

# 1 World hegemony

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The exotic is no more. We live in a world where there are no longer 'unknown lands' about which fabulous stories can be told. In the late 19th century the public would flock to the meetings of geographical societies to hear the tales of the great explorers of the times. Today we have a global media that can bring events across the world into our living rooms instantaneously. Our world is pre-eminently global in scope. This 'communications revolution' is just one aspect of contemporary 'globalization': economic organization, political competition, social mores, cultural clashes and ecological crises are all, today, fundamentally global in nature. Put another way, depletion of the ozone layer, religious conflicts, ubiquitous blue jeans, new world (dis)order, 'cocacolarization' and McWorld — we are all in this together. This scale of social organization is novel: by eradicating the exotic and creating 'one world', we, as a society, are geographically different from all that has gone before.

How did we reach this global outcome? There was certainly no smooth evolutionary path. Historians interested in long-term patterns are apt to find continuities in the social record that suggest the 20th century as 'global times' is an inevitable culmination of humankind's progress. But there was no incremental increase in the geographical scale of social organization prior to our modern world. Earlier social organizations were 'regional' in scope, with no likelihood of ever becoming global. The largest empires were either quite ephemeral — lasting just a few generations — like the Eurasian Mongol conquests, or more stable but with seemingly definite limits to their geographical expansion like the Chinese and Roman empires. These latter impressive political systems were undoubtedly very substantial, but they reached logistic obstacles in their programmes of conquest and incorporation. In general the historical record shows that empires waxed and waned rather than exhibiting any nascent drive to globalization. Hence we define an historical disjuncture between our world and what went before. In the 'long 16th century' (c. 1450–1650) a society emerged in Europe that was to throw off the traditional shackles and embark on an expansion that led to its economic and political domination of the world by 1900.

Postmedieval Europe waxed but did not wane. Europeans became the 'great destroyers' of all other societies. Beginning in the Americas and then moving to other continents, non-Europeans have had their social organizations destroyed as they have been incorporated into the world of the Europeans. Crucially Europeans evolved a double attack on the societies they encountered. As well as traditional political incorporation through military might, Europeans brought with them the economic imperatives of the market. With or without a political take-over, the

production capacities of non-European societies were reorientated to a world market dominated by Europeans. By 1900 the whole world consisted of one great economic functional region centred on Western Europe.

How and why was this able to happen? Understanding this historical disjuncture has been termed the 'central intellectual problem' tackled by historical and social thinkers over many generations.<sup>1</sup> Starting from different theoretical positions, writers have viewed the disjuncture in a variety of ways: 'European miracle', 'rise of the West', 'transition from feudalism to capitalism' and 'origins of modernity' are the four main formulations of the problem. These scholars all agree that something extraordinary occurred in Europe about half a millennium ago but disagree on how to conceptualize it. They all suffer from the same basic conundrum. In trying to find the secret of Europe's success, they have searched through medieval and early modern European history to find what made this place and its people so special they could conquer the world. But whatever arguments they have come up with for European exceptionalism, critics have always found it relatively easy to point to non-European societies that experienced similar situations but without the same effect.<sup>2</sup> For instance in the classic Marxist formulation, the free (wage) labour that lies at the heart of the transition from feudalism to capitalism argument is by no means unique to Europe and can be found in other places at other times but without leading to an expansive capitalism.

If no special ingredient, what? Behind every supposed miracle a mundane explanation can usually be found and Immanuel Wallerstein provides just such for this European case.<sup>3</sup> In his 'conjunctural explanation', Europe is interpreted as an 'aberrant case' to the normal pattern of historical change. Wallerstein argues that the concomitant collapse of four crucial elements in the development of Europe in the 15th century created a unique situation. A failure of production led to the collapse of economic elites, a breakdown of order led to a collapse of political elites and the social glue provided by the church was eroding in a collapse of cultural elites. These three internal collapses were related and not necessarily unique to 15th-century Europe but in addition there was a collapse of the external threat to Europe with the demise of Mongol power. The internal crises made Europe a society ripe for military conquest but there was no external power strong enough to take advantage. Hence, with elites in disarray, European society could be reinvented in a new form. An opening was provided in which the rewards for different social activities were turned upside down. Strategies of capital accumulation were found to be better able to cope with the internal collapses than more traditional forms of behaviour. In other words economic elites were able to rival the traditionally dominant political elites in the influence they wielded during these trying times. The result was that during the long 16th century, a new type of society emerged which Wallerstein calls the 'modern world-system' or 'capitalist world-economy'. It is this social entity, born of contingencies in Europe, that has expanded to take over the whole globe.

Geographically it consists of an entrenched hierarchical division of labour with core and periphery plus a semi-periphery in between.<sup>4</sup> The core is where most of the capital accumulation ends up, the periphery is the zone of cheap labour and the semi-periphery mixes these two characteristics. This geographical structure — first created in Europe in the long 16th century as western European core, southern European semi-periphery and eastern European periphery — is now writ large

across the world with western and Japan, and with the 'southern periphery'.

This modern world-system. Their prefix 'world' has no define the 'worlds', both material and their lives. Physically they are relatively autonomous and have taken the basic form of 'world-economy' bureaucratic class. Economic producers via political mechanisms in 15th-century Europe. Its world-economy where a world economic surplus. There had before 1450, but none found subordination to a world-economy only time a nascent world-economy. Framing the rise of Europe in a different light. Instead of focusing on survival. There is no doubt that what we may term a traditional world-empire. The question of formal monopoly of violence over other world-systems? The argument of very few modern models relied upon this grand aim but versus economics contest arguments where a mutuality between powers what were potentially rival powers another: politicians needed to control the business community needed wealth. It is this almost symmetry that defines the modern world-system. This system and economic — experienced in Europe itself. The result was to develop from strength to subordination. For four centuries economic survival. Destroyed societies were integrated into the world market. In the highly competitive world of logistic problems that had always leaving no obstacles in the way of capital accumulation resulted to denote integration into the world system which there were no longer any barriers over the whole world to create a world system. The political economy based on economic elites in the modern

across the world with western Europe still core but sharing this status with the USA and Japan, and with the 'south' and 'east' comprising mixes of semi-periphery and periphery.

This modern world-system is just one of many world-systems that have existed. Their prefix 'world' has no global connotation: they are so-named because they define the 'worlds', both material and imagined, in which their inhabitants live out their lives. Physically they consist of integrated areas of economic production that are relatively autonomous in their internal development. Historically they have taken the basic form of 'world-empires' under the political control of a military-bureaucratic class. Economic surplus is redistributed upwards from agricultural producers via political mechanisms. It is just such a system, feudalism, that collapsed in 15th-century Europe. Its replacement was a different type of world-system, a world-economy where a world market is crucially implicated in the distribution of economic surplus. There had been many incipient world-economies in world history before 1450, but none found a political mechanism to prevent coercion resulting in subordination to a world-empire. This is why Europe forms an aberrant case – the only time a nascent world-economy was able to develop fully into a world-system.

Framing the rise of Europe in this manner leads us to consider its success in a different light. Instead of focusing on its origins, we are drawn to consider its survival. There is no doubt that the capitalist world-economy has been vulnerable to what we may term a traditional political take-over and conversion into a form of world-empire. The question is: why didn't the political elites capitalize on their formal monopoly of violence to bring the 'upstart' economic elites back into line as in other world-systems? The answer seems to be that 'ruling the world' has been the goal of very few modern military and political leaders; survival of the system has relied upon this grand aim being kept off the political agenda. Rather than a politics versus economics contest arising, a particular political economy has been created where a mutuality between political and economic elites was developed. In this way, what were potentially rival elites found themselves partially dependent upon one another: politicians needed the wealth created by business to enhance their power, the business community needed the politicians to provide the conditions for creating wealth. It is this almost symbiotic relationship that lies behind the survival of the modern world-system. This was reflected directly in the 'double attack' – political and economic – experienced by non-Europeans, but its full development was to be found in Europe itself. The result was that a fragile modern world-system was able to develop from strength to strength.

For four centuries economic growth was facilitated, in part, by geographical expansion. Destroyed societies were reconstructed and their production reorientated to the world market. In the highly competitive search for economic advantage, the physical logistic problems that had always limited the growth of world-empires were overcome leaving no obstacles in the way of geographical expansion. Hence the basic logic of capital accumulation resulted in region after region being 'opened up', the term used to denote integration into the world market. The unique situation was thus created in which there were no longer any limits to prevent this world-system from expanding over the whole world to create our contemporary global society.

The political economy based upon a 'symbiotic' relationship between political and economic elites in the modern world-system has always had a crucial geographical



**Plate 1** *The Battle of the Strong Boxes and the Money Bags* (c. 1565) by the Flemish painter Pieter Bruegel the Elder engraved by Jan Galle (Kress Library, Harvard University). This is a vivid early expression of the new capitalist world-economy showing its different form of competitive chaos but depicted in traditional military mode

dimension. Two distinctive spatial structures have been created. On the one hand an economic space of nodes and flows facilitates the movement of labour and capital for production and commodities for consumption. On the other hand the political space of the system consists of a mosaic of sovereign territories, separate units of law and order. The two spaces interact every time an economic flow crosses a political border. These contrasting spaces provide a necessary manoeuvrability for economic elites in relation to political elites. In other words politicians are unable, ultimately, to control business. Through the whole history of the world-economy economic elites have been able to profit from this circumstance. Even in wartime when borders are especially controlled, any number of businessmen have been able to have very profitable wars. In the construction of the political economy that enabled the modern world-system to prosper, therefore, a divided political system was crucial. It is this feature that has, as it were, liberated an economics to stimulate the whole process that has led to globalization. In this chapter we focus on the states as necessary, though not sufficient, facilitators of capitalist expansion.

The chapter is divided into three key arguments. We begin by elaborating on the crucial role of states in the capitalist world-economy. However we find that the

literature on this topic is peculiar. Whereas we economic dimensions of a states system, this Either the importance of the economic dimer single state, for instance by the many Marxist is recognized but with a neglect of economic relations' studies. In the first part of this chap we describe how Europe turned the concept single universal property to a multiple territo beyond construction to the survival of the sy focus on political-military processes wanti political-economy basis for the survival and, i how the mutuality between economics and p

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## The political organization of wo

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literature on this topic is peculiar. Whereas we are concerned for both the political and economic dimensions of a states system, this is not the focus of mainstream studies. Either the importance of the economic dimension is recognized but at the level of a single state, for instance by the many Marxist theories of the state, or a system of states is recognized but with a neglect of economic processes as is typical of international relations' studies. In the first part of this chapter we focus upon political processes as we describe how Europe turned the concept of sovereignty upside down – from a single universal property to a multiple territorial property. However, when we move beyond construction to the survival of the system, we find the international relations focus on political–military processes wanting. This justifies our recognition of a political-economy basis for the survival and, in our second key argument, we consider how the mutuality between economics and politics was achieved.

Economic elites as a group cannot combat the violent potential of political elites and their states; what is required is a new type of state activity that promotes political economy over traditional political–military state imperatives. Enter the hegemons. We argue that there have been three hegemonic states – the Dutch Republic in the 17th century, Britain in the 19th century and the USA in the 20th century – who have led the world-system towards political-economy imperatives. In the second section we deal with three hegemonic cycles – the rise and fall of the hegemons – as a historical analogy through which we gain the necessary insights for understanding the survival of the inter-state system. Hegemons are unique to the modern world-system, and in the final key argument we consider their contribution to the overall development of this world. Hegemons define the basic stages and trajectory of the system and therefore are implicated in delineating the very nature of the system. What is it that makes the modern world-system 'modern'? In the third section we take the argument beyond political economy to the social–cultural realm by implicating the hegemons in the creation of three critical forms of modernity. Hence this chapter follows a path from political–military through political economy to social–cultural to set out the basic arguments upon which the rest of the book builds.

### The political organization of world-systems

On 14 September 1793 Qianlong, the Chinese emperor, attended his 57th birthday celebrations since becoming 'Son of Heaven'.<sup>5</sup> As part of this annual fête, delegations from vassal states took the opportunity to pledge their allegiance to the emperor. For the celebrations that year three such delegations were present: from Burma, Mongolia and Great Britain. Britain was placed on the official list of 'kingdoms of the western ocean' accepting Chinese suzerainty. The only indication that the British may have been different was the fact that the leader of the delegation, George Lord Macartney, did not kowtow on presentation to the emperor. Ever since the British had arrived in China the previous year there had been a crisis of ritual which was resolved by agreement that Macartney would only kneel before the emperor. But the British remained just a small part of the celebrations and were quickly returned to the ranks of the vassal foreigners.

constituted the most open governments among the major powers in their eras of high hegemony.

We can conclude, therefore, that the hegemons have been the modern world's liberal champions both economically and politically. As well as their negative role in preventing the rise of a world empire, hegemonic states have a crucial positive role in defining the nature of the modern world-system. Of course these two roles are not separate. Liberalism – either the idea of a liberal economics based upon open markets or a political liberalism based upon diffused power – makes little or no sense in a universal empire. By preventing the latter, the hegemon creates space for the former. In short, hegemonic cycles represent much more than the rise and fall of particular hegemonic states.

### Hegemonies, world development and modernities

Historical analogies vary greatly in their credibility, but I think we have shown above that the hegemonic analogy can be reasonably well drawn. However neat and compelling the analogies may appear, they cannot be judged solely in terms of similarities between cases. There is, of course, no such thing as the perfect analogy – if the cases are so close as to be the same it is no longer an analogy. Ultimately the value of historical analogies is not measured by 'goodness of fit' but by their utility.

A good analogy is pregnant with suggestions for how to take the analysis further. It points to new ideas that are not obvious from the original cases but emerge in the process of bringing them together. Historical analogy is a tool for understanding social change, no more, no less. The purpose of the discussion below is to illustrate just how suggestive the idea of hegemony can be for understanding our modern world.

Before we embark on this task we must recognize that historical analogies have their limitations. They can be very blunt instruments for understanding both the present and the past. The worst analogies abstract the cases being compared out of their historical context. The historical analogy we have developed avoids this pitfall because we have not presented comparisons based upon unchanging processes but have set them within an overarching historical context, the modern world-system. This is not a static system and therefore the context within which hegemony occurs has changed greatly among the three cases. But a world-systems' analysis implies much more than appreciation of changing contexts. Wallerstein describes hegemony as a 'processual concept'; it goes beyond a taxonomical ordering of events to describe a process through which the modern world-system operates.<sup>68</sup> This is the basis of the analogy's special utility. The emergence, maintenance and decline of world hegemonies define a basic set of transformations that distinguish the modern world-system from all earlier world-systems. We argue below that hegemonic cycles define the stages of development of the modern world-system, are implicated in the overall trajectory of the system and specify what it is about the system that makes it modern. In short, the utility of the hegemony analogy is to be found in the reach of its significance.

### Stages of world development

Giovanni Arrighi emphasizes that the hegemony we are dealing with is world hegemony.<sup>69</sup> As such each case defines a world development, the stages through which the modern world-system has progressed: hegemony is a process of supersession in which each hegemon creates a new order in the world-system that is more complex than its predecessor.

In his model, Arrighi brings together many of the ideas we have previously presented. The anarchy of the inter-state system and the world wars are at the centre of his analysis. He treats anarchy in the orthodox manner as indicating no rule but with working arrangements between states creating an order of sorts. World wars on the other hand represent a breakdown of that order which he calls 'systemic chaos'.<sup>70</sup> However this chaos denotes a broader concept than world war. As well as inter-state conflict organized by the political rulers, there is an equally serious rebelliousness among the ruled. The Thirty Years War is a culmination of the religious rebellions we call the Reformation, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars are the centre-piece of the 'age of revolutions' (1776–1848) and World Wars I and II coincide with the rise of socialist threats to the system from the Russian Revolution (1917) through to the Chinese Revolution (1949). In these dangerous circumstances with wars feeding off revolutions and vice versa, there is a general demand among the political and economic elites for order. This is not just a matter of war being followed by peace, a pacification must be imposed to stabilize the system. The hegemon is the only state able to provide the necessary order and in doing so creates a particular stage of world-system development.

The Dutch are instrumental in creating the simplest pattern of order which Arrighi terms the 'Westphalia system' after the treaty that confirms the inter-state system.<sup>71</sup> The chaos of the Thirty Years War derived directly from a lack of respect for political boundaries: great armies marauded across Central Europe leaving swaths of destruction in their wake. It is just such behaviour that is outlawed at Westphalia. The new Europe of boundaries around sovereign territorial states produced separated spaces of peace, a mosaic that kept religions apart while simultaneously providing new units of economic competition. This first pacification, therefore, was at the scale of individual sovereign territories.<sup>72</sup> This most certainly did not bring an end to war – the sovereign states remained war machines – but general war is replaced by border wars. This is an anarchic system par excellence, but it is no longer chaotic.

Systemic chaos reappears with the French Revolution and Napoleon. Once again armies march across Europe with little or no concern for political boundaries. The order that is imposed at Vienna under British tutelage is a more complex one than Westphalia. Arrighi calls this 'Free Trade Imperialism', a new stage of order that is less anarchic than the Westphalia system.<sup>73</sup> Britain was able to maintain a balance of power within Europe through the formal existence of the Concert of Europe which having a free hand to dominate the rest of the world-system. The Concert was a very weak organization but none the less represented organization above the states that impinged on the sovereignty of smaller states. Hence the new scale of pacification in Europe as a whole.<sup>74</sup> In addition, through free-trade policies, the world-economy centred upon the hegemon's economy at a new level of integration.

### World hegemony

In the systemic chaos of the first half of the 20th century, the world-system was satisfied by the USA in a further stage of supersession: the 'American Enterprise System'.<sup>75</sup> The international system of Nations are a quantum step above the 19th-century world-system: first, they are global in scope; second, they cover a far wider balance of power; and third, they are part of a new economic state associations that severely curbing the zone of pacification becomes larger again, the 'North' as the Cold War 'freezes' alliances for the time being. In addition the world-economy has been further integrated through international institutions, financial markets and telecommunications, sovereignty of states.

This is a clear example of world hegemony. It is more than the attributes or behaviours of a particular state, it is the nature of the world-system itself. Hegemony is the evolution of the system in terms of stages of supersession and a new ordered political order. But hegemonies can define stages of world-system development.

### The rise and demise of the system

All world-systems are historical systems in that they develop and they come to their end. This 'systemic chaos' is not new, world empires we treated earlier. But how do the world-systems fit into this historical pattern? Following Arrighi's model, hegemonies have replaced imperiums as the dominant world-systems. Unlike new empires each hegemon does not define its own system, but during their zenith hegemonies soon decline, but the system continues to thrive. The Dutch, therefore, has discovered the trick of renewing itself through the evolution of the system. This does not mean that renewals can be predicted. The world-system is a historical system and therefore the evolution of the system to the next stage is a model describes the evolution of the system to the next stage. The mechanisms he describes are eternal: quite the reverse of the American Free Enterprise System as the final stage of the world-system. Hence in this model the three hegemonic cycles of the world-system, they define the overarching system cycle. Terence Hopkins has provided the argument that the system cycle.<sup>79</sup> Each case of hegemony signifies a new stage of the modern world-system. Dutch hegemony is demonstrated that a capitalist world-economy was able to world-empire. Without Dutch hegemony the modern world-system have succeeded in avoiding the fate of all previous world-systems. The incorporation or conversion into a world-empire. The Dutch, though on all quantitative criteria the Dutch are, in

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This is a clear example of world hegemony as a system more than the attributes or behaviours of a particular state. It is the nature of the world-system itself. Hegemony is the evolution of the system in terms of stages of economic and political order. But hegemonies can define even a system.

### The rise and demise of the system

All world-systems are historical systems in the sense that they develop and they come to their end. This 'systemic chaos' of world empires we treated earlier. But how do the modern world-systems fit into this historical pattern? Following the pattern of world empires, hegemony has replaced imperiums as the dominant form of world-system. Unlike new empires each hegemon does not define its own zenith, but the hegemon soon declines, but the hegemon instrumental in creating continues to thrive. The modern world-system, therefore, has discovered the trick of renewing itself through evolution. This does not mean that renewals can be infinite. The modern world-system is a historical system and therefore its system cycle just like other world-systems before it. The model describes the evolution of the system to the point where the mechanisms he describes are eternal: quite the nature of the American Free Enterprise System as the final stage of the modern world-system. In short, the modern world-system has its rise and fall. Hence in this model the three hegemonic cycles of our system, they define the overarching system cycle. Terence Hopkins has provided the argument that the system cycle.<sup>79</sup> Each case of hegemony signifies the end of the modern world-system. Dutch hegemony was demonstrated that a capitalist world-economy was able to world-empire. Without Dutch hegemony the modern world-system would have succeeded in avoiding the fate of all previous world-systems. Incorporation or conversion into a world-empire. Although on all quantitative criteria the Dutch are,

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This is a clear example of world hegemony as a system-wide property. Hegemony is more than the attributes or behaviours of a particularly favoured state; it is part of the nature of the world-system itself. Hegemony defines the basic steps in the evolution of the system in terms of stages of economic development and the associated political order. But hegemonies can define even more.

#### The rise and demise of the system

All world-systems are historical systems in the sense that they are created, they develop and they come to their end. This 'system cycle' defines the rise and fall of world empires we treated earlier. But how do the hegemonic cycles within a world-economy fit into this historical pattern? Following Chase-Dunn we have argued that hegemonies have replaced imperiums as the dominant engine of social change, but unlike new empires each hegemon does not define a new world-system.<sup>77</sup> On reaching their zenith hegemonies soon decline, but the renewed system they have been instrumental in creating continues to thrive. The capitalist world-economy, therefore, has discovered the trick of renewing itself as stages of development in its evolution. This does not mean that renewals can continue forever: the modern world-system is a historical system and therefore might be expected to have a system cycle just like other world-systems before it. Hence, although Arrighi's model describes the evolution of the system to the present, he does not suggest the mechanisms he describes are eternal: quite the reverse in fact; he interprets the American Free Enterprise System as the final stage in the process of supersession.<sup>78</sup> In short, the modern world-system has its rise and fall just like any other historical system. Hence in this model the three hegemonic cycles constitute the 'life-span' of our system, they define the overarching system cycle.

Terence Hopkins has provided the argument that relates the hegemonic cycles to the system cycle.<sup>79</sup> Each case of hegemony signifies a critical 'moment' in the existence of the modern world-system. Dutch hegemony represents the moment of 'rise'; it demonstrated that a capitalist world-economy was a realistic historical alternative to world-empire. Without Dutch hegemony the modern world-system might never have succeeded in avoiding the fate of all previous incipient world-economies – incorporation or conversion into a world-empire. The corollary of this is that although on all quantitative criteria the Dutch are, in Wallerstein's term, 'the least

plausible' hegemon, in the perspective of the world-system cycle they become the crucial actors that make all subsequent stages possible.

British hegemony represents the moment of 'dominium' when the modern world-system eliminated all rival systems to become truly global. This is the period when the world-economy proved itself to be an exceptional system like no other in history. Its expansion proved irresistible. Through a combination of war and market processes the capitalist world-economy became innately more powerful than all other systems with which it came into contact. Even the greatest world-empire of them all, China, was forced to succumb in the 19th century as we noted earlier. Every part of the world was integrated into a single division of labour as pre-capitalist economic systems were either destroyed or transformed by reorientation to the world market. In terms of the system cycle, British hegemony occurs as the high point of the system trajectory.

Although on all quantitative indicators the USA has been the most powerful of the hegemon, in this argument it represents the moment of 'demise'. This may seem strange to readers used to seeing their history as ever onward progress, but in terms of system cycles the turning of the tide comes at the very limits of the social system - a success too far. In the case of the modern world-system, the American Free Enterprise System has been so successful it has created the basis of a trans-state world that supersedes inter-stateness. Both increasing political interconnectedness and the massive globalization of economic processes have become what Hopkins calls 'state-subversive'.<sup>80</sup> The inter-state system is being undermined not through another attempt at world-empire but through its own development.

Hopkins's thesis is controversial.<sup>81</sup> We cannot know the future; so that describing American hegemony as the demise moment is conjecture. Nevertheless it is a thesis that we explore and develop in later chapters. Hence, this is a question we will return to in some detail later in the book; at this stage we can leave it as a provocative idea of the sort we expect from the better type of historical analogy.

## Modernities

The fact that we have called our current world-system 'modern' has elicited no discussion thus far. Although the word is often used simply to mean contemporary, we use modern here as more than a temporal reference. The idea that something is modern implies a social or cultural content. Hence the concept of a modern world-system implies more than a capitalist world-economy narrowly conceived in political-economy terms. The socio-cultural sphere of activities has been relatively neglected thus far, but it will be remembered that we began with Gramsci's cultural definition of hegemony as intellectual and moral leadership. The cultural has been lurking in the background; the time has come to bring it back to the fore as we contemplate what is modern about our system. We will argue that it is in their role as definers of modernity that the hegemon most display their world-leadership qualities.

The cultural dimension of all world-systems is represented by its civilization. The major world-empires have been the great civilizations. Since the appellation 'modern' is used to denote the world-system we are dealing with, we can designate its

culture as modern civilization. Just as with viewed as barbarians in contrast to the civil 1900 there have been no outsiders left, ar been replaced in our civilization by the inter Modern people living in modern society c fortunate enough to be 'still' living in tradit be civilized, so too can traditional societies the modern world-system sets in train th customs and mores, sometimes termed 'mo culture compatible with producing for the

Modernization theory was very popula conceptualizing social change after decolon pence was seen as only a first stepping state. In order for the state to develop, its p modernize. That is to say, the society had r rather than tribes, and people had to b behave in customary fashion. In this approa good condition, barely disguised from the c USA or Western Europe).<sup>82</sup> The key point modern society became the universal goal o concept of the modern that stifled all creat poor Third World countries. But historicall, jects, and those recently devised for the Thir

Once we ask historical questions about mo the origins of the modern.<sup>83</sup> Probably the interpret the industrial revolution in late 18t between traditional and modern. This crea creases in productivity that led to mass urb with the rural past that that implies. But for systematic rational thinking, it is the 17th c that marks the breakthrough to modernity between these different conceptions of the modernity to be a multiple concept. Given t

task becomes to describe the general historica ties have arisen. World hegemonies have pr What is this experience we call modernity perpetual change as capitalist entrepreneurs advantages in the market-place. The need for basic driving force. Such a world is a ver experience rapid change as both opportunity their existing world. According to Marshall B live in 'a maelstrom of perpetual disintegrati diction, of ambiguity and anguish'.<sup>84</sup> The m the arts scene in the closing years of the last and images to try to capture, or make sense and course coping with modernity extends far people have to deal with it in their daily lives

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culture as modern civilization. Just as with other world-systems, outsiders have been viewed as barbarians in contrast to the civilized who inhabit the system. Since about 1900 there have been no outsiders left, and the civilized-barbarian antithesis has been replaced in our civilization by the internal conflict of modern versus traditional. Modern people living in modern society consider themselves superior to those unfortunate enough to be 'still' living in traditional societies. But just as barbarians can be civilized, so too can traditional societies be modernized. Thus incorporation into the modern world-system sets in train the process of modernization: traditional customs and mores, sometimes termed 'moral economy', are converted into a new culture compatible with producing for the world market.

Modernization theory was very popular in the 1950s and 1960s as a way of conceptualizing social change after decolonization in the Third World. Political independence was seen as only a first stepping-stone to a new existence as a modern state. In order for the state to develop, its people and institutions were expected to modernize. That is to say, the society had to be functionally organized into classes rather than tribes, and people had to be more economically rational rather than behave in customary fashion. In this approach, modern is treated as a self-evidently good condition, barely disguised from the contemporary society of the theorists (the USA or Western Europe).<sup>82</sup> The key point here, however, is that this stereotypical modern society became the universal goal of development. The result was a singular concept of the modern that stifled all creative thinking about possible futures for poor Third World countries. But historically there have been many modernity projects, and those recently devised for the Third World should not be seen in isolation.

Once we ask historical questions about modernity, we come to the vexed matter of the origins of the modern.<sup>83</sup> Probably the most common approach has been to interpret the industrial revolution in late 18th-century Britain as the great watershed between traditional and modern. This created the conditions for the massive increases in productivity that led to mass urban society with all the breaking of links with the rural past that that implies. But for many writers who equate modern with systematic rational thinking, it is the 17th century's European scientific revolution that marks the breakthrough to modernity. However, we do not have to choose between these different conceptions of the beginning of modernity if we allow modernity to be a multiple concept. Given the existence of several modernities, the task becomes to describe the general historical context in which alternative modernities have arisen. World hegemonies have provided just such contexts.

What is this experience we call modernity? The modern world-system is one of perpetual change as capitalist entrepreneurs are forever shifting their focus to gain advantages in the market-place. The need for ceaseless accumulation of capital is the basic driving force. Such a world is a very paradoxical place. Men and women experience rapid change as both opportunity for a better world and as destroyer of their existing world. According to Marshall Berman to live in the modern world is to live in 'a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish'.<sup>84</sup> The modernism movement which burst on to the arts scene in the closing years of the last century explicitly provided the visions and images to try to capture, or make sense of, the maelstrom of modern life. Of course coping with modernity extends far beyond artistic movements, ordinary people have to deal with it in their daily lives.<sup>85</sup> In this discussion we are concerned



**Plate 4** *Apocalyptic Landscape* (1913) by Ludwig Meidner (Los Angeles County Museum of Art). This is a typical modernist painting that attempts to capture movement and change. Although resembling the chaos of a town after an earthquake, it is the painter's image of his home city of Berlin representing modernity

with culture in its general meaning as the way of life in a society rather than as the 'high culture' of a society's elites.

There are several political regimes that have portrayed themselves as agents of modernity. Emphasizing the rationality core of modernity, they have often attempted to control change through bureaucratic planning. Revolutionary and Napoleonic France were explicit modernizers as they rationalized the government of their own country and then attempted to export their modern bureaucracy to the rest of Europe.<sup>86</sup> In our times the USSR thought it could capture modernity in its planning mechanism and so steer change in its preferred direction. Both of these projects were spectacular failures. Their bureaucracies proved to be far too crude as social engineers to cope with the modern maelstrom – these, and other similar projects, quite rapidly slid from the renewal to the disintegration side of modernity. However, although modernity cannot be captured by a particular state apparatus, that does not mean that particular states are never implicated in the renewal aspect of the modern. By taking advantage of opportunities that arise, states can certainly

nurture modernity; in certain circumstances modernity.

Berman identifies three main phases of modernity from the 16th to the 18th centuries, the second in the 19th century, and the third in the 20th century.<sup>87</sup> At the cultural level, modernity is defined as intellectual attempts to come to terms with the world by ordering knowledge so that people are subjected to it. The periods of major ordering are usually identified with the modern world was devised with 'man' at the centre, and change interpreted as human progress, and these have been globalized and repackaged as 'development'. In these terms, there is a theoretical taming of the perpetual war between the privileging science and technology.

The reader will note immediately the temporal cycles. The argument of this book is that the modern world-system we call 'modernity' have evolved through a series of cycles. It follows from our definition of hegemony. Although the modern world-system, the rate of change that has taken place in fact the rate of change will accelerate precisely because of the world through their restructuring of the world through intellectual reassessments and the creation of new forms of modernity. Hence each hegemony is a particular version of what is modern about the world. The modern world is that of the merchants, the every-day activities that is generated. There has been no merchants in the past but in the 17th century the modern world-system in which the calculating behavior of the modern world in practical form: navigation became the great engine of change. No one else created this modernity: they created it. The 19th century great commercial ports gave way to the modern world. In this industrial world, modernity became an alienated way of life. For Marx the modern became an alienated way of life. Industrialist, mechanical engineering became the modern world. There is no doubt that Britain is the country most implicated in the modern condition about.<sup>88</sup> In the 20th century the alienated modern world by a spread of affluence to ordinary people. The focal modern place in the new consumer society is to buy commodities endlessly. Here it is management and computer technologies that has been the modern world. There can be no doubt that Americans have created a temporary modernity. Hence the hegemony have created new ways of life that have dominated the modern world. The leading architects of modernities.

We should expect nothing less from the prime actors in the history of the modern world. What is modern about the system in their res



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Berman identifies three main phases of modernity: the first extending from the 16th to the 18th centuries, the second in the 19th century and a contemporary modernity in this century.<sup>87</sup> At the cultural-ideological level these phases can be defined as intellectual attempts to come to terms with a rapidly changing world by ordering knowledge so that people are subjects as well as objects of change. Three periods of major ordering are usually identified: in the 17th century a Cartesian world was devised with 'man' at the centre, the 19th century was the high mark of change interpreted as human progress, and in our century the idea of change has been globalized and repackaged as 'development' in modernization theory. Each of these is a theoretical taming of the perpetually new by application of a rationality privileging science and technology.

The reader will note immediately the temporal correlation with the three hegemonic cycles. The argument of this book is that the crucial aspects of the social-cultural dimension we call 'modernity' have evolved with and through the hegemons. This follows from our definition of hegemony. Although rapid change is the norm in the modern world-system, the rate of change that has to be coped with is not a constant. In fact the rate of change will accelerate precisely when hegemons are creating a new world through their restructuring of the world-economy. This stimulates a basic need for intellectual reassessments and the creation of a new rationalization of the newness. New forms of modernity are the socio-cultural reaction to this hegemonic creation of uncertainties. Hence each hegemon has been responsible for creating its particular version of what is modern about the modern world-system. The first modern world is that of the merchants, the everyday life of commerce and the massive coterie of activities that is generated. There had been many influential networks of merchants in the past but in the 17th century a new rationality came to dominate the world-system in which the calculating behaviour of the merchant was the archetypal practical form: navigation became the great enabling applied science. The Dutch more than anyone else created this modernity; they made making money respectable. In the 19th century great commercial ports gave way to massive industrial towns as the archetypal modern. In this industrial world, modern society became mass society — for Marx the modern became an alienated way of life. As the merchant gave way to the industrialist, mechanical engineering became the great enabling applied science. There is no doubt that Britain is the country most implicated in bringing this second modern condition about.<sup>88</sup> In the 20th century the alienation has been countered in selected countries by a spread of affluence to ordinary people. The suburban mall has become the focal modern place in the new consumer society where people are encouraged to buy commodities endlessly. Here it is management science with its communications and computer technologies that has been the major enabling applied science of our era. There can be no doubt that Americans have been the major purveyors of contemporary modernity. Hence the hegemons have been directly instrumental in creating new ways of life that have dominated the modern world-system; they have been the leading architects of modernities.

We should expect nothing less from world hegemons, of course. As the prime actors in the history of the modern world-system, it is they who should define what is modern about the system in their respective eras. Because each hegemon is

indisputably a great success story in its path to high hegemony, their rivals try to emulate if they can. After the success of the Dutch, other states commercialized their activities in a process known as mercantilism. After the success of the British, other states industrialized to prevent 'falling behind'. After the success of the Americans, other states that could create their own 'affluent societies' based upon mass consumption. This is what is meant by hegemonic 'intellectual and moral leadership' at the world-system scale. Emulation implies no coercion, merely a general consensus about what it is to be modern in a given era.

## The limits of hegemony

This chapter has covered an enormous amount of material within its relatively short length. We have introduced large claims – some would say they are heroic – which we elaborate upon in subsequent chapters. But before we go any further we need to be clear and specific about the scope of our analysis. Like all historical analogies, the idea of world hegemony has its limits. As will be well appreciated by now, this is a very wide-ranging book but there is obviously much that is missing. Hence it is incumbent on the author to spell out the limits of hegemony before developing its multifarious insights.

The first point to make about limits is that I am not unduly concerned about questions of degree of hegemony. As we have seen, the Dutch are usually viewed as the 'least hegemonic', or indeed not hegemonic at all, but there are differences of opinion on whether Britain or the USA has been the 'most hegemonic'. Such questions are not unimportant, but we can spend too long on them; ultimately they come down to definitions and interpretations whose resolution can only be to agree to differ. My position is that the idea of hegemony must be analytically distinguished from the actual historical situations. This is the old hoary chestnut of the difference between theoretical model and concrete cases. All three hegemonies are partial examples of hegemony as an ideal case. How could it be otherwise? But they are not so partial as to make my argument redundant.

There is a second more important limit to hegemony that is integral to the analysis. The relative importance of consent in the relationship between hegemon and other states means that the former's interests only prevail, in Gramsci's words, 'up to a certain point'.<sup>89</sup> Whereas world-empires can impose their interests by coercion, the fact of not relying on this option is what makes a hegemon a hegemon. In this form of rule, the interests of the other states over which hegemony is being exercised have to be taken into account. In constructing a moral leadership, again in Gramsci's words, 'a certain compromise equilibrium' has to be formed which will inevitably mean short-term sacrifices by the hegemon to achieve its longer-term goals.<sup>90</sup>

Although very different in kind, both of these limits point to the same corollary: there will be much for which the hegemon is not directly responsible. Since this is a book about hegemony, we are selecting episodes from the historical record that show the difference hegemony makes. Certainly there is another book to be written about the role of the 'Number Twos' (France, Germany . . .) in the modern world-system.<sup>91</sup> And, of course, the hegemonies as defenders of the system have not been the

major players in the development of capitalism and their various combinations. Systemic movements are missing from the globalized in our particular focus. Like

But we do argue that world hegemony shapes modern ways of living. Hegemonies are the structures through which we live our lives: they have had the task of providing the form of the book attempts to confirm. In this chapter and define it in terms of the nature of the key processes of universalizing capitalism as a prelude to the concern for where we are going. The penultimate chapter deals with the case of 'post-hegemonic trauma' and the final chapter we return to the question next as America's impasse transmits an intellectual journey from world hegemony

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major players in the development of anti-systemic movements - socialism, national-ism and their various combinations. This is not to say that Number Twos and anti-systemic movements are missing from our analysis but rather that they are marginalized in our particular focus. Like all histories, this one is highly selective.

But we do argue that world hegemony has had an exorbitant influence on our modern ways of living. Hegemons have provided the economic and political structures through which we live our lives and the dominant world-views and moralities by which we live our lives: they have defined what makes us modern. This chapter has had the task of providing the foundation for this assertion, which the remainder of the book attempts to confirm. In the next chapter we focus upon modern politics and define it in terms of the nature of the modern state. In the following two chapters the key processes of universalizing and emulating are explored further. All of this is a prelude to the concern for where we have reached today and where we may be going. The penultimate chapter identifies contemporary American dilemmas as a case of 'post-hegemonic trauma' and uses our historical analogy to see what we can learn from the British and the Dutch when they faced their great 'impasses'. In the final chapter we return to the question of system cycle and discuss what happens next as America's impasse transmutes into a world impasse. That completes our intellectual journey from world hegemony to world impasse.

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