

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN SOCIOLOGY:  
STATE, SOCIAL FORCES, AND  
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT—A CRITICAL REVIEW OF  
WORLD SYSTEM THEORY

*Jia-you Sheu\**

**A. Introduction**

World system theory has become prominent in American sociological theories, especially in sociology of national development. While the pioneers of the world system perspective can be traced back to Prebisch (1950) and Baran (1957), the two major spokesmen for this perspective in contemporary English-speaking societies and Spanish-speaking societies are Wallerstein (1974) and Frank (1969), respectively.

This perspective arises in part out of criticisms of the modernization school's approach to development. The modernization school emphasizes internal variables (e.g., institutional arrangements, cultural values, and population characteristics) as factors contributing to economic development or underdevelopment (see Inkeles and Smith, 1974). In direct contrast to modernization school, the world system perspective emphasizes external variables (e.g., position in the world division of labor) and the interconnections between external variables and internal variables (e.g., the alliance between foreign and domestic economic actors) as factors contributing to development or underdevelopment. In other words, this "exogenetic" perspective (Hechter, 1975), as opposed to the "ontogenetic" perspective contained, for example, in modernization theory, views the development or underdevelopment of countries and areas not as separate events but as integral features of a single "world economy", with different geographic sectors performing different roles and functions in an

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\*The author is an Associate Research Fellow at the Institute of American Culture, Academia Sinica, Republic of China.

international division of labor (Frank, 1967; Wallerstein, 1974).

Frank (1967; 1969), for example, criticizes the concept of dual societies (traditional vs. modern) used by most modernization theorists on the ground that the “development of underdevelopment” of a traditional society is not the form that society takes upon contact with developed societies. It is rather the result of being involved in the capitalist world-economy as a peripheral society. Frank asserts that “historical research demonstrates that contemporary underdevelopment is in large part the historical product of past and continuing economic and other relations between the satellite underdeveloped and the now developed metropolitan countries” (1969:4). Wallerstein (1974) also claims that since the nineteenth century there has been only one world system in existence, namely, the capitalist world economy, which he regards as a unit with a single division of labor and without a common political system.

Students of development usually limit themselves to either development within societies, or development among societies—with societies being treated as *separate, unrelated* entities. The major contribution of the world system perspective to the study of development is that it shifts or redirects attention toward the *interconnections* of development or underdevelopment among societies, underlying the *external* impacts on internal development or underdevelopment of societies. Below, the theoretical formulations of the world system perspective will be introduced. The discussion will focus on the following major aspects of this perspective: (a) basic structure of the world system, (b) foreign trade and product specialization, (c) characteristics of social formation, and (d) the state in the world system.

## B. Basic Structure of the World System

A general paradigm of the world system perspective has been elaborated in recent years (e.g., Frank, 1969; Galtung, 1971; Wallerstein, 1974, 1977; Chirot, 1977). In general, world system theorists conceive the modern world system as

an effective division of labor, a world economy in which commodities are produced and exchanged with the object of realizing the maximum profit. The phrase "world system" implies that there is a working social system, larger than any country, whose operation is the appropriate focus of social analysis. These conceptualizations demand some elaboration.

First, the modern economy is characterized by capitalist production. In the modern economy, production is undertaken for sale in a market in which the object is to maximize profit.

Second, the unit of analysis of capitalist production must be specified at the level of the world economy, not within each country. Furthermore, the world economy should be conceived in terms of economic processes and links, not in terms of political, cultural and other criteria, even though they may be interrelated. Based on a world-scale economic division of labor, the world is divided into core and peripheral areas. In core areas national economies tend to be diversified and well-integrated; in peripheral areas national economies tend to be less diversified and not well-integrated. Peripheral national economies typically are composed of a "modern" sector and a "traditional" sector, with the latter serving as a labor reserve both for the modern sector and for core areas (Frank, 1969). In addition to core and peripheral areas, there are some areas in which economic structures are intermediate between those found in core and peripheral areas. These areas are called "semi-peripheral areas".

In terms of the dynamic aspects of the world economy, world system theorists maintain that the world economy as a whole is subject to cyclical processes and secular trends (Wallerstein, 1977; Chase-Dunn and Rubinson, 1979).

The cyclical processes of the world economy are conventionally termed "business cycles" in economics. They refer to the repeated expansion and contraction of the world economy. They are viewed by world system theorists not only as a description of historical realities, but also as constituting a fundamental parameter of the functioning of the world eco-

nomy. The locational shifts (upward and downward) of countries within the structure of the world economy and secular trends of the world economy are mainly explained in terms of these cyclical processes (Wallerstein, 1977; Chase-Dunn and Rubinson, 1979).

Secular trends in the world economy are the long-term developments of the world economy as a whole. These secular trends include: (a) the expansion of the world economy, (b) commodification – the intensification and deepening of commodity relations, (c) mechanization, (d) increased state formation, and (e) increased size of economic enterprises, (Wallerstein, 1977; Chase-Dunn and Rubinson, 1979), as will be elaborated in the following.

### C. Foreign Trade and Product Specialization.

Scholars differ on the effects of trade with other countries. According to the principle of comparative advantage as formulated by Ricardo (1971) and others (e.g. Samuelson, 1962; Kindleberger, 1964), all countries maximize their growth by trading with one another, whether or not their respective endowments of production differ. Each country in the world division of labor should concentrate its production in what its endowments of production favor. As a result, trade with other countries should benefit all countries regardless of specialization and level of development.

This perspective, however, has been challenged recently by world system theorists (e.g. Baran, 1957; Frank, 1967; Galtung, 1971; Emmanuel, 1972; Bettelheim, 1972; Amin, 1974; Wallerstein, 1974; for an excellent review of this, see Ragin and Delacroix, 1978). In general, they argue that the historically determined division of labor in the world economy and the place of the peripheral areas within this division of labor interfered with the latter's economic development, and as a result the "development of underdevelopment" was promoted in peripheral areas. Specifically, these theorists claim that within the world economy peripheral areas became specialized in the export of raw materials, or relatively unprocessed goods,

which was inimical to development because of various processes associated with the transactions between them and the core countries. These various processes include unequal exchange, class distortion, and the blockage of structural differentiation (Ragin and Delacroix, 1978).

(a) Unequal exchange: world system theorists such as Emmanuel (1972), Amin (1974) and Mandel (1975) have proposed the notion of unequal exchange in describing the underdevelopment of peripheral areas. Though there are some differences among them, in general, they claim that a loss of value occurs when commodities produced in the periphery are exchanged for commodities produced in core countries. Unequal exchange occurs because labor productivity in peripheral countries tends to be less than that in core countries. The exchange among them leads inevitably to a drain or outflow of value and capital from the peripheral countries to core countries which hinders the accumulation of capital and perpetuates underdevelopment in peripheral areas.

(b) Group distortion: The interrelations among group distortion, trade and underdevelopment will be discussed in greater details in next section, concerning characteristics of the social formation. In general, group distortion-oriented theorists point out the failure of indigenous elites to forge economic development in peripheral areas because of the unfavorable position of the peripheral areas in the international division of labor. In particular, they argue that the incorporation of peripheral areas into the world economy created local, parasitic social groups which function as intermediaries in the process of exploitation by foreign actors (e.g., latifundia-owners in Latin America, Kulak traders in Africa). This exploitation is made possible by the congruence of interests between them and foreign actors (Galtung, 1971; Frank, 1972; Mamdani, 1976). The alliance between local, parasitic social groups and foreign actors led to the suppression of policies favoring indigenous industrial development and to the strengthening of the export of raw materials from, and imports of processed goods to, the peripheral countries. It thus became a group-based blockage to

the development of the peripheral areas.

(c) Structural differentiation: Some authors (e.g. Hirschman, 1958; Galtung, 1971; Amin, 1974) emphasize the effects of world trade on the internal social structure of peripheral countries. They claim that specialization in the export of raw materials or unprocessed goods in peripheral countries hinder their internal structural differentiation. Structural differentiation promotes economic development because of its tendency for self-propulsion which leads to further differentiation within the same sphere of production (the so-called backward linkage and forward linkage in economics) and between spheres of production (the so-called spill-over effects). The former designates the division of labor within the same sphere of production, while the latter refers to the *societal* division of labor (Ragin and Delacroix, 1978). Primary product specialization impedes structural differentiation because it limits the potential for the expansion of the division of labor in a single sphere of production and of the societal division of labor as a whole (Galtung, 1971).

#### D. Characteristics of the Social Formation

Some social scientists (e.g. Moore, 1966; Brenner, 1976; Tilly, 1975) attempt to explain economic development by analyzing the characteristics of social formation of individual societies. In particular, they point out that the degree to which peasants and workers confront capitalists has an important bearing on economic development.

When peasants and workers are strong, capitalists can not squeeze them at will in order to get more economic surplus. Capitalists have to develop entrepreneurial creativity to increase labor productivity and to get more economic surplus. Brenner (1976) argues that the English tenant's relative ability to resist coercion brought forth cooperation in investments and improvements between the tenant and the landlord. This cooperative landlord-tenant relationship set technological innovativeness free (e.g., the convertible husbandry system), improved tenants' productivity, and made possible the transfor-

mation of agriculture in England. The agricultural transformation, in turn, was the key to England's industrial and over-all economic development.

When peasants and workers are weak, as was the case in 16th century Eastern Europe and modern Africa, the landed elites can get more surplus simply by increasing workers' hours or decreasing workers' wages. Hence, there is no structural imperative for improvements and technological innovations. Therefore, the absolute powerlessness of peasants and workers is inimical to economic development.

There are several factors suggested by group-oriented scholars (e.g. Moore, 1966; Brenner, 1976, Tilly, 1976) that determine social formation among peasants and workers: their level of solidarity, degree of consciousness and organization, and their relation to potential allies and to the state.

The level of solidarity and extent of political organization displayed by peasants and the workers has an important bearing on political action. Strong solidarity, as Barrington Moore (1966:475) suggests, can take a revolutionary form when institutional arrangements are such that they spread conflicts through large numbers of peasants or workers. The Chinese Communist's uprising in the 1940s is an example. On the other hand, weak solidarity is found where social and political obstacles to the spread of grievances and conflicts exist. Weak solidarity within workers or peasant groups interferes with their potential for political action. It is thus un conducive to strong political organization. Such was the case in Indian villages in premodern and later times.

There are several structural factors which might account for the differences between the Chinese and the Indian case. The Indian villages were highly divided by (a) region (the weak state bureaucracy was not able to unite India), (b) the concrete proliferation of subcastes, (c) religion (Hinduism vs. Islam), and (d) language. The social isolation of the Indian villages inhibited peasants' political action beyond the village level. In contrast to the Indian villages, Chinese villages were much more integrated with one another. First, a powerful im-

perial state bureaucracy placed all regions under a highly uniform rule. Second, there was never a caste system in China. Third, there were few rivalries among religions in China. As a matter of fact, the main religions (Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism) were to a large extent syncretized. Hence, in China religion has seldom been the basis for grave conflict. Finally, all educated Chinese share the same written language. Social and cultural homogeneity within villages and between villages made communication, cooperation, and unity of action beyond village level easier to achieve for Chinese peasants. Thus according to this reasoning, the different types of socio-economic organization found in different societies have a considerable influence on the power of peasants and workers.

The possible allies of peasants and workers depend to some extent on the stage and nature of economic development that a society has reached and on specific historical circumstances. The latter may be a product of past participation in the world economy. For example, facing the sweeping domination of the powerful industrial elites, small entrepreneurs (e.g., small traders, craftsmen) in the core may tend to side with workers in conflicts between workers and the industrial elite. On the other hand, small traders in contemporary Uganda form a powerful group which participates actively in the exploitation of peasants and workers. Similarly, skilled laborers in the modern sector may not ally with workers in the traditional areas because they have more to gain from the dominance of foreign sector. Thus, the pro-working-class government of Allende's United Popular Front did not get strong support from skilled laborers in the modern sector (McDaniel, 1976). Furthermore, when the state bureaucracy develops as a pseudo-class, it may compete against landlords and commercial elites, or it may protect the interests of peasants and workers. Peasants' and workers' political resources may thereby be increased. Allende's Chile was the attempt to move Chile in this direction.

In any case, when peasants' and workers' levels of solidarity are high, and when they have potential allies from other segments or from the state, their bargaining power will be



strong.

The level of solidarity, the availability of potential allies from other segments or from the state (i.e., group development and dynamics, or more generally, the characteristics of social formation) are also shaped by a region's position in the world division of labor. Wallerstein (1974:95–105) claims that the core's specialization in intensive agriculture, cattle raising and processing, and textiles required a high degree of cooperation and a high level of skill in the work force. These requirements increased workers' and peasants' solidarity and enabled them to get better terms from capitalists. Furthermore, the factory and urban settings (which developed rapidly in modern core countries), as group-oriented scholars pointed out, facilitated worker's solidarity and organization.

In sum, in this section it is proposed that economic development is influenced by the characteristics of the social formation of individual societies (particularly, factors affecting the degree of confrontation between workers and peasants and capitalists) which, in turn, are shaped in part by the position of individual countries in the world division of labor.

## **E. The State in the World System**

In the following section I will review theoretical discussions of the state by world system scholars. The discussion will include a discussion of theories of the state and a discussion of critiques of these theories.

### ***E.1. Theories of the State***

Theories of the state are very incomplete and multimorphous in world system theory. Wallerstein (1974), for example, suggests that the economic structure of different zones in the world division of labor support different-types of states of varying strength (strong states in the core, weak states in the periphery). Each different type operates in the interests of the local dominant class. In his scheme, the core state is characterized by a strong bureaucratic machinery which protects the interests of the dominant group. Wallerstein's understanding of state structure as economically determined by the world divi-

sion of labor is closely bound up with his view of the state's function relative to the rest of the world system as primarily an enforcer of the transfer of surplus from the periphery to the core.

Frank (1972) argues that in regions (e.g., Latin America) where capitalist production was initiated in response to a demand for raw materials from foreign actors, an alliance between local commercial elites and foreign actors developed. The interests of the local commercial elites were directed toward free trade with core areas, against the interests of the indigenous industrial elites who favored protectionism. The contrast in the development fates of Brazil and the U.S. reveals two different outcomes in the struggle between these two elite groups in each region:

In Brazil, a commercial (sugar and coffee) elite backed by the core (Great Britain) won control of the destiny of that society. Thus, commercial elites suppressed policies favoring indigenous industrial development. Therefore, the spin-off and spill-over effects that industrial development had in England, for example, were lacking.

In the U.S., this same group (commercial elites—the so-called “cotton aristocracy”) was defeated during the Civil War by the aspiring industrial elites.

Frank further argues, seemingly paradoxically, that the victory of the industrial elites in the U.S. (and, consequently, North American economic development) was facilitated by the particular strength of the North American polity. The strength of the U.S. polity, in turn, rested in the large number of small freehold farmers. The paradox lies in the fact that the freehold farmer polity owed its existence to a policy of benign neglect on the part of the mother country (U.K.) due to the perceived poverty of the English colonies of North America. Thus, according to Frank, the contemporary power and wealth of the U.S. and the contrasting underdevelopment of Brazil flow respectively from the initial poverty of the former and from the initial richness of the latter.

According to Mandel (1975), interference by the core is

necessary to destroy precapitalist modes of production which are obstacles to economic development. Where this interference takes place in the presence of a pre-existing embryonic indigenous elites (as in Japan) or in the presence of a strong state (as in Russia), some degree of industrial development follows. When the destruction of the precapitalist mode of production occurs in the absence of such forces, core interference leads to under-development. Where states are strong, the industrial elites can take political action through military and commercial policy to protect indigenous manufacturing. Where states are weak, outward-oriented infrastructure and export-oriented elites become dominant, and production and occupational structures in these areas take on the characteristics of the so-called "enclave economy."

Typically, one or a few modern sectors are created which tend, of necessity, to buttress the favored position of the commercial elites who control them. Although they may be technologically "vanguard sectors", they are at the service of interests residing outside domestic economic circuits. They do not operate as a force for the diffusion of progress throughout the economic structure. On the contrary, they serve as a way-station for flows originating and terminating in foreign metropolitan centers (Galtung, 1971). Thus, these "vanguard sectors" do not lead to the expansion and diversification of the economic infrastructure of the occupational structure, in general, and of manufacturing production, in particular (Delacroix and Ragin, 1978). In the process, traditional economic relationships are disrupted but indigenous development is blocked (Mandel, 1975).

Berman (1974) claims that dependent enclave development in Africa maintains the traditional clientelistic system and gives it an international dimension by creating mutually beneficial links between the local elites and external capitalist interests. These links give the local elites a vested interest in the preservation of the status quo. In addition, foreign actors may foment political instability (e.g., coups) in their attempts to improve the position of the indigenous clientelistic network

to which they are linked. Foreign intervention into the political process will tend to focus on efforts to encourage or discourage such instability in their favor (e.g., the case of Zaire). Furthermore, Berman argues that clientelism retards the development of groups by dividing individuals sharing similar economic backgrounds and by hindering the emergence of collective consciousness. Group politics is a direct challenge to the clientelistic system and is excluded as a possible political mode by the influence of foreign metropolitan actors. As a result, a commercial elite remains the dominant social force while the development of other social forces is aborted.

While Berman argues that the world system prevents group formation and class-politics in Africa, Stavenhagen claims that it does not. Stavenhagen (1975) shows that the incorporation of Africa into the world economy produced profound changes in its socioeconomic structure. The traditional self-sufficient subsistence economy in Africa was disrupted by the slave trade at first and then by cash crops and enclaves in response to the demand for labor and materials from core countries. The consequences of this evolution for group formation and class politics are as follows:

First, the appearance of rural migrant labors: The introduction of the money economy and the establishment of monetary taxes by the colonial administration forced an increasing number of workers from the subsistence economy to seek wage labor in the capitalist sector.

Second, the emergence of the cash crop farmer: Cash crop farming, introduced by the colonial administration, modified traditional production relations in agriculture. Capitalist relations of production (e.g., wage labor, capital accumulation, marketing, mortgages, and credits) expanded. The emergence of the commercial cash crop farmer represents the rise of a new social class in African agriculture. These farmers were able to elevate themselves in wealth and thereby acquire substantial economic and political power. The production of cash crops was encouraged by foreign actors. It served the interests of foreign actors seeking agricultural raw materials by reducing

the need for their own investments and at the same time ensuring them of a greater supply. The over-supply of cash crops due to competitive expansion by producing countries worsened the terms of trade and made these countries vulnerable to the boom and bust cycles of world commodity prices.

Third, the establishment of the enclave plantation economy: The enclave plantation economy was established by colonial administration or directly managed by foreign corporations. Work on plantations separated the laborer from his original means of production. Thus, plantations became the characteristic ground for the development of a peasant group.

In sum, from the above discussions we can conclude that world system theorists tend to emphasize two aspects of the state in the world economy: Its relationships to social group and its strength.

First, with regard to the relationship between state and social group, world system theorists tend to consider the state as a superstructure of the economically dominant group. The line between the state and the dominant group is often blurred or hardly distinguishable. Historically, the economically dominant group tended to be the commercial elites in peripheral areas while it was the industrial elites which proved dominant in core countries.

Second, with regard to state's strength, these theorists tend to claim that in the modern world economy strong states are found in core countries while weak states are found in peripheral countries.

### *E.2 Critiques*

State as superstructure: Whether the state is a superstructure or not is an empirical question; it cannot be decided by fiat. This question must be examined in the following terms: (1) Which economic group or portion of group dominates society? (2) Which group interests does the state protect?

When there is a high correspondence between dominant social group and the group interests the state protects, the state may indeed become the administrative machinery of the dominant group. However, this has not always been the case

historically, which is one of the reasons why the world system's view of the state as superstructural is an oversimplification. For example, in colonial Uganda the economically dominant class was the commercial elite, while the class interests the state protected were those of the landlord class, the cotton growers (Mamdani, 1976). In Chile under Allende the economically dominant group was commercial elites, while Allende's government attempted to protect the interests of the workers (even though the regime failed in this attempt.) These are some historical examples in which the economically dominant group and the group interests the state protected did not coincide.

Max Weber argues in his discussion of class, status, and power that the state can be independent of class and group. Weber (1947) states that because of their different positions in the societal division of labor, the interests of the dominant group and state bureaucrats (as a whole) may not coincide. He discusses numerous political phenomena that mitigate class dynamics. Though the state has to depend on classes or groups for revenue, once the state achieves autonomous power it may cease its dependence on any one class or group.

In sum, though state and dominant social group are intimately interconnected, the state can be relatively independent of group domination and play an active role in national development. This, I suspect, is the case in South Korea, Republic of China, Hong Kong and Singapore.

State's strength: World system theorists argue, that strong states are found in the core while weak states are found in the periphery. However, this argument has some defects:

First, historically, strong states are not necessarily found only in the core. The Netherlands was regarded by Wallerstein as a core state, but it did not possess a strong state; on the other hand, imperial China had a "strong state" in most ways, but it was never in the core.

Second, Wallerstein argues that a weak state is characteristic of the periphery. However, for Wallerstein's overall scheme to function, it seems necessary that, relative to other internal

social groups, the periphery state should be strong enough to ensure surplus extraction. Otherwise, the regime cannot play a role in the world economy. Brenner (1976) indicates that the underdevelopment of Poland was not due to its weak state, but precisely to the degree of its "effectiveness" in enforcing policies that tended to strengthen the Polish serf mode of production. In other words, the state helped the Polish landlords to ensure surplus extraction (squeezing the peasants) and simultaneously tended to minimize Poland's economic development by limiting entrepreneurship. Brenner (1976), as well as Perry Anderson (1974), claim that the state's relationship to development is not most satisfactorily grasped in terms of relative strength, but rather in terms of degree of autonomy relative to a country's internal social forces.

Hence, when analyzing development, it is mandatory to take into consideration not only the state's strength relative to the world economy, but also the degree of autonomy (independent of group interest, particularly commercial elites) it enjoys.

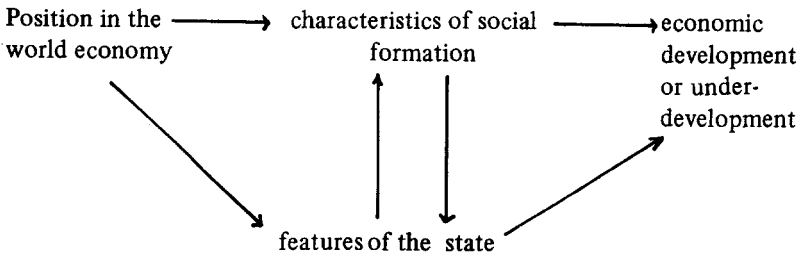
When the state plays an active, independent, and central role in national development, it may serve as an important mediator of the world economy even if a country's economic position is weak relative to other countries. For example, Ragin and Delacroix (1978) have pointed strongly to the importance of the state in mediating economic development. Tugwell's discussion of the management of oil revenue by OPEC countries is another example. The state can intervene and manage the country's resources, or it can impose economic policies such as austerity or autarky. In any case, the need for state intervention in initiating and sustaining economic development is great precisely because western style class development is aborted in the periphery, according to world system theory. In general, the economic development of the contemporary developed countries was preceded by deliberate state policies and action.

Hence, it is proposed that features of the state, especially its strength in the world economy relative to other states and

its autonomy relative to internal social force, constitute important factors in social and economic development.

### F. Conclusion

In this essay, we discussed three factors having an important bearing on the national development of a society: position in the world economy, characteristics of social formation, and features of the state. In addition, we also discussed how the position of a country in the world economy influences the nature of the state and the characteristics of social formation. Based on the above discussions, the interconnections between the position in the world economy, the characteristics of social formation, the features of the state, and the economic development of a country can be diagrammed summarily as follows:



The above diagram constitutes the national development model of the world system theory. The world system theory emphasizes, as we can see from the above diagram, external variables (e.g., position in the world economy) and the interconnections between external variables and internal variables (e.g., characteristics of social formation and features of the state) as factors contributing to a country's development or underdevelopment.



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## 當代美國社會學：政府、社會力 和國家成長——世界體系理論的評論

(摘 要)

許 嘉 猷

世界體系理論最近正崛起於美國社會學界，特別是在經濟成長社會學方面。此一理論的興起，部份起於對現代化學派如殷格斯(Inkeles)等人的攻擊。現代化學派強調一個地區的內在因素(如文化價值、制度的安排、人口特性等)為導致此地區成長與否的主要因素。與此相反地，世界體系理論着重於一個地區的外在因素(例如此一地區在世界經濟分工中所佔的位置)，外在因素與內在因素的互相連接(例如外來從事經濟者與本土從事經濟者的連合)為導致此地區成長與否的主要因素。

世界體系理論認為，當今世界經濟本身乃是一整體的社會體系，此一體系超乎任何國家和社會。其本身如何運作應是社會分析的焦點，因為此一體系的運作影響此一體系內各個國家或社會的社會結構、階級關係、政治制度和經濟成長。因此，研究當今某一國家或社會的成長，不應視此一國家或社會為一單獨的，無牽連的實體，而應在整個世界經濟下看某一國家或社會與其他國家或社會間如何連繫。在此一基本前提之下，世界體系理論注重下列幾點：

第一，世界體系本身的基本結構。此包括世界體系的基本結構，其結構上的特性為何，此一體系本身如何運作等等。

第二，國際貿易和生產專業化。此項包括對外貿易與該國經濟成長的關係，基於比較利益原則下的生產專業化是否一定對該國有利，或者得視該國的經濟發展程度和生產類別而定，對外貿

易與該國的社會分化的關係等等。

第三，社會力的特質。此包括一國或某一地區的社會力如何受世界體系的影響，某一國或地區的社會力如何和其他國或地區連接起來，其連結的主要機構為何，與該國的社會，經濟成長有何關係等等。

第四，政府在世界體系所佔的位置。此研究包括世界體系的運作與某國政府的強弱有何關係，在世界體系之範疇下，弱小政府可以扮演何種角色去促進該國的成長等等。