

"Compared to the international political-economic disorder of trade, monetary and development conflicts and instability in the 1970's, a global political-economic order distinguished by greater cooperation and stability clearly exists in the 2000's."

What Ought in "the Naughts" Is Not: Just Hegemonic Desserts

A statement such as that above is primed for a resigned, partial agreement and a vociferous, cautionary repudiation. What is indeed clear is that the 1970's were a period fraught with instability and uncertainty on most fronts of the international political economy. Much less so is the extent to which a significant shift has occurred as the 21st century takes its tentative first steps into history. This essay will undertake an attitudinal assessment of the world's political-economic order of both decades, asserting that the existing situations could be seen in either an optimistic or pessimistic light, given the empirical observations one chooses to emphasize.

The sampled articles which treat the 1970's, either writing in that period or commenting on it retrospectively, point to an excessively pessimistic view predicated largely on various factors such as residual colonial effects of Europe and pervasive yet declining hegemonic influence of the USA. Texts commenting on the renewed and continuing *Pax Americana* of the 2000's, I will argue, have a rather more dangerously optimistic tone to them, reminiscent of the 1950's in the sense that scholars feel a prescriptive answer to problems of stability, development, and cooperation is well within reach.

The 1970's: No hegemonic picnic. A resounding sense of uncertainty permeated the 1970's both in the developed and developing world. It could be coincidence, but more likely a product of scholars observing the world around them, that during this period three quite different approaches to explaining the world order were being proposed and debated in the field: world systems, hegemonic stability, and neoliberal institutionalist theories. As seems to be the standard in IR, none of the debates was resolved conclusively, and very few of the conclusions given by the theories bode well for the decade or the future beyond it.

World systems theory, as outlined by Immanuel Wallerstein in the 1970's, offered an explanation of political-economic order at the time that was at once plausible and bleak. Its critique of the nation-state focus framed the world as united by a single capitalist economic system, though examination of this system yielded three key categorizations of states. His concepts of core, semi-periphery, and peripheral positions¹ in a three-tiered hierarchy related well to concepts of "meta-power" to influence and enforce the rules keeping the order in place. Yet the "world system" as described was anything but stable, fair, or even hopeful. As Cardoso and dependency theorists would argue, those developing nations lacking this meta-power, especially previous colonies as many were, had no choice but to engage in a near-futile struggle to change their status, to move toward the core. Even Ruggie's well-meaning discussion of "embedded liberalism", whose welded trade theory stresses the use of power to achieve a social purpose--economic growth, free trade, or some other worthwhile goal--noted that developing countries were excluded from playing the game at the core table, by rule and from the outset². No world containing so much constant competition and so little obvious progress could be stable.

At the beginning of the decade, with many seeing the waning of both the Cold War and U.S. hegemony, an opportunity was taken to challenge the prevailing, state-centered paradigm of realism and military power as the primary concerns in IR. Edward Morse made the strongest claims to this

¹ Defined on pg. 18 and discussed throughout the volume, the concept of a core creates an alternative view of inward rather than upward mobility as the goal of all states in the system. This works nicely with the concepts of the "in-crowd" and those "outside, looking in".

² Noting earlier the disproportionate burdening of "domestic adjustment measures" on developing countries on pg. 408, his conclusion is especially bleak and accurate for their future, noting that weak states unable to negotiate have "never been fully extended" the "compromise of embedded liberalism" (pg. 413) and that the effects of exploitation on the "poorer developing countries" by core countries acting on its principles "may prove to be very nearly fatal" (pg. 414).

effect³, but was unfortunately light in the empirical support he sought specifically to provide. Where his observations are apt is in pointing out the roles of transportation and communication technology in fostering capital and labor mobility⁴, as well as in pointing out the development gap between rich and poor nations⁵ as a barrier to truly global integration. It was not enough, however, to usurp either realism or the unitary-acting state as the central unit of analysis, as in the same volume Robert Gilpin provided the realist counter that hegemons throughout history have been responsible for shaping both the political and economic world in their own image, and even the most powerful transnational corporations, given as the most powerful non-state actors, are “dependent upon peculiar patterns of interstate relations”⁶.

The latter two approaches of hegemonic stability and institutionalism, placed in antagonizing opposition by the realist and liberal camps, were both shown to be only EZ-steps above causal bankruptcy in explaining international order and cooperation. Stephen Krasner’s historical analysis of past hegemons found insufficient explanatory power of states alone in establishment and enforcement of international trade practices⁷, while the institutionalists, led by the ever-cautious

³ On pg. 26 he asserts that “traditional instruments of force [have] receded in importance”, and this has led to greater competition for “power and position...in the international monetary and commercial systems.” Just a page later, on pg. 27, he makes an early claim for the primacy of economic policy in the remainder of the 20th century.

⁴ Morse, in a historical overview, notes how these factors and capital mobility create a stability-conducive and state-bypassing condition of interdependence on pg. 34-40.

⁵ Morse, pg. 41

⁶ Gilpin, pg. 53-54

⁷ Only half of the six cases are accounted for by realism-based hegemonic stability theory as expounded by Krasner, and he makes only a brief and rather feeble attempt to explain those that weren’t with “cataclysmic events” as the necessary catch-all amendment that will cause states to adjust their trade policies as the theory predicts they should.

Keohane, were perhaps doomed by an insufficient empirical pool to make a causal argument⁸ impervious to unsympathetic scrutiny⁹. Both camps created a heated dialogue which only smoked and smoldered, and to date scholars have failed to spark a satisfyingly causal theoretical fire under the role of multilateral institutions. The extent to which they “take on lives of their own” in providing order in both high and low political relations or are merely tools of the current hegemon to further its goals in a superficially legitimate way remains, as I will argue later, uncertain.

Following directly from hegemonic stability theory and indirectly from the insufficiently convincing push from the institutionalists that they could carry the world-ordering-burden independently, a rare consensus was at least reached in that the post-1970’s world was headed for less order and cooperation, as the U.S. lost hegemonic power to create, sustain, and enforce it. Yet the frightened echoes from all corners of the enclosed and ever-shrinking chamber that is Earth proved to be largely hallucinated--or at least mis-measured by some scholars of the time. Stephen Krasner’s piece “State Power and the Structure of International Trade” is a prime example of measuring hegemonic power incompletely¹⁰. His clear statistics of 1970’s decline reflected what was

⁸ On the assumption that it is not hegemony but strong institutions which have enabled stable trade relationships, Keohane’s *After Hegemony* examines the institutions regulating trade in oil and other sectors. It was seen as a much better refutation of hegemonic stability theory than a case for an alternative system of institutional powers to enable cooperation.

⁹ Grieco’s response to Keohane, leading to an often heated scholarly dialog ending unsatisfactorily, essentially reduced the thesis of *After Hegemony* to a much less ambitious “plausibility probe” with insufficient explanatory power to explain even the most favorable of cases--let alone a standard “tough test” to establish a theory’s worthiness.

¹⁰ Tables 2 and 3 on Krasner pg. 333-334 comparing British and American hegemony use per capita income, aggregate size, share of world trade and investment flows compared to their nearest competitor as a measure of hegemonic strength, which seemed much more reasonable because few or no alternatives were considered.

perceived by many as a time when the very foundations of world order were being shaken, yet despite the title of his article, he in fact failed to consider the basic and unchanged structural unit of the world economy, the U.S. dollar. John Ruggie showed that the establishment of this structural unit was anything but stably streamlined¹¹, but even grudging worldwide acceptance of the dollar standard as a substitute for that of gold, with no other viable replacements in sight, indicated a minimal structural stability which could be understandably overlooked in favor of trendy power indicators. With such a recent detachment of the primary reserve currency and serious questions about the future power of the United States¹², to express confidence in the future would have required something akin to blind faith in the USA's leaders and world institutions.

Yet subsequent events ran counter to what the pessimistic prognosticators predicted. At very least, U.S hegemony rebounded. More accurately, in retrospect and in the view of Susan Strange¹³, reports of a 1970's decline were little more than a Chicken Little-ish exaggeration of a hegemonic hiccup between courses in a global meal the USA was destined to devour.

The 2000's: Zeroing in on the invisible. The 2000's provide only a nebulous environment

¹¹ Tracing a long history of regimes' influence on the establishment of monetary policy, Ruggie notes how the need for greater liquidity in the dollar (coming from greater pressure on the primary currency as international trade increased) led to formal inconvertibility into gold in 1971 on pg. 408.

¹² In the realm of trade, a loss or lack of negotiating power in the USA could be seen in the limited leverage held in securing the most power-sustaining commodity of oil. Keohane's *After Hegemony* gives an extended account of its "frustrations" in "hegemonic cooperation" on pg. 150-176. On pg. 176-177 he outlines the consequences of acting unilaterally to secure its oil, attributing the problems of the 1970's in this arena to this decision.

¹³ Strange argues that the measures of hegemony used by other scholars, showing a marked U.S. decline, are inappropriate, and that American hegemonic dominance of "structural power" never waned. An example of maintenance is the use of the dollar as the world's standard currency and predicted furthering of it in high-tech industries.

for testing both institutional theories and that of hegemonic stability, as the resurgent and continuing presence of both a dominant hegemon and functional trade institutions of bilateral, regional, and multinational varieties will attest. The world is not likely to provide a laboratory in which these test-confounding factors can be separated.

Buoyed by this second round of near-total world domination, American scholars now seem tipsy on bottle after bottle of *chateau d'optimisme*, when in fact the more apt quantity would be barrels of oil and barges of Chinese imports. Anticipating dessert "on the house", the USA-led world order seems more likely to receive a hefty bill and overworked waitstaff in demand of a large gratuity.

Factors which arguably saved U.S. hegemony, and the stable, cooperation-conducive benefits accompanying its order, include growth industries such as high-tech fields and the unassailable meta-power ordained to the monetary basis of the world economy. Yet now instead of enumerating the factors which will lead to a loss of stability, some current scholars are trumpeting globalization as the force which will either maintain the world order of U.S. hegemony, or preserve order in the event of U.S. decline through greater integration and reliance on enduring institutions. There is little scholarly caution behind this new faith in the U.S. or institutions, as was collectively displayed in excess in the 1970's due inconclusive or insufficient data. Many now proceed as if institutional theory was proven, or as if globalization is big enough to transcend the need for any single theory, hegemon, or institution.

One seeing more order and stability in the new century might point to the greater inclusiveness of the WTO as evidence, yet this is clearly countered by the familiar critique that expansion has come at the cost of its fundamental functions of minimizing trade barriers. In response to the bloated WTO's bureaucratic morass, Edward Mansfield has shown that greater regional cooperation through PTA's has proven more successful at meeting the more singular trading needs of individual states¹⁴. The frequent violation of WTO articles, near inability to

¹⁴ In their conclusion, pg. 620-621, Mansfield and Milner lean toward the formation of regional PTA's as more of a

prosecute them, and the very slow process of reforming “rounds” point in the direction of institutional moribundity rather than real international stability.

Causing much of the dissatisfaction with multilateral organizations, in trade and otherwise, is the often conflicting relationship between a state’s national government and powerful domestic groups. This is one area in which the 1970’s may actually have been *more* stable, as the developed countries still maintained a strong base in manufacturing, able to employ most of their populations gainfully. With the rise of regional integration and free trade agreements, more domestic groups in developed countries have felt their livelihoods come under threat. If the power of domestic groups to influence international policy in trade and other areas is as strong as Putnam argues¹⁵, one can expect the resistance to such liberalizing policies to continue increasing.

In a present day analysis, Kerry Chase argues optimistically that coordination of domestic and international levels is still quite possible, using the wide-ranging support for NAFTA as an example¹⁶. Yet in developed countries the window of opportunity for such convergence of interests,

complement than a substitute for multilateral organizations such as the WTO, which was thought to limit their formation effectively. Regional agreements could serve as a “stepping stone to greater global openness” (pg. 621) and thereby be quite benign. Mansfield’s 2003 empirical piece is more guarded in its optimism, but it certainly persists. Claims of multilateral and PTA harmony are much more muted when confronted with his hard data on the increasing number of PTA’s being formed over time.

¹⁵ Factors which Putnam highlights in determining the outcomes of a “two-level game” between domestic and international interests, on pg. 434 he frames the domestic influence on national leaders as a strong constraint on what can be accomplished internationally, also noting that beholden leaders are obliged to minimize “the adverse consequences of foreign developments” on domestic groups.

¹⁶ His analysis of U.S. industries is a four-sectored typology assessing support based on the interaction of returns to scale and regional production sharing between industries. His results on pg. 158 show that only in one of four sectors, industries in which the increases of the potential consumption market and production cost-cutting

a result of increased markets for domestically-produced products in economies of scale, has only narrowed as the real beneficiaries have disproportionately tended to be the multinational corporations who see only the positives--not the destabilizing domestic negatives--of production sharing¹⁷. This points to NAFTA's support and passage as the result of a very successful PR campaign--powerful enough to convince a population not as informed or engaged as Putnam's thesis requires¹⁸ that the benefits of increased markets for American products and lower consumer prices for imported goods would all go to American factory workers. Reality clearly created the strongest resistance in that group, not to mention American farmers¹⁹. That this resistance has grown, belatedly perhaps, through the years of NAFTA's implementation causes a negative and destabilizing impact when it is combined with competition from outside the Americas.

One could argue convincingly that regional trade agreements such as ASEAN²⁰ have

opportunities (benefiting labor and capital, respectively) were small, was there not domestic support for NAFTA, which was a priority for the national government.

¹⁷ A term Chase uses as a more business-friendly and politically correct word for "outsourcing", itself a euphemism to many domestic politicians and their concerned constituents for polemic appeals to stop "destroying the American middle class by giving all the good jobs away to backward foreigners" or some such Rust Belt call to arms.

¹⁸ Putnam, pg. 432 accounts for domestic influence on foreign policy, such as forming an RTA, as a political consideration of "parties, social classes, interest groups (both economic and nonneconomic), legislators, and even public opinion and elections." Borrowing terms from Chomsky, consent for NAFTA would be more easily "manufactured" if large portions of those groups were not aware--or were convincingly misinformed--of their real interests.

¹⁹ Indeed, Chase mentions U.S. agriculture only in the industry needed to produce its high-end machinery.

²⁰ Katzenstein's recent book, on pg. 27, notes ambitions for China-ASEAN and Japan-ASEAN free trade agreements by the end of this decade which would put the USA, far more distant culturally and geographically, at a further disadvantage in these large, vital markets.

augmented strong domestic-focused restrictions on Asian markets for American goods. Japan's neomercantilism, noted by Katzenstein²¹, has continued into the 21st century, and China's export-led growth has not yet been matched by domestic consumption or even much access to Chinese store shelves. These create a "double whammy" for American industries in Asia, facing an assortment of non-tariff barriers to Asian markets. Latin American import substitution, on the other hand, has seemingly benefited neither the USA nor itself. It is not surprising that the cascading effect of these regional trade agreements, initially an insurance plan against the fallibility of multilateral organizations such as the WTO²², arises as an attempt to shore up the security of domestic industries. But the net effect of so many RTA's creates serious non-tariff barriers to trade outside of one's region, creating an obvious though not inevitable challenge to the liberal and nondiscriminatory WTO order²³.

James Kurth may have applied the product cycle to international and inter-industrial conflict in the 1970's, but the lessons resonate most today in the domestic labor markets of the developed countries, where the previous savior of technology has made even once-secure "white-collar" service jobs and high-tech industries increasingly insecure. While the edge in high-end, research-intensive innovation still belongs to the developed countries²⁴, semi-peripheral countries' economic, educational, and technological advances are gaining ground even at that high level. Given that semi-peripheral countries have a near infinite potential in greater population sizes, smaller

²¹ In his discussion of domestic structures' influence on foreign economic policy, Katzenstein outlines Japan's neomercantilistic development strategy on pg. 897-900.

²² Mansfield and Reinhardt, pg. 834.

²³ Mansfield and Reinhardt note that many regional trade agreements do not in fact undermine the liberalizing agenda of the WTO and in fact can go beyond the WTO into totally free trade between states. They are, however, undeniably discriminatory in creating an excluding effect for all states not part of an individual state's RTA.

²⁴ An edge which Krasner notes must be maintained for "large" states to benefit from trade liberalization, pg. 320

developed countries are rightfully concerned about their growing comparative disadvantage in labor as well as the shrinking comparative advantage in the skilled and innovative sectors.

So it would seem, and Rostow would have argued along with today's globalization fanatics²⁵, that developing countries have everything to gain--all the incentives and means needed to start catching up to the core. Ngairé Woods attributed many cases of slow development in the 1970's to a failed promise of shared technology between the core and periphery²⁶, a deficit which greater "production sharing" under the liberal 21st century order has greatly, but only selectively alleviated. Those at the farthest peripheral reaches, she argues, have still received few benefits of either phenomenon, as profit-minded investment has centered on semi-peripheral states whose stronger governments and infrastructures truly merit the term "nation-state".

A number of factors, culled from dependency theory and the realist principle of preemptive threat reduction, have conspired to keep the poor countries from realizing their potential, most so in weak states where aid and investment are thought to evaporate into thin air with few visible returns. Those at the top also fear the electoral consequences of unequal relative gains, creating more semi-peripheral challengers to rankle the domestic economy constituencies. Intermediate states in that grey, semi-peripheral expanse are wholly consumed in competition between one another to reach the core. Those at bottom are smothered by heavily-conditional blankets of aid, applied in the early 2000's as a nearly universal and indivisible package.

A major destabilizing force whose domestic manifestations have already rendered some developing countries basket-case states is the growing dissatisfaction among the poor as the "losers" in globalization. Joseph Stiglitz is correct to point out that even "successful" development

²⁵ W.W. Rostow's staged formula for national development, like globalization proponents in the IMF who stress the enactment of domestic economic reforms, emphasized ostensibly simple decisions which the leaders of countries could either make, postpone, or foolishly resist making for a temporary period.

²⁶ pg. 19

programs, in which market liberalization has led to rising trends in state GDP, can be internally destabilizing, as the benefits of the growth go disproportionately to the state's elites²⁷, making each developing country a microcosm of the world system separating the few affluent core states from the many across the indigent periphery. To call such cases successes, as the growth certainly benefits the material interests of some, is to perpetuate a core-centric perspective which blinds one to the reality of the majority and can only lead to more injustice.

Stiglitz acknowledges past failures, but his proposed solutions, in addition to requiring many powerful actors in developed countries to act against their short-term interests²⁸, require the trust and cooperation of the developing world to go along with another round of top-down reforms.

Technological advancement now works against the USA in that the developing world has much greater access to information--leading to greater awareness of better conditions elsewhere--creating at once greater expectations and an intimate knowledge of past North-on-South impositions under the supposedly beneficial guises of globalization, monetary policy liberalization, and free trade.

Having perhaps experienced the past failures personally, and being aware that theirs is not isolated in the world, leads one to expect more resistance--thereby less order and stability from compliance--than in the past to Northern efforts at Washington consensual development plans.

No system or state in which the majority is marginalized, repeatedly exploited or excluded, can be stable in the long term. The same disappointment Cardoso expresses in 1978 at the lack of 3rd World development could still be given today, as Pogge notes in "A Cosmopolitan Perspective on the Global Economic Order". The current situation goes beyond even the "radical" inequality existing then, into even worse territory, as is evidenced in the further erosion of the ratio of per-capita income

²⁷ "unless governments design...policies to make sure that the poor share...in the benefits" (Stiglitz, pg. 45)

²⁸ Stiglitz's ambitious reform plan is laid out through the course of his book, but specific tenets which make the financiers in developed countries bristle include limits on mobile capital, debt forgiveness, and a lessening of the conditions required for developing countries to receive aid.

between the developed and developing world²⁹. He shows convincingly that our current “order” is both based on and increasing injustice, no basis at all for stability.

Our Western concept of order shows a clear preference for the rule of law in establishing and maintaining stability, yet international enforcement problems appear even in institutions such as the WTO specifically set up to enforce trade laws. It’s no surprise that other violations of much more arbitrary and less-coordinated arenas, such as the illicit international economy, even more rampant lawlessness is the rule rather than the exception. In this subfield of study the most optimism Peter Andreas can muster is to point out that states are now cooperating more than at any point in the past to restrict illicit activities which cross international borders. As the positive correlation between international crime and policing escalates, the global stakes in legal viability are raised without actually reducing the amount of illegal activity. Andreas justifies his point that too much emphasis on accomplishing the explicit goals of international prohibition regimes “misses the point”³⁰, noting that regardless of effectiveness they serve a valuable symbolic role to express disapproval of certain activities³¹, thus maintaining a moral high ground. Yet such perceived ground is practically useless in maintaining real order when all one can do is look down from it at the state border and see Katzenstein’s thesis of porous regionalism³² being proven, against the law. Both Katzenstein and

²⁹ While accompanied by several other appalling and illustrative figures, the regression of this ratio, cited on pg. 97 as going from 30:1 “around 1960” to 40:1 in the 2000’s, is the most useful in denying a positive shift toward economic stability from the 1970’s to the present.

³⁰ Andreas and Nadelmann, pg. 247

³¹ Andreas and Nadelmann, pg. 229

³² Probably not meant to be used in this context, but in accordance with his third point of differing from “closed regions of the past” (pg. 1), trade of goods across borders of the liberalized and regionally-integrated states of Europe and Asia (and presumably many others) will be generally increased, less restricted, and less inspected. By merit of these factors, vastly more illegal trade is also inevitable. This usage is meant to be a counter to and in

Andreas emphasize the prominent role of a hegemonic USA in fostering international cooperation, with the former being far more optimistic in stabilizing potential of such an influence, but undermining the order-underpinning rule of law seems to be the greater long-term concern.

Andreas' examples of the USA imposing its norms of legality on states throughout the world could actually serve as the basis for a hegemonic *instability* theory. He notes throughout *Policing the Globe* that many of the policies the USA has worked so hard at quite successfully imposing are in fact contrary to scientific research in addition to showing total disregard for the traditional uses of many substances declared by the current hegemon to be "illicit". Such contradictions are hypocritical and unsustainable, perhaps even if hegemony persists, and thus undermine the rule of law on which the Western order purports to be founded. Despite encouraging caution to the contrary, Andreas and Nadelmann are still too kind in emphasizing the international cooperative gains made in recent years, thus becoming unintentional defenders of a system which another similarly-informed but less scholarly-restrained observer would not hesitate to excoriate. One such observer is Moises Naim, whose personal wealth of anecdotes could fill a data set, and it should be disturbing that such a fatal alarmist is presenting the dissenting voice of reason. Liberalization of trade and almost arbitrary illegality of a portion of it simply cannot be simultaneously sustained, and it is inevitable that the continued escalation of costs and eroding effectiveness of enforcement will reach a breaking point. One must hope the funding will break and not the respect of laws of laws in general.

Any mention of law from a Western perspective stems naturally from a desire for justice and the belief that laws are the most nondiscriminatory arbiters of it. Yet what developed countries see as preventing the domestic use of products which undermine the economy and morality, many

contempt of the greater cooperation between states in law enforcement.

entrepreneurs seeking to live the American dream outside USA borders see such laws as only another impediment to lifting themselves, and their countries in the process, out of poverty. Free-market fundamentalists and other advocates of globalization have been feeding the third world cheerful platitudes since at least the 1970's, and to date they have amounted to little more than table scraps, on loan and subject to immediate regurgitation should digestion not occur according to a prescribed diet.

Whether one views the world with a global GINI coefficient or as a village of 100 people, the absurd extent of inequality precludes any truly stable order, and those who see one can only be limiting their vistas to a much-restricted comfort zone. It is understandably difficult for many to understand such strife, having never experienced it oneself. Those who attack the logic of prescriptive calls for (re-)distributive justice, especially seeing Thomas Pogge's thesis that our very state and system of being is harming the third world³³ as a ripe target for criticism, are likely missing the point on account of willful ignorance to the point of blindness. If personal experience can make a truly compassionate conservative of Jenna Bush³⁴, let me propose that the best way to guarantee a stable and cooperative world order in the long-term would be a mutually agreeable annexation of Haiti³⁵, provided that all three branches of the federal government move there.

Failing this surefire solution, I would also propose a more graphic reinterpretation of world systems theory which is at once more cosmopolitan, for being less core-centric, and crudely

³³ Throughout his article, Pogge defends his assertion that in performing the positive duties of maintaining the modern lifestyle in the developed countries, we are violating our negative duties not to do harm to others, as "upholding a radical inequality counts as harming the worse-off when the historical path on which this inequality arose is pervaded by grievous wrongs" (pg. 97).

³⁴ Haven't actually read it, so can't rightly cite it: Bush, Jenna. 2007. *Ana's Story: A Journey of Hope*. New York: HarperCollins Childrens Books.

³⁵ or any other impoverished quagmire in our own regional midst, to minimize transaction costs of extra distance.

unrestrained by scholarly terms which are biased toward stability³⁶. It would be more appropriate and scarcely less objective to consider the world a three-tiered cafeteria: the core dines extravagantly on international delicacies at a table with very limited seating, a “kids’ table” with smaller portions seats the semi-peripheral and lesser NIC’s, and finally--one can see where this is headed--empty dog dishes on the floor entice the periphery to beg and fight over whatever scraps fall from either table via the product cycle and worldwide trickle-down economics³⁷. The continued existence of a periphery goes beyond destabilizing to an intolerable level of dehumanization.

Conclusions. In neither the 1970’s nor the 2000’s was the future of the world certain; the same could be said of the perceived “orders” of their time. Most scholars foreseeing, or witnessing, the end of U.S. hegemony in the 1970’s appear to have neglected the next step up for developed countries such as the USA in the product cycle, as described by James Kurth³⁸. Similarly, I have argued that many today who see a stable order are downplaying the gains that otherwise semi-peripheral countries are making in high-tech, research-intensive industries which have perpetuated the core. Is there another step up from technology which will help developed countries stay ahead and maintain their current advantage, or is the fragile free trade imperative bound to crumble under preemptive trade wars, a regional interdependence which is simply too complex to be practical and sustainable?

³⁶ For what, truly, could be more stable-sounding than a core? And to call the third world “peripheral” also carries the meaning of being barely on the edge of one’s vision and awareness--the easy ignorance of such a dismal periphery leads again to an unrealistic bias toward a stable system.

³⁷ At the risk of rambling and further metaphorical overextension: The model is all the more appropriate in that many peripheral dogs at the bottom would starve, and indeed are starving. Over time these dogs could either assume a Skinnerian behaviorist state of “learned helplessness” or form packs to bite the hands that (aren’t) feeding enough).

³⁸ He astutely predicted the rise of the telecommunications industry in his conclusion.

Anyone proposing globalization as the answer to all of the world's problems of development, justice, cooperation, and stability makes an implicit assumption that the states currently driving the world economy from the top down will not lose their status of innovative, meta-empowered centrality. For many in the institutional camp of transnational and economic centrality, that is far too great an assumption, as the state, to them, has for the past thirty years been teetering on the verge of irrelevance. While any dramatic change within the remaining years of the decade appears unlikely--Wallerstein would say that there is yet no alternative threatening or ready to replace the entire system--it is scholarly folly to speak of the years beyond with the amount of confidence, approaching certainty, which many exude. In the absence of a clearly progressive future, maintaining the status quo becomes the most attractive option for those in a moderately comfortable position. The actions which carry out this option, perceived as necessary and non-exploitative maintenance, ignore the great injustices faced by the struggling majority of the world. Just as in terms of military threat, the ignorance of economic challengers, truly "greedy states", and discontents entails a great deal of peril for the world.

Based on the assumption that reality tends to prove both predictive pessimism and optimism overstated, it would be wise to question any assertion that we've really come such a long way in the realms of international cooperation, trade, stability, and development. If there has been a shift from the 1970's to the present, it is not in structure or substance but the points of attention and attitudes of scholars, who will find themselves increasingly handicapped by a world which is in fact changing in other areas faster than the pace which good research can match.

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