5. High-mass consumption society (moving beyond basic needs to the consumption of durable goods).

One main critique is the assumption that the first stage is universal and that it is too ethno-centric, that it implies that the stages of evolution are extracted from Western contexts. It is criticized for assuming that development is a Western concept.

The process of modernisation as distinct from backwardness can instigate instability and violence is the main theme of Huntington’s work. He purports that rapid economic and social change will disrupt traditional social groupings: families, caste etc. It can produce nouveau-riche people and induce geographical mobility that will further undermine social ties. It can aggravate relations over resources and consumption. All this could add up to a situation where rapid economic growth, uneven in its impact, can be outstripped by social frustration. The Bourgeois Revolution in 1789 can be examined through this lens and even the Mexican Revolution was preceded by economic growth.

For classical Marxist followers, capitalism is just one of the stages of development and is not an end in itself. Structuralists such as Gunderfrank evolve from this classical starting point and stress that the under-development of the periphery is crucial to the development of the centre and the only way to overcome the former is to delink it from capitalism and to do away with it.

1. Structuralists examine such flows (upwards and downwards) and cause-and-effect.
2. The notion of underdevelopment is a modern feature of structuralism.
3. Structuralism looks at the world as a whole and not as a sequence of national economies.

Capitalism today is regulated and rule-bound in a way that is different when Marx was writing about it. The welfare state has become widespread and conscious policies have been applied to develop economic growth over the long period. The state is not as autonomous as it was before. Nationalism and religion are powerful forces that Marx and the structuralists do not really deal with.


Globalisation is a vague and ill-defined term in its own right. This is, to some extent, reflected in the literature.

Stiglitz is concerned with how the processes of globalization are managed and sequenced and how to ensure that these processes do not affect vulnerable societies and countries. The drivers of globalisation are not really in dispute but the real challenge is to assess their political, economic and social significance. Technological change and financial realities have stimulated the relative weight of transactions and organizations across national boundaries. Financial regulation was stimulated by deregulation in the 1980s, reinforced by changes in ICT. There has been a movement in the character of trade with greater flows of goods within networks stimulating interdependency. Economies that are more truly integrated is a subject of continuing debate and many argue that they are merely more international.

There are parts of the world economy that have not benefited from globalization. In some areas, globalization has contributed to the growing gap between rich and form – a deformed structural violence. This is contributing to organized violence in many parts of the world. Is there a way in which contemporary armed conflict are sustained by global economic processes? For instance, does the deregulation of financial markets make the financing of a conflict in a far-flung corner of the world easier?