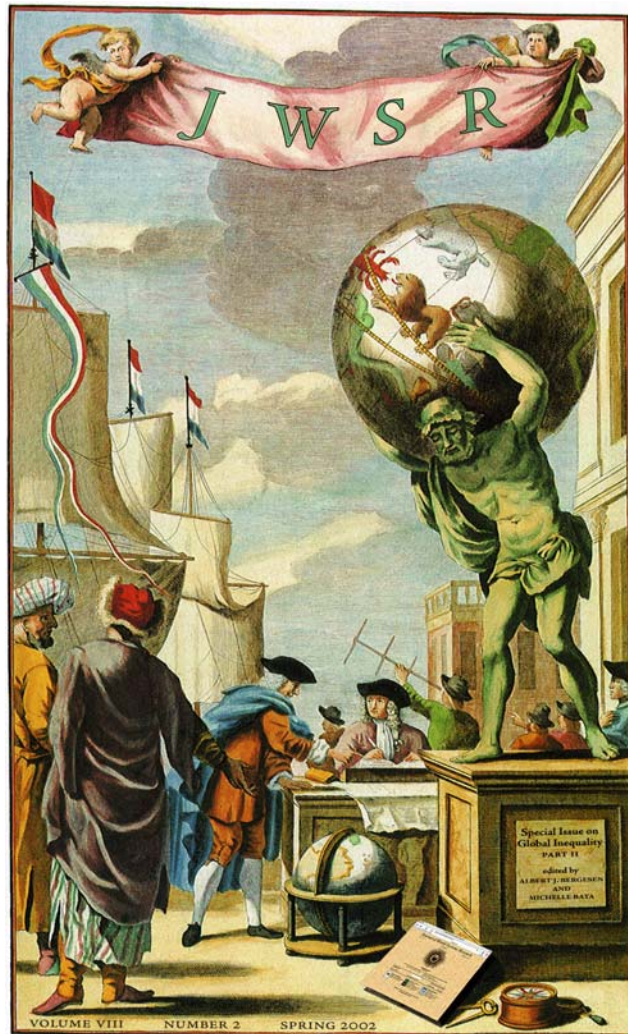


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This is Part II of the special issue on global inequality. The articles in this issue extend some of the theoretical issues raised in the first issue. By focusing on specific regions and comparing the development of global inequalities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the articles in this issue suggest new directions in global inequality research.

In the first article, “Critiques of World-Systems Analysis and Alternatives: Unequal Exchange and Three Forms of Class and Struggle in the Japan–US Silk Network, 1980–1890,” author Elson Boles offers a critique of more recent world-system analyses. His complaint is that such analyses rely too heavily on macrostructural abstraction instead of giving weight to the “total history” of interstate relationships. As such, by examining the Japan–US silk network, he endeavors to focus not on the particulars of how modern capitalism might shape that network, but instead concentrates on historical method, theory, and conceptualizations.

Boles begins by noting that the form of the Japan–US network during 1854–1886 was integral to the incorporation of Japan into the modern world-system. Japan’s incorporation was critical because it allowed for the creation of a global division of labor as it pertained to the silk network. He then develops an incorporated comparisons method in order to reconstruct the relationships between the agencies, labor forms, and social relationships involved in the Japan–US network. He finds that interstate disparities of the network arose through the interconnections among distinct capital-labor relationships. Specifically, Boles

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concludes that the integration of specific forms of production and class relationships via interstate markets decisively structured the uneven market pressures on commodity prices and on production relationships. Thus, unequal exchange in the Japan–US silk network was sustained on the basis of the social conditions of production.

The next article by John Talbot offers another view of the unequal exchange in the world-system. In “Information, Finance, and the New International Inequality: The Case of Coffee,” Talbot argues that a “new” international inequality exists that has been superimposed on the “old” form of international inequality, and that this superimposition helps explain increasing global inequality. Based on Arrighi’s (1994) concept of the four systemic cycles of accumulation, Talbot conceptualizes the old and new forms of inequality as they are linked to the rise and fall of global hegemony. For instance, the old form of international inequality was established during the British cycle, which was significant because that cycle drew the world into a single market based on a singular global division of labor, which relied on the control of production processes and the flow of goods. On the other hand, the new form of international inequality emerged during the crisis of the US regime in the 1970s, and was based on the control of capital and the flow of goods. Using the world coffee market during the period of US financial expansion since 1970, he compares the events in the coffee industry following two severe frosts in Brazil that disrupted the market. His argument is that the combination of the old and new forms of inequality disadvantages coffee producers in peripheral and semiperipheral nations such that core-based transnational corporations (TNCs) were able to gain control of production through their control over financial capital. He concludes that the way in which TNCs dealt with the shock of the frosts in Brazil illustrates how new international inequality functions, and further highlights the ramifications of superimposing the new form on the old form of inequality.

Next, Bruce Podobnik adds to the debate concerning increasing global inequality in his article titled “Global Energy Inequalities: Exploring the Long-Term Implications.” He opens his article by claiming that insufficient attention has been paid to the unequal levels of energy consumption in the world-system. This inattention is problematic because unequal levels of energy consumption can lead to environmental and human challenges, as well as increase the potential for resource-based geopolitical conflicts. He contends that energy-related difficulties will eventually undermine stability in the world. By highlighting the fact that many people in the developing world struggle to access modern energy technologies while people in more developed regions consume energy resources at an unsustainable rate, he illustrates how the expanding capitalist world-economy intensifies processes of environmental degradation.

The final article is Andre Gunder Frank’s review essay of the book *Globalization and History: the Evolution of a Nineteenth Century Atlantic Economy* by Kevin O’Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson. Frank critically evaluates the authors’ central question: “whether the Atlantic economy experienced convergence of income among its constituent parts.” His world-systemic answer is that this question cannot be answered without considering the broader web of economic relations in which the Atlantic Economy was embedded. In making this point Frank also begins to outline a different way to conceive of global inequality in the world economy in terms of a “world-wide multilateral system of balances and imbalances of trade and payments.” It is a most provocative discussion with rich implications for how the distinctly international aspects of global inequality should be conceptualized.