



COMMITTEE
ON
INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

The Lost (Neo?) Colonies of Russia: An Examination of Core-Periphery Dynamics in the Former USSR

Diego Fernando Vallejo

University of Chicago

July 2023

A paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in the Master of Arts Program in the Committee on International Relations

Faculty Advisor: Aaron Jakes

Preceptor: Manuel Cabal

1 Abstract

This study examines the spatial and political economic dynamics in a real-existing socialist space: the USSR. Particularly, core-periphery dynamics and dependency. Employing critical Neo-Marxian lenses designed to analyze global capitalism through the political economy of dependency, this piece examines the main experiment for a socialist utopia of the 20th century. Utilizing the theoretical insights of Latin American development economists of the 70s (dependencistas), Wallerstein's world-systems perspective and economic imperialism, I examine the core-periphery dynamics of the former Soviet Union—European Russia as the center and Central Asian republics as the periphery. Drawing from the case of cotton extraction in Uzbekistan and literature related to colonial perceptions and orientalist perspectives remnant from Tsarist Russia, this research attempts to shed light on the existence of core-periphery dynamics and dependency akin to that of global capitalist and neo-colonial extraction—specifically that of the United States as the center and Latin America as the periphery.

2 Introduction

One may relate cotton and the dynamics of this commodity to the industrial revolution or something characteristic of western imperialism, spanning through stories of capitalism, accumulation and colonization. However, at its highest, the Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) of Uzbekistan was the second largest producer of cotton in the world, dispatching 95% of its cotton yield to Moscow—outside of its national border. This distribution model was not exclusive to Uzbekistan alone; other Central Asian republics also followed suit with other agricultural commodities, where little would stay within the region. The cotton example demonstrates the existence of extractive relations with the Moscow heartland of the USSR. At the core of this nexus lies the hierarchical and political ties established between the Central

Committee of the USSR and the ruling class in Uzbekistan, as well as their counterparts in the neighboring republics.

Operating within the framework of the planned system, Moscow wielded direct authority in determining crucial aspects such as production volumes, pricing mechanisms, extraction quotas, and agricultural outputs. This centralized decision-making authority extended its influence over vital factors including wages, rents, and working conditions, leaving an indelible imprint on the socio-economic and political landscape of the region. In light of these circumstances, it becomes evident that the cotton industry in the Uzbek SSR was intrinsically intertwined with and under the yoke of the overarching apparatus of power and control emanating from Moscow (Gleason 1991).

The empirical dynamics of the political economic relationship between the Slavic core and the Central Asian periphery was one that resembled the capitalist world, particularly that of the North American center and Latin America. The “dependencistas”, a group of scholars such as Cardoso, Evans, Santos, Falleto, observed how powerful real-existing capitalist regimes resulted in a dependency that determined not only the economic and productive conditions of the periphery, but also the social, political and cultural landscape. All under the umbrella of the core. They define dependency as a phenomenon of global capital accumulation and the effect of the modern capitalist empire’s core-periphery relation with its dominated entities (Mahoney and Rodriguez-Franco 2018). The basis of these intellectual conclusions follows the tradition of Marxian thinkers of the early 20th centuries such as Rosa Luxembour and Vladimir Lenin as an unescapable reality of global capital accumulation.

Nevertheless, these ideas were developed in the middle of the Cold War, without widely considering the spatial distribution of core-periphery dynamics within the real existing-socialist superpower: The USSR. Following its dissolution, in 1991, Gleason was the first to report on

such extractive archetypes in which several dimensions of what dependency entailed were observed, particularly in the peripheral region of Central Asia (Hierman 2022). This raises an empirical puzzle: why can we see dependency and core-periphery dynamics in the USSR similar to those in real-existing capitalism? what insights can we gain by applying critical lens of the historical patterns associated with capitalism to a real-existing socialist space—the Soviet Union?

My hypothesis is that core-periphery dynamics, particularly dependency, is not uniquely capitalistic or a unique result of trans-boundary capital accumulation, but present in any imperial state formation in which there is a disbalance of power and subjugation. When this peripherization process occurs in the geographical boundaries of very powerful central polities, the realities of these peripheral states are subject to the core in several aspects apart from the economy: its political processes, cultural values and norms.

Furthermore, a core-periphery relationship of dependency within the framework of a world-systems perspective accounts for structural relations that permeate an existing ideological fabric that encompasses a given space. The viewing of interactions and historical trajectories through a non-state or societal unit, allow for these parallels to be worth examining. For this reason, through a historiographic and case-study analysis of Soviet and Russian engagement in Central Asia, I explore core-periphery dynamics in the region, focusing on the case of the cotton industry, as well as the pre-existing colonial perceptions present in this engagement.

I first explore the theory and historical context surrounding literature of the world-systems perspective and its core-periphery, the political economy of dependency and imperialism. Here, drawing from the literature on dependency, I identify two peripheral conditions akin to capitalist imperialism. Subsequently, I place this theory within the context

of Soviet/Russian engagement in Central Asia, specifically examining literature relevant to the processes specific to this geographic space. Lastly, I conduct a case study to examine the presence of the aforementioned conditions.

Through this analysis, it is clear that Central Asia was a peripheral region to Moscow during the Soviet era, a status that persists to this day according to empirical and academic evidence. Furthermore, dependency and core-periphery dynamics parallel to capitalism are observed because of two reasons, the USSR was a vast empire that through its exertion of power was able to consolidate a rule in the region that stretched from military occupation to economic extraction to cultural narratives and language. Moreover, its structural interaction with the forces of capitalism through the legacy of 19th century colonialism of the tsarist empire alongside the interactions with the rest of the world during the Cold War marked its structural position within the modern world system.

Applying such a critical perspective, rooted in a similar philosophical foundation, offers valuable insights into the structural relations within the broader world system. It also allows for questioning and critiquing the applicability of critical perspectives when addressing the prevailing status quo.

3 Literature Review and Historical Context

Theory and Analytical Validity of the Core-periphery Perspective

Core-periphery network models play a prominent role in physics and mathematics, particularly in network theory. These models can be categorized into two types: discrete and continuous. The centrality of the core and the assumptions made about the interconnectivity of peripheral nodes differentiate the mathematical characteristics of each model. In the social

sciences, core-periphery structures tend to be continuous and have been observed in economics, sociology, and international relations, both as qualitative and quantitative concepts.

Core-periphery takes its most bold and comprehensive approach in Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems perspective. His analysis of world-systems not only serves as a framework for understanding study subjects of social disciplines but for explaining the state of knowledge creation in the social sciences as a whole. In the article titled "*A world-system perspective on the social sciences*", Wallerstein examines the development of social sciences and offers a critique of the prevailing post-war developmentalist perspective. He argues for a shift towards a "world-system perspective" as an alternative framework for understanding social action and analyzing historical processes (Wallerstein 1976).

In this article, he highlights the emergence of social science disciplines in the 19th century. He maintains that this process gave rise to debates between universalizers, who viewed human behavior as subject to generalizable laws and comparable to natural phenomena, and particularizers, who emphasized the unique qualities of human life and the limitations of generalizations. The author also suggests that these debates have become institutionalized, leading to the division of disciplines into universalizing fields (economics, sociology, political science) and particularizing fields (history, anthropology) (Wallerstein 1976, 343).

Wallerstein situates his work within the framework of the world-system theory, with a specific focus on the Anglo-American context that holds particular significance for his knowledge creation. He also recognizes the influence of critical perspectives, particularly Marxism, which challenged the universality of extant paradigms. By highlighting the prevailing consensus in the social sciences, Wallerstein argues that the analysis has predominantly centered around individual societies as the fundamental unit of study, often examining whether these societies follow similar historical paths.

This perspective informed the developmentalist paradigm that emerged after World War II, which emphasized the measurement and promotion of development across states. Based on his aforementioned analysis, Wallerstein contends that this developmentalist perspective began to lose credibility because, despite efforts to promote development, the gap between developed and developing countries continued to widen. The rise of national liberation movements and challenges to the developmentalist standard further eroded its dominance (Wallerstein 1976, 345).

Consequently, Wallerstein proposes this world-system perspective as an alternative framework. This perspective shifts the unit of analysis from individual societies to an entity characterized by an ongoing division of labor. The author distinguishes between two types of world-systems: world-empires, characterized by political unity and surplus appropriation through tribute, and world-economies, marked by the absence of political unity and sown together through economic interactions (Wallerstein 1976, 346).

By discarding the assumption of a society or polity as the primary unit, Wallerstein suggests exploring alternative modes of organizing the material world. He identifies "modes of production" as essential in understanding how decisions are made regarding division of labor, production, consumption, and distribution. He introduces the reciprocal-lineage mode as the earliest mode of production, based on limited specialization, reciprocal exchange, and control of reproduction. He contrasts it with world-systems characterized by surplus appropriation and bureaucratic control (Wallerstein 1976, 348).

Unraveling the fabric of the world-systems perspective reveals an intriguing dynamic where this perspective assumes a central position in shaping disciplinary boundaries and the creation of knowledge. While the universality of such systems is not explicitly asserted, it seems to be implied through this vantage point. Nevertheless, when examining the empirical

underpinnings of this notion, the focus primarily lies in critiquing social systems and the production of knowledge in a given world system. Consequently, this critical approach serves as a catalyst for questioning and analyzing the prevailing status quo, thereby highlighting the significance of perspectives mentioned by Wallerstein such as Marxism. However, this very nature and the inherent worldview espoused by the social sciences within a world-systems framework prompt us to ponder the following: Can the macro-historical processes they encompass truly be comprehensibly scrutinized through these lenses that were also created from a world system of core-periphery?

Critical and Historical Perspectives on Core-periphery Dynamics

This focus is particularly specific for global capitalism and the contemporary western liberal order, but it can also be extrapolated to real-existing socialism of the 20th century USSR, as well as other macro-historical processes such as that of non-European knowledge creation and evolution, from granular systems of reciprocal-lineage modes in small, isolated polities, to cosmovisions beyond the western imaginative of capitalism and social order in non-western societies. Thus, to expand the previously raised question, to what extent is this perspective, which has been produced through Wallerstein's experience in the global north, a product of its own dynamics and hierarchy of knowledge in the Eurocentric world?

Critiques of the world-systems perspective such as those by Nederveen Pieterse raise significant concerns within this angle and the ontological position of the world-systems in the field of development. He argues that world-system theory is a conceptual framework that lacks a comprehensive system theory, focusing instead on "social systems" as its primary units, with one such system being the "modern world system". Therefore, understanding the assumptions underlying these conceptual units, their interrelationships, and the mechanisms of transition between them is a fundamental challenge in world-system theory. This approach shares the

difficulty of conceptualizing structural change within the relations of other "structural" approaches to history and its sociology. (Pieterse 1988) Furthermore, he also acknowledges the limitations of placing economic interactions in the center of world-systems, arguing that the structural interactions are not only due to exploitation—be it within capitalism or any other economic system—and that the process of peripherization can occur differently in different social systems which are not subject to a teleological conclusion such as a world-system (Pieterse 1988).

Nevertheless, this criticism also provides the conditions and an interesting angle for this dissertation to apply a world-system theory to the USSR, given that it combines this challenge with neo-Marxist dependency theory and conventional Marxism—cornerstone theoretical frameworks for this analysis, but also, expanding world-systems outside the global order into another hegemonic state formation which can structurally interact with such order. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this underlying combination then introduces certain limitations such as the centrism of dependency thinking and the materialistic and deterministic tendencies of conventional Marxism. Addressing the question of structural change, particularly how the "modern world system" can be transformed into a successor social system, remains a key concern with future applications of this theory.

Finally, Wallerstein's unwavering commitment to historical materialism is evident in his retention of one of its most criticized features: a teleology based on the dialectic of modes of production. New generations of Marxist thought have largely moved away from this assumption as it fails to account for the complexities of historical causality. The existence of dependency and peripherization can be attributed to their inevitability within a capitalist system, where institutions such as private property and surpluses are firmly established. However, by demonstrating that these relationships can persist under varying institutional frameworks, I

propose that historical causality is more complex, devoid of any predetermined teleology, and instead shaped by nodes of decision-making and contingency. This understanding suggests that alternative worlds are achievable. Consequently, from a theoretical standpoint, Wallerstein's analysis falls short in accurately capturing the causal chain leading to imperialist economic relationships, necessitating further research and theoretical development.

Therefore, by applying this critical perspective, which examines global capitalism, to the geographical context of real existing socialism rooted in Marxist thought, we can gain valuable insights into the complex dynamics of structural societal interactions that extend beyond political, social, or economic boundaries. Wallerstein's core-periphery perspective applied to subjects of study within development studies and Marxism is thus crucial for comprehending the epistemological and ontological justifications for employing critical frameworks in global structural systems and the theorization of the world-systems perspective's own applicability.

Political Economy of Dependency

The neo-Marxist concept of dependency relies heavily on the political economic perspective, which is particularly important for this disquisition. Briefly mentioned in a previous paragraph, the concept of dependency and the creation of a core-periphery framework in this discipline arise from an observed international economics and trade phenomenon that resulted from neoclassical—Ricardian—comparative advantage. In a nutshell, David Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage suggests that countries should specialize in producing goods and services in which they have a lower opportunity cost compared to other countries, allowing for mutually beneficial trade and overall economic efficiency—trade and export oriented. By focusing on their respective strengths and engaging in a trade and export orientation, based on comparative advantage, countries can enhance productivity and maximize welfare (Love 1980).

Although this could be the case with countries that are in the same economic level, it was not necessarily the case when relative underdevelopment exists. Raul Plebisch was the first to identify this in the late 1940s. He stated that underdeveloped countries (peripheral countries) will fall into dependency (dependent on core countries) if they follow a “trade and export” oriented industrialization (Love 1980). Within countries, Paul Krugman (1991) further argues that, within a regional economy, in cases where transportation costs are sufficiently low, manufacturing activities tend to concentrate in a central region known as the core, while peripheral regions focus primarily on agricultural production.

Therefore, the principle of comparative advantage undergoes a dissociation in the context of unequal economic interactions, particularly between an industrial economy specializing in high-value manufactured products and a non-industrial economy heavily reliant on primary goods exports. This dissociation is further exacerbated in cases of starkly disproportionate exchange, such as the interaction between a dominant hegemonic power and a weaker peripheral entity.

In order to deal with this negative phenomenon, Plebisch called for an “import-substitution” oriented industrialization where countries should focus on developing their manufacturing sector before engaging in international trade. This strategy was one that the UN Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) in the 1960s and 70s, with heavy sponsoring by the USA, followed in the effort to “develop” this region (Bianculli 2016). However, even though certain industries in urban areas grew, stagnation followed, and several dislocations occurred particularly in rural areas. Due to the stagnation of economic growth, there was a substantial influx of people migrating to urban areas in search of employment opportunities that were ultimately unavailable. Thus, it was clear that the economic dimension of trade imbalances was not the only one to take into account (Mahoney and Rodriguez-Franco 2018).

These results can be attributed to the fact that Latin America as a region has been a periphery since colonization from European powers, particularly Spain. In a larger scale, I argue that it has operated as a periphery of the west, where European domination established itself as a significant core in every social aspect, politically (through imposition), economically (through extraction) and culturally (through language and religion). However, specific to the time of Plebisch and the ECLA, the region had become an entrenched periphery of one of the era's superpowers: the USA.

The process of the current peripherization in Latin America commenced with the Monroe Doctrine declaration in the early 19th century following the emergence of independence movements in the region and the ideal for regional political and economic integration (Bianculli 2016). Throughout the 20th century, however, this process further solidified as various countries experienced direct political, military, and economic interventions, leading to the establishment of a neo-colonial and imperial dominance characterized by the exertion of both soft and hard power (McPherson 2016).

Hence, despite the development of a manufacturing sector in Latin American countries, the persistent reliance on the core for financial capital, expertise, and technological advancements perpetuated a state of dependency. This was observed and firstly mentioned by the previously mentioned group of Latin American economists of the 1970s, mainly Santos, Cardoso, Evans and Falleto ("dependencistas"), where they claimed that import-substitution does not prevent dependency, the effects of peripherization creates a different, more entrenched form of core-periphery relationship that goes beyond the economic effects, where the "economy and society of underdeveloped or developing countries or societies is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected" (Dos Santos 1970) (Gleason 1991).

By suggesting a more entrenched dependency dynamic which apart from economic spans to political, sociological and cultural dependency, it allowed for its representation and empirical observation in (1) technological and economic vulnerability towards the core, and (2) cultural development gap and socioeconomic stratification in the periphery—often by ethnic lines due to colonial remnants of racial stratification, which is represented in income inequality but also in the level of connectivity with the core by a managerial elite that coopts the extractive economic activity.

Imperialism

The conditions mentioned in the previous paragraph can be attributed to imperial formations as well. To an extent, any entity that is subjugated to an imperial force will experience a process of peripherization with respect to the empire's core (Hierman 2022). The iterations of empires throughout history show how this process is not just one based on power exertion and subjugation but has a more intricate façade of interactions and connections between different societies and populations. This is a statement Burbank and Cooper present in their book: *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*.

This book argues that empires throughout history exhibit distinct characteristics that are specific to their historical era, geographical location, and contextual factors, which are reflected in their expansionary policies and mechanisms. Whether it is the hegemony of ancient Rome in the Mediterranean, the Inca empire's dominance in the Andes, the British mastery of the seas, or the Soviet Union's bureaucratic control or the United States' expansion to the west or its capital annexation, each empire's methods are shaped by its unique historical context and their legacy (Burbank and Cooper 2010).

However, the concept of empire in political science is often associated with a specific unit of analysis tied to a regime or characterized by military and coercive expansion. If this narrow perspective is adopted, the United States, being a democratic regime, might not be classified as an empire. Nevertheless, the United States has exhibited aggressive expansion both militarily and through new means specific to the 20th century and post-industrialization capitalism: financial leverage, extractivism through private sector operations, intelligence, political meddling and espionage, etc. Similarly, the USSR, initially driven by Marxist ideology, aimed to become an international project, seeking to unite populations through a socialist revolution rather than forcible annexation. However, the existence of coercive tactics employed by Moscow to maintain bureaucratic control over non-Russian republics and its satellite states, such as propaganda, direct military intervention, financial leverage, trade limitations and political imposition, raises the question of whether the USA and the USSR can be considered empires in the same sense as Rome or the British Empire.

I argue, in accordance with Burbank and Cooper, that both are two notions of empire subject to the world-system forces of the 20th century, and the exertion of power is carried out through means relevant to their political priorities. Imperialism through global capitalism “economically annexes”, through private capital, peripheral sovereign states, as the USA did with El Salvador and Guatemala, as an example. Whereas imperialism through Soviet-led socialism incorporated its periphery into the state bureaucracy, as the USSR did with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (Hierman 2022). By drawing a parallel between imperialism in global capitalism and real-existing socialism, this assumption strengthens the basis for examining the application of world-systems within the geographical space of real-existing socialism.

This framework goes in accordance with supporters of Wallerstein's world-systems, such as one of Charles Tilly's argument in *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (1984). He claims that in a particular world system, it is logical to consider states, regional modes of production, associations, and various other categories as viable units of analysis. Therefore, by examining the application of core-periphery dynamics, as previously done by the "dependencistas", within the context of real-existing socialism and considering the spatial economy of the USSR through the case of cotton, we can gain valuable insights into the structural relationship between this region and global capitalism. Furthermore, this analysis enables us to address our research questions concerning the factors contributing to the formation of dependency in large extractive state formations.

Finally, understanding the dynamics of core-periphery in empire within the context of global capitalism and real-existing socialism provides a framework for analyzing specific industries and regions under different ideological systems. Given the centrality of political economic interactions in both Wallerstein's perspective and that of neo-Marxist dependency in development studies, the cotton industry is a formidable example because it has played a pivotal role in global disruptions and transformations. Such as the consolidation of global capitalism, as well as being an important commodity for non-capitalist empires throughout history, including the USSR. Examining the implications of cotton production as a case study in Central Asia for the dependency dynamics of real-existing socialism, thus, allows us to understand how the core-periphery shapes the structural relationships between these regions and overall extraction dynamics.

Relevance and Applicability of Core-periphery to the USSR and the Cotton Industry

The history of cotton is one of importance and change, multi-faceted and geographically diverse. The commodity has been in the center of global disruptions and has embodied much

more than the product itself. It has represented commercial ventures, colonization and extraction but also served as a main fuel for industrialization. In the words of Beckert: *“industrial capitalism was creating in an ever-changing world, and cotton, the world’s most important industry, was the mainspring of this unprecedented acceleration of human productivity”* (Beckert 2014, 69).

The geographical associations of cotton are normally centered around the south of the United States, India, Egypt or the global south in general. In European eyes, it has been a commodity of far-away lands. This was no different in Russia which since the Tsarist empire has seen the production of cotton in Central Asia—their “oriental periphery”. The Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) of Uzbekistan became the second largest cotton producing region in the world around 1980, sending roughly 95% of its cotton to Moscow (Gleason 1991). The export of this commodity or even the further processing as cloth or clothing would take place in Slavic Russia or elsewhere, leaving the aggregated value of the primary commodity in the hands of those in the center, similar to the extraction of value that industrial capitalists would harness through the ownership of the means of production.

The soviet project promised to achieve a communist society, where equality would prime, the proletariat would rule and own these means of production. It would be Marx’s materialization, finally addressing the social problems and labor exploitation that arose after the industrial revolution. This was a global project, sanctioned and embedded in the soviet coat of arms itself: “workers of the world, unite!”. The prior conceptualizations surrounding cotton would, in theory, not be the same as those presented by Beckert. Geographically and through the supply chain, the profits should be distributed equitably. Thus, why are we observing a process of extraction of value and depletion?

Other Central Asian republics followed a similar distribution for their own primary commodities. The Central Committee of the USSR (CCSU), by the very nature of the planned system, held hierarchical and political ties with party member committees that conformed the ruling class and controlled means of production of Central Asian and Caucasian SSRs: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. The quantity and price of production of their cotton, and the quotas for the extraction of resources and agricultural commodities were directly set from Moscow, thus determining wages, rents, working conditions and even cultural narratives (Gleason 1991).

These extractive dynamics are eerily similar to capitalist neoclassical international trade phenomenon such as that mentioned before by Raul Plebisch in 1949—the argument that underdeveloped countries will fall into dependency if they follow a “trade and export “oriented industrialization (Love 1980). Furthermore, the dependencistas concern was also visible within this extractive relationship where the effects of peripherization creates a more entrenched form of core-periphery relationship that goes beyond the economic effects, where the progress and structure of underdeveloped or developing countries or societies are influenced by the growth and advancement of another economy to which they are subordinated (Dos Santos 1970).

The ideal of post-imperial and transnational struggles of class did not set after the October revolution but were actually systematized in the Soviet system according to Gleason, which argues that Uzbekistan, as well as the rest of Central Asia, is a periphery of Moscow since the Russian empire (Gleason 1991). These dynamics can be observed in the spatial economy of the USSR, particularly the case of Cotton but also in the other two representations of dependency mentioned in its theoretical examination: (1) technological and economic vulnerability towards the core, and (2) cultural development gap and socioeconomic stratification in the periphery. If it is determined that many of the aspects known about the

historical development of capitalism also apply to the Soviet Union, this finding could offer valuable insights into the nature of real existing socialism and the reasons behind extractive dynamics within it.

4 Background for Case Studies

Overview of the Formation and Structure of the Soviet Union

The structure of the Soviet Union, officially known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), can be traced back to the aftermath of the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the subsequent Civil War. Born amidst chaos and ideological fervor, it embodied a grand experiment in socialist utopia. Led by the Bolshevik Party under Vladimir Lenin, the Soviet Union's historical trajectory was marked by triumphs and tribulations.

In December 1922, the USSR emerged as a large entity, with its foundation resting upon a federation of republics. The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) was joined either by force or negotiation by the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkSSR), the Bielorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR), and the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (TSFSR), which later splintered into the Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani SSRs (Ivonavich 2018). It also held control of Russia's central Asian dominions—Turkestan—, although the republics conforming this area would not be organized into separate republics until some years later.

The Soviet Union's political structure embodied a dualistic nature—a dance between centralized authority and a modicum of regional autonomy. While the republics enjoyed a measure of self-governance within the web of the federal framework, true power resided within the halls of the central government in the heartland of Moscow. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), a monolithic force, stood as the unequivocal nexus of authority. Under

the General Secretary, initially Lenin and later Stalin, Kruschev, Brezhnev and Gorbachov, the CPSU would orchestrate the policies and decisions that affected millions throughout the country.

The economic landscape of the Soviet Union was a comprehensive experiment in central planning, a departure from traditional market forces. The state assumed ownership and control of the means of production, charting meticulously designed blueprints for economic development. The collectivization of agriculture and rapid industrialization became the hallmarks of the Soviet economic model. However, the lofty aspirations of this project were tempered by a litany of challenges, including inefficiencies, scarcities, and a dearth of innovation (Ivonavich 2018).

The social structure of Soviet society was characterized by a pervasive adherence to ideological conformity and the suppression of dissenting viewpoints. The state meticulously controlled the realms of education, media, and cultural institutions to disseminate and uphold the principles of communism. Any form of active political opposition or active divergent thinking was promptly extinguished, overshadowed by a constant presence of censorship, repression, and the harsh grip of the gulag system. To safeguard its vision and extend its reach, the Soviet Union nurtured a robust military apparatus. Its arsenals of nuclear weaponry propelled it to the forefront of global power competition during the Cold War. The Soviet military machine played a strategic role in advancing Soviet interests, projecting power across Eastern Europe and beyond.

Yet, despite its veneer of invincibility, the Soviet Union grappled with internal contradictions and daunting challenges. Economic stagnation, corruption, and nationalistic aspirations reverberated across the vast expanse of its republics. In 1991, a failed coup against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev unleashed a process of decline, its aftermath saw its

republics fractured, reclaiming their independence and ending the communist system (Ivonavich 2018).

Soviet Presence in Central Asia

First of all, what drove the Russians to conquer and claim this region as their own? Diverse scholarly perspectives point to different motivations that compelled the Tsar. From 19th-century imperialistic fervor, such as geostrategic maneuverings influenced by the "Great Game" against Britain's dominions in India, and nuanced economic considerations, emerge as the most discernible factors. However, engagement during the second half of the 19th century was more disperse, and even though certain suppositions and conceptualizations about the region commenced in this period of time, subjugation fully sprouted during the Soviet period in the 20th century (Obertreis 2017).

Timur Dadabaev, through his chapter in *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan - Life and Politics during the Soviet Era*, highlights the difficulty of obtaining accurate information related to the collective memory of central Asian soviet citizens. The historical development of these societies went from nomadic to state-censored sedentarism. In his words: "*these countries and societies experienced transitions from settled and nomadic lifestyles into the socialist construction of a 'Sovietness' followed by the bankruptcy of this notion and reconstruction of ethnic-centered nation building*" (Dadabaev 2017, 22).

Therefore, the official narrative from the USSR of daily life is one that must be taken with a grain of salt. However, by examining historical accounts like those of Dabaev, contemporaneous media, official narratives and policies of the CPSU and testimonies that shed light on the enduring legacies of the tsarist empire's colonial rule, it becomes possible to extract

fundamental policies and their subsequent impact. These policies were instrumental in shaping the dependency dynamics between Moscow and its periphery of Central Asia.

After the October revolution, the region saw its dramatic transformation subject to processes led from Moscow. Soviet policy was characterized by a combination of political control, economic exploitation, and cultural assimilation. The Soviet Union established a firm grip over Central Asia by dividing the region into separate republics under the Soviet framework. Moscow entrusted locally appointed Communist Party officials with governing the new republics, guaranteeing unwavering loyalty to Soviet doctrines. Dissent and nationalist sentiments were suppressed, sparing no effort to maintain an unyielding hold and thwart any possibility of independence.

Central Asia's resources were utilized to support the USSR's industrial and agricultural needs. The region became a significant source of oil, gas, and minerals, which were zealously extracted under direct ordinances from the heartland in Moscow. However, this economic exploitation often disrupted traditional agrarian structures and led to social and environmental challenges as exemplified with cotton production from Uzbekistan (Obertreis 2017).

Culturally, the Soviets aimed to assimilate the diverse Central Asian populations into the Soviet way of life. They promoted education and literacy primarily through the Russian language. They were also the first to introduce standardized education systems and would implement modern—or “European style”—educational amenities. However, this cultural assimilation led to the erosion of local languages, traditions, and cultural practices. With regards to religion, the Atheist Soviet project was incompatible to the region's Islamic majority and traditional beliefs such as Tengrism. This would lead to dilemmas that stemmed from the dislocation of an unfathomable Atheist core force upon deeply rooted religious idiosyncrasies (Sahin 2017, 75).

Finally, it is important to note that Russian policy makers kept orientalist and colonial views inherited by the tsarist empire when considering policies towards the region, informing many of the preconceptions that needed to be tackled for assimilation as well as the “plantation mentality” with regards to natural resource exploitation. This is most clearly seen with cotton, which was a strategic industry for the USSR.

5 Case Study: The Uzbek SSR and Its Cotton Industry

The socio-economic and political dynamics in Central Asia—in this case Uzbekistan—displayed pillars of orientalizing, including colonial mentality, paternalistic developmentalism, chauvinism, and a belief in European superiority which are characteristic of a dependent peripheral region. The specialization in primary goods extraction, specifically cotton, contributed to a dual economy within the sphere of Soviet-led communism, resembling US-led capitalist interventions. By presenting the history surrounding Russian and then Soviet involvement in Central Asia focusing on the case of Uzbekistan through cotton and the socio-economic perceptions of the center, I will then analyze the information presented in this case to pinpoint the underlying causal mechanisms of my argument.

Historical Development of the Cotton Industry in Central Asia

Cotton extraction from the Russian core started prior to the October revolution in the second half of the 19th century during the imperial colonization of the territory Russians called Turkestan. Although the motivations for conquest of this territory seem to be more geo-strategic rather than financial, in the context of the aforementioned Great Game, capitalists ventured into these new lands in order to exploit untapped resources or become middlemen in the production of these resources. Cotton in the region has been grown at least from 500-600

BCE. Its soil's and climate's natural conditions allowed for this crop to flourish, especially in the Ferghana valley (Khawar, Kahriz and Kahriz 2019).

The American Civil War had a profound and unprecedented impact on the global cotton economy, resulting in significant disruptions. Prior to the war, major Western European powers such as France and Britain heavily relied on importing cotton from the southern plantations of the United States, while Russia alone accounted for 92 percent of American cotton exports (Beckert 2014). However, the outbreak of the civil war led to a sharp decline, plummeting by 96 percent over the subsequent decade. This crisis reverberated worldwide, compelling Britain to increase its investment in Indian cotton and stimulating a notable upsurge in cotton production in regions like Egypt and Brazil (Obertreis 2017).

Although Central Asia had previously played a minor role in cotton production, the turmoil caused by the Civil War prompted a significant surge in cotton cultivation during the 1860s in the region. This increased output can be seen as a response to the disruption in the global cotton supply chain. Referred to as the "cotton famine," this crisis had far-reaching consequences, including severe food shortages among laborers and peasants across various parts of the world. Consequently, Russian officials began to contemplate the notion of "cotton autonomy" within the imaginations of the Tsarist empire. Aligned with capitalist endeavors and the colonial ideal of bringing a presumed "superior" culture to oriental lands, the consolidation of imperial rule involved agricultural and infrastructural projects aimed at harmonizing these policy objectives and securing the extraction of this commodity (Obertreis 2017). Engineers and capitalist venturers already attempted to unlock the untapped potential of the land, conceptualizing grandiose mega-projects in the Ferghana valley, and the idealization of the "Hungry Steppe"—the lush, fertile land the steppe would become after the

implementation of large-scale irrigation. In Tashkent, Russian intellectuals would debate the best possible ways to make this a reality.

Cotton, at the start of the 20th century, was already an important element for Russian consolidation of power in the region, linked to the further cementation of rule and the imperial imagination of what Turkestan meant within the imperial and colonial mentality of Saint Petersburg. However, these projects never materialized under the Tsar, yet they would become a fundamental pillar for Bolshevik policymakers. After the revolution, they would already have an idea of the importance of this commodity and the place it should take within the soviet project.

Early Takeover

In the 1920s, the nationalization and takeover of the cotton industry by the Soviet state was not easy nor straightforward. The region was basically isolated from the rest of the USSR. The civil war and the revolution had a profound impact in both the agricultural sector and people in Central Asia, where agriculture and irrigation declined drastically resulting in famine. Furthermore, the state-takeover of the cotton industry had to address the void created by the defunct network of intermediaries that played a crucial role in purchasing cotton from farmers and supplying it to cotton factories in Russia (Obertreis 2017, 144).

This did not stop, however, plans for ambitious projects for the region such as *korenizatsiia*, “indigenization policy”. It consisted in a policy that would explicitly showcase the Bolsheviks disavowal of the exploitation of non-Russian ethnic groups under the tsarist regime by focusing on class struggle rather than ethnic differentiation. It served as a crucial political measure in Soviet consolidation, and it demonstrates that Moscow acknowledged that a solely Slavic cadre would be insufficient to establish an effective administration, particularly

in the predominantly non-Slavic region of southern Central Asia. The policy of *Korenizatsiia* held great significance for indigenous communists and intellectuals, who sought to actively participate in the construction of a new and ostensibly fairer state system (Obertreis 2017, 145).

Nevertheless, ethnic tensions persisted throughout the 1920s. Within communist circles, a distinction was commonly made between "Europeans" and "Uzbeks," and a derogatory view of the "uncultured Uzbeks" prevailed among "European" Soviet workers in Bukhara. Uzbek intellectuals voiced their grievances about Russian dominance through the influx of Russian settlers. Prominent political figures such as Isaak Zelenskii, who led the Central Asian Bureau, maintained a sense of mistrust. These tensions continued to persist despite the increase of Central Asians in leadership positions over time (Obertreis 2017, 146).

This distrust translated to infrastructural projects as well. The initial plans for large-scale transformation in agriculture and irrigation were not devised by representatives of the indigenous nations but were instead formulated by Europeans. The Hungry Steppe was present and well, and engineers such as Georgii K. Rizenkampf endeavored to tap the potential of irrigation for large-scale cotton cultivation. Through mechanization and foreign technical assistance, he devised a 20-year plan for large scale irrigation in the Hungry Steppe which did not culminate in anything close to the ambitious goals (Xushbakovich 2022). Although his ideas resonated in Moscow, particularly certain elements of his program that aligned with the policies of the Bolsheviks in terms of expanding irrigation and cotton cultivation, as well as the concept of cotton autonomy, later developments displayed him and his followers as "bourgeois" or "old" specialists, and future state-led projects would attempt to separate from this tsarist legacy (Obertreis 2017, 154; Xushbakovich 2022)

Reforms and Collectivization

Within the ambit of the New Economic Policy, a wave of transformative measures emanated from Moscow: National Delimitation, Land-water Reform, and Hujum—for women's emancipation. As the National Delimitation deftly demarcated distinct SSRs like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, it was the profound ramifications of the land-water reform and the Hujum movement that reverberated throughout the peasantry and left an indelible imprint on cotton production.

After the revolution, the New Economic Policy (NEP) emerged as a cornerstone of state policy and intellectual debate towards the rural sector. This policy was based on a set of interconnected assumptions, in which the fundamental preconception was that a country such as the Soviet Union, which relied heavily on a small-scale capitalist agricultural sector, could not progress directly towards socialism. Instead, it required a transitional phase focused on increasing agricultural productivity and fostering positive attitudes among the peasantries. During this transition, the state would control key sectors of the economy such as heavy industry, mining, banking, transport, and foreign trade, while farming and handicrafts would remain the domain of small-scale producers (Solomon 1975, 555). Despite the focus on “small scale”, this policy set the conditions for land consolidation to exist, creating a “Kulak” class of richer landowners.

Because of this, in 1925, when the private market was still strong, Lenin's view of abolishing Kulaks was implemented by the “Land Water Reform”. Kulak's lands were confiscated and redistributed to poorer peasants. This campaign reform was officially declared as accomplished in the central districts of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan by 1927. However, it extended to various other regions until 1929, coinciding with the onset of the collectivization campaign. While the reform yielded certain economic outcomes such as an expansion in cotton acreage, it also exhibited limited progress in terms of yield per hectare (Obertreis 2017, 161).

Political radicalization under Stalin, saw an aggressive and authoritarian new economic archetype: collectivization and forced industrialization through five-year plans. These collective farms would be called *kolkhoz*, under a party administrator. Cotton production emerged as a primary focus during the collectivization efforts in Central Asia, commanding significant attention from the start. Moscow's Central Committee on July 18, 1929, issued a famous decree that emphasized the imperative of utilizing all available resources to maximize cotton cultivation. In the essence of the idea of cotton autonomy, the purpose was to eliminate the reliance on imported foreign cotton for the Union's textile industry by the conclusion of the first Five-Year Plan, while also accumulating the necessary reserves to facilitate further expansion of the textile sector (Obertreis 2017, 164).

The sense of urgency surrounding cotton extraction and textile production remained high throughout the second and third five-year plans. Numerous cotton decrees were implemented, placing constant pressure on the government of the Uzbek SSR, the peasantry, and Soviet officials in the collective farms to meet the targets set by Moscow. The issue of whitewashing, which impeded the accurate reporting of yields reaching the Russian heartland, would later emerge as a significant factor differentiating Moscow's relationship with Central Asia in the 1980s (Ivonavich 2018).

The sense of urgency permeated the economic and social fabric of Uzbek life as well, where economic production and the relationship to communism, the fatherland and the Soviet center were primarily focused on cotton production. In essence, the Uzbek SSR, was converting itself into a dual economy, similar to those observed in colonial plantations. However, in this case, there was comprehensive policy of assimilation and technocratic imposition of “progressive methods” of agriculture based on the supposition of superior European technology. Suppressed aspirations of nationhood, stifled ethnic and religious diversity, and curtailed

economic liberties, obfuscated the visions of a socialist utopia which remained elusive. Among the strides made in education and healthcare, it was the pervasive dominance of cotton that held sway over all other aspects.

Таблица 3*

Вид продукции	1953 г.	1963 г.	1963 г. в % к 1953 г.
Продукция земледелия, тыс. т			
хлопок-сырец	2521,0	3687,8	148,3
джут и стебли кенафа	74,0	272,1	367,7
зерно	226,3	304,9	134,7
картофель	12,3	33,3	207,7
овощи	65,1	313,6	481,7
фрукты и виноград	42,1	114,7	272,4
табак	2,9	7,3	251,7
Продукция животноводства, тыс. т			
скот и птица (в весе жи- вого скота)	62,3	154,4	247,8
молоко	79,8	258,2	323,6
яйца (млн. шт.)	19,9	127,9	642,7
шерсть	15,4	21,8	141,6
коконы тутового шелко- пряда	13,4	17,5	130,6

Table retrieved from 1964
publication of the Science
Academy of the Uzbek SSR
reporting production to the
Central Committee.

* Составлена по данным Отдела статистики сельского хозяйства ЦСУ УзССР.

Increase in cotton production was displayed almost consistently in every state report of public science from 1964 onwards. In a table of the 1964 version of this state report, showing change in agricultural production of the Uzbek SSR, we observe that harvesting of raw cotton has increased from 2521 tons to 3687 tons from 1953 to 1963¹ (Science Academy of the Uzbek SSR 1964).

The pressure through unrealistic quotas would also cause stark differentiations between Russians and Uzbeks, which in essence would continue to perceive the region as an oriental and unproductive periphery, whereas Russia as the center for European culture, technology and advanced productivity. The whitewashing that occurred—at least in pre-war times—was not

¹ “хлопок-сырец” translates to “raw cotton.”

seen as a consequence of these burdensome requirements, but as a characteristic of perceived central-Asian backwardness (Obertreis 2017).

Economic and Cultural Perceptions

Eurocentric views and processes of orientalizations as those identified by Edward Said are prevalent in the interactions between Moscow and Central Asia during the USSR. This has been recognized not only by Obertreis in the context of cotton discussed above, but also by post-Soviet political economists and historians that have analyzed dependency dynamics by taking novel approaches which examine Russian perceptions towards peripheral Islam.

Gradskova, following the second characteristic of dependency defined in previous sections and in the context of the Hujum policy, delves into the differentiation of the “woman of the east”, that of the central Asian Muslim vs Christian Slavic in the 1920s and 30s (Gradskova 2021). Furthermore, Kuznetsova, undertakes an open discussion about the legacies of Russian colonization of Central Asia. Both argue that in the USSR, social embodiments of modernity were materialized in the Russian language and that connections to Slavic centers, the normative ideals of the core’s cosmopolitanism and European social norms were pivotal in determining social mobility (Kuznetsova 2003). Finally, Obertreis (2017) uncovers the influence of individuals known as Stakhonovites, those who surpass work quotas or are recognized for their “virtuous” dedication, on the narrative ideals of social mobility rooted in the cultural perception of the core. Together, these scholarly perspectives provide a multifaceted understanding of the intricate interplay between culture, power dynamics, and the forceful perception of wealth and culture as symbolic to the center in European Russia.

Gradskova argues that the creation of an “us” vs “them”—in this case the civilized, modern core vs the backward, oriental periphery—is grounded on the image of the “woman of

the east”. In order to depict Russian women as symbols of liberation and modernity, women from the Islamic periphery were portrayed as submissive and oppressed. Through soviet media, publications and films of the 20s and 30s, Gradskova shows how the clichés and stereotypes from the tsarist era still permeated the new cultural narrative of the Soviet Union and served as a basis for the peripherization of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Gradskova starts by recognizing that the Soviet state proclaimed the equality of all citizens, and that communist ideology emphasized the importance of both men and women's labor as a fundamental principle of social organization. Nevertheless, women in the Soviet Union were seen as needing more time to achieve true equality due to patriarchal perceptions of lower levels of education and "class consciousness." Soviet documents made a clear distinction between different groups of women, categorizing them as either *natsionalka*—woman (typically Russian, Slavic, or European), *natsmenka*—woman of national minorities, or *vostochnitsa*—woman of the East (Gradskova 2021, 6). This demonstrates a continuation of imperial othering.

On the basis of “equality” but also a “civilizational” approach, the Soviet state would create pamphlets in order to educate activists and local populations on women’s rights. The pamphlets presented women of diverse ethnic backgrounds in the Caucasus region as being subjected to exploitation and lacking in fundamental rights, while subtly portraying Russian women as comparatively more liberated. The male authors criticized the colonial policies of the tsarist regime and drew attention to the adversities endured by women under Russian dominion, yet, alongside this critique, the pamphlets underscored the perceived cultural underdevelopment among local populations, often attributing it to Islamic beliefs and customs regarded as "barbarous" (Gradskova 2021, 10).

The male authors of these pamphlets also associated the transformation of women's lives in the Caucasus with the establishment of new societal institutions, including women's clubs, maternity hospitals, and nurseries. Moreover, they emphasized the role of legislation in prohibiting practices such as bride pricing, bride kidnapping, and polygamy, although the actual effectiveness of these measures was limited (Gradszkova 2021). The pamphlets aimed to highlight the advancements made in improving women's status, frequently citing examples of women occupying various roles and engaging in institutional settings. However, the pursuit of emancipation was frequently depicted as a struggle against local men and the patriarchal power they wielded. She mentions the example of the Azeri SSR, where Azerbaijani women were portrayed as victims of Islam and Islamic laws—the main obstacle to women's freedom and rights. It perpetuated orientalist clichés on victimization (Gradszkova 2021, 15).

These clichés are common in European colonial thought, as described by Edward Said, when exploring narratives of creation of the orient in the aftermath of the Enlightenment era. He focuses on France and Britain, yet other 19th century colonial empires also displayed these characteristics such as Russia. Kuznetsova (2003) explores the context of Central Asia's marginalization and the enduring influence of Tsarist rule during the Soviet era. She analyzes Lazerevich's book, *Social and Economic Results of Russian Colonization of Turkestan*, where several of the legacies discussed are mentioned but highlights migrations as a particular effect.

Drawing on an extensive range of statistical sources from the USSR and Russia, as well as primarily works of literature from Russian authors, Lazerevich's research spanning from 1960 to 1990 contributes by distilling the characteristics of colonial legacies. According to Kuznetsova and Lazerevich, Russia always remained the metropolis of Central Asia, and openly recognize that the relations with the region until 1917 were openly that of a colonial Empire. However, from 1917 to 1991, a concealed form of colonization prevailed, disguised

under the guise of formal equality between the parties in the form of the USSR. Russian colonization, unlike other empires with overseas possessions, had the following specific features: a unified land area, the scale of integration of the Russian ethnic group, a unified economic complex—at least during Soviet times—exerted totalitarianism, and the secrecy of colonization (Kuznetsova 2003, 65; Lazerevich 2001).

The book also mentions migrations from the central regions of Russia. In the first stage prior to 1917, there was spontaneous and organized emigration of peasants due to the pressure of scarce land, famine, and agrarian reforms (1906-1911). The second stage (1917-1953) witnessed the organized relocation of skilled and unskilled labor to the emerging industrial and transportation sectors, along with mass migrations of peasants during the collectivization years, avoiding dispossession and exile to Siberia. The subsequent years involved evacuations during wartime and "special resettlements" of diverse ethnic groups including Germans, Kalmyks, Crimean Tatars, and various Caucasian peoples (Kuznetsova 2003, 65; Lazerevich 2001, 63-65).

In the third stage (after 1953), the focus shifted to skilled workers and engineering-technical personnel for the development of natural resources and heavy industry, retired military personnel, far north laborers and marginalized individuals. From the late 1970s to the early 1980s, the flow of migrants began to decline as there was no longer a shortage of labor. Russians consistently made up about 60% of the non-indigenous population throughout the years (Lazerevich 2001, 66). It is also characteristic for them to be most concentrated in large cities, especially in Almaty (over 80% of all city residents), Tashkent (over 50%), and Bishkek—during soviet times called Frunze (up to 70%). After the collapse of the USSR, the population and proportion of non-indigenous people rapidly declined due to mass repatriation (Kuznetsova 2003, 66).

These mass migrations brought Sovietization processes to these lands. Similar to these effects, Stakhonovites were also mechanisms to culturally assimilate local populations. These were virtuous laborers, normally locals or non-Russians which due to the over-fulfillment of their expectations were compensated with European consumer goods such as clothing, radios, watches, bicycles, etc. Coupled with narratives of the “European lifestyle” such as those of the “European house that had windows”, it was meant to display a feeling of wealth and the mass-consumer culture that was characteristic of it (Obertreis 2017, 188).

As mentioned at the start of this case study, the socio-economic and political dynamics of Central Asian societies are characterized by orientalization, including colonial mentality, paternalistic developmentalism, chauvinism, and a firm belief in European superiority. These factors, coupled with a dual economy resulting from the specialization in primary goods extraction, notably cotton, shed light on the presence of a phenomenon akin to US-led capitalism within the sphere of influence of Soviet-led communism.

6. Method of Analysis

Given this historiography, the state of knowledge on the topic and the case study presented, in the next section I will analyze the presence of both identified elements of dependency from the dependencistas literature, and attempt to qualitatively infer and prove my argument that these conditions are a consequence of a core-periphery relationship of dependency comparable to that of global capitalism. To reiterate, these conditions are: (1) technological and economic vulnerability towards the core and (2) cultural development gap and socioeconomic stratification in the periphery—often by ethnic lines, which is represented in inequality but also in the level of connectivity with the core by a managerial elite that coopts the extractive economic activity.

7. Analysis and Discussion

1. *Technological and Economic Vulnerability Towards the Core*

Economic vulnerability refers to the condition in which a peripheral society is susceptible to the forces and impacts of the economy of the core. Similarly, with technology, the innovation frontier of the periphery—if any—is subject to innovation in the core. In the case of Central Asia, through our previous examination of literature, we can observe that economic vulnerability exists within the cotton industry, but also throughout agriculture as a whole.

First of all, cooptation of raw cotton output by the center, immediately demonstrates an extractive activity similar to that of a colonial plantation. While capitalists from the Russian core initially exploited this industry during the empire, the dynamics of market forces within Russia already sparked a dependency dynamic through this time. Nevertheless, Uzbekistan quickly became explicitly dependent on cotton production through the prices and quotas set by the Soviet center after the Bolshevik uprising. This dependence made Uzbekistan technologically and economically vulnerable to the heartland. This vulnerability was exacerbated due to the focus of meeting unrealistic quotas set by Moscow, rather than diversifying the economy or developing other industries or commodities.

Furthermore, the dismissal of local agricultural expertise in lieu of “progressive and mechanized technologies” display the halting of innovation in local terms which are now subject to that of the core. This in turn reinforces the perception of the periphery as less developed compared to the center based on the assumption of European technological superiority. Finally, Eurocentric views such as the perception of Central Asia as the oriental,

underdeveloped periphery of Russia reflects its technological and economic vulnerability which was also observed during the region's vulnerable state after the Russian revolution.

Parallel to the socio-economic realities of Latin American countries under the imperial influence of the United States' capitalist empire, Central Asia observes processes of stratification in the aforementioned case study, where despite the lack of private capital and corporations maximizing profits subject to market demand in the core, it is the central government, placing quotas and prices in accordance to the international market and at the prerogative of communist technocrats which determines the political economic and social reality of the region.

2. Cultural Development Gap and Socioeconomic Stratification in the Periphery

Santos and Cardoso's reflection that dependency is much more entrenched is clearly observed within the cultural development gap left by soviet presence in the Central Asia and the aggressive policy tactics employed to assimilate. Despite the ideological emphasis on equality and autonomy of Marxism, the remnants of colonial stereotypes continued to shape the perception and treatment of these territories.

Stratification of the periphery is clear, the Stakhonovites, parallel to economic elites such as local landowners in Central America, were exposed and benefited from material goods that represented the wealth and culture of the center. This creates a relationship where an elite coopts the value of the extractive economic activity resulting in a material advantage but also a cultural superimposition of the core, and normally disregarding the local as inferior. Such intricate interactions are compatible to the policies of assimilation and are also observed in the conceptualization of "the woman of the east". Although this was to "liberate oriental women",

it was extremely Eurocentric and came as well with a paternalistic approach of European superiority.

In Latin America, processes like these were not widespread, however, orientalization can be seen in the indigenous population since the time of the colony by Spain. Furthermore, the ethnic tension sprouted by the settlement of Russian settlers in the region and the spatial distribution of the urban-rural divide, showcasing a large number of ethnic Russians in cities, more consolidates the evidence of Russia being an imperial center akin to a capitalist or even mercantilist one. Similarly, in the era of Spanish colonization, cities were inhabited mainly by Spanish or Spanish descendants whereas rural lands mainly by indigenous.

Within our historiographic analysis and these case studies, we can observe the presence of the identified conditions. Although, as Hierman, Tilly and Wallerstein suggest, these could be exemplifiers of any core-periphery process throughout an empire in history. Yet, the similarities with American capitalist imperialism, as well as the structural interactions with capitalism as a global force, reckon the importance of acknowledging these parallels. Therefore, there is no denying that Central Asia is a periphery of Moscow as Gleason argued, but also that the capitalist, world-system archetypes of extraction—similar to those in Latin America—existed in Central Asia, represented by the extractive archetypes in the spatial economy of a geographic space of real-existing socialism.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can observe dependency and core-periphery dynamics akin to those in American capitalism in the USSR because, as an expansive empire, it employed its power to establish a dominant presence in the region, encompassing a range of aspects from military and economic control to shaping cultural narratives and language. Furthermore, its interactions

with the forces of capitalism, influenced by the legacy of 19th-century colonialism under the tsarist empire, as well as its engagement with the global economy during the Cold War, solidified its position within the broader modern world system. The quotas and prices for cotton were mostly unrealistic and burdensome, yet they upheld a reality that is similar to that of corporate monocultures, because even though capital and profit-maximization was not the overwhelming force for subjugation of the local economy, the large bureaucratic apparatus acted equally in order to extract as much surplus value as possible.

Coupled with a colonial legacy that viewed non-European peoples as “others” further cemented the orientalization and dehumanization of traditional local practices. Even though cultural assimilation and equality was a fundamental pillar in soviet policy and Marxist ideology, this angle allowed for patriarchal notions of European superiority which could be observed in social status and media, nurturing a vicious cycle of dependency that is sociologically and culturally representative of dependent development.

Applying a critical perspective for capitalism and the western liberal order to a geographic space of real existing socialism embodies a nuanced debate on what realities and systems are more suitable for human societies and co-existence. As mentioned before, although many Marxists and the Marxist ideology per se originate as a response to capitalism, it is important to view with the same lenses the only attempts of its materialization in our world. Finally, it makes apparent several structural interactions with the world-system of the post-industrial revolution.

Employing this critical perspective—the world-systems and core-periphery dynamics—to one existing ideological space is only the beginning. Following work from Schneider, who applies world-systems theory to precapitalist spaces and social, political and economic formations such as that of the political economy of luxury goods, exhibits that the

world-systems perspective is needed to expound on the intricacies of human interactions as well as explore its own validity throughout human history, and separate from the critiques of it being one social system (Schneider 1991).

Moreover, the critical examination undertaken in this particular disquisition has overlooked the environmental ramifications associated with these political-economic extractive archetypes. Future research should also focus on the particular affectations of human societies as part of and dependent on nature. Subsequent research endeavors should place emphasis on understanding the specific impacts on human societies as interconnected and interdependent with the natural world. In the context of Central Asia, the enduring consequences of this economic and political dependency have left an indelible mark on the land, resulting in soil erosion and environmental degradation as a result of large-scale projects for subduing nature. It is crucial to incorporate this pivotal perspective when delving into future investigations that analyze world-systems in the Anthropocene. World systems extend beyond human-centric perspectives, encompassing all living and non-living entities of the planet.

In essence, the presence of core-periphery dynamics in Soviet Central Asia becomes evident through the examination of the political-economic implications of the cotton industry and the socio-economic conditions shaped by tsarist rule and global capitalist forces. These dynamics emerge due to the large imperial nature of the USSR and its significant structural interactions with other core-periphery models within the world-system, notably capitalism. By applying this critical perspective to a geographic space of real-existing socialism and illuminating its extractive nature, a fertile ground is created for discussing the historical sociology across various social science disciplines in addition to offering illuminating insights for future research on the practical implications of human societies and their interactions.

Bibliography

- Beckert, Sven. 2014. *Empire of Cotton*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Bianculli, Andrea. 2016. "Latin America." In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism*, by Tanja A Börzel and Thomas Risse. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burbank, Jane, and Frederick Cooper. 2010. *Empires in World History*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Dadabaev, Timur. 2017. "Recollecting the Soviet Past: Challenges of Data Collection on Everyday Life Experiences and Public Memory in PostSoviet Central Asia." In *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan - Life and Politics during the Soviet Era*, edited by TIMUR DADABAEV and HISAO KOMATSU. New York: Springer Nature - Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dos Santos, Theotonio. 1970. "The Structure of Dependence." *The American Economic Review* 60 (2): 231-236.
- Gleason, Gregory. 1991. "The Political Economy of Dependency under Socialism: The Asian Republics in the USSR." *Studies in Comparative Communism* 24 (4): 335-353.
- Gradskova, Yulia. 2021. "The “Woman of the East” and Soviet Orientalism. Rethinking the Soviet story of women’s “emancipation” in Azerbaijan in the 1920s-1930s." *Journal of Caucasian Studies* (Special Issue “Gender in the Caucasus and the Diaspora”).
- Hierman, Brent D. 2022. "Colonial Legacies and Global Networks in Central Asia and the Caucasus." *The Oxford Handbook of Economic Imperialism* (Oxford University Press) 635-654.
- Ivonavich, Alexander Vdovin. 2018. *СССР. История великой державы (1922–1991 гг.)*. Moscow: Проспект.
- Khawar, Khalid Mahmood, Parisa Pourali Kahriz, and Mahsa Pourali Kahriz. 2019. "Cotton Production in Central Asia." In *Cotton Production*, edited by K Jabran and B S Chauhan.
- Krugman, Paul R. 1991. "Increasing returns and economic geography." *Journal of Political Economy* 483–499.
- Kuznetsova, S I. 2003. "Социальные и экономические итоги российской колонизации Туркестана (Social and economic results of the Russian colonization of Turkestan) ." *Abstract Journal* 3: 65-71.
- Lazerevich, E E. 2001. *ЛЕЙЗЕРОВИЧ Е.Е. СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ И ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИЕ ИТОГИ РОССИЙСКОЙ КОЛОНИЗАЦИИ ТУРКЕСТАНА*. Tel Aviv.
- Love, Joseph L. 1980. "Raúl Prebisch and the Origins of the Doctrine of Unequal Exchange." *Latin American Research Review* 15 (3): 45-72.

Mahoney, James, and Diana Rodriguez-Franco. 2018. "Dependency Theory." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Politics of Development*, by Carol Lancaster and Nicolas Van de Walle, 22-42. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McPherson, Alan. 2016. *A Short History of U.S. Interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.

Obertreis, Julia. 2017. "Russian Colonial Rule in Turkestan, 1860–1917." In *Imperial Desert Dreams, 1860-1991*, by Julia Obertreis, 49-139. Göttingen: V & R Unipress.

Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. 1988. "A Critique of World Systems Theory." *International Sociology* 3 (3): 207-312.

Sahin, Ilhan. 2017. "Religious Life of Kyrgyz People according to Oral Materials." In *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan - Life and Politics during the Soviet Era*, edited by TIMUR DADABAEV and HISAO KOMATSU. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Schneider, Jane. 1991. "Was There a Precapitalist World-System?" In *Core/periphery Relations In Precapitalist Worlds*, edited by Thomas D Hall and Christopher Chase-Durvin. London: Routledge.

Science Academy of the Uzbek SSR. 1984. "Agricultural and Farm Production." *ОБЩЕСТВЕННЫЕ НАУКИ В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ*. Tashkent: Central Committee of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic.

Solomon, Susan Gross. 1975. "Controversy in Social Science: Soviet Rural Studies in the 1920s." *Minerva* (Springer) 13 (4): 554-582.

Tilly, Charles. 1984. *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1976. "A World-System Perspective on the Social Sciences." *The British Journal of Sociology* (Wiley on behalf of The London School of Economics and Political Science) (Special Issue. History and Sociology): 343-352.

Xushbakovich, Nuriddin Choriyev. 2022. "Land development and irrigation works in the southern regions of Uzbekistan (During the rule of Tsarist Russia)." *The Peerian Journal* (Tashkent Medical Academy) 104-108.