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THE STUDY OF LONG-TERM CHANGE AND WORLD POLITICAL  
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Abstract

Four research strategies on the long-term change of the world system are analyzed in order to bring out knowledge relevant to the study of the formation and development of the world's political institutions, in particular government institutions. The Frank's world system approach, Modelski's evolutionist theory, English School approach, and Wendt's teleological approach to the study of world institutions and change are examined and compared. Relying on Wendt's and, particularly, Modelski's analysis, the last part of the paper highlights some topics on the change of the form of the leadership of the world's government institutions in the short-medium term.

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The large majority of political scientists working in the field of institutional change have a preference for short-term and contextual analysis rather than long-term and process/structure analysis. By contrast, this chapter relies on long-term analyses of global processes, structures and mechanisms in order to understand the formation of and past changes in the world's political institutions, and to work out how to model future change. In the four sections of this chapter, the nature and origins of these institutions, and the causes and direction of their non-casual change, are explored. On the assumption that the formation of and changes in these institutions are long processes, moved forward by human communities' aptitude for learning, three propositions are discussed hereafter, i.e.:

1 The global system, which encompasses all regional international systems, came into existence a thousand years ago. Political globalization also started about a thousand years ago, and has been developing for at least ten centuries;

2 In the continuous reproduction of the global political system, social mechanisms of learning and innovation have produced a coherent network of institutions of government that, in the second half of the twentieth century, turned decisively towards a preference for formal structures;

3 Change in global political institutions is neither casual nor without direction, and its destination can be predicted fairly accurately.

Knowledge about the past processes of change in the world system is important for anticipating the direction of current change in the world's political institutions, but analytical and interpretive models are also relevant to the accomplishment of this endeavor. In particular, George Modelski's evolutionist approach to the analysis of global politics is here recognized as an appropriate strategy for the analysis and modeling of institutional change. Aspects of this approach are examined here in dialog with other long-term change theories and studies, namely Gunder Frank's economic structure approach; the "common perspective" approach largely represented by the English School; and Alexander Wendt's organizational/teleological approach. Definition of global political institutions is the first step of this study, in terms of recognizing the differences that exist among political scientists with regard to the very nature of these institutions.

### **Defining the political institutions of the global system**

In the traditional study of international politics, as distinct from the long-term study of global politics, scholars concentrate on institutions like diplomacy, international law and war, institutions that serve the primary interest that states have in having ordered and predictable relations. Diplomacy developed to communicate and negotiate in conditions that were fair and certain; international law developed to avoid conflicts of interest, by referring to shared principles and norms; war evolved to solve serious conflicts by agreed forms of violence when agreement on shared norms is lacking; and violence is taken as the ultimate instrument.<sup>1</sup> These institutions have not been created by someone in particular, but have emerged from the continuous interaction of states, and, on occasion, have been transformed and adapted to new circumstances. According to the terminology of the English School, which is particularly concerned with the study of this type of institutions (see especially Buzan, 2004; Holsti, 2005), it is common to refer to them as *primary or constitutive institutions*.

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<sup>1</sup> It is correct to add that some authors also consider balance of power to be an institution that gives order to the whole set of relations of an international political system.

In the study of global politics, as thoroughly explained by the authors in this book (see especially Chapter ?? by Modelski, and Chapter ?? Thompson), the existence of a different type of institution, i.e. *global reach institutions*, is brought to our attention. Like the previous ones, they are informal but, nevertheless, effective institutions for the constitution, operation and re-production of the global political system. Global leadership is the institution that gives uniform direction to the system by selecting and executing coherent programs and strategies of government with regard to world problems and relations between state-actors. Global war is (maybe, has been) the macro-decision institution for the change of authority in the system. As such, global wars have been key turning points in world history with regard to institutional change because, besides introducing new leadership, they have reformed the political structure of the whole world. Besides these two strictly political institutions, other institutions of global reach, which belong to the economic and social sectors, like leading industries and social movements, have important functions in the operation and reproduction of the global political system. On the whole, institutions of global reach emerge from world-wide processes and the action of the state- and non-state-actors that are able to perform on a global scale. They persist over time and across subsequent historical world systems. However, their characteristics change over time to adapt to new conditions, and by interacting with organization institutions, which are presented here below. With regard to such knowledge, it is possible that global war will, in future, give way to a different form of macro-decision-making institution that will fulfill the function of change in the authority of the system; and that global leadership shifts from the one-state form that dominated the past 500 years, to the different form that scholars see as consisting of either one formal organization or a uniform network of international organizations. In Modelski's analysis, for instance, global leadership is one of the historical forms of authority-bearing institution within the process of evolution of global politics. More precisely, around 500 years ago, the one-state form of global leadership replaced the classical imperial form that lasted from about AD 1000 to AD 1430, and it is now in the process of being replaced by the global organization form (see Modelski and Devezas, 2007, Chapter 3 of this volume). Other scientific studies (see, for example, the discussion of Wendt's analysis later in this chapter) also recognize that the current process of change in the inter-state system leads to the centralization, into a world organization, of the power to act in the interests of security.

Besides the two above-mentioned informal types of institution, a third type has been created by states in order to deal with collective issues and problems. They give steady organization to the global system over periods of time shorter than that of the global-reach institutions with which they partially overlap. They are formed at the constitutive time of historical – either regional or world level – international systems on the initiative of many states, but especially the most powerful ones and those possessing resources specifically relevant to crucial, common problems. The label “*organization and government institutions*” is appropriate to such institutions, because they are instrumental in the formation of the political organization of the system and government that deal with distinct issues and problem areas. On the succession of systems to one another, not all organizations and government institutions are replaced with new ones. Some of them preserve their main features over time; others are reformed and adapted to new conditions; and brand-new ones are created. On occasion, these institutions can also be reformed during the lifetime of a historical system, under the pressure of the coalition of states, in order to respond to new emerging problems. The great-power coalition is an example of an organization and government institution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Initially an institution of the European international system, it also served as a global leadership institution. The League of Nations and the United Nations are examples of institutions formed to cope with the global problems of the twentieth century. Other contemporary institutions, created to deal with the current problems of the

global system, are coherent complexes of norms, practices and international organizations, commonly called regimes. They are issue-specific, and regulate currency, trade, the environment and other international problems.

World political institutions, then, can be divided into three types, intimately linked, complementary to, to some extent overlapping with one another, but also divisible from one another, i.e. the primary or constitutive type, the global-reach type, and the organization and government type. Type-one and type-two institutions have a continuous existence, whereas type-three institutions are discontinuous and system-specific. It is an important aspect of the argument of the present study that organization-and-government institutions of the current world political system, at odds with the institutions of the world systems of the past, are more formal, i.e. they have their own statutes, administrative structures, and material and human resources. These characteristics must be preserved in modeling the next stage of evolution of global-reach institutions, especially of global leadership and global war, because of the interdependent development of both global-reach- and organization-institutions. Incidentally, we should remember that the importance of the formal nature of the current organization and government institutions is widely recognized in the accepted definition of the present global system as institution-based hegemonic system, and of the United States' institutional hegemonic or leadership role (see, for example, Cronin, 2001; Ikenberry, 1998; and Puchala, 2005). These definitions imply that, at the end of the Second World War, the United States sustained the formation of institutions that have adapted to new circumstances and have been the essential instrument of organization and government of the global system that has existed up to the present time. Consequently, as noted in the conclusions of this chapter, the American interpretation of this role merits special attention in the modeling of the next phase of institutional change.

The majority of analysts of international politics are reluctant to use the terms “organization” and “government”. It is not my intention here to deal extensively with this issue, but, for the sake of clarity, the use of these terms is defined briefly below, because the definition is useful to the analysis of global politics here presented. The reluctance of international relations scholars to use the “organization” and, especially, “government” concepts is explained by the close relationship that exists between these concepts and those of authority and legitimacy that are believed to be inapplicable to the international political system. This belief is founded upon the notion that the international system, at odds with the state, is lacking in institutions for imposing authoritative decisions on the system members. Within such a concept, only formal–legal institutions have both political authority and legitimacy, and system members will only accept political submission to formal–legal institutions. In opposition to this concept, another concept – empirically demonstrated mainly by anthropological and sociological studies – acknowledges that authority is the legitimate political role founded on practice that system members normally accept as good for the system order, irrespective of the transformation of practice into legal–formal structures.

Taking into account that political authority can both formal–legal- and practice-authority, three kinds of political systems can be distinguished, i.e. those, like states, that rely only on legal–formal-authority institutions; those, like past international systems, that rely only on practice-authority-institutions; and those that rely on both formal–legal- and practice-authority institutions, like the contemporary global system, as it is demonstrated here later. It is worth remarking, however, that the formal and informal base of authority-institutions is not taken by political scientists as being important in explaining the structure and dynamics of political systems. In fact analysts take the relationship between the concentration of power/authority and the level of legitimacy of political authority much more into account. For example, on the base of this relationship, the typologies of domestic political regimes are arranged in order to differentiate the various democratic and authoritarian forms. Also,

international political systems can be classified in relation to power concentration and the legitimacy of authority, and various forms of institutional political organization can be differentiated from one another. It must be added here that the term “political organization” in international political analysis is homologous to the term “regime” in the analysis of domestic politics, but, to avoid confusion, it cannot be used in international political analysis with the meaning it has in domestic politics analysis, because “regime”, in the international relations field, has the consolidated meaning of a complex of norms, practices and international organizations for the government of issue-specific problems.

In order to demonstrate the importance of the relationship between power concentration and authority legitimacy in distinguishing between different types of international political organization, it is worth noting Adam Watson’s comparative study of the international systems of three historical periods, i.e. ancient state systems; European international society after the fifteenth century; and the later global international society. Watson (1992) distinguishes four types of political organization – i.e. independence, hegemony, dominion and empire – according to the increasing level of both power centralization and legitimacy of authority.<sup>2</sup> Watson’s study makes explicit that all political organizations – even those characterized by high power concentration – are stable as far as the system members consider the authority of one or few of them as legitimate. His analysis demonstrates that strong propensity toward hegemony and empire types prevailed in ancient international systems. By contrast, European international society, was characterized by anti-hegemonic attraction, although hegemonic tendencies prevailed to a large extent. An anti-hegemonic push has pervaded the global international society, but independent organizations have not existed so far. However, Watson emphasizes the importance of system’s cultural traits in explaining the dominance of different forms of organization in the three periods that he examined, but he overlooked the role of institutions as instruments of government in the leading state(s).

Unlike Watson, Modelski explicitly deals with the institutional dimension of the world political system. In his analysis, global political institutions are defined as *behavioral and policy patterns*, and also as operational and routine rules giving stability to international relations that are reproduced through socialization processes. In his analysis, the institutions of government of the global political system are the institutions of global reach that sustain the vertical structures of the system, giving a global power the tools needed to set in action strategies for the control of collective problems. Modelski defines global leadership as “*an informal structure of global political authority ... [for] the management of global problems*” (2000b). Global leadership, then, is a practice (i.e. not a formal) institution of government, based on both concentration of forces of global reach, i.e. military, economic, and cultural resources of power, and output legitimacy, i.e. good management of global problems. It can be said that, Modelski, unlike many contemporary students of international hegemony, has turned to a preference for the term “*leadership*” rather than “*hegemony*” in referring to this institution, because the latter term has normally been used to indicate coercive power, while

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<sup>2</sup> In *independence*, states are free to make domestic and external decisions, but international relations and their voluntary respect for reciprocal agreements impose limits on their external behavior. In *hegemony*, states are independent in domestic affairs, but hegemonic authority conditions their external relations because they consent to the need for authority to ensure order in the system. In the third type, *dominion*, the authority of one state on the others covers the domestic sphere, even if states maintain their identity and structures of government and administration. In the fourth type, *empire*, all the states are directly administered by the centre of the empire.

organizational capabilities and participatory decision-making are important components of global-reach institutions. However, especially since Gramsci and the Gramscian School (see, for example, Arrighi, 1982; Cox, 1987; Murphy, 1994) defined the concept of hegemony by stressing the importance of consent in the relationship between the hegemonic actor and its partners, the two terms can be considered as interchangeable in political discourse.

Another important point to make regarding global leadership is that, as Modelski remarks, it is not an omnipotent and unlimited *institution* of government of the global system. This aspect deserves comment. Political systems differ from one another in the scope of the legal capacity and legitimate action of the government institutions, i.e. the number and range of issues that belong to the political or public sphere. The areas of values, interests and problems that the system members reserve for the private sphere, i.e. the areas that political authority cannot enter, and the areas of values, interests and problems that the system members agree to process as “public sphere” matters, i.e. the areas of collective discussion and authoritative decisions, are neither the same across space, i.e. in all political systems, nor over time, i.e. in the history of a single political system. Generally speaking, in the last few centuries, state political systems have enormously increased the number of areas pertaining to the political sphere, especially in advanced countries. However, by contrast, the global political system has only moderately, and in recent times, increased the number of matters that can be said to be covered by the political sphere.<sup>3</sup> As Ikenberry (1998) remarks, at the time that a new international system comes into existence, states agree on the limits of the political sphere of the system, and, in the constitution (which is not a formal, written document) of the new system, scientists can find an indication about the enlargement of the scope of the political sphere of the previous international system. Modelski defines the world’s public sphere as consisting of critical world problems; comprehending problems brought in by various segments of world opinion; and the challengers to the global leader – either single countries or coalitions of countries. Analyzing the development of the current world system, Ruggie (2004) also demonstrates that non-state-actors are autonomously capable of fomenting, and are responsible for, the current enlargement of the world public sphere. The competence of the global leader, then, is fairly definable as far as the public sphere of the present global system is itself defined, and also the public sphere of the future system can be forecast by an accurate analysis of current social and political trends.

### **Origins of the political institutions of the global system**

The question of the origins of the global political institutions is intimately linked to the question of the formation of the global system. The view of the recent formation of the world system, which is commonly portrayed as the recent incorporation of regional international systems into the European system, has been challenged by both the view of the pristine unity of the world system, and the view of the inception of the formation of the global system as early as the end of the first millennium.

Pristine unity has been defined and defended by André G. Frank, who considers the historical–economic analysis of the world as the all-inclusive unit of social reality. At odds with the social scientists that concentrate on the study of parts of the world on the assumption that only the parts are coherent units, Frank defended the scientific need to also recognize the

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<sup>3</sup> Existing regional international systems have a public sphere of different scope. Over the last 50 years, Europe has been enlarging the range of the matters considered to be in the public sphere; extending the number of states sharing it; and also substituting practice-based institutions with formal–legal institutions of government, thanks to the integration process of the European Union.

world as a coherent unit in order to explain the difference between the parts. As he loved to say, the world system existed not for the last 500 years, but for 5,000 years, i.e. since the first system of states was formed in Mesopotamia (Frank and Gills, 1993). In Frank's view, capitalist accumulation, which has been active world-wide in the last five thousand years, made all the parts of the world members of a coherent unit. This interpretation is at odds with the common perspective on the forms of the economy that places the origin of capitalist accumulation in sixteenth-century Europe. In particular, Frank developed his discourse in direct opposition to Immanuel Wallerstein (1974), and demonstrated that capitalist production and the interdependence of capitalist systems are much older than Wallerstein and the common perspective that we take for granted. In particular, Wallerstein was wrong in underestimating interdependence and division of labor among different (sub)systems, because he undervalued the effect of luxury-goods exchange and trade. When the state overtook hunter/gatherer groups and chiefdoms,<sup>4</sup> the ruling classes immediately started to exchange luxury goods, and produced an interdependent world economic system in which only one division of labor emerged. In other terms, both the introduction of capitalist production and the formation of states and international systems are placed in the fourth millennium BC.<sup>5</sup> The world system, i.e. the interdependence of regional state systems, by contrast, started in 2700–2400 BC, when the economies of Eurasia (Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Indus Valley) joined together in a single economy whose *motor force* was capitalist accumulation. In addition, the same cycles of growth and decline of capital accumulation united the parts of that economy in a single process of change. This aspect concerns the causes of global change, and is discussed in the next section of this chapter. Here, the issue of interest is the time that political institutions appeared in a world system that had already become integrated by the same economic institutions and processes.

At odds with the perspective of the pristine origin of the world system, the majority of social scientists view the formation of the global system and world-wide political institutions as a process of very recent origin. More exactly, the formation of the world system is believed to be concomitant with the late stage of the expansion of the European state system. According to this perspective, which has been thoroughly investigated by the English School (see, for instance, Bull and Watson, 1984; Buzan, 2004), during the last five centuries, international systems, existing separately in different regions of the world, progressively came into a unified system, because, in the first place, the European expansion produced the economic and technological unification of the planet and, in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century, the political unification of the world founded upon primary institutions such as state sovereignty, international law and diplomatic conventions. To give conceptual foundations to this perspective, the English School distinguishes two types of state system: the type in which international relations depend only on the fact that each state takes account of the other states' behavior, and the type in which international relations are stably organized by rules and institutions agreed on and commonly respected by the states, in their own

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<sup>4</sup> According to anthropologists and archaeologists, in 3000–4000 BC there emerged political organizations that had the three characteristics of a state, i.e. a legitimate monopoly of force, a centralized bureaucratic government, and a network of urban centres. However, Cioffi-Revilla (2005) demonstrates that the transition from chiefdom to state happened in different eras in different places, i.e. between 8000 and 3000 BC in West Asia, between 6500 and 1045 BC in East Asia, between 2500 and 100 BC in Andean America, and between 1200 and 100 BC in Mesoamerica

<sup>5</sup> Cioffi-Revilla (1996) puts the formation of the first state system in West Asia at c.3700 BC, but c.2000 BC in East Asia.

interests. Hedley Bull (1977), the founder of the English School, named the former type *the international system*, and the latter type *the international society*. Accordingly, the world political system as an international society, i.e. as the system founded on institutions shared by all the states of the planet, came into existence in the recent process that started with the inclusion of the Ottoman Empire in the European state system, and finished with the decolonization of non-European countries in the second half of the twentieth century.

Two objections are raised here against this view of the recent formation of the world political system. First, the distinction between an international (institution-empty) system and an international (institution-laden) system/society is abstract and not factual, as some English School writers also admit (see below). Second, attention is only paid to institutions as practices of ordered relations normally respected by the states, i.e. primary ones. Institutions as means of government and strategic political action are ignored.

Regarding the first issue, Adam Watson, who, in association with Bull, made a study of the expansion of a European international society (Bull and Watson, 1984), remarks that the states of Europe and Asia always respected trade agreements between merchants and companies. Therefore, they were members of the same international society, because *ab initio* they shared the same obligation to the *pacta sunt servanda* norm (Bull and Watson, 1984). Economic and strategic pressures, as Watson remarks in a later study (1992), put states of different cultures and civilizations into the same system of rules and institutions of a practical and regulatory nature. It is worth noting that other English School authors, namely Buzan and Little (2000), in a study of world history and politics, also amended the English School analysis of the formation of the world system by demonstrating that regional international systems have normally been mutually connection as parts of wider economic international systems.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, in conclusion, authors with the same common perspective directly or indirectly admit that the world political system was already in place at the time of the first colonial expansion of the European monarchies in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the so-called era of the first expansion of the European state system.

Regarding the second issue – i.e. overlooking global government institutions – it is noted here that the common perspective admits that the world political system came into existence thanks to the standardization strategies of the centre of the system (see Buzan and Little, 2000). The European powers exercised coercive and persuasive pressures on the peripheral countries in order to impose on them the economic and cultural standards of the centre. Apparently, then, also in the common perspective view, the dominant state-actors of the world system had explicit strategies of government, but the analysts of this perspective

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<sup>6</sup> Assuming the interconnection of five social sectors (the military, political, economic, socio-cultural, and environmental), Buzan and Little (2000) distinguish three types of systems, i.e. *complete international systems*, characterized by the interconnection of all the sectors; *economic international systems*, characterized by economic and socio-cultural exchange in the absence of political–military interaction; and *pre-international systems*, which latter precede the development of cities and civilization, and are characterized by socio-cultural interaction and no commercial exchange. Bringing the economic sector into the picture, Buzan and Little (2000) affirm that in the last 6,000 years *complete international systems* existed independently from one another and were part of *economic international systems* that led them to mutual connections. The two types of system were characterized by the same tendency to increase in size growth until the global economic system appeared 500 years ago and, a few centuries later, the present complete international system, the global international system, started to exist.

have overlooked the analysis of the institutions used by the central states to enforce standardization – i.e. government – strategies on the world system.

The analysis of the formation of institutions for selecting and executing strategies of government in the global system is, instead, the main interest of George Modelski. He is explicit on the question of the temporal origin of the global process of formation of political institutions. Assuming that the world system is a construction founded upon a long learning process that started several millennia ago, and has been strengthened with nuclei of cooperation since 1200 BC, he demonstrates that the process of construction of world-wide institutions was initiated about a millennium ago, and “crystallized” during the last half millennium. In particular, institutions with world impact came into being with the projects of the Chinese Sung dynasty in the tenth century; the Mongolian attempt to build a world empire in c.1250; the creation of the network of Portuguese naval and commercial bases all over the world after 1515; and, lastly, by the late nineteenth century, the creation of international organizations. Accordingly, Modelski’s analysis demonstrates that the subsuming of all regional systems into one world system came about with the progressive formation of a collective organization and also the constitution of institutions aimed at implementing strategies for the solution (i.e. government) of collective problems. In international political analysis, the term “globalization” should be reserved for this process of the last millennium that has been patterned by evolutionary mechanisms of social change, as examined later in this chapter (Modelski 2000a).<sup>7</sup>

Summarizing this section, we can note that Frank has demonstrated that, in the last five millennia, the whole world has been characterized by capitalist accumulation structures and cycles that held together the parts inside the same unit, as also echoed by Buzan and Little’s analysis. Expressly founded upon the universality of the economic practice of capitalist accumulation and the world cycles of economic growth and decline, Frank’s perspective neglects the presence of world-wide political institutions of government. On the other hand, the authors of the common perspective have demonstrated the existence of primary political institutions, and, more precisely, of practices that make international relations ordered and predictable to state rulers, but fail to single out global reach and organization and government institutions as different kinds of global political institutions, while underlying the importance of standardization practices in forming a single world political system. Lastly, Modelski, unlike the other political scientists, has revealed the process of formation of global reach and also organization and government institutions, by studying the projects and actions of the states that, during the last millennium, have been carrying out strategies of organization around the world and have been solving global problems.

### **Causes of long-term change**

In this section, the causes of long-term change in the political institutions of the global system are dealt with. The common perspective is silent on this matter, therefore, only the analyses of Frank, Modelski, and Wendt are examined here. In Frank’s analysis, change is the effect of economic structures. In Modelski’s analysis, change is explained by evolutionary processes and mechanisms. In the analysis of Wendt (2003), the driving factors of important transformations in the area of security-institutions are the social structures and mechanisms grasped in the framework of the self-organization and teleological theories.

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<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Frank (1998) believes that the view of globalization as the process now constituting a single world system is misleading, because it wrongly supposes that originally distinct societies are now constructing a global system.

Frank explains long-term change in the world system as resulting from the effects of three structures, i.e. the structure of the economic cycle; the centre–periphery structure; and the hegemony/rivalry structure. In short, these structures have three main consequences for the world system, i.e.:

- 1 Regularity of change, because the ascending and descending phases of capitalist accumulation succeed each other in a cycle at a fairly regular pace (more exactly, a 400-year-long cycle is divided into phases of growth and decline – each about 200 years long);
- 2 The transfer of the accumulation of a surplus from the peripheral to the central zones;
- 3 Concentration of an important fraction of the economic surplus and the related political–economic hegemonic power in the hands of the owner/ruling classes of the centre (Gills and Frank, 1993).

Under these structural conditions, change in the world system is associated with the long cycles of capitalist accumulation, and consists of the movement of the central zone within the centre–periphery structure, and the succession of hegemonies in the hegemonic/rivalry structure. In particular, the centralization of power with regard to accumulation and political organization, i.e. hegemony, always triggers the formation of opposing alliances, which causes conflict and, consequently, a different country comes to occupy the hegemonic position. It is worth noting that, in Frank’s view the process of capital accumulation and transfer of economic surplus is inter-regional and inter-social, not international. Therefore, the world system consists of interdependent, hegemonic zones, and is dominated by a network of hegemonies. However, Frank admitted that one hegemonic zone has privileged position in the world system, and, consequently, the ruling class of the great-power state of that zone is endowed with the benefits that accrue from the status of super-hegemony. For that reason, without going into further analysis, Frank did not rule the fact that great wars between opposing alliances of competing great powers – as maintained by the political science theory of hegemonic cycles – can be the succession mechanism of the hegemony/rivalry structure.

It is also worth noting that in contrast to critics of the cycle explanation, Frank emphasized that transition does not produce a repetition of the preceding cycle, because new conditions make the forms of accumulation, hegemonic power, and world order of a cycle different from those of the past one. Frank also did not rule out the fact that the economic cycles that he analyzed and the other technological and socio-political cycles that he did not analyze, are encompassed within the same evolution process of the world system (Gills and Frank, 1993). In this regard, it is noted here that the analysis of social evolution aims to answer the question of why different socio-political organizations coexist in a historical period, and why all of them disappear except the one that overcomes the others. The same methodology, therefore, is applied by social evolutionists to the study of the past, in order to explain over gone change, and to the present in order to discern the conditions that have the greatest chance of occurring in the times ahead. The answer to the question of how the diffusion of one social organization and disappearance of others occurs lies in the relationship between actors and the environment. In brief terms, it consists of the changes in social organization that the actors make in order to solve the problems and challenges of new environmental factors. This answer is given, taking into account the aptitude of the human race to react to the environment by learning and producing innovation. For this reason, researchers into social evolution are interested in the conditions that favor innovation, and they adopt a specific methodology to explain the conditions that reinforce new configurations – in general, association and cooperation – and the conditions that expand selected configurations – in general, imitation and emulation. According to the orthodox evolutionist

interpretation, the process of change shows a pattern, because it depends on mechanisms that always produce the same chain of action and reaction in response to environmental problems. However, loose evolutionary analysts regard patterns of change as being inapplicable to social systems.

Using evolutionist methodology, George Modelski demonstrates that interaction between world problems and world politics propels the formation of and changes in global political institutions. This interaction has the form of a “patterned” process comprising four phases and mechanisms, commonly referred to as variation, cooperation, selection, and amplification. In the *variation* (or innovation) phase, actors propose contending strategies for coping with common problems. In the *cooperation* phase, the actors that agree on the same strategy of problem solution gather in one group. In world politics, this mechanism is the formation of coalitions, alliances and special relationships. In the *selection* phase, the winning strategy is settled on. In Darwinian biology, which initiated evolution studies, this is a natural mechanism, i.e. it is imposed by the forces of nature. In social systems, selection should be the result of rational cost/benefit calculation with regard to the available options, but is made, by and large, by trial and error, and without fixed preferences. All social sciences have their own preferred approaches to the study of this mechanism. Economics mainly focuses on market competition between enterprises; political science concentrates on the study of electoral competition between parties and candidates; and the science of international politics analyzes great-power competition for world leadership. The fourth phase, *amplification*, consists of the consolidation and diffusion of the selected innovation strategy throughout the whole system.

Using evolutionist methodology in the analysis of the process of globalization during the past millennium, Modelski is able to explain the formation and change of the political institutions of the global system. Passing through three periods – the Eurasian Transition (930–1430), the Western European or Atlantic (1430–1850), and the Western Post-European or Atlantic-Pacific period (1850–) – the world system moved from conditions of loose structure and low connections among its parts to conditions of high connection and organization, and the increasing actions of government institutions. Each period corresponds with an evolutionary mechanism. The first one corresponds with innovation, i.e. the creation of the preconditions for collective organization;<sup>8</sup> the second with cooperation, i.e. the formation of the nucleus;<sup>9</sup> and the third one to the selection of the global organization.<sup>10</sup> The fourth phase of consolidation of the organization will occur in the distant future. In the three past phases of the process, the *active zone* of the world system contained the most populated countries, the greatest cities, the strongest centers of production, and was also the location of

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<sup>8</sup> In the Eurasian Transition period, in which Mongols aimed at creating a Euro-Asian world order, the printing press, the compass and gunpowder constituted the various preconditions of modernity that produced technical development.

<sup>9</sup> In the Atlantic period, the global political system came into existence thanks to a world network of fortresses, commercial posts, colonies and missions. Originally created by the maritime power of Portugal in cooperation with Spain, this network consolidated thanks to three factors: national states in Atlantic and Iberian Europe, the notion of sovereignty conceived in Westfalia in 1648, and the balance of power defined in Utrecht in 1713–14.

<sup>10</sup> In the Atlantic–Pacific period, intergovernmental organizations, international regimes and non-governmental international organizations came into existence and created a dense network of various actors in world politics.

the state in charge of the system leadership.<sup>11</sup> During the three phases, the active zone moved from Asia to Western Europe–the Atlantic and, later, to the Atlantic–Pacific zone. The zone in which the global leader and its challenger were selected moved accordingly. This last aspect concerns the issue of the global-leader succession, which is intimately linked to the issue of the development of global political institutions that Modelski also analyzes by means of the four-phase cycle. In particular, each cycle of global leadership encompasses the *agenda-setting* phase, during which the problems of the system are defined, and new solution strategies proposed; the *coalition-building* phase, during which groups of states are created in competition with one another according to different agendas and strategies; the *macro-decision* phase, during which two main coalitions fight one another, normally up to the level of global war; at the end of this phase, the major power of the winning coalition acquires the leader role, and, with the support of allied countries, starts the *execution* phase of the program of solving world problems.<sup>12</sup> It is worth signaling here that, unlike the authors of the hegemonic school – who explain hegemony succession according to the theory that the consumption of the power of the hegemonic state is caused by an overload of engagements and challenges – Modelski connects global leadership to the long-term evolution of the global system, and explains the succession of leadership and also the changes in global political institutions as being dependent on evolutionary mechanisms. Taking into account these mechanisms, one is also able to recognize the direction and destination of the changes in the institutions of the system. This aspect is treated later in this chapter, after presenting Alexander Wendt’s explanation of world political change.

Wendt’s analysis is anchored in self-organization theory, but does not make use of instruments like that of organization growth and collapse that other self-organization researchers apply to the study of long-term change (see, for instance, Dark, 1998; Rennstich, 2007, Chapter 4, this volume). Wendt instead applies teleology to self-organization theory to explain long-term changes in the organization of the world system. In Wendt’s theory, change in social systems (and the formation of order in the natural world) emerges spontaneously from the *boundary conditions* that drive a system toward its final state. Wendt wants to demonstrate that the *final state* of the world system is the disappearance of the *boundary conditions* that cause the struggle of states and individuals for mutual recognition and security. Wendt terms this final state the *world state*, meaning that all the states, without ceasing to exist, will create an organization and grant it with the function and power of ensuring security to all the states and human beings.

Wendt makes clear that his teleological explanation of world politics is founded on the interaction between the ascending process of non-deliberate self-organization of the members of the system, and the descending process of the structural development of system constitution. In other terms, for the self-organization theory, order is the non-deliberate result

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<sup>11</sup> It can be noted here that the global-power state must have military, economic–financial, technological, and industrial resources in order to control the regimes, rules and institutions of global interdependence, and also cultural and ideological capabilities in order to receive the consent of the system members about the organizational principles by respecting the individuality of those system members.

<sup>12</sup> Modelski and Thompson (1988, 1996) illustrate the alignments, power concentration, and world wars of the cycles of global politics of the last five centuries in which Portugal (first cycle: 1516–1609), Holland (second cycle: 1609–1714), Great Britain (third and fourth cycle: 1714–1815 and 1815–1945) and the United States from 1945, have been selected as global powers. Each cycle has an approximate duration of a century, and each phase is about 25 years long, i.e. the approximate duration of a generation.

of the interaction of the actors that adopt “local” rules of behavior (such as, for instance, *balance of power* rules). At the same time, system development is explained by methodological holism, which maintains that systems, as irreducible totalities with structural integrity, choose – so to speak – the characters and behaviors of their actors. In fact, social systems are characterized by fundamental organizational principles, or *boundary conditions*, that separate them from their environment and impose a *closure* on their internal processes. However, the interaction of the ascending and descending processes does not give a complete explanation because ascending, self-organizational causality is not linear, and knowing the direction of the change does not help, while the descending causality is homeostatic and is unsuitable for explaining change. In order to complete explanation, the role of the final state as *attractor* is needed. The final, *attractor* state is knowable by taking into account the *boundary conditions* of the system that keep it under conditions of instability. The movement of the system, then, is not caused by the final state, but by the *boundary* or structural conditions.

This section has hinted at a variety of processes, structures and mechanisms that cause long-term changes in the global system. In particular, in Frank’s view, the system is under the influence of economic structures that also have political importance, like the hegemony–rivalry structure. However, Frank remarked that evolutionist mechanisms meddle with those structures in causing change in the world system. Studying social evolutionary mechanisms, Modelski is able to single out the long-term process of formation of political institutions for dealing with crucial problems of global range. Adopting a non-historical perspective and a different kind of structural factor, i.e. the *boundary conditions* of the state systems, Wendt maintains, instead, that international change is the inevitable succession of system stages towards a stable *attractor state*. In this section, it has also been signaled that processes, structures and mechanisms can give regularity and direction to change, but in this respect the researchers are not in agreement with one another. Wendt excludes regularity but recognizes the existence of a direction that leads towards the destination of the *final state*. According to Frank and Modelski, regularity is an intrinsic character of the explanatory model that each of them adopts, and direction depends on the continuous innovative reproduction of the system. In Frank’s theory, however, reproduction is without a final state. Instead, in Modelski’s theory, the end product of the process of change is known as the conclusive stage of the current evolution period, and will be followed by a further period that cannot be predicted at this moment. In this section, causes relevant to understanding changes in the political institutions of the global system have been examined. In the next section, attention is drawn to the direction of change and the destination of the system.

### **Direction of change and destination**

Change as a correction to and innovation for the choices made by the states in the process of institution development is examined here. In particular, our attention is drawn to the teleological movement examined by Wendt, and the evolution movement examined by Modelski, because only these authors deal with these issues. The former is a succession of five system stages, each one possessing new institutional solutions to the problem of security. The latter is the “patterned” evolutionary process that, through learning and innovation, ameliorates the institutions created to deal with critical problems. The destination of change is rather similar in the two studies, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

In the Wendt model, human beings are organized in various autonomous political communities that struggle for recognition and security. The dominant form of political community, i.e. the sovereign state, creates a system organization founded on *boundary conditions* that make necessary to resort to war for the sake of the system unit’s security. Wendt, however, puts forward the common view that overcoming such organization based on

perennial conflict for security is an impossible event.<sup>13</sup> He signals that technology makes the costs of enforcing security by resorting to war unbearable, and for that reason it can be expected that states will make the same choice that individuals have made, that is, they will form a world state to which to surrender the task of ensuring security to all. Wendt's argument, however, is that this transformation is not the mere result of cost calculation, but of a change at the level the ideas. More precisely, change will consist of a process of construction of new individual and collective identities that ensure the mutual recognition of all human communities and states. Since the individuals want to be recognized as members of a group, and the state is the most important group struggling for such recognition, the formation of the world state is inevitable. In brief terms, Wendt explains this inevitable formation with a five-stage process that the states pass through in search of security and recognition. The five stages are also termed a system of states; a society of states; a world society; a collective security system; and a world state.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, the culture of

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<sup>13</sup> In particular, Wendt (2003) mentions the Kantian and Hegelian position. According to Kant, the state of conflict of the international system produces republican states, and these, selfish and jealous of their sovereignty, will never go beyond the constitution of a world federation of states. According to Hegel, the states, unlike the individuals, do not have enough motivation to abandon the state of anarchy and the search for mutual recognition that guarantees security to each of them. Therefore, they have the tendency to perpetuate their character of self-sufficient totalities. As we will see later in this chapter, Wendt disagrees with Hegel, and broadly agrees with Kant.

<sup>14</sup> In "stage one" – the system of states, there is no recognition and collective identity. A state that is stronger than another state can conquer it, and confront another state in order to gain its recognition or conquer it; and so on. The system is unstable and moves toward a non-Hobbesian attractor. In "stage two", the society of states, an anarchic culture of the Lockian type is established; states recognize each other's legal sovereignty, and cease to be the victims of mutual conquest, but do not recognize the citizens of the other states as subjects that cannot be conquered. In other words, states exclude the legitimacy of war for the total conquest of another state, but not for earning their own positions. The increase in the destructiveness of military technology, however, makes also position wars unbearable, and the increasing number of human deaths makes inevitable accepting the right to existence of individuals. Therefore this stage is also unstable. In "stage three" – the world society – instability is overcome by the international obligation to solve conflicts by non-violent means, so that the security of the individuals as well as states is recognized. However, since such an obligation does not include collective protection from aggression, and "criminal" states can act violently, instability is not eliminated. In "stage four", the collective security system, states agree on mutual defence. Although a world state is not created, this stage realizes the security of states and individuals, and could be a stable one. Every sovereign state, however, may defect, withdraw the recognition of another state's autonomy, and make it a target of aggression. Such instability can be overcome only by entering into a stage in which mutual recognition takes a stronger form. Individuals and small powers that have little to lose by transferring the responsibility of mutual recognition to a world state will promote this change. Also the great powers will accept this stage as soon as they become aware of the disadvantage of preserving a system in which they bear high costs in order to get other states to respect their power and privileges. In "stage five", the world state, the recognition of individuals is not mediated by state governments and borders, even though states continue to be important because they organize particularism and defend themselves from universalism. Since the world state is able

anarchy of each stage makes the struggle for recognition a violent one; on the other hand, the development of military technology makes violence increasingly intolerable and ineffective in terms of security.

Wendt concentrates on the change of the institutions for security, and does not give a historical description of the system stages, but rather gives a theoretical explanation of the mechanisms that produce change. However, it is not difficult to locate stages on the time line of past world history. It is also clear that the fourth stage of the movement is now under development. Therefore, the great question of today is about the inevitable – in the Wendtian sense – institutional choices needed to bring about the world state.<sup>15</sup> Wendt believes that the world system will undergo three important transformations in order to form an organization with the Weberian characters of the state, i.e. a monopoly of force, legitimacy, sovereignty and collective identity. First, it will become a security community, that is a community in which nobody feels threatened by others, and everybody is sure that any conflict is solved by peaceful means, even if the risk of violent actions by criminals cannot be eliminated. Second, a system of collective security will be created, so that any “criminal” action will provoke the reaction of all the system members. After these changes are made, the third change will be the creation of a global organization capable of making decisions on security affairs, using binding legitimate procedures. Such an organization will not necessarily have its own armed forces, because the execution of its decisions can be made by the armed forces of the territorial states. Moreover, since the world public sphere will consist only of security deliberations, the world state will not have a formal structure of government, i.e. a unitary body under a leader. Nevertheless, the territorial states, deprived of sovereignty in security affairs, will be different from what they are today.

Unlike Wendt’s final state, the future of the world political system as seen by Modelski, using the analysis of the long-term process of political globalization, is not defined only in terms of security problems and institutions. As mentioned above, Modelski distinguishes three periods within the globalization process, i.e. the Euro–Asian Transition; the Western European or Atlantic; and the current Western Post-European or Atlantic– Pacific period. In the last one, intergovernmental organizations, functional regimes, and non-governmental world-wide organizations came into existence, and created pervasive networks that have raised the participation of a variety of actors in world politics. As a consequence of this evolution, Modelski believes that, after a phase of democratic transition, the problem of the consensual base of the world order will be solved, and in the twenty-first century a *fuller political framework* will emerge. Rather than the interconnection of sovereignty, recognition and security on which Wendt focuses, Modelski (2000a) attributes the potentialities of innovative change to the agents of globalization, i.e. the individuals and organizations that propagate the level of global interactions like multinational enterprises; world financial markets; non-governmental organizations for humanitarian purposes; leaders of social movements; and also states in a global leadership position. In other terms, the globalization process is fomented by the interaction of the global leadership process (i.e. the world government institution-building process) and other processes, namely the economic processes that influence trade regimes and the world market; the process of democratization and formation of a democratic world community; and the process of formation of world public

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to react to any aggression and therefore discourages defection, this stage is a stable one unless it is confronted by shocks of external origin that cannot be defined at the present day.

<sup>15</sup> According to Wendt, the world state will come into existence in 100–200 years from now. The coincidence with the end-time of the next phase of Modelski’s calendar is worth noting here.

opinion in which the media have an important role. At the end of the twenty-first century, all these processes will bring to an end the current phase of global politics, which is dominated by long cycles of hegemonic succession. At that time, in harmony with the Kantian vision and in broad agreement with Wendt, Modelski believes that a global democratic community with a federal-type organization will absorb the current role of global leader and will organize the global political system.

### **Concluding remarks about the future of global political institutions**

The main aspects of the four perspectives on the long-term change of global political institutions reviewed here are summarized in Table 6.1. Some similarities notwithstanding, the differences in theory, methods and substantive matters are quite considerable. According to researcher preferences, the four perspectives will be of different utility to the task of modeling and forecasting global political institutions. In general, the long-term economic perspective helps to deal with the influence of economic processes on the construction and development of global political institutions. The traditional political science perspective, here named the “common perspective”, has no orientation towards causative factors like structure, process and mechanism, but is worth taking into account in modeling the integration role that primary institutions have on the system actors. The evolution and the self-organization/teleological perspectives, instead, offer many valuable suggestions and instruments to future studies. The latter admittedly helps to model the effects of security and recognition as driving factors in the behavior of the states as formal actors of global politics, and also of the individuals and other communities and groups as informal actors within the global system. The power of the evolutionary approach of George Modelski is demonstrated by the high correlation between the historical development of global politics in the last millennium, and the “patterned” phases of change summarized in the well-known “Matrix of Evolutionary World Politics” that synthesizes Modelski’s explicative design for world dynamics.

**Table 1: Synopsis of four scientific approaches to the study of world political institutions**

	<b>Frank</b>	<b>Common perspective</b>	<b>Modelski</b>	<b>Wendt</b>
<b>Origin (locus and time) of institution building</b>	The world system of capital accumulation in around 2700 BC	The enlarged European state system in around the 16 <sup>th</sup> century	The Eurasian system in around the 10 <sup>th</sup> century	The European state system in around the 17 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>Actors of institution building</b>	Social actors	Nation-states	Great powers, leading industrial sectors and, in current time, IGOs, media, and social movements	Individuals, political communities, and states
<b>Authority institution</b>	Superhegemony	The great power Concert	Imperial power Global leadership Global organization	World-wide organization (not yet existent) in security matters
<b>Political/public sphere</b>	Economy	General	Worldwide problems	Security
<b>Power base in institution-building</b>	Economic	Economic & military	Economic, military & institutional	Military
<b>Method of government</b>	Surplus transfer and accumulation; political order	Standardization	Problem-solving	Force concentration
<b>Causes of institution change</b>	Economic cycles; centre/periphery	Contingent circumstances	Evolutionary mechanisms	Social structures (boundary)

	structure; hegemony/rivalry structure			conditions) and social mechanisms (self organization and teleological causation)
<b>Direction of change</b>	Unknown	Unknown	Known from the study of path- dependent evolution	Attractor states
<b>End state</b>	None	None	Fuller democratic community of states	World state

In his recent analysis of the Global Organization period, Modelski concentrates on the issue of the rise of the global democratic community. His analysis takes into consideration various factors and trends involved in this process. This chapter's main aim has been to call particular attention to one of them – the emergence and strengthening of formal institutions of organization and government during the past *c.*80 years. Since intergovernmental organizations and economic regimes have introduced formal procedures in the government of the global political system, this innovation is key to further development for the well-known relationship existing between legal-formal institutions and political legitimacy and democracy. It is worth noting here that the democratization of the state during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been a complex process that included trial-and-error experimentation with formal democratic procedures of policy-making. The legitimacy of democratic regimes increased as long as experimentation overcame errors, and agreed procedures of collective decision-making were adopted by political actors to bring legitimacy to government institutions. While Modelski (see, for example, Modelski and Devezas, Chapter 3 of this volume) concentrates on macro-level change in the current long cycle (LC10), modeling the future global government institutions also requires attention being paid to the micro-level change, i.e. the democratic reform, of the procedures of existing world political institutions.

The political organization of the present global system is an institution-based leadership organization, as noted in the introductory section of this chapter. Therefore, the good news for analysts and people concerned with non-violent change in the global government structure is that agreed procedures for collective decision-making have been introduced at world level with the above-mentioned evolutionary innovation that has brought formal institutions of government to the global political system. In the present world system, then, institutional power is increasingly important, as Modelski remarks (see Modelski and Devezas, 2007, Chapter 3, this volume). The bad news is that the reform of democratic procedures, which normally is also hard to attain when reform norms exist, such as at the level of the state political system, is very difficult at the level of the world political system, where reform norms do not exist. The most important reason for this state of affairs is that the global leader is also the veto player in the reform process of the institutions of the world government structure. However, the present global system has issue-differentiated institutions, i.e. different regimes for different issues (plus, of course, the United Nations, which is here counted as the security institution of the world system), but their agencies are considered as belonging to different issue regimes. This institutional differentiation can be counted as a positive choice with regard to changes in global politics, because it raises the level of international democracy by giving states different institutional arenas in which they can use various resources to negotiate positive-sum accords. In this regard, the development of the environment (see, for example, Falkner, 2005; Vogler and Bretherton, 2006) and human rights (see, for example, Cardenas, 2004) regimes are worth examining. However, the United States is the most important actor (or one of the most important actors) out of all the major regimes – either thanks to the resources that it has or the coalitions that it is able to

form. This makes the United States extremely able to obstruct the approval of unwanted reforms by using its “resource power”, and by influencing negotiation by exercising pressure across different institutions. As Wendt remarks concerning security matters, world institution change is possible when the great powers recognize the advantage in supporting reform, i.e. they recognize the unbearable costs of no reform. It can be sustained that in the security sector, as well as in other sectors, this condition is more possible when the United States loses its ability to form coalitions, i.e. when the de-concentration of power increases and political multipolarity emerges, as in the current phase of coalition reconfiguration signaled by Modelski, and also because new powers are created by the growth of opportunities opened up by the globalization process. However, the decline in American institutional power may also lead to a crisis in the existing global institutions, rather than the relocation of the institutional power to other states and coalitions of states. Briefly, reforming the world government institutions might cause conflict and confrontation, with human suffering and resource-wastage in the next macro-decision phase. However, as Modelski has remarked in recent writings, modeling global change also has to take into account the alternative reform process that world public opinion may trigger by consolidating the negotiation and mediation power of transnational non-governmental organizations and civil-society movements that have emerged on the scene of the global political system.

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