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Puzzling Politics: A Methodology for Turning World-Systems Analysis Inside-Out

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Abstract

Can world-systems analysis illuminate politics? Can it help explain why illiberal regimes, outsider parties, and anti-immigrant rhetoric seem to be on the rise? Can it help explain any such national changes that seem destined to shift how nations relate to world markets? Leading surveys of historical sociology seem to say no. We disagree. While there are problems with Wallerstein's early mode of analyzing politics in the capitalist world-system from the outside-in, historical sociologists have been too quick to dismiss world-systems analysis. We propose an alternative inside-out approach anchored in a methodology for selecting what to study: those national political transformations which constitute puzzling instances within a given world-historical political process. We recommend promising theoretical lineages to guide empirical research on the selected puzzle: those that specify the elite social bases of politics. We thereby turn world-systems analysis inside-out. Our inside-out approach advances the project of world-systems analysis as a methodology, rather than a theoretical prescription in several ways. First, it addresses an important but largely overlooked question: how to select what to study. Second, it devises a methodology that can, but does not have to, pair with the methodology of incorporated comparisons. Third, it offers a methodology that stimulates, rather than forecloses, theoretical flexibility and fresh interpretations of politics and the world-economy. We illustrate the strengths of this new approach with three books, two of which won the best book award from ASA's Political Economy of the World System (PEWS) Section.

Keywords: National political transformation; World-historical methodology

Political changes such as regime change, shifts in partisan power, or institutional reorganizations can have powerful effects on how countries relate to the capitalist world-economy. The third wave of democratization in the 1980s solidified neoliberal globalization in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Newly minted electoral processes legitimized the many technocrats who implemented such policies. At the turn of the 21st century, however, shifting electoral fortunes of left-leaning parties led many Latin American countries to push back against neoliberal-globalization and U.S. hegemony. More recently, a surge of right-wing nationalists have risen to power from countries ranging from the United States to Turkey, reflecting and accelerating the erosion of the liberal democratic institutions that helped legitimize neoliberal globalization. What then, might world-systems analysis contribute to our understanding of such pivotal changes in national politics? As a mode of analysis that seeks to understand the dynamics of the capitalist world-economy, one might think world-systems analysis would have much to say on such matters. And yet, historical sociologists often dispute this claim.

According to leading surveys of historical sociology and its methodologies (Adams, Clemens, and Orloff 2005; Go and Lawson 2017; Mahoney 2004; Paige 1999), world-systems analysis has little to contribute. Such surveys typically cast world-systems analysis as a relic of second wave historical sociology that flourished in the 1970s. They rarely include world-systems analysis among the promising new directions for historical sociology. Needless to say, it is a grave mistake to declare that world-systems analysis has nothing to offer those interested in national political change. Indeed, there is an urgent need to comprehend vexing political developments such as the rise of capitalist "populists" like Trump, even as we see the rise of anti-neoliberal "populists" elsewhere (Gates 2018).

To address such developments, we reclaim and amplify critical lineages within world-systems analysis; lineages which have been largely ignored. Third-wave historical sociologists often distort Wallerstein's mission and overlook many critical lineages within world-systems analysis. We, instead, build on efforts to conceive world-systems analysis as a methodology, rather than a theoretical prescription. While these efforts have emphsazed how to conduct comparisons (McMichael 1990; Tomich 1994), we emphasize how to select the empirical focus of inquiry. We advocate selecting national political transformations that constitute puzzling instances within world-historical political processes. While such prior efforts eschew theory, we appreciate theory as a heuristic to formulate the empirical questions we pursue to unravel our puzzles. Thus, we advocate approaching our selected empirical focus of inquiry with theoretically-informed empirical questions. To understand political change, we see promise in those theoretical lineages that specify the elite social bases of politics, but which also take political conjunctures and their relationship to global capitalism seriously.

With our inside-out approach to analyzing politics, we can avoid the, de facto, universalism and functionalism of Wallerstein's earlier outside-in approach. Here, like Paige (1999), we use three books to illustrate our inside-out approach. We selected two books that won the best book award from the American Sociological Association's Section on the Political Economy of the World-System and a third published by Cambridge University Press. All three are their author's first monograph. As such, they suggest an emergent new mode of world-systems analysis.

Problems with "Third-Wave" Critiques of World-Systems Analysis

Third-wave critics often dismiss world-systems analysis as a theory-building project akin to others of the second-wave of historical sociology. Paige (1999), for example, observed that a third wave of historical sociologists had begun to address the problems of what Sewell (1996) called Wallerstein's "abstract transhistorical time" (Paige 1999:783) and the misguided "universal laws of a Wallersteinian world-system" (1999:783-4). Mahoney (2004: 469) exhorts his fellow third wave historical sociologists to build general theories, but not those like world-systems "theory."[1] The latter, he dismisses as a "variant of Marxist structural functionalism" which has been rejected by contemporary sociologists because it has not produced "important or valid empirical insights" (Mahoney 2004:469). Go and Lawson give credit to world-systems analysis as an earlier "theoretically informed exploration of transnational and global dynamics" (Go and Lawson 2017: 8), but implicitly demote it as a narrow theory-building project when they call for a global historical sociology that "does not foster a single theory" (Go and Lawson 2017: 15).

This critique is not entirely without merit. Indeed, even world-systems scholars critique Wallerstein along similar lines. One of Wallerstein's former students, for instances, regretted Wallerstein's "functionalist history", and penchant to prefigure history "from a preconceived concrete totality" (McMichael 1990: 388, 391). Wallerstein's early recruit at Binghamton University, similarly criticized his "abstract functionalist view of capitalism as a system . . . whose historical development is predetermined by a static structure" (Tomich 2004: 17).

To cast the entirety of world-systems analysis as a failed theory-building project, however, distorts "its raison d'etre:" "to open up questions, not close them down" (Taylor 1993: 553). Wallerstein intended world-systems analysis not to be a "theory about the social world" (Wallerstein 1991: 237), so much as "a 'protest' against how social scientific inquiry is structured" (Wallerstein 1991: 237); a project to "unthink" a number of 19th century paradigms such as our proclivity for treating nations as bounded societies (1991). It was Wallerstein's attempt at a

[1] Mahoney (2004:482) encourages historical sociologists to use what he calls general theories: those that develop "postulates about ontologically primitive causes built around specific agents and mechanisms."

"historical social science" (2000: 34) that was "informed by theoretical hunches but not bound by them" (Wallerstein 2002: 358). Indeed, it is in the spirit of advancing this project to "unthink" conventions of comparative historical sociology that some (McMichael 1990; Tomich 1994; 2018) proposed an antidote: world-systems analysis as a methodology.

Third-wave historical sociologists also rarely capture the breadth of such critical lineages. Adams, Clemens and Orloff (2005), for example, acknowledge recent "critical extensions" of world-systems analysis as contributing to one of the five new directions in the emergent third wave of historical sociology: that of renewed interests in colonialism and racial formations of empire. But, they dismiss those they deem its leading exemplars, Arrighi and Silver (1999), for having "blocked off valuable avenues of discussion with people of other theoretical inclinations" because of their "insistence that there must exist a social totality" and their "economistic propositions" (Adams et al. 2005: footnote 7). In singling Arrighi and Silver out, they conveniently overlook world-systems scholars who contemplated the "coloniality of power" (Quijano 2000), its gendered extensions (Wynter 2014) and racial formations of empire (Rodney 1972; Santiago-Valles 2012) post-colonial states (Martin 2013) and the resistance movements such projects engendered (Martin 2005), not to mention its own methodological innovations. Even Go and Lawson's bid to define "global historical sociology" as a new subfield ignores such critical lineages (2017: 14).

Ironically, third wave historical sociologists share, or appropriate, many criticisms of historical sociology made by world-systems analysts, particularly by Wallerstein's hand-picked deputy for graduate education (Hopkins 1978) and his mentees (McMichael 1990; Tomich 1994). They echo Wallerstein's own critique of methodological nationalism (1991), in re-scaling to other levels and units of analysis (Clemens 2007; Go and Lawson 2017). Paige's (1999) call for "historically conditional theories," or theories that delimited the historical conditions under which certain sequences of events, or conjunctures of factors occur, is difficult to decipher from Wallerstein's call for "historical social science" (2000). Clemens pronounced "a general shift from an explicit defense of comparative methods to a focus on historical process" (2007: 527) decades after Hopkins (1978) advocated just such a shift. By conceptualizing "social history as a continual process of ordering and reordering, of structuration" (Clemens 2007: 532), they arrive at a position remarkably similar to Hopkin's conception of history as one of "cumulating processes" (Hopkins 1978: 204). Go and Lawson pitch as the signature feature of global historical sociology "a commitment to 'relationalism'" (2017: 14); "a 'relational' stance that examines the contextually bound, historically situated configurations of events and experiences" (2017: 3). They seem, however, unaware of Hopkins' earlier exhortation that in world-systems analysis, "our acting units or agencies can only be thought of as formed, and continually reformed, by the relations between them" (Hopkins 1978: 204-5).

Despite these similarities, this emergent third wave of historical sociology fails to take up the central challenge of world-systems analysis: to grapple with how to analyze society given the undeniable reality of a capitalist world-economy. Third wave historical sociologists have shifted away "from the imagery of systems and crises….to multidimensional understandings of emergence and destabilization" (Clemens 2007: 529). In doing so, they implicitly, and unnecessarily, bracket those analyzing various types of emergence and destabilization in relation to capitalism as uni-dimensional theories. They interrogate "the regular mechanisms that aggregated into complex social processes," or elaborate "the discursive structuring of action" (Clemens 2007:532). They thereby pointedly define an interest in "complex social processes," but not capitalism per se. Go and Lawson declare global historical sociology to be "a shared conceptual and theoretical space" within which scholars can explore the "global and transnational constitution of national forms, or the historical construction of global and transnational forms" (Go and Lawson 2017: 15). Such visions of third wave historical sociology gives the appearance of a studied avoidance of capitalism, and of world-systems analysis.

In devising our inside-out approach, we contemplate how politics is, indeed, related to global capitalism. We do so, however, in a way that avoids the vulnerability of Wallerstein's early approach to politics.

Wallerstein's "Outside-In" Approach to Politics: Critiques

Wallerstein pioneered efforts to move beyond the methodological nationalism of most second-wave historical sociologists. Doing so enabled him to launch the critical project of unraveling the relationship between national, and thus apparently "internal," political processes and the "external" capitalist world-economy. While a critical intervention, his early efforts to understand politics faltered. Here we delineate his early "outside-in" approach to politics; one which, like his second-wave counterparts, (over)reached for a grand narrative that could not withstand the test of history.

Wallerstein sought to understand the nature of politics by first, defining the world's structure of inequality and then, analyzing how politics in any given nation-state could be related to its position within that structure of inequality. In doing so, he analyzed politics from the outside-in. Although Wallerstein has at times argued otherwise, world-systems scholars widely accept the notion that economic relationships define a state's position within a world hierarchy of nations.[2] He identified an economic base, if you will, from which to derive state attributes and political

[2] This is so despite the fact that Wallerstein (1976) on occasion and others (Snyder and Kick 1979; Babones 2015) have argued that the "core-periphery hierarchy is fundamentally political, not economic" (Babones 2015). Nevertheless, such an interpretation forecloses what should, in our view, be a rich field of empirical research into the nature of politics, state-society relations and its relationship to the capitalist world-economy.

outcomes. Specifically, he conceived of a trimodal division between core, peripheral and semiperipheral economic zones.

Wallerstein first differentiated between states where "high-profit, high-technology, high-wage diversified production" are concentrated (core states) from those states where "low profit, low-technology, low-wage, less diversified production" (Wallerstein 1976: 462) are concentrated (peripheral states). To this dualism, he added a stratum of "middle-income" economies or "semiperipheral" states (Wallerstein 1974b). He argued the semiperiphery played a role in facilitating the continued functioning of the world-system by mediating the extremes of the core-periphery divide in the capitalist world-system (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1977).

Wallerstein then derived attributes of states from their world-systemic positions. In one formulation, for example, he attributed "strong state mechanisms" to wealthy and powerful core states and weakness to peripheral states (Wallerstein 1974a: 401). He conceived the semiperipheral state as an active autonomous state with "[t]he direct and immediate interest … in the control of the market (internal and international)" (Wallerstein, 1979: 72). Wallerstein reasoned that semiperipheral states are generally more likely to intervene in the economy because, unlike core states, semiperipheral states cannot hope to maintain, let alone improve, their economic position in the world-economy through market mechanisms (Wallerstein 1979: 72). Wallerstein associated such attempts to intervene in the economy with controlling the flow of goods and capital, the size of the internal labor force, taxation rates and redistributive state expenditures (Wallerstein 1979: 72). Like many grand narratives of the second wave, however, Wallerstein's outside-in approach faced empirical challenges.

The main difficulties encountered by those seeking to follow Wallerstein's early mode of analyzing politics from the outside-in was not, per se, that scholars debate the very structure of the capitalist world-economy. Although some still debate the continued relevance of the tri-modal structure of the world-system[3], several studies have recently affirmed such a structure whether it be measured by GDP per capita (Babones 2005; Korzeniewicz 2012), as Arrighi and Drangel (1986) proposed, or by national positions within trade networks (Nemeth and Smith 1985) or investment flows (Mahutga 2006).[4]

[3] Some have argued that this tri-modal structure is collapsing whether because we now live in a U.S. dominated empire based primarily on political rather than economic control (Babones 2015), because the core-periphery distinction has become blurred (Robinson and Harrison 2000), or because the divide between the Global North and South has become ever more salient (Arrighi 2001). Others contendthe world's structure of inequality has become quadra-modal (Karataşlı 2017).

[4] While sympathetic to Wallerstein's conceptualization of core-like as opposed to periphery-like business activities, Arrighi and Drangel (1986) countered with a more feasible strategy: that of assumeing that core business activities will produce greater wealth per capita than peripheral activities and therefore of assessing a nation's position using its gross national product per capita.

Rather, the main difficulties have been empirical. A number of inconvenient historical developments contradicted expected political developments derived from Wallerstein's outside-in approach. For example, the economic policies of semiperipheral states in the last quarter of the 20th century seem increasingly less like the interventionist and developmentalist states posited by Arrighi (1990). Instead, the semiperipheral former Soviet republics, populist Latin American and Southern European regimes abandoned their earlier developmentalist policies and converged towards the new neoliberal economic paradigm. At the time, they opted for the export-oriented industrialization historically associated with the periphery. Recent events also undermine earlier claims that the distinct structure of semiperipheral economies would make their states prone to authoritarianism (Arrighi 1990:32) because labor tended to be more militant (Korzeniewicz 1990; Silver 2003), social protests tended to be more widespread (Chase-Dunn 1989, 1990; Martin 1990), or their limited resources complicated efforts to contain such pressure from below. Even so, democratization took place throughout much of the world, including the semiperiphery (Korzeniewicz and Awbrey 1992; Schwartzman 1998), in last century's final decades. The empirical failings of Wallerstein's early mode of analyzing politics from the outside-in made it an easy target for critics of the second-wave historical sociologists. We devise an alternative world-systems analysis of politics, one inspired in particular by critical lineages of world-systems analysis that treat it as a methodology.

Towards an Inside-Out Approach to Politics in the Capitalist World-Economy

We advance the agenda of devising world-systems analysis as a methodology in several ways. Our starting point is the need for a better world-systems approach to study the particularly thorny substantive field of politics. We propose to address the vulnerabilities of Wallerstein's outside-in approach with an intentional strategy of how we select our empirical focus. We adapt the puzzle-based logic of selecting cases to world-systems analysis. We recommend selecting national political transformations that constitute anomalies for world-systems analysis. For world-systems analysis, this means selecting national political transformations that constitute puzzling instances within world-historical political processes. This strategy heads off critics who claim world-systems analysis fails to present empirical evidence that challenges a world-systems view of the structure or dynamics of capitalism (Adams et al. 2005; Brenner 1977; Mahoney 2004: 469; Paige 1999:798; Skocpol 1977: 1088-89; Stinchcombe 1982). We do not deny, however, the relevance of theory. Indeed, theory is indispensable in helping us discern which of the otherwise seemingly infinite directions empirical research might take. Combining a puzzle-driven methodology of selecting our empirical focus with theoretically informed questions constitutes a more promising world-systems approach to politics; one which can unravel how national political transformations relate to the capitalist world-economy from the inside-out.

Having established a substantive area of inquiry as politics, we anchor our proposed methodology in a distinct logic for selecting the empirical focus of inquiry. First, we should select "instances" or moments within political processes that—world-systems analysis tells us—span time and space, not "cases" of some abstractly pre-defined type of politics—be it authoritarianism, fascism or revolution. Second, we can, and even should, embrace the national level of political transformation, rather than eschew it as necessarily entailing methodological nationalism. Third, we should select those national-level political transformations that constitute puzzling instances within what we might call world-historical political processes. When we do so, we can turn world-systems analysis of politics inside-out: we start with the particularities of a specific national political transformation and analyze how the political struggles "inside" the national context relate to, and can even transform, the apparently "outside" structure of the capitalist world-economy.

First, we should not conceive of selecting our substantive focus as selecting "cases" of an abstract or "ideal type" of politics. Doing so makes an implausible assumption: namely that any case of a given type of politics, like revolution, could and does operate independently of other cases, or countries, experiencing revolution. As Hopkins saw it, such a methodology would "deny a central feature of what we are trying to study:" namely that we live in a "multi-level, complex system of social action that is comprehensive and singular" (Hopkins 1978: 204). As such, each apparent 'case' of a given type of politics actually occurs within a system that is singular "not only in scope – and so forms a spatial 'world' with its own changing geopolitical boundaries—but also in time – and so forms a temporal 'world' with its own irreversible sequences and nonarbitrary periodicities." Thus, each apparent case of a type of politics is actually better conceived of as an "instance" or moment occurring within a single "cumulating process;" a process which should be qualified as having a particular "world" scope and which varies historically in scope and form. Each instance within such a world-historical political process, is necessarily part of "an overall developmental movement carried forward by one major form of the process, then a second one, with the first still going on, then a third form, all intersecting, and so on" (Hopkins 1978: 204). The first revolutionary transformation, for instance, necessarily impinges on the meaning and conditions for subsequent revolutionary transformations.

Our second principle for how to select the empirical focus of inquiry is that we can and perhaps even should embrace national political transformations. World-systems analysts might wonder: shouldn't we avoid national-level political transformations? After all, world-systems analysts have been keen to avoid the methodological nationalism implicit in the conventions for selecting "cases" (Hopkins 1978; Wallerstein 1991). As a result, however, world-systems analysts have too often let others define how we understand national-level political transformations. This is unfortunate because national-level political changes are often a key locus for consolidating or eroding world hegemony (Gates 2015). Moreover, we have seen how shifting our empirical focus

to lower levels of analysis enables us to see how "parts," be they actors, local processes or cracks between states (Grubacic and O'Hearn 2016) "mutually co-constitute" the capitalist world-system (McMichael 1990; Tomich 1994). By extension, there is much to gain by taking national (and regional or even local) political processes seriously. We need not fear embracing an empirical focus on national-level political transformations, so long as we do not ascribe to the implausible assumptions of methodological nationalism: the assumption that each nation constitutes an independent society that acts autonomously from others. We still might wonder, nonetheless, which national-level political transformations to select?

Our third recommendation is to select those national political transformations that constitute puzzles, especially for world-systems analysis. In making this recommendation, we adapt a recommendation from those historical sociologists (Burawoy 1989; Paige 1999) who call for selecting theoretically strategic cases to build theory. Such cases, in their view, are those, which represent anomalies, sometimes called negative cases (Emigh 1997), for a particular theoretical tradition. By embracing the challenge of explaining anomalies for one's preferred theoretical tradition, scholars can delimit the conditions (Paige 1999) under which the theory may hold or refine our understanding of its mechanisms without violating the theory's core principles (Burawoy 1989). While we would not endorse their case-based logic, we argue this logic can be adapted for world-systems analysis.

We propose selecting as our object of empirical inquiry those national political transformations which represent puzzling instances within a given world-historical political processes, especially for prior world-systems analyses of that process. Even so, our hope is not to build better theories per se. Rather, it is to build more complete and accurate historical accounts, albeit ones that are theoretically informed: what we might call a "historically-grounded theory" (McMichael 1990: 395) or "theoretical history" (Tomich 2004). Our approach, then, calls for constructing a history that re-interprets a particular national political transformation by analyzing how it relates to the capitalist world-economy.

Our methodology for selecting an empirical focus of inquiry dovetails with the logic of "incorporated comparisons," but can also stand alone. Identifying puzzles need not follow any strict definition. Any of the recent inconvenient historical developments described above, for example, constitute anomalies for world-systems analysis ripe for fruitful analysis. Developments in a given society might pose a puzzle, particularly when placed in a longer historical context. In such cases, our methodology for selecting an empirical focus of inquiry has the advantage that it can stand alone. That said, scholars might also identify comparative puzzles, such as variation in politics across societies at a similar juncture or across similar structural positions within the world-economy. Such comparative puzzles would represent ideal opportunities to put "incorporated comparisons" to work; to use this world-systems methodology of comparison to explain otherwise

puzzling real-world political developments. In such cases, incorporated comparison would "reconstruct changing social relations in and of time and space," or in and of any given national political transformations, as "mutual conditioning parts" of a greater whole (McMichael 1990: 395).

By approaching the study of politics with an intentional methodology for how to select "instances" of political processes as the focus of our empirical inquiries, our inside-out approach avoids some of the pitfalls of Wallerstein's early outside-in approach. In the outside-in approach, the empirical task tends to be one of fitting the empirical details to an already fixed idea of what the historical narrative should be. In an inside-out approach, the empirical task is to answer a question posed by the puzzling nature of an instance of politics. The approach allows the researcher to undertake the analysis with questions, rather than a preformed narrative. But what questions should we ask?

Deriving Empirical Questions from Theories of the Elite Social Bases of Politics

Having selected a focus of empirical inquiry in a strategic way—in a way that maximizes their potential to contribute new interpretations of the world and advance world-systems analysis—scholars can freely draw inspiration from a wide range of theoretical lineages to guide their research. To resolve political puzzles for world-systems analysis, we see particular promise in deriving empirical questions from those theorizing the elite social bases of politics. Political sociologists have recently revitalized (Akard 1992; Dreiling 2000; Dreiling and Darves 2011; Prechel 1990) a long tradition demonstrating the elite social bases of politics (Domhoff 1967; Mills 1956; Moore 1966). They have yet, however, to take up how political struggles that take place "inside" the nation, might be related to global capitalism.

We recommend contemplating how world-markets differentiate the interests of the economic elites with a stake in any given national political struggle. Such an approach follows Schwartzman's assessment that those analyses which "identify class conflict as the social mechanism linking world-system processes to national political dynamics" (1998: 179) offer the greatest insight into the global linkages of national political transformations like democratization. Doing so enables us to see the capitalist world-economy as a differentiating force. It can help us understand why, not just countries, but also actors within countries, have conflicting interests, which prompt struggles over projects and the political forms best suited to carry them out. It is also in line with new work analyzing global commodity chains, in ways attuned to how struggles between actors within each commodity chain shape the nature of that commodity's world markets (Bair 2009; Quark 2013).

We trace this line of inquiry to earlier work on the elite social bases of politics in places where elites had to confront the reality of the wider capitalist world-economy; where powerful foreign

capitalists and the shifting tides of global hegemony factored into particular political struggles (Cardoso and Faletto 1979; Poulantzas 1976; Zeitlin 1974). Their analyses revealed how tensions among the economic elite engaged in a given political struggle (targeting political change "inside" the nation), often stemmed from their varied modes of relating to world-markets and hegemonic powers. As Poulantzas explained it, the fall of Southern European dictatorships entails asking a particular type of question about the elite social bases of politics: "The fundamental question… is...in what way have the so-called 'external' factors which characterize the changes in the present phase of imperialism, been reproduced and internalized within the socio-economic and political structures of these countries?" (1976: 45). Although world-systems analysis does not often include Poulantzas' work in its canon, his work is, in our view, foundational for such an approach. We can even see the influence of Poulantzas in a collaborative project orchestrated by Wallerstein and Arrighi on the converging forms of politics in Southern Europe (Arrighi 1985).

Wallerstein came to appreciate the analytic purchase of empirical inquiries into the elite social bases of politics. He traced the rise of fascism across much of Southern Europe in the inter-war period to pressures for political change from those national economic elites who had not been in business with the core-country capitalists for political change (1985). These "left over" elites had not been the ones to develop the export-sectors in primary goods, which, in alliance with core-country capitalists, had "peripheralized" their economies in the 19th century. They decried their "weak states" which tended to serve the interests of the export-oriented segments of the internal elite aligned with British hegemony. Following the example of the late industrialization of Germany and Japan, they favored instead a more interventionist or strong state, which they hoped could shift "the mix of [economic] activities in a 'core like' direction" (Wallerstein 1985: 35). These "conservative" segments of the bourgeoisie gained power by the early part of the 20th century via totalitarian regimes willing to oppose both the ideological and economic power of the Anglo-American imperialism. They cultivated an alliance with the aspiring hegemon at the time: Germany. Wallerstein thus traces divisions with a society's economic elite to distinct hegemonic cycles or the degree to which their activities are nested within international trade and investment patterns to aspiring hegemonic powers as opposed to the existing (or waning) hegemon. Here, then, he adopts the theoretical inclinations of our inside-out approach.

Such an inside-out approach would also open the possibility that political struggles targeting national political change co-constitutes the world-economy. It would contemplate, that is, how resolutions of such political struggles (those of any actor trying to make political change "inside" a given nation) co-constitute the very nature of the world-economy. In doing so, it avoids making any assumptions often built into the outside-in approach: that outside forces are critical—if not the—driving forces behind national-political dynamics. Instead, it leaves open the possibility that even actors seemingly far from the commanding heights of the capitalist world-economy have the

power to shape the very structure and dynamics of capitalism. It remains open to the possibility that the policies or institutional changes born out of "internal" political struggles may themselves have consequences for the nature of the world-markets. In doing so, it embraces the view of world-systems analysis endorsed by McMichael (1990) and Tomich (1994); one in which the very nature of the whole is, in fact, co-constructed by the social dynamics of its parts. We contribute to this effort, however, by specifying how one might reveal such co-constituting moments in national politics: through analyzing their elite social bases. Below we briefly sketch examples of sociologists who have already begun to practice elements of our inside-out approach.

Formulating Political Puzzles within a World-Historical Political Process

Here we describe three books that exemplify our inside-out approach of selecting their empirical focus of inquiry. Not only does each focus on a national political transformation of intrinsic interest to world-systems scholars, that of economic policy-making, but each also anchors its analysis by selecting national political transformations that represent puzzling instances within a given world-historical political process.

Chorev's award-winning *Remaking U.S. Trade Policy: From Protectionism to Globalization (*2007) frames the United States as a puzzling instance of free trade policy within the context of a world-historical process of trade liberalization. The United States's liberalization of trade breaks with the nation's own long history of protectionism. It also poses a challenge to the dominant narrative of the world's neoliberalization. The latter, she notes, often casts states as adopting neoliberal reforms, such as free trade, as by-product of economic or structural, or "external," pressures wrought by "globalization." And yet, such a narrative cannot explain the U.S. case which pioneered neoliberal reforms (Harvey 2005), and which originated those very structural conditions so essential in dominant narratives.

Winders' award winning *The Politics of Food Supply: U.S. Agricultural Policy in the World-Economy* (2009) similarly frames the retrenchment and eventual elimination of a state-interventionist policy in the United States as a puzzle. Winders focuses, however, on the heart of American protectionism: its agricultural policy to protect crops through supply management. This long-standing pillar of U.S. agricultural policy sought to elevate the overall price of crop commodities within the U.S. market by reducing production or supply (Winders 2009:1). In effect, it paid farmers not to grow crops. This reduced supply, increased the price of protected crops and increased farmer incomes.[5] Winders poses the policy's early moment of retrenchment

[5] The policy set the minimum price for crops like wheat, corn and cotton (price supports). To obtain this price, the government paid farmers to reach that minimum price. It did so, however, only when farmers restricted the amount that they produced to a certain percentage of their acreage (production controls).

(between 1954-1973) and eventual demise (in 1996) as puzzling moments within the longer history of U.S. agricultural protectionism. Furthermore, he poses the policy's 1996 demise as puzzling, given the world's much earlier embrace of neoliberalization.[6] Winders asks not only why this essentially neoliberal shift in agricultural policy occurred, but also why it occurred when it did within the world-historical political process of neoliberalization.

Kaup's book, *Market Justice: Political Economic Struggle in Bolivia* (2012) poses Bolivia's post-neoliberal project as a puzzle. The president who instigated this turn, Evo Morales, decried the injustices wrought by global capitalism, but he has failed to reduce Bolivia's dependence on the capitalist world-economy. Instead, he has intensified Bolivia's integration into the capitalist world-economy as an exporter of natural resources. By framing his study in this way, Kaup casts Bolivia not as an exemplary case of the recent left-wing post-neoliberal presidents in Latin America. Rather, he casts Bolivia's post-neoliberal turn as a puzzling moment within the much broader world-historical political process whereby societies, historically incorporated as peripheries within the capitalist world-economy, construct national projects that decry the injustices of their dominant mode of incorporation (Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein 1989). Unlike earlier instances within this political process, however, Bolivia constructs a project, which paradoxically, deepens its role as natural resource producer for export. Thus, Kaup, like Chorev and Winders, energizes his reader, and his research, to unravel political puzzles for world-systems analysis.

Unraveling Puzzles through the Cumulative Processes of Policy-Making

Having selected their empirical focus by identifying puzzling instances within world-historical political processes, it is perhaps not surprising that each of these works unravel their puzzles by analyzing the long-term concrete historical development of a given political process. That is, they analyze particular transformations of national policies with reference to what Hopkins (1978) called "cumulating processes." Their analyses reveal how earlier moments in a longer political process shaped the terrain of subsequent policy-making.

Chorev's analysis of U.S. trade policy over the 20th century reveals that a transformation of the institutional arrangements framing trade policy-making produced the shift in trade policy. Struggles over trade policy, she finds, first took place within the highly politicized public forum of Congress. But as of 1934, the official authority to set tariffs shifted to the executive branch. This shift limited protectionism to those industries with sufficient power in Congress to secure "selective protections." The executive branch further curtailed the ability of industries to secure

[6] The 1996 Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform (FAIR) Act eliminated supply management policy. The Act swapped the price supports with a fixed-income support payment to farmers, and ended production controls.

such selective protections in 1974, when it acquired authority over additional protectionist measures such as trade remedies. For twenty years thereafter, industries seeking protections had to appeal to "quasi-judicial executive agencies" (Chorev 2007:10) to secure protections, with increasingly limited success. In 1994, Congress made it even more difficult to obtain protections when it delegated authority over such disputes to the World Trade Organization's international-level dispute settlement mechanism. This further weakened the executive branch's already meager ability to secure protections for industries challenged by global competition. Chorev shows that free trade advocates defeated protectionists by transforming the institutional framework for making trade policy (Chorev 2007:10).

Winders makes an even more explicit case for why he must analyze "the historical development of supply management…[or] its policy trajectory" (2009: xvi) in order to understand its retrenchment and recent elimination. He echoes Hopkins when he argues that such policy changes "are not discrete acts but rather are steps in larger policy trajectories" (xvi). The fate of supply management policy rested, in Winders (2009) view, on the relative power of its prime advocates within Congress: Southern Democrats. He shows that at the time of the policy's origin with the 1938 addendum to the New Deal's 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act and throughout the period of expansion after 1973, these Democratic representatives held considerable clout in Congress. Their unusual longevity enabled them to secure and retain the chairmanships of many powerful committees in Congress (2009: 16). Winders' analysis of the policy's demise affirms Chorev's insight that the neoliberal shift occurred once those elite segments who relied on congressional power to preserve their protections lost out to those elites with access to the new institutional arenas of dispute settlement over foreign trade. Furthermore, as Winders reveals, this left protectionists vulnerable to shifts in their underlying social bases that could erode their popular support.

Kaup argues that unraveling the paradox of Bolivia's post-neoliberal regime requires that we look at "how and why people and places incorporate…into the global economy….and how and why they may actively seek out alternatives" (2014:18). For Bolivia, this means analyzing how and why Bolivia became incorporated into the global economy as an extractor of valuable natural resources. It means analyzing the paradox of Morales' regime within the country's long history of political conflicts over who controls, and how to use, resource wealth. Kaup argues the Morales post-neoliberal project is constrained by the "zombies" of neoliberalism, or the institutional and infrastructural legacies of the neoliberal era. These included the way neoliberalizers gutted Bolivia's state-owned hydrocarbon enterprise, undermining Bolivia's ability to become a viable producer of gas in its own right, and secured contracts with transnational gas producers, undermining the TNCs' willingness to make necessary investments for further exploration.

Unraveling the Puzzles with How World-Markets Differentiate Elite Interests

Each of these works also reveal the promise of empirical research guided by theories of the elite social bases of politics. Each reveals how world-markets differentiate the interests of the economic elites with a stake in any given national political struggle. Even so, the authors arrive at varied theoretical conclusions. That they can, illustrates how the puzzle-driven mode of selecting one's empirical focus of inquiry opens up avenues for theoretical innovation.

Chorev (2007) traces the institutional transformations that facilitated U.S. trade liberalization to a conflict among economic elites who were differentially situated within world-markets. In her view, protectionists included "domestic industries that were not internationally competitive" such as textile, apparel, footwear, steel, and later on the automobile and semiconductor industries (Chorev 2007:5). In contrast, the internationalists, or free trade advocates, included internationally competitive corporations, local industries using imported goods, commercial and investment banks, as well as private policy-discussion groups (Chorev 2007:3). In making domestic political struggle central, Chorev (2007:3) aligns with McMichael's call to challenge those narratives "obscuring political struggles that define the relations of globalization" (2001: 203). Her conclusions enable her to build on ample scholarship that has established the "elective affinity between new political institutions and global economic activities" (Chorev 2007:9). In particular, she affirms Jessop's (1997:574) observation that delegating authority to supranational authorities has constituted a form of institutional transformation consonant with the neoliberal global shift more generally. Such an institutional re-organization, she notes (2007:7), represents what Cox (1992:31) described as how "power within the state becomes concentrated in those agencies in closest touch with the global economy". Her work thereby echoes institutionalists, who have long noted the way that institutional structures affect the distribution of power and how the reorganization of authorities within the state can enhance the privileged access of some, even as they constrict the authority of others.

Chorev distinguishes herself, however, from dominant strains of historical institutionalism with her attention to the elite societal bases for the struggle over trade policy. She makes a compelling argument for greater attention to the strategic interests of key actors who shape and reshape the institutional framework for policy debates than has characterized historical institutionalism thus far. She certainly contributes to the vibrant community of historical sociologists examining institutional change (Adams, Clemens and Orloff 2005). But she differs from their proclivity, as Adams, Clemens and Orloff (2005) see it, to cast actors as having bounded-rationality that is culturally, more than economically, constituted. Rather, she emphasizes "the interplay between institutions and strategic actors more than most current formulations" of historical institutionalism and traces institutional change to the "deliberate political action of strategic players" (Chorev 2007:14).

Winders (2009) traces opposition to supply management policies not—as many have assumed—to a coalition of urban consumers opposed to rural interests. Rather, he traces it to the rise of divisions within the agricultural elite and their respective regional cross-class coalitions. Yes, the policy appeared to benefit all crop farmers, as it ensured they could secure higher than market-value prices for their crops. And yet, Winders (2009) reveals that there were powerful crop farmers who opposed these market interventionist policies. He reveals that cotton, corn and wheat farmers did, indeed, band together to instigate the policy. But his research into congressional votes and hearings over a 70-year period reveal that the midwestern medium-sized family farms of the corn belt broke with the Southern anchored cotton and wheat coalition. To understand the origins of these conflicts and the ultimate defeat of the wheat-cotton protectionist coalition, Winders traces how world markets differentiated and shifted the interests of the distinct segments of agricultural elites. He shows that cotton and wheat's lack of competitiveness in world-markets unified them in calling for protective policies. Their shared position in world markets thus defined the post-WWII food regime under U.S. hegemony. He reveals how world market conditions had become much more favorable for wheat by 1975. As a result, wheat abandoned the supply management coalition, leaving the Southern cotton segment the lone defender of the policy (Winders 2009:127).

Winders invites us to see his work as examining the type of ebb and flow in state protectionism from the vagaries of market societies delineated by Polanyi (1944). But as Winders rightly points out (2009:14), Polanyi's theory cannot explain when state intervention expands rather than recedes, let alone why the forces in favor of retrenchment would eventually win out over those favoring protectionism, as they did in his case. To do so, Winders reveals, requires an analysis not just of the interests arrayed in favor of such retrenchment and how they shape policy-making, but how these interests are themselves contingent on and co-constituters of the world-economy.

Kaup further unravels the puzzle of a "post-neoliberal" regime intensifying the nation's incorporation into the capitalist world-economy by examining the elite social bases of Morales' regime. Kaup pointedly observes that the social basis for Morales' regime consists not just of the popular classes who decried the social injustices of neoliberalism. Just like the social basis for Chavez' post-neoliberal regime (Gates 2010), Morales' also includes an unlikely suspect: the very transnational corporations demonized in the rallying cry for nationalization that galvanized his supporters. Thus, he reveals how Bolivia's left has ironically solidified the power of what some might call a transnational capitalist class, but which Kaup more precisely calls global elites participating in Bolivia's local circuits of capital. Bolivia's intensification of resource dependence can thus be understood as a natural outgrowth of a regime whose main benefactor were transnational capitalists. In doing so, Kaup reveals that Bolivia seeks to achieve national development and greater social equity not by rejecting its core elites as earlier nationalist

movements did (Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein 1989:66). Instead, it seeks a more equitable and just national development paradoxically, through deepening its role as natural resource producer for world markets, even if this entails deepening ties with core economic elites.

Discovering How Internal Political Struggles Co-Constitute theWorld-System

These works also demonstrate how this inside-out approach may discover sites of unanticipated agency within the capitalist world-economy. They reveal how struggles that target national sites of political change can in fact re-form the very nature of the capitalist world-economy. For example, Winders' wide-angle lens captures how the elite-driven political struggle at the center of shifting U.S. agricultural policy had unanticipated feedback effects on the social structures of the capitalist world-economy.[7] Kaup, similarly, reveals how struggles between mining and landed elites in Bolivia co-constituted the world's neoliberalization.

Winders (2009) shows how the supply management policy reconfigured the structure of the capitalist world-economy in ways that favored the corn segment's position. After World War II, the supply management policy expanded to include a third policy: paying farmers to convert their "surplus" production into international food aid (known as export subsidies). The U.S. government paid corn farmers for their surplus, which they then donated to poor countries. The policy had the perhaps unintended effect of eroding food production in the third world. This expanded foreign markets for U.S. agricultural exports such as wheat in addition to corn. It also increased the pressure to liberalize agriculture policy globally, as countries struggled to meet their internal food demands. The fact that this policy favoring corn and wheat segments was the only plank of the supply management policy that remained in place with the 1996 FAIR Act underscores the increased power of these segments in determining the shape of policy by the 1990s. Perhaps for these reasons, the committee that awarded Winders the PEWS book award praised his "multi-level analysis" as embodying "the strengths of world-systems analysis."

In delving into the precise nature of the elites Morales defeated, Kaup also reveals an unlikely champion of neoliberalism: Bolivia's mining elite. Historically a partner of the foreign tin barons, mining elites found living under the economic thumb of Bolivia's landed elites insufferable. For them, neoliberalism promised not just new opportunities to benefit economically, but an opportunity to use expanded state revenue to offset the now economically dominant landed elite. It was the nation's mining elite that championed a neoliberal project precisely because they hoped

[7] Winders also delineates how the supply management fueled perhaps the most formidable challenge to the Southern planter class: the civil rights movement. Under supply management Southern planters shifted production to other crops such as soy which"weakened the ties between planters and tenant farmers" (p.xv) that had characterized the plantation-tenant system of cotton. As the civil rights movement gained influence within the Democratic Party, the Southern planter class lost its political stronghold: their leadership positions within Congress.

that opening Bolivia up to transnational gas producers would enable them to gain a financial advantage over the landed elite. They sought to redistribute the wealth from this project to the mining sector, and thereby offset the historical financial advantage of the landed elites. Thus, it was Bolivia's mining elite, not transnational capitalists per se, that Bolivia's post-neoliberal regime sought to oust. It was control over resource wealth, not resource extraction per se, which the Morales regime sought to attain.

In revealing an unlikely elite protagonist of neoliberalism, Kaup counters a number of leading theories. He counters those who would characterize neoliberalization as resulting from international or outside influence—be it the interests of foreign capital investors (Frank 1969) embodied in a transnational capital class (Robinson and Harris 2000), or the leverage of international financial institutions through loan conditions (Stallings 1992). At the same time, he counters those who heralded internationally-trained technocratic teams as the internal architects of neoliberalization (Babb 2001; Centeno 1995). Instead, he affirms those who trace neoliberalism to internal elite champions (Gates 2009: Thacker 2000), in this case to mining elites who sought to eclipse landed elites. In doing so, he unveils how conflict between elites co-constituted the uneven geography of the current neoliberal capitalist world-economy.

Conclusion

The three books we feature illustrate the potential of our inside-out approach to politics. They each embrace, rather than discount, what might otherwise seem like inconvenient political developments for world-systems analysis. They select those national political transformations that are puzzling within a given world-historical political process. In doing so, they illustrate how our method of selecting puzzles can stand alone, without deploying an incorporated comparison. Consistent with how they frame their puzzles, each unravels their puzzles with an analysis of the cumulative processes of policy-making. These works also demonstrate the promise of delving into the ways world-markets differentiated elite interests, as suggested by critical theories postulating the elite social bases of politics. Doing so enables them to unravel their puzzles. Even so, these authors often arrive at distinct theoretical articulations of the relationship between elites, state institutions, world-markets and structures of inequality. As such, they demonstrate the flexibility and potential for theoretical innovation of our inside-out approach to analyzing politics. Finally, they also demonstrate the potential to reveal how the political struggle over a given national political policy may in fact re-shape the very terms of world markets. These works thereby illustrate the perils of dismissing efforts to understand the relationship between national political processes and global capitalism, as many third-wave historical sociologists seem to do.

Our inside-out approach contemplates how capitalism matters to national politics in ways that avoid the structural functionalism of Wallerstein's early outside-in approach and address his

"inability to account for variation in response to capitalist penetration" (Paige 1999:797). It embraces the messiness of real-world politics by intentionally selecting national political transformations that are puzzling. Even as it takes the particularities of politics seriously, it trains our attention on how such particularities relate to the apparently external forces of capitalism from within. It can reveal how the political struggles over national political outcomes in fact express underlying tensions among elites over how to relate to world-markets. When we analyze politics from the inside out, we can break free of reading capitalism as over-determining politics, and instead appreciate it as a dynamic—albeit highly structured—system that political struggles continuously form and re-form.

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