialization could cause upward mobility in the world-system. However, historically, as more countries embraced the movement toward industrialization,

the payoff became less significant. Empirically, countries in the periphery were able to modernize/industrialize (measured using the percentage of gross domestic product generated through manufacturing) to the point of catching up or even surpassing the levels of industrialization of core countries (Arrighi 2007; Arrighi et al. 2003, 2005). This, however, did not result in the leveling of the difference in global economic power or even income distribution between the core and periphery (Arrighi et al. 2003, 2005) as was initially imagined by development scholars like Bell (1973). Yet, this push for industrialization continues, particularly in the discussions regarding sub-Saharan Africa and its engagement with China.

Most world-systems scholars acknowledge that states are able to move from one position to another in the world-economic hierarchy over time. Nonetheless, Wallerstein has held that “the fact that particular states change their position in the world-economy. . . [however] does not itself change the nature of the system. . . the key factor to note is that within the capitalist world-economy, all states cannot ‘develop’ simultaneously by definition, since the system functions by virtue of having unequal core and peripheral regions” (Wallerstein 1974a, p. 24). This reiterates the intrinsic inequality of, and challenge of upward mobility in, the modern capitalist world-system.

Marilyn Grell-Brisk (2017, 2019) empirically demonstrates the persistence of the tripartite distribution in the world-system or to say it differently, the tendency for clustering or formation of “convergence clubs” in the distribution of global wealth. This is consistent with previous studies of global income/wealth distributions (that cut across disciplines and methodological approaches) by Arrighi and Drangel (1986), Bianchi (1997), Babones (2005), Henderson et al. (2008), Pittau et al. (2010), Grell-Brisk (2017), and Karatasli (2017). More importantly, the scholars all found persistent gaps between the core-semiperiphery-periphery that could be interpreted as pseudo-boundaries between core-semiperiphery-periphery zones. These gaps are incredibly difficult to overcome. Chase-Dunn (2014) contends that the gaps exist because of

the primarily economic indicator (gross national product, gross domestic product etc.) used in these studies. He argues that a multidimensional set of power hierarchies would render a more continuous hierarchy.

Jeffrey Kentor (2008) measured a country’s place in the world-system; i.e., whether a country fell into the core, periphery, or semiperiphery, based on economic and military power with three dimensions – a country’s economic power (gross domestic product per capita; gross domestic product; total exports; ratio of external foreign investment to internal foreign investment), a country’s military capacity (gross military spending, military exports, ratio of military exports to military imports), and a country’s global dependence (export commodity variety, foreign debt as a percentage of total GDP, military imports as a percentage of GDP). Pointing to Kentor (2008), Chase-Dunn writes, “But another way to look at the core/periphery hierarchy is as a multi-dimensional set of power hierarchies, that includes economic, political and military power forming a continuous hierarchy that is a relatively stable stratification hierarchy in the sense that most of national societies stay in the same position over time, but that also experiences occasional instances of upward and downward mobility?” (Chase-Dunn 2014). However, Grell-Brisk and Chase-Dunn’s (2019) most recent work show that, even with military data, the gaps between core-semiperiphery and periphery are still present and possibly more pronounced than in the economic data.

Semiperiphery

Structural inequality persists and according to Wallerstein, the semiperiphery plays a significant role in this. Indeed, he theorizes that the semiperiphery is absolutely necessary for the stability of this unequal system. The semiperiphery is not a phase in development. It is not a transitional point. It is a permanent fixture of the modern capitalist world-system. In fact, the world-system includes a large periphery, a smaller middle semiperiphery, and an even smaller core (again, see Fig. 1).

“Neither [military] force nor ideological commitment. . . would suffice were it not for the division of the majority into the lower stratum and a smaller middle stratum (Wallerstein 1974b).”

According to Wallerstein, the semiperiphery is essential to the proper functioning of the system for two reasons, political and political-economic. The political reasons go back to the idea of *cultural stratification* (Wallerstein 1974c). A dichotomized and highly unequal world-system is more likely to be volatile and lead to revolts. Therefore, in some ways, the semiperiphery acts as police for the system. Small in comparison to the periphery, the countries in the semiperiphery tend to consider themselves somehow better than the periphery; if the periphery rose in rebellion against the core’s unremitting exploitation, the semiperiphery would support the core and manage and suppress any insurrection on the part of the periphery (Wallerstein 1974c).

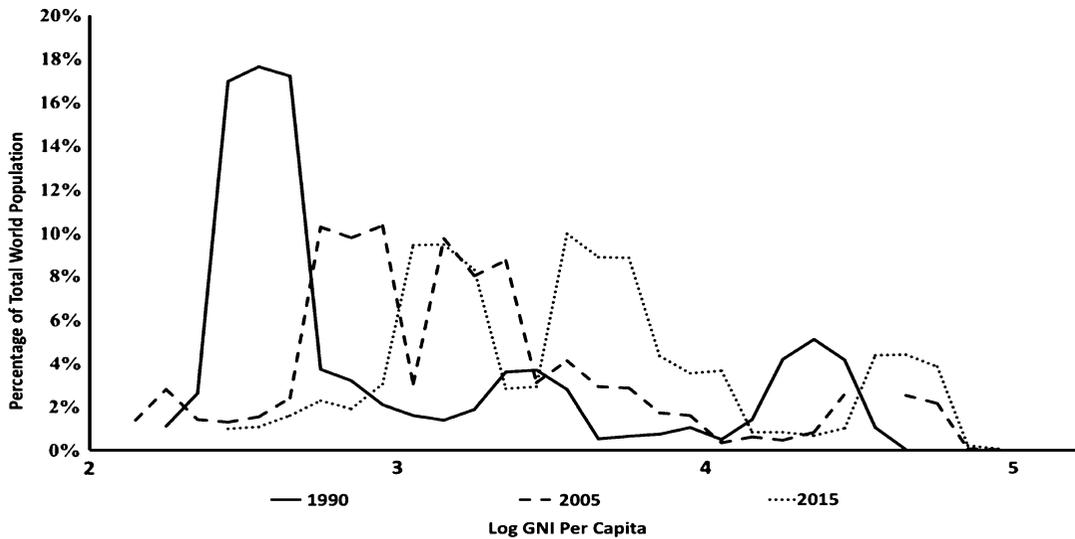
Antonio Gelis-Filho presents cultural stratification in a slightly different way, renaming the semiperiphery the “abandonat” – a loose, semiperipheral social group characterized by its strong support and identification with the values of the countries in the core. *Abandonat* describes “the psychological process. . . characterized by the geocultural connection between a set of people in the semiperiphery and the values of the core countries. That connection results in a disconnection from the local sociological reality, something that can be describes as a feeling of being “abandoned” in the semiperiphery by. . . the core” (Gelís-Filho 2017, p. 36). The abandonat is not only the core’s geocultural, “world-system police force”(Gelís-Filho 2017, p. 36), it also serves as its cheerleader.

Still, Grell-Brisk (2017, 2018) and Sahan Karatasli (2017) have both shown that within the last 50 years, there has been an increasing change in the structure of the world-system, with Grell-Brisk contending a continued tripartite structure with a movement toward a larger semiperiphery (see Fig. 2), and Karatasli arguing that we are moving away from a tripartite structure to a quad-modal form of stratification. In either case, these studies present a different look to the world-economic distribution than that of Wallerstein’s.

For Grell-Brisk, unlike Wallerstein and Gelís-Filho, the idea that semiperipheral countries would automatically fall in line with core states when there is systemic conflict, seem out of place in today’s political economic atmosphere. China, which is often classified as *the* semiperipheral state with the most global economic and political clout, tirelessly sells itself as being a voice for both the developing and underdeveloped world. It claims that its motives for trade and foreign aid and investments are guided by “post-colonial solidarity” (which has a certain anti-core sentiment) and principles of equality and mutual benefit; touting multipolarity as the way of the future. The decline of the American hegemony has also fostered a general ambivalence toward core states, with semiperipheral and peripheral states seeking to come together against the growing systemic crises.

Within the last couple decades, we have witnessed an increasing number of regional (such as ALBA) and multilateral state cooperative efforts (such as BRICS or AFTA) that are economic as well as noneconomic responses to pressures from core countries (Grell-Brisk 2017). China’s *Belt and Road Initiative* (the latest rebranding of the *One Belt One Road* development strategy initiated by China) which admittedly, like most Chinese policies is opaque, is a development strategy that attempts to link periphery and semiperiphery as well as some core countries. This is a bold move toward a cooperative approach to development. Still, with the declining number of countries identified as being in the periphery, we might see an increase in conflict within the semiperiphery itself. However, there is the issue of the time horizon – not enough time has passed to make a definitive empirical statement. For now, we can point to the increasing military budget of semiperipheral states and China in particular; China’s increasingly aggressive stance in the South China Sea; and its growing military presence in Africa.

Wallerstein’s political-economic reason for the existence of the semiperiphery (1974a) is much more convincing. One of the characteristics of a core state is its strong state apparatus coupled with strong sense of cultural national identity. This



Stratification in World-Economy: Semiperiphery and Periphery, Fig. 2 The dismantling of the tripartite world-economic distribution of wealth. (Source: Adapted from Grell-Brisk and Chase-Dunn (2019))

serves to mask and justify disparities between the core states and global economic zones (Wallerstein 1974b). It also helps maintain the wage-productivity squeeze (essential to unequal exchange) in the core which allows them to reap the most benefit from the international division of labor. But, this also forces capitalists to shift focus to the semiperiphery. Semiperipheral zones are always seeking to trade with both core and periphery and so their economic decisions tend to follow the logic of state-based methods of market control. The BRICS countries, which typically fall in the semiperipheral bracket, conform to this thesis, particularly in the case of China (Grell-Brisk 2017). Hung (2016) demonstrates the level with which China has maintained state control and management of its economy since the 1990s, with what many have dubbed its “state-based capitalism.” From the opening of its market to its major economic reforms, China has operated as a strong state machinery, and a particularly state-centric culture (Canton 2015; Grell-Brisk 2017; Hung 2016).

Unlike Wallerstein, who argues that the semiperiphery acts a stabilizing factor that moderates the contradictions of core/periphery polarization, Christopher Chase-Dunn contends that the semiperiphery is in actuality, a locus of change in the

world-system (1988). It is the zone in which we see the implementation of new organizational and technological features that transform the world-system (Chase-Dunn and Grell-Brisk 2016). Chase-Dunn and Thomas Hall have also contend that although in some cases the semiperiphery may stabilize the existing hierarchy (Arrighi and Drangel 1986; Goldfrank 1990; Martin 1990; Silver 1990), semiperipheral and peripheral marcher states have also been a force of change, challenging core powers to form larger empires and spread the commodification of production across the whole regions (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997).

Periphery

The periphery, characterized by a weak state apparatus and where raw materials and natural resources are plentiful, is generally exploited by the semiperiphery and core states. Further, the peripheral zone receives very little from the benefits of the global division of labor.

Wallerstein has argued that the core-periphery hierarchy is a condition of the world-economy, undergirded by unequal exchange. Yet, much of the periphery is former colonial regions where weakened or nonexistent state apparatuses were

created by the core states themselves. This is particularly apparent with the sub-Saharan African region. Majority of the empirical studies place the countries in the region at the peripheral level (Arrighi and Drangel 1986; Karatasli 2017; Smith and White 1992; Snyder and Kick 1979). In Fig. 3, Grell-Brisk demonstrates how starkly sub-Saharan Africa performs in comparison to the rest of the world.

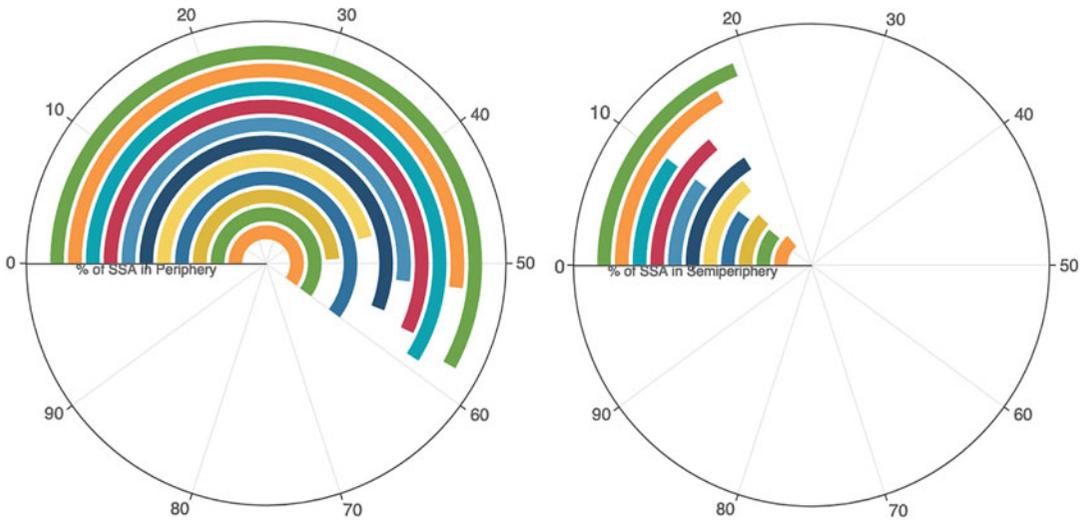
Despite the fact that a vast majority of sub-Saharan Africa falls into the peripheral zone, individual countries within the region have made considerable gains in the world-economic hierarchy. Grell-Brisk (2018) notes that sub-Saharan countries' position in the stratified world-economy is significantly influenced by their political economic condition at the time of decolonization. So, countries like South Africa or Seychelles entered the world-economy in a qualitatively better position than most sub-Saharan countries. These countries also tended to maintain their position.

Given China's growing influence in the world-system, claims of neo-colonialist tendencies have been lodged against it. Heavily criticized in the Occident, China's involvement in the Global South has been claimed as exploitative, even "neoimperialistic" or "neocolonialistic" (Lyman 2005; Norberg 2006), sometimes even colonialist (Bergeson 2013). And some of these criticisms of Chinese engagement in Africa are not unfounded. For example, in terms of foreign aid, China spends \$354.4 billion on overseas finance but only \$81.1 billion on overseas aid or official development assistance (ODA). ODA is finance for local economic development that does not profit the donor country. Contrast this to the United States which spends \$394.6 billion on overseas finance and \$4366.4 billion in overseas aid (Dreher et al. 2017). Or, in terms of resource extraction, one third of the world's cobalt (used in electric vehicle batteries) supply come from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); and eight of the fourteen largest cobalt mines in the DRC are owned by a single Chinese company, Huayou. There is no cobalt processing in the DRC despite talks in 2018 of creating a special economic zone for cobalt processing, which preceded talks of partnering

with Tanzania to process cobalt. And then, there is the question of China creating a debt trap for Africa countries. Starting at 2% in 2005, China now owns a full 15% of sub-Saharan Africa's external debt as of 2015 (Dreher et al. 2017). In 2018, 72% of Kenya's bilateral debt is to China up from 57% in 2016 (Dahir 2018; Eom et al. 2018). In Cameroon, China is the largest single creditor but holds 1/3rd of the total debt; in Djibouti, Chinese financiers hold 77% of debt (Eom et al. 2018).

Still, loaded terms and vague concepts such as neocolonialism or neoimperialism do not always clearly capture the relationship between China and its Global South counterparts. Furthermore, in a hierarchical world-system, is it even possible for a semiperipheral state like China to *be* imperialist? Both John Smith and David Harvey have addressed this specific question, spurring an interesting intellectual debate (Harvey 2018; Smith 2016).

Nonetheless, the upward mobility of some sub-Saharan African countries has been tied to their increased interactions with China. Its engagement with Africa has garnered much discussion in academia and was initially viewed as an effort to gain access to natural resources to support a growing China economy (Brautigam 2008, 2010, 2011; Kaplinsky et al. 2010; Kaplinsky and Morris 2009). This is because the structure of China's import from Africa was very biased toward oil-rich and other natural resource-strong African countries (Grell-Brisk 2016; Sandrey 2006). Yet, the relationship has been beneficial for Africa not only in terms of increasing aid and investment from China but also the fact that other countries (Japan, India, Brazil, and Singapore, to name a few) have begun seeking and gaining entry into the African market and that could mean better terms of trade for African countries. African countries that vote with China at the United Nations, receive 86% more in aid from China (Dreher et al. 2015). Not only this, but Dreher et al. (2017) have also found that development (using nighttime light as a proxy for development) is positively related to receipt of aid from China. And, for every percentage point increase in Chinese aid, African countries received 15% fewer conditions



Stratification in World-Economy: Semiperiphery and Periphery, Fig. 3 Percent of Sub-Saharan Africa in the Periphery and Semiperiphery from 1965 through 2015

(from left to right). Source: Adapted from Grell-Brisk (2019)

from the World Bank (Hernandez 2017). Therefore, it is good politics to continue to engage with China. Xiaojun Li has also argued that African countries now realize that when it comes to aid, they need options, not conditions (2017).

Africa is, on the one hand, particularly appealing as a market for technology, foodstuffs, other capital goods, consumer products, and services, but conversely, a supplier of raw materials and commodities, as well as a potential source of cheap labor for Asia. One must remain cognizant that despite the uproar surrounding China's involvement with Africa, the United States remains one of the African regions' most important trade partners. The United States' total goods traded bilaterally with sub-Saharan Africa were \$39 billion for 2017 which was an increase from 2016. The top markets the US exported to were South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, and Angola and the top import suppliers to the US were South Africa, Nigeria, Angola, Cote D'Ivoire, and Botswana [mostly mineral fuels, platinum and diamonds, cocoa, iron and steel] (Office of the United States Trade Representative 2017). But with China's increasing engagement with sub-Saharan Africa, the United States now feels added pressure to engage more fully with the

region. The United States' International Development Finance Corporation now plans to distribute some of the 60 billion dollar at its disposal in Africa (Olander 2018).

World-System upward mobility by sub-Saharan Africa is directly tied to those countries with high levels of natural resources (particularly oil and minerals). This type of upward mobility is typically minimized and theorized around questions of resource-curse and the feasibility of maintaining growth and mobility. Understandably so – Zambia's difficulties with the rise and fall of copper prices is a classic example. Without getting into the specifics of natural-resource type (re: gold vs. copper or diamonds vs. oil) and examples of countries whose economies have remained stable despite being completely dependent on a natural-resource, Volker Bornschier and Bruno Trezzini (1996) offer a way to conceptualize the gains made by resource-rich dependent countries. They argue that resource-rich semiperipheral states behave like, and are similar to, peripheral ones. Bornschier and Trezzini contend that in resource-rich semiperipheral states, the income received from the natural resources go to and are kept by the elites; there is little to no investment or incentive to invest in infrastructure; and

government legitimacy is obtained through coercive measures. However, this implies that these countries are really not semiperipheral, but some other category. This highlights the problematic conceptualization of the semiperiphery as “we will know a semiperipheral state when we see one.” It makes the determination of semiperiphery somewhat arbitrary. As far as sub-Saharan Africa, Grell-Brisk (2019) showed empirically that the countries in the region that were upwardly mobile did so slowly, over long periods of time, and tended to hold to their gains.

Uneven Peripheralization and Semiperipheralization

The unit of analysis of the world-systems paradigm is the world-system itself. This does not mean that world-systems scholars completely ignore the internal dynamics of nation-states. Scholars have pointed out that even within the core countries, we find certain regions of peripheral-ness and semiperipheral-ness. This is referred to as nestedness. Given the way the United States is organized politically (with states and a federal government), it is easy to observe the ways in which different geographic regions fall into core-semiperiphery-periphery hierarchy. A well-studied region in terms of internal state stratification in the United States is Appalachia, particularly Southern and Central Appalachia.

Wilma Dunaway (1996) presents historical evidence to demonstrate that despite participating in the global economy (via the slave and fur trade), the Appalachian region did not benefit much from the international division of labor. This was notably a consequence of landless workers and absentee investors, a concentration on agriculture and the overuse of natural resources as the primary source of economic activity. As such, the region did not undergo the typically linear advance to modernity and was a frontier peripheral zone. The complete decline of Appalachia happened with the decreasing demand for large-scale agriculture.

Other scholars (Eller 1978; Lewis 1978; Lewis et al. 1978) previously viewed the Appalachian

region more as a colony precisely for some of the reasons Dunaway claims – predominance of absentee landowners and the extractive coal and agricultural industries. Hellen M. Lewis notes that “[Appalachia’s] history also demonstrates the concerted efforts of the exploiters to label their work as ‘progress’ and to blame any of the obvious problems it causes on the ignorance or deficiencies of the Appalachian people. We believe that there are peoples all over the world who have experienced this sort of ‘development’... and who can easily identify with... the colonization of Appalachia” (Lewis 1978, p. 2). John A. Williams (1979) rejects this framing of Appalachia as a colony pointing out that nation-hood was never an option for the region and neither did they have the ability to throw out the so-called invaders. At the same time, David Walls provide a slightly different conceptualization of Appalachia, presenting Central Appalachia as being spatially and institutionally between core and periphery; i. e., semiperipheral. He notes, “the internal colonialism model applied to Central Appalachia needs to be superseded by a model of peripheral regions within an advanced capitalist society” (Walls 1978, p. 339). Although he does not completely throw out the colonial framing of Appalachia, he sees the region from a more world-economy perspective.

Similarly, a newer study documents the role of the coal industry in the reproduction of Central Appalachia as an internal periphery within the United States (Wishart 2014). It outlines the economic, ecological, and human inequalities that entailed this peripheralization of the region. William R. Wishart argues that the area’s designation as “extractive periphery” in the United States is due to the processes of unequal exchange contributing to the development of the nation at large while degrading the region and its people. He again mentions the extractive policies with regards to coal – the center of the region’s economy.

Final Remarks

The concepts outlined above are only part of a rich interdisciplinary discourse on global stratification and the tripartite world-economy. World-Systems analysis is typically seen as particular to Immanuel Wallerstein. Yet, a close reading of the literature reveals that the world-systems perspective has evolved to include multiple approaches and methodologies, including but not limited to, surveying global commodity chains (including Wallerstein himself or Dunaway and Clelland (2016)), global economic stratification (including Arrighi (1986)), transnationalization processes (including Robinson (2004)), the historical semiperipheral processes which generate movement to core or toward technological innovation (including Chase-Dunn (1997)) or even world systems as a study of holistic social systems that include those of the premodern capitalist system (including G nder-Frank (1993b)).

The concepts of global stratification, periphery, and semiperiphery are not limited to the work of world-systems scholars and have found adherents in economics, political science, anthropology, history, and even entomology. A proponent of interdisciplinary work, for Wallerstein (2003) this is as it should be.

Notes

1. World-system is an inter-societal system with a self-contained division of labor. It is a system that is a world, and is a fundamental unit of analysis (Wallerstein 1993). The modern capitalist world-system is a world-system whose mode of accumulation is capitalist, interacts politically, economically, socially, and culturally but is not dominated by one political system (Wallerstein 2005). One state can dominate the world-system without overt coercion (hegemony) but the whole modern world-system has never been united under one political system.
2. According to Hopkins and Wallerstein (1986), a commodity chain refers to a network, of labor and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity. The majority of products consumed in the capitalist world-economy cross national boundaries linking core and non-core.

Cross-References

- ▶ [China's Global Rise and Neoimperialism: Attitudes and Actualities](#)
- ▶ [Emmanuel, Arghiri and "Unequal Exchange"](#)
- ▶ [Global Inequality, Imperialism and](#)
- ▶ [Wallerstein, Immanuel Maurice \(1930–\)](#)
- ▶ [World-systems Analysis and Giovanni Arrighi](#)

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