

# Marxism



**The Bourgeoisie  
HATES Him!**



See How He **Seized The Means Of  
Production** With This **One Weird Trick!**

# Classical Marxism: assumptions



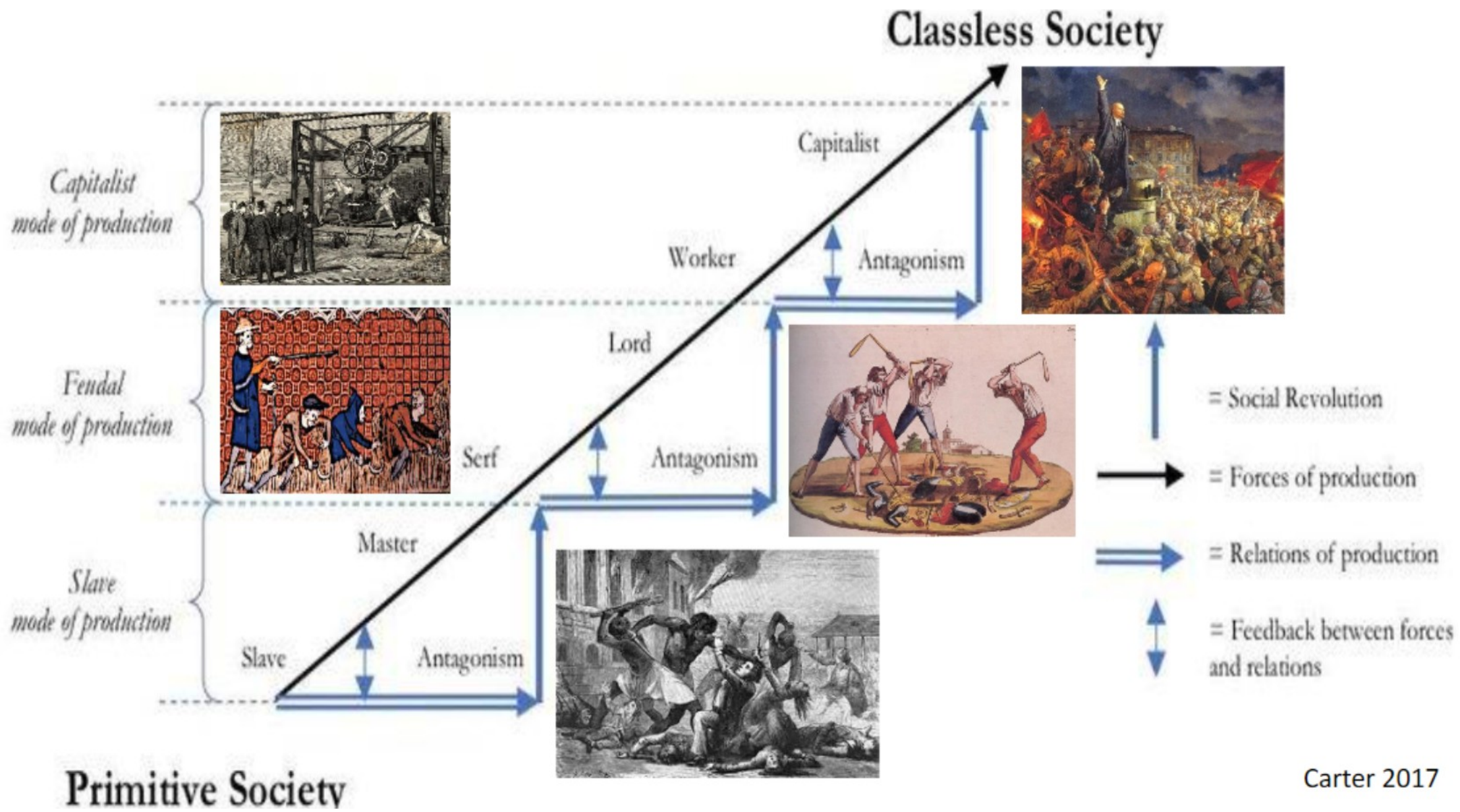
- Social theory explaining **societal transformations**  
→ not an IR theory
- Transformations driven by changes in **socioeconomic formations** defined by prevailing **mode of production**
- Marsh (2002) summarizes: economism, determinism, materialism, structuralism

mode of production



→ **Economic** base, **structure** of forces and relations of production, provides **material** resources and **determines** how society (superstructure) functions and evolves





# Structure: class hierarchy

- **Capitalism** is a mode of production defined by **private ownership** of the **means of production** → incentivizes profit accumulation and unequal distribution of resources
  - Society is stratified into **social classes** - social groups defined by specific **social relations** to **means of production**:
  - **Capitalist class** (bourgeoisie): owns the means of production
  - **Working class** (proletariat): sells their labor
  - Interpretation of the socioeconomic position defined by class-membership through these “lenses” creates a **class consciousness** – subjective perceptions of similarity
  - The resulting **inequality** is being pacified and reproduced through various **superstructure** mechanisms → religious beliefs, cultural and political ideologies, educational doctrines  
→ maintaining **false class consciousness**
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# Agency: from individual to class

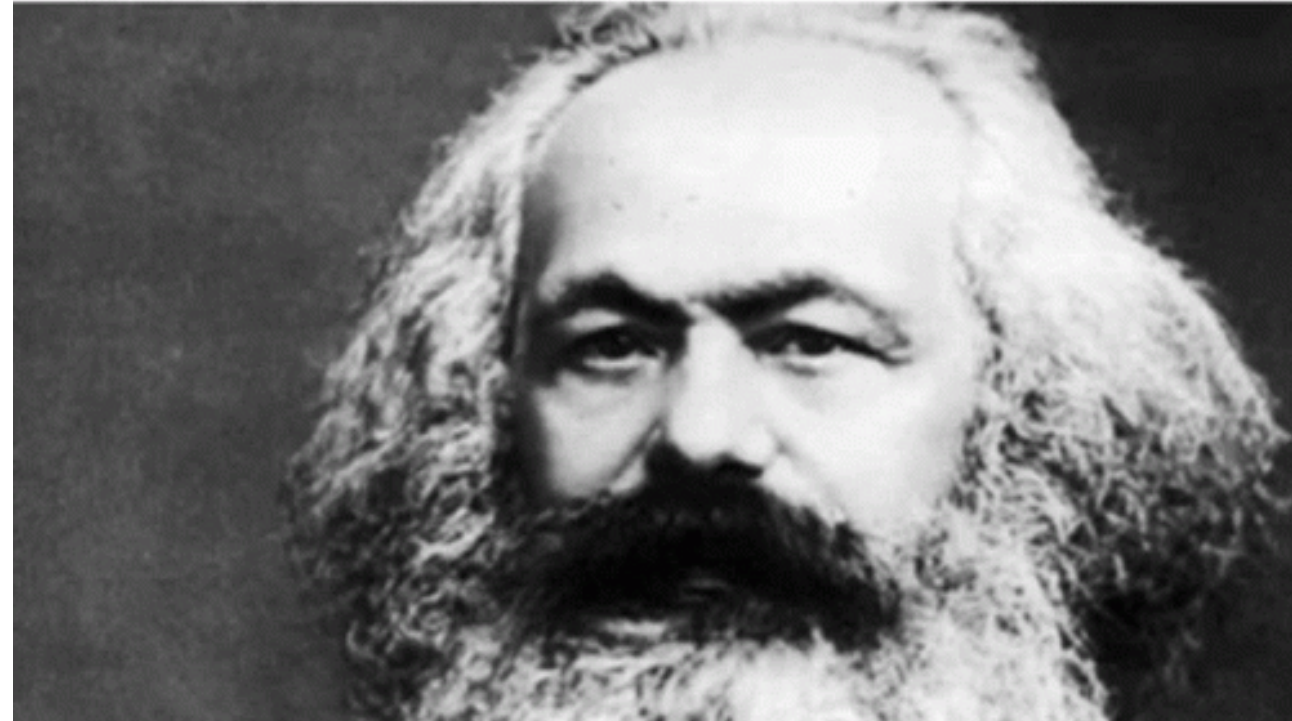
- **Agency:** concept of a social actor
  - Actor: an entity that is able to make decisions
- Individual agent as a **social being**, not atomized individual, defined by broader socioeconomic relations → class formation
- **Classes** are collective **agents** of social/historical **change**
- *“The philosophers have only **interpreted** the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to **change** it.” (Marx, 1845)*



# Marxism in international relations

- Marx does not deal with international affairs much
- International outcomes are results of the economic base
- Various attempts to apply:
  - Lenin's imperialism
  - Trotsky's uneven and combined development
  - Robert Cox's application of Gramscian thought
  - Wallerstein's world-systems theory

**\*MARXISM INTENSIFIES\***



# Neo-Marxism

- There is **no single Neo-Marxism**
- **Umbrella term** for diverse approaches drawing on, revising, and updating Marx's ideas, while integrating ideas from other traditions
- Still interested in dynamics of class conflict
- General trend to **relaxation of the core assumptions** of classical Marxism: economism, determinism, materialism, structuralism →
- More **emphasis on superstructure**: ideas and actor's reflexivity greatly matter
- **Multiple sources of inequalities**: class, race, gender





# Gramscianism



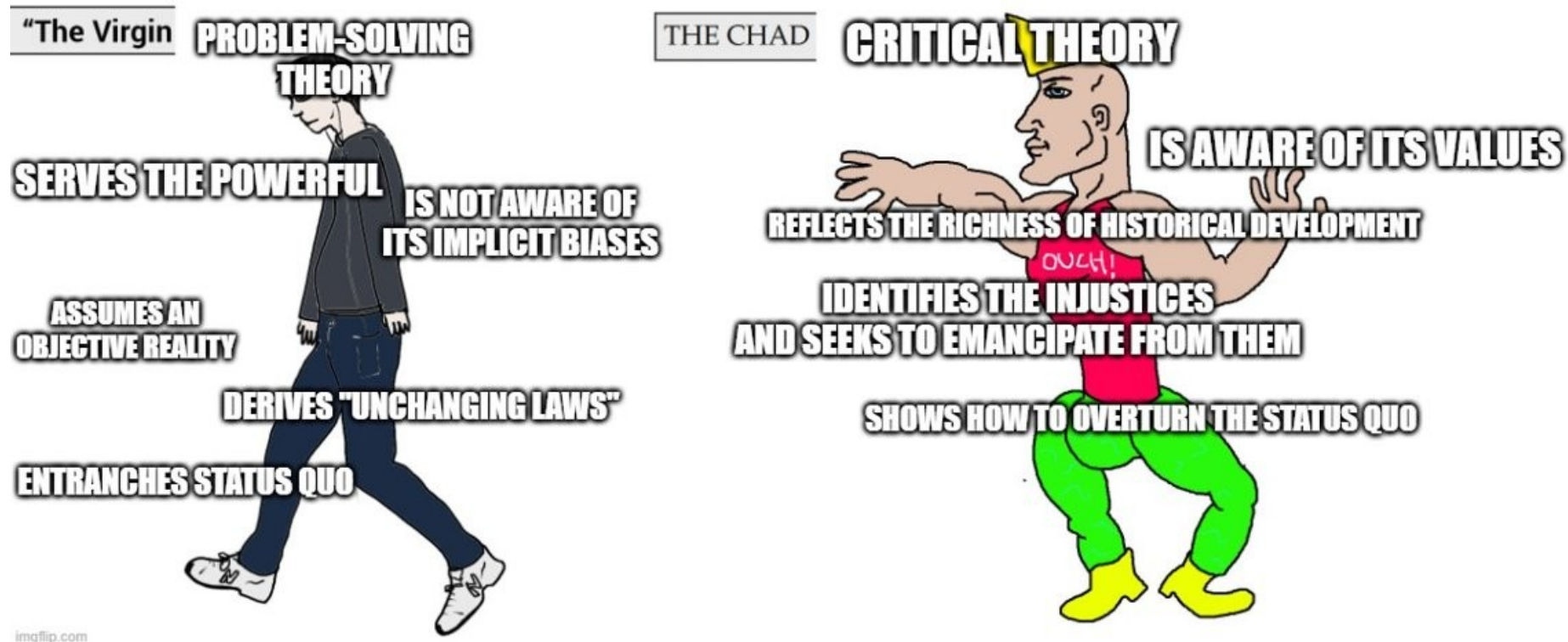
- The role of base and superstructure is changed
- Hegemonic culture to misinterpret the interests of the controlled class and pacify it





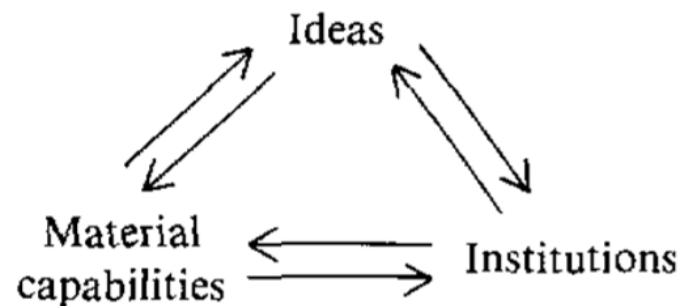
# Robert Cox – Gramscian in international relations

- "a theory is always for someone and some purpose"
- Critical vs. Problem-solving theory



# Cox: Critical vs. Problem-solving Theory

- Holistic, interaction of the base and (reformed) superstructure, historical
- Three main components that are interrelated which define a system like IR



- The case of origin of states

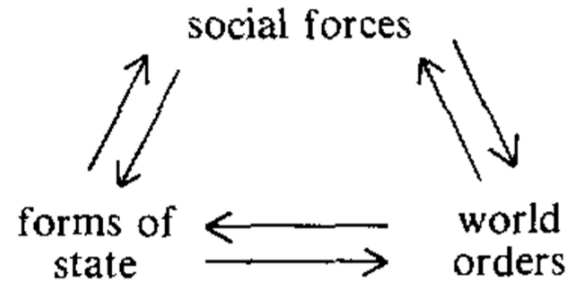
# Cox

- Critical theory is **deriving the definition of a particular structure, not from an abstract model but from a study of the historical situation**
- If we look at international system from the point of critical theory...
- How did it develop? Why is it this way? **How could it be changed?**  
We look at historical process that made it this way and possibility of change

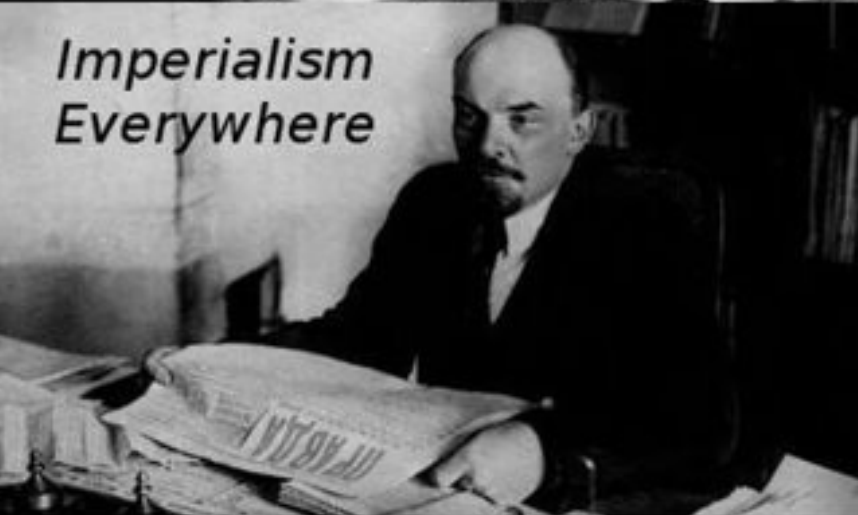
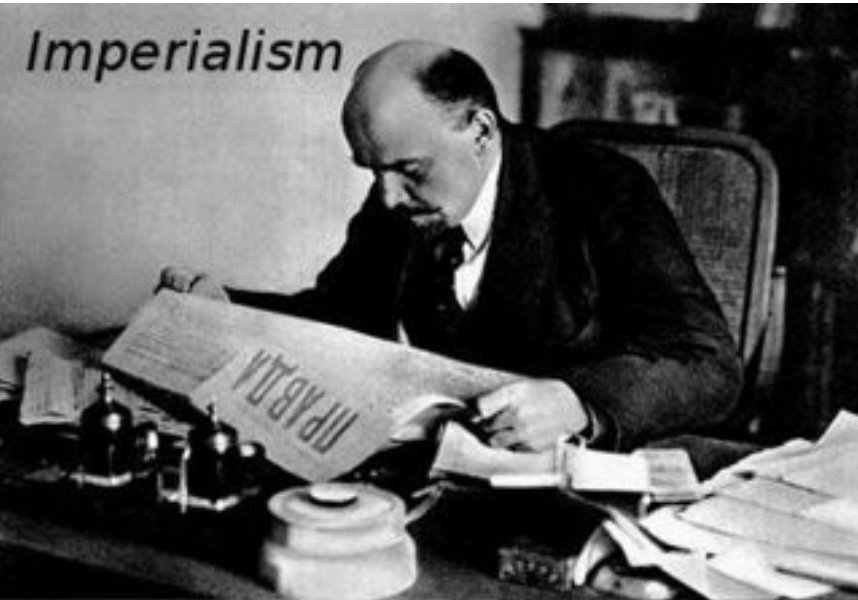


# Cox: Three main levels of historical structures

- Modes of production (social forces)
- Forms of states
- World orders
- Are Interrelated: changes in modes of production affect forms of states which in turn alter world orders etc.
- Example: The process of transformation from feudalism to capitalism



# Imperialism the final stage of capitalism



- Monopolization
- Spreading of capitalist exploitation -> colonies
- Core vs. Periphery
- Maximization of profits leads to struggle over periphery
- Exploitation of periphery enables improved living standards in the core

# Dependency theory

- World economy stratified into **core-periphery structure**
  - **Periphery:** providing natural resources, cheap labor, markets for core
  - **Core:** high added-value goods, technological superiority
  - **Dependency** is being reproduced by international division of labor with deteriorating terms of trade, colonial legacies, etc.
- Escaping the dependency via **alternative growth and development models** (e.g. import-substitution industrialization)





# World-System Theory

- **Systemic perspective:** underdevelopment does not result from specific historical and internal factors but from the countries' **position in capitalist economy** (core-(semi)periphery)
- **Semi-periphery:** a “buffer” between core and periphery with mixed characteristics (e.g. China)
- *“The secret of capitalism was in the establishment of the division of labor within the framework of a world-economy that was not an empire” (Wallerstein 1974)*
- Stability supported by **military dominance** and **ideological hegemony**
- **Historical perspective:** capitalism one of possible forms of economic organization undergoing long-term cycles of economic expansion-contraction and political transition

# Uneven and combined development

- Marxism assumes linear development forward
- International interaction does change that
- Combining developed and backward aspects in various ways
- Creates unique characteristics in societies combining local and global influences

**The Middle East in the world hierarchy:  
imperialism and resistance**

Raymond Hinnebusch



# **The historical conjuncture of neo-colonialism and underdevelopment in Nigeria**

**ATTAH, Noah Echa**