

CHAPTER 9

MARXISM

BENNO TESCHKE

MARXIST thought on international relations pre-dates its formal establishment as an institutionalized field of study. Its integration into the Western canon of international relations approaches is belated, partial and problematic, and symptomatic of the politics of social science governed by the great twentieth-century contest between communism and capitalism. While Marxist international relations during the interwar years and the “first cold war” was marginal to the discipline, its resurgence after the end of the “long boom,” unchallenged US hegemony, and deepening North–South conflicts led in conjunction with the post-positivist and critical turn during the 1980s to its increasing internal differentiation and overall consolidation as a recognizable tradition within the field. Today, after the removal of the intellectual strictures imposed by the geopolitics of bipolarity and released from doctrinal party lines, Marxist international relations presents a vibrant and rich subfield that produces some of the most trenchant challenges to mainstream international relations theory and general social science.

1 MARX AND ENGELS ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

This renaissance presents as much a Marxist challenge to international relations as a challenge of the problematique of international relations to Marxism that reaches back into the very core premises of its founders. For Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

never systematically addressed, much less successfully resolved, the question of the spatial and interspatial dimensions of social processes over time on a universal scale (Berki 1971; Soell 1972; Kandal 1989; Harvey 2001). This absence of an explicit theorization of relations between spatiotemporally differentially developing political communities exposes a fundamental deficiency that pervades their conceptions of world history in general and their theory of capitalism in particular. This deficiency underwent several permutations in the intellectual trajectories of Marx and Engels without ever receiving a definitive resolution.

Marx and Engels's initial position was influenced by liberal cosmopolitanism and premised on the transnationalizing power of capitalism and the pacifying consequences of "universal interdependence" based on international commerce—assumptions that ultimately implied a world-historical convergence toward a "world after capitalism's own image." This perspective, first sketched in the 1846 *German Ideology*, received its canonical definition in the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*:

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country . . . In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations . . . The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian nations into civilisation (Marx and Engels 1998, 39).

The core dynamic behind this process was driven by the progressive universalization of capitalism, understood as the contradictory relation between waged workers and capitalists whose market-mediated reproduction imposed the need for expanded reproduction through competitive accumulation. This would lead to a series of social transformations in noncapitalist societies whose cumulative result was the creation of the capitalist world market. While this perspective retained the role of states as guarantors of exploitative and antagonistic class-divided societies, militarized inter-state conflicts would be gradually replaced by the consolidation and polarization of classes, leading to the intensification of class struggle on a global scale, culminating eventually in a synchronized proletarian world revolution. Here, the notion of a "simultaneous development on a world scale" prevails (Soell 1972, 112). This original conception provides a singular analytic revolving around the vertical deepening and horizontal widening of capitalism progressively unifying the world geographically, homogenizing national differences sociopolitically, while polarizing class relations universally. This narrative would eventuate in the abolition of national histories and prepare the terrain for world history proper (even though the term *Geschichte* as a consciously planned collective enterprise was reserved for the post-capitalist age). Yet, Marx and Engels never clarified how exactly the trade-mediated expansion of capitalism would transform prevailing

regional class relations and state forms in a capitalist direction. They rather imputed an automaticity to a transnationalizing process that discounted domestic class conflict (resistance) and geopolitics (war). This pristine conception extrapolated directly from the national to the universal, eliding the international as the mediating instance that frames the national and fractures and disables the universal to this day.

Such supra-historical abstractions, based on logical deductions untempered by historical experience, received several qualifications after the failed 1848 revolutions that transformed Marx and Engels's perspective on the nexus between capitalist development, revolutions, and war. Prior to 1848, Marx and Engels expected progress through the internationalization of revolutions by means of inter-state wars, pitching a democratic and united Germany against late-absolutist states (Denmark, Russia, and Austria). A successful German bourgeois revolution would end the "Holy Alliance" and shift the European balance of power toward the progressive Western countries. This would lead to a division of Europe into a revolutionary and counter-revolutionary camp. The new constellation was depicted as a struggle between freedom and despotism carried out by "world war." After the failed 1848 revolution, the formula "domestic revolution plus war equals international progress" was now reversed to "war plus revolution equals domestic progress." The world-historical march toward communism came now to be derived less from the unfolding of domestic class dynamics, spilling over into the international, as from defeat in inter-state wars. The consequent delegitimation of the European Old Regimes would facilitate revolutionary change in specific countries. But a third complication came into view: In contrast to earlier confident assumptions of international working-class formation, Marx and especially Engels started to envisage the prospect of the national incorporation of working classes into their respective nation states, most directly through "social imperialism" and the replacement of international class solidarity with national loyalty through warfare.

Overall, the general insight into the variability of country-specific resolutions of particular social and geopolitical conflicts led to a shift from the notion of "simultaneous development on a world scale" to the empirical recognition of socio-temporally differentiated national trajectories, encapsulated in the notion of "unevenness" (Soell 1972, 113–15). Still, the growing recognition of "unevenness" and of force *a* an integral component of an expanding capitalist world market (India, China, American Civil War, Ottoman Empire, etc.) generated only a series of tergiversations that never resulted in an encompassing praxis-guiding theory that properly accounted for the relation between world-market formation, revolution, and geopolitics. More fundamentally, the move toward "unevenness" relied on a taken-for-granted prior determination: the existence of a system of states that was the precondition for regionally multiple differential developments; hence, the precondition for unevenness. However, as this spatial fragmentation of the total historical process was captured only in its results—differences between separately existing entities—"unevenness" as a central category of analysis discounted

both, an explanation of this geopolitical pluriverse and the causative dimension of cross-regional geopolitical dynamics. In this respect, the statement that “bourgeois society comprises . . . the total commercial and industrial life of a particular stage and transcends in this respect each state and nation, although it is required to represent itself externally as a nation and internally as a state” (Marx and Engels 1976, 50) raises precisely the question in what exactly this requirement consists, insofar as the territorial fragmentation of the states system cannot be derived from the formation of a transnationalizing capitalist bourgeoisie.

While this “geopolitical deficiency” received intermittent attention in Marx and Engels’s journalistic and historical writings (however unsatisfactorily), its full challenge surfaces most dramatically where Marx turns most theoretical: the three volumes of *Das Kapital*. Here, the central object of investigation is “capital” in the abstract, unfolding according to its inner contradictions (the “laws of accumulation”), conceived as a dialectical self-movement that relegates agency and history to the margins as mere illustrations of the “capital-logic.” Although “Capital” is adorned with illustrative references to Victorian Britain, it was essentially conceptualized in ideal-typical fashion in a political and geopolitical vacuum—beyond history. While the working plan for the 1857 *Introduction* envisages a theory of the state and international relations (that would remain eventually unfinished), the problem as to *why* political power constitutes itself territorially in the shape of a world system of multiple sovereign states and *how* the dynamics between these political jurisdictions relate to the national and transnational reproduction of capitalism is not even formulated as a research desideratum. Marx and Engels’s interest in geopolitics remained primarily tied to the tactical consequences of alterations in world politics for communist strategy and, hence, limited to very perceptive but primarily ad hoc interventions, rather than governed by a sustained reflection on geopolitical and transsocietal relations for the general course of history.

2 CLASSICAL THEORIES OF IMPERIALISM

Classical Marxist theories of imperialism constitute a more systematic and sustained attempt to ground the changing geopolitical dynamics and the crisis and breakdown of world order in the changing dynamics of capitalism. The second generation of Marxists located the “new imperialism,” “the scramble for Africa,” the arms race, and the final descent into world war in a profound transformation in the nature of capitalism, following a significant slump in the rates of return across the capitalist economies during the world economic crisis of 1873–98. Socialist tactics and strategy were redefined in the light of these developments (Mommsen 1980; Brewer 1990; Chilcote 2000).

This transformation was conceptualized, with various emphases, by Rudolf Hilferding (1981), Nicolai Bukharin (1972), and Vladimir Lenin (1973) in a transition from the era of free competition to the centralization and concentration of capital, leading eventually to national monopolies (trusts and cartels)—the era of monopoly capitalism (Luxemburg (1951) understands imperialism somewhat differently as a permanent component of capitalism in general). The notion of “finance capital” expressed the fusion between industrial and banking capital, uniting previously fractured capitalist interests nationally with a view to instrumentalize the state for expanded reproduction through the political promotion of monopoly profits. Both the concentration of capital and the reliance on the state were rooted in tendencies of overproduction and overaccumulation (underconsumption), thought to be generic to capitalism’s long-term dynamics, especially in the age of industry. Domestically, protectionism (high tariffs and quotas) restricted foreign competition, allowing price-setting above world-market levels in home markets and controlled overseas areas. Internationally, the quest for raw materials, the search for new export markets, and the export of capital demanded the territorialization and politico-military control of colonies, leading to empire formation, the regionalization of the world market, and the formation of rival national blocs. According to Bukharin and Lenin, “super-profits” reaped from colonial exploitation were central for the integration of working classes into their “fatherlands” through the prospect of higher wages and social welfare (social imperialism). These “bribes” nurtured a metropolitan “labor aristocracy” rooted in national contexts that betrayed the causes of internationalism. The direct role of the state in the national and international promotion of “finance capital” implied the transformation of private economic competition between firms into public politico-military competition between states, encapsulated in the notion of “inter-imperial rivalry.” Intensifying inter-imperial strategic competition over the territorial redivision of the world was bound to lead to world war, increasing the chances that bourgeois power could be broken in defeated states that formed “the weakest link” in the chain of capitalist states. Thus reformulated, the classical expectation that socialist revolution would occur first in the most advanced capitalist countries received a geographical dislocation toward the least developed—Russia, in particular. Through this reversal of the original Marx-Engels position, the transnationalizing tendency of capitalism was renationalized, the relation between the world market and interstate conflict rearticulated, the relative impotence of working classes in the capitalist heartland rendered plausible, while socialist revolution in Russia received a theoretical justification.

Classical Marxist theories of imperialism can be criticized on empirical grounds, specific to the assumptions made relating to a circumscribed period, and on wider theoretical grounds, regarding their relevance as general Marxist theories of international relations. Empirically, few price-setting and market-distorting monopolies actually existed, while cartels were loose inter-firm agreements subject to collapse.

Underconsumptionism was, on the one hand, posited as a phenomenon intrinsic to the capital-logic, yet also deemed to be reversible through “social imperialism.” Real wages were rising in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The account of “finance capital” relied primarily on the example of the German and Austrian banking sectors, which contrasted strongly with more fragmented and competitive banking sectors in Britain and France. Capital exports to the colonial periphery, although rising sharply before the First World War, were significantly lower than capital exports (both portfolio and direct investments) between imperialist powers. Inter-imperial volumes of trade were significantly higher than imperial-colonial commerce. Colonial capital exports were small in absolute terms relative to domestic investments. Rates of return from colonial capital exports were not higher relative to the rates from domestic investment, yet subject to higher risks. “All the evidence suggests that the long-run effects of empire on the development of the imperialist centers was small” (Brewer 2000, 83). Although aggregate results cannot be interpreted as nullifying the economic case for empire since profit expectations may have provided the initial motives for economic and political imperialism (although they raise the question of its sustained character), a simple cost-benefit analysis alone sheds insufficient light on the complexities involved. Special interest groups may have gained privileged leverage on the state, privatizing benefits and socializing costs in terms of significant public expenditures for the military and political maintenance of empire. Still, the historical record is ambiguous.

In a wider theoretical perspective, classical Marxist theories of imperialism are self-limiting by their attempt to explain a particular juncture (c.1873–1917) of capitalist international relations. They cannot be expanded to provide a general theory of *capitalist* international relations. Even the partial character of theories of imperialism is open to a range of powerful theoretical criticisms. The attempt to present a particular phenomenon—with huge variations within specific advanced capitalist countries, in their respective imperial-colonial relations, in the rates of intra-colonial development, and in inter-imperial relations—as a necessary byproduct inscribed in the dynamics of a particular phase of capitalism objectifies its rise, reproduction, and fall. Especially Lenin’s interpretation of imperialism as “the highest stage of capitalism” reifies this juncture as a definite and necessary stage (the monopoly stage) intrinsic to the overall development of capitalism, rather than understanding it as a particular (and reversible) outcome of the conflicts between nationally differentially developed societies.

Karl Kautsky (1970, 45–6) raised a similar objection, arguing that “imperialism...represents only one among various modes of expansion of capitalism.” His notion of “ultra-imperialism” envisaged the likelihood of cooperation among national capitals—a “holy alliance of imperialists” that was not reduced to an economically necessary logic of capitalism, but that emphasized the variable class (geo)politics of capitalism. In this respect, the theorization of the role of the state in Hilferding, Bukharin, and Lenin was not only reductionist, but also mechanistic

and functionalist, both domestically and internationally. Diplomacy, international alliance patterns, and geopolitical crises were deduced from, but not historically analyzed in relation to, nationally variable sociopolitical interests (as a close reading of the 1885 “Berlin Conference” or the 1914 “July Crisis” demands). The tendency to objectify country-specific developments and to generalize them as holding for the capitalist states system as a whole discounted the differential development of political constellations of social forces in the imperialist core countries in their implications for inter-imperialist as well as core–periphery relations. Moreover, social forces in the colonies are generally portrayed as passive recipients, rather than as active participants in specific geopolitical encounters with diverse results raising the charge of Eurocentrism. These criticisms are ultimately grounded in the failure to address social and political agency more generally.

Although Marx’s original direct move from “the national” to “the global” defined as the world market (silencing “the inter-national”) was not repeated, the collapsing of multiple and unevenly developing national trajectories into one systemic logic reified the “inter-imperial” as an abstract extrapolation, restrictively defined as a sphere of strategic competition and war. And behind this failure to uncover the variable and interactive dimension of the politics and geopolitics (rather than logic) of the “inter-imperial” lies the absence of an inquiry into the precondition for military conflict—the inter-state system. Classical theories of imperialism took the nation state as a social relation in its plural manifestations—the states system—as given, failing to problematize, much less theorize, the fact that nation states were “relevant units” (Brewer 1990, 123) in the world economy.

3 WORLD-SYSTEMS THEORY

World-systems theory, most prominently represented by Immanuel Wallerstein, draws on classical Marxist theories of imperialism, dependency theory as developed by Andre Gunther Frank, and the work of the *Annales* historian Fernand Braudel (Wallerstein 1974a; 1974b; 1983; Chase-Dunn 1991). Its objective is to provide a theoretical framework for the interpretation of the entire history of the capitalist world system. Its central unit of analysis is the world economy, understood as an integrated totality defined by a single international division of labor based on different “regimes of labor control” (wage labor, sharecropping, serfdom/slavery) between multiple states. Their strength and geopolitical location within the world economy (core, semi-periphery, periphery) correspond in descending order to their labor regimes. States are hierarchically tied into a system of unequal exchange maintained by their differential power capacities that govern politically set monopolistic terms of trade. Unequal exchange leads to the transfer of surplus from the periphery

to the core, consolidating, in turn, the political hierarchies and developmental differentials within it. World economies are generically contrasted to world empires as single territorial units in which tribute is extracted by a central authority. The modern world system originated in the “long sixteenth century” (1450–1640) (in the thirteenth century according to Braudel (1982, 433)) in Europe due to of an original regional specialization and division of labor, theorized by a weak technological determinism (high-skilled manufacture in “Western Europe” versus low-skilled agriculture in “Eastern Europe” and raw material production overseas). This enabled European core states to incorporate the semi-periphery/periphery into the world system on their terms, entailing the reproduction of their economic underdevelopment and political dependency. The modern world system, spanning regionally different labor regimes, is invariably described as capitalist, since economic activity beyond the core countries is generically conceived as profit-oriented production for the world market.

This organization of international capitalism on a world scale exhibits a strong tendency toward a self-reinforcing system maintenance. Specifically, it is immune to a reversal to world empires since only a world economy allows for global capital accumulation without the prohibitive politico-military costs of empire-building. In fact, the states system is a precondition for the rise and continuing reproduction of capitalism, since plural sovereignties are needed for the transfer of surplus from peripheries to cores through state-organized competition, preventing the direct absorption of surplus by a centralized imperial formation. A recurring cycle of successive hegemonic states (Genoa/Venice, Holland, Britain, and the United States) periodically alters intra-core hierarchies, rearranging and realigning geocommercial core–(semi-)periphery relations (Arrighi 1994). In contrast to realist hegemonic stability theory that anchors hegemony in military–political capacity alone, hegemony is here grounded in innovations in capital-intensive production systems (which spill over into commercial and then financial superiority), allowing hegemonic states to position themselves at the summit of the international division of labor. Hegemonic transitions are decided by hegemonic intra-core wars between rising challengers and declining status quo powers.

World-systems theory is an evolving theoretical tradition that has undergone several permutations and partial revisions. However, at the center of this approach stands a problematic conception of capitalism as a worldwide commercial network that transfers surplus from the periphery to the core. Implicit in this conception is a failure to consider the origins of capitalist class relations and the specific dynamics of capitalist economic development (Marx’s “primitive accumulation” arguably first achieved in seventeenth-century England), leading to a problematic timing of the origins of the modern world system—the Italian–Iberian “age of discovery” during the “long sixteenth century” and a distinct overall narrative of modern world history defined in terms of successive commercial hegemonies (Brenner 1977; Brewer 1990, 161–78; Teschke 2003, 129–39). The tendency to generalize the

monopolistic and inter-regional character of capitalism—derived from Marxist theories of imperialism—leads to the equation of all four historical hegemonies as invariably capitalist, downplaying their differences in the types of social relations and state forms that constitute their economies (merchant capitalism, mercantilism, free-trade capitalism, regime-regulated capitalism) and especially the crucial difference between a structurally monopolistic system of merchant capital that defined the Italian, Spanish and Dutch experiences and the competitive capitalism, rooted in capitalist class relations as defined by Marx, of their British and US successors. This underspecifies the profound variations in the sociopolitical dynamics of different hegemonic powers, their diverse strategies of managing intra-core (competition or cooperation) and core–periphery relations, and the different projects of territorialization over which they presided (Gowan 2006). The flattening of their qualitative differences leads to a highly static depiction of the modern world system revolving around the geographical redistribution of surplus, supervised by changing hegemonic powers.

Wallerstein's definition of capitalism merely interconnects in the sphere of circulation regionally diverse labor regimes that technically adapt to and specialize according to the requirements of international commerce. Since classes and class conflict play a derivative role in the regionally specific construction of "labor regimes" during the moment of their encounter with and integration into the trade-based worldwide division of labor (since labor regimes and class relations are reduced to the kind of product specialization demanded by their export orientation for the world market), world-systems theory is unable to explain the regionally variegated outcomes of these encounters that engendered different class conflicts with different outcomes; that is, the reinforcement of preexisting labor regimes (for example, east-Elbian "second serfdom"), the imposition of completely new pre-capitalist labor regimes (slave-based plantation systems or *encomiendas* in the Americas), or their transformation in a capitalist direction. Labor regimes did not simply emerge as a passive and functional adaptation to the requirements of the world market and the technical exigencies of product specialization, but as class-contested, highly politicized, and active responses to external pressures. Since these regionally diverse resolutions, mediated by prevailing balance of class forces, are short-circuited, the differential paths of economic development and nondevelopment and the chances of states that underwent a successful capitalist transformation to rise to the rank of core state remain obscure to world-systems theory.

Relatedly, Wallerstein's state theory remains spurious. State interests are directly reduced to trade-dependent ruling classes, rather than reflecting diverse class-contested strategies of reproduction within an international force field that also allows the construction of alternative geostrategic projects. A state's strength and position in the world system are directly inferred from its dominant labor regime. The "strength" of core states is premised on a high-skill/high-capitalization regime that simultaneously generates the resources to state-organized surplus transfer

from the periphery, thus reinforcing inter-regional hierarchies. The “weakness” of peripheral states expresses their low-skill/low-capitalization regime. This purely quantitative conceptualization of power differentials fails to understand the specific qualitative character of state forms in their relation to class politics across all zones (Brenner 1977; Skocpol 1977).

The states system itself, in turn, is deemed to be a structural feature of the capitalist world economy. “Capitalism and a world-economy (that is, a single division of labour, but multiple polities and cultures) are obverse sides of the same coin” (Wallerstein 1974*b*, 391; Chase-Dunn 1991, 107). In this perspective, the states system not only performs a functional complementarity to capitalism, but constitutes the very condition of possibility for capitalist expansion and surplus transfer. However, world-systems theory neither addresses nor answers the question whether the states system is itself causally created by—and not simply encountered by—capitalism. The Statement that “the interstate system is the political superstructure of the capitalist world-economy and was a deliberate invention of the modern world” (Wallerstein 1995, 141) remains assertoric and without proof. An explanation of the world economy’s “obverse side” is missing. Since capitalism—whether defined as commercial exchange or a specific relation of production—originated in a geopolitical context that was already prestructured as a system of plural sovereignties, this geopolitical pluriverse and its attendant strategic pressures demand a theoretical and historical account and not merely a statement on its functionality to capitalism (Teschke 2003; Lacher 2006). This genetic disjuncture between states system and capitalism allows for the explanation of profound historical variations in the configurations between the spaces of capitalist accumulation and political jurisdiction. For the geopolitics of world history since the “long sixteenth century” was marked not only by successful, though not universal, empire formations by capitalist and noncapitalist polities, but by an immense diversity of spatial orders (Teschke 2006, 136). In contrast, even the most dynamic part of world-systems theory—hegemonic successions—repeatedly relapses into a circular account of the essential sameness of successive hegemonies, erecting hegemonic orders on an ever-expanding geographical scale, while maintaining the qualitatively identical mechanisms of international order/hierarchy among multiple states plus surplus transfer. Similarly, the account of hegemonic transitions in terms of hegemonic wars fails to square with the historical record. Venice/Genoa did not clash with Holland; Holland only partially with England (France was the greater challenger); Britain was not militarily defeated by the United States. The overemphasis on hegemonic agency fails fully to incorporate geopolitical contexts into the equation.

Overall, world-systems theory is premised on a deep structural functionalism in which the function, strength, and location of specific states on the world system’s core–semi-periphery–periphery spectrum is determined by their trade-mediated integration into the economic structure of the international division of labor. This tends to reinforce existing economic (the “development of underdevelopment”) and political hierarchies (“dependency”). The subsumption of very different

historical cases under one law-like generalization of rise, expansion, challenge, war, and demise levels their respective specificities. It also tends to reify a cyclical pattern of capitalist world history that leads to theoretical rigidities that jar with actual historical developments while prescribing determinate theoretical expectations for the future course of history. These prescriptions are repeatedly revised in light of the long delay in the “decline of US hegemony” (Arrighi 2005*a*; 2005*b*; Wallerstein 2006).

4 NEO-GRAMSCIAN INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

Neo-Gramscian international political economy (IPE, or “transnational historical materialism”) presents the most influential Marxist theory in the contemporary international relations discourse. Based on the noneconomistic writings of the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci, the concept of hegemony constitutes the central analytical category to understand historical world orders with a view to devise counter-hegemonic prescriptions against them.

Neo-Gramscian thought entered international relations primarily through the work of Robert Cox (1987, 1–15; 1996, 124, 135), who “derived” categories of analysis from Gramsci’s writings and “applied” them to international relations (see also van der Pijl 1984; Gill and Law 1988; Gill 1990, 33–56; 1993; Arrighi 1994; Rupert 1995, 14–38). Hegemonic power is conceptualized as a mutually irreducible configuration between dominant ideas, institutions, and material capacities that are widely accepted as legitimate. Social forces, states, and world orders are inter-related as dialectical wholes, bound together in world hegemonies. A dominant “structure of accumulation,” defined as a spatiotemporally specific combination of different “modes of social relations of production,” lies at the core of these hegemonies. Cox distinguishes twelve modes (subsistence, peasant lord, primitive labor market, household, self-employment, enterprise labor market, bipartism, enterprise corporatism, tripartism, state corporatism, communal, central planning). Different “monad-modes”—presented simultaneously as Leibnizian self-enclosed entities and as interrelated practices—coexist in different societies, yet are orchestrated and hierarchized by the state, constituting a “structure of accumulation” in which one “monad-mode” is hegemonic. This “structure of accumulation” is then projected abroad, through both the transnationalizing agency of the hegemonic class and the international agency of its hegemonic state. The mechanisms of exercising hegemony consist internationally in specific international organizations (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, G8, UN) that co-opt talent from nonhegemonic foreign elites and allow for a degree of co-determination by and

concessions to subaltern states. Transnationally, a hegemonic class universalizes itself through private international fora (Trilateral Commission, Rotary Club, Bilderberg Group, think tanks), fostering the formation of a global civil society—a transnational historic bloc (van der Pijl 1984; Gill 1990). The transnationalization of a hegemonic project, in turn, exercises pressures on subaltern states to align their respective composites of “structures of accumulation” with those of the hegemonic state, often through processes of “passive revolution” and *trasformismo* (state-led reformist processes). These states become internationalized and act as “transmission belts” (Cox 1992, 30) between the hegemon and their respective domestic arrangements and are, ultimately, incorporated into the world hegemonic bloc.

In contrast to realism, which introduced the notion of international hegemony based on the concentration of material power in one dominant state, neo-Gramscians claim that liberal international hegemonies are based on the universalization of particular state–society complexes, maintained primarily by consensus formation (although coercion remains latent) between hegemonic and hegemonized states, rather than on crude power politics alone. The specification of distinct state–society complexes at the heart of successive world hegemonies allows us to distinguish between different inter-state systems with different forms of conflict and cooperation, rather than to collapse their variety into a circular and cyclical realist (or world system’s) narrative of the transhistorical rise and fall of world hegemonies. Modern world history is periodized in terms of two successive hegemonies, the *Pax Britannica* and the *Pax Americana*, interrupted by a nonhegemonic period of inter-state rivalry. Other neo-Gramscians, like Giovanni Arrighi (1994), list four world hegemonies—Genoese, Dutch, British, and American. Whereas Cox originally envisaged that the construction of counter-hegemony was possible neither within international organizations, nor within the sphere of a transnational civil society, but in national contexts first, he later renounced this position by arguing for “inter-civilizational dialogue.”

Centrally, the replacement of Marx’s term “mode of production” with the concept of “structures of accumulation” entails fundamental problems for the neo-Gramscian tradition. For most of Cox’s “structures of accumulation” present only historical variations within the capitalist mode of production, whereas the latter is taken as given and never historically theorized. In this perspective, the social conflicts associated with capitalist transformations and the novelty and specific dynamics of capitalist modernity disappear from view (Lacher 2002, 150). The attendant emphasis on inter-ruling class relations—a fixation on inter-elite agency and ideology formation (Scherrer 1998) rather than on class conflict and “primitive accumulation” (Shilliam 2004)—is radicalized by a failure to trace the geographical expansion of capitalism across a territorially preconstituted inter-state system, which is itself taken for granted, but described as being in place by the time of the Treaty of Westphalia (Cox 1987, 111). For Cox, the states system becomes progressively transnationalized/internationalized; for Arrighi, it is, following Wallerstein,

a persistent condition for the flowering of capitalism, defined as “a fusion between capital and state,” that reproduces inter-state competition over surplus. Yet, it was this protracted but progressive inter-national expansion of the capital relation in its encounter with specific territorially contained correlations of social forces that gave rise to regionally specific resolutions of state–society relations. In this respect, the specific combination of “monad-modes” in diverse national contexts cannot be accepted as pre-given, since these “developed and (in some cases) regressed not as monads, but in ‘geo-political’ and temporal relation to each other through the exigencies of the expansion and intensification of capitalist sociality” (Shilliam 2004, 83).

The missing political geography of uneven capitalist expansion is addressed by Kees van der Pijl (1998; 2006), who conceives of this process as a three-century cycle in which an expanding “Lockean heartland,” composed of ever-larger coalitions of liberal-capitalist states, is repeatedly challenged by successive waves of “Hobbesian contender states.” These confrontations are decided not by the balance of military capacities alone, but by the differential ability of these competing state/society complexes to mobilize human productivity, tending to lead to the absorption of defeated contenders into the Lockean heartland. The origin of the heartland lies in the British export of the Lockean state/society complex to its settler colonies, generating a transnational society among its integrated regions. Since the conditions for political autonomy and development outside the heartland are heavily circumscribed by the expanding world economy, state classes outside the heartland tend to generate state-led late-industrialization “catching-up strategies” to resist peripheralization, often leading to the introduction of capitalism by “passive revolutions.” This mobilization of society by authoritarian means, necessitated by “relative backwardness,” produces very different state/society complexes (in which civil society remains confiscated by and subordinated to the “Hobbesian contender state”) that, in some cases, ultimately resolve their tensions with the liberal heartland in a series of contests over world hegemony; that is, world wars. While there remains competition for the leadership of the heartland, each new hegemon coordinates the “international socialization of state functions,” incorporating defeated contender states into the heartland and sustaining the interests of capital in general on an expanding geographical scale, leading eventually to an “immanent world state,” characterized by governance without government. While *realpolitik* within the heartland is suspended, transnational policy planning groups, staffed by a transnational managerial class of cadres, set the agendas for the successful integration, reproduction, and continuing expansion of the heartland’s transnational society, including the formulation of “comprehensive concepts of control.” This reading holds the considerable advantage of setting out a substantive and generative account of the lateral dynamics of capitalist expansion that goes beyond Cox’s abstract typologies of state forms and monad-modes (and does not homogenize capitalist space under the heading of hegemony “from above”) by

tying their emergence and transformations in temporal and geopolitical relation to each other into an overall framework of uneven expansion. It thus opens up a theoretically integrated perspective on the geographical trajectory of the social and geopolitical processes and crises in the transformative conflicts that characterize the long-term dynamics of hegemonies in their internal and external relations.

In a wider perspective, however, the concept of world hegemony as a general category for world history is of very limited applicability. Equivocations over the definition and historical origins of capitalism have contributed to exaggerated claims over the capitalist character and transnationalizing success of specific historic blocs and the attendant restructuring of particular international orders by and for a hegemonic state. Arrighi's "Dutch hegemony," for example, fails to understand the limits posed to Dutch commercial supremacy by an absolutist-mercantilist European states system that imposed its specific competitive patterns of international relations on the Dutch Republic, rather than being hegemonized along the lines of the Dutch social model (Teschke 2003, 133–6). Even the historical record for the first capitalist world hegemony, the *Pax Britannica*, is equivocal. While Britain's nineteenth-century role overseas was of crucial importance, it failed to become hegemonic in continental Europe, where its central objective was negatively defined as preventing the ascendancy of a dominant European challenger through power-balancing (Congress of Vienna and Concert of Europe), rather than the positive pursuit of internationalizing its state–society relations through consensual means (Lacher 2006, 123).

Neo-Gramscian IPE is best equipped to provide a conceptual framework for understanding one particular world order—the *Pax Americana*. While the politics of class is central to Mark Rupert's important work (1995), even here the charge of reducing the analysis of US hegemony to inter-elite relations applies (see Bieler et al. 2006); the depiction of states within the hegemonic order as "transmission belts" between the global and the national discounts their relative autonomy and characterizes them as passive mediators of global forces (Panitch 1996); the privileging of consensus over and against coercion remains dubious, both in intra-core relations and in those between hegemonies and nonhegemonized states; and the concentration on hegemonic order de-emphasizes the contradictions and fault lines within transnational historical blocs, including a marginalization of analyses regarding counter-hegemonic movements (Drainville 1994). Finally, neo-Gramscian IPE slides towards a "pluralistic empiricism," far removed from the rigours of Marx's original critique of political economy (Burnham 1991).

While neo-Gramscian IPE has opened up powerful avenues of research, its central category of hegemony is, in the end, unable to provide a more encompassing perspective on the dynamics of capitalist international relations. In line with Gramsci's original twin omissions—lack of an inter-national perspective and discounting

of class politics and social relations in favor of consensual ideology formation—the passage from the national/hegemonic to the transnational/hegemonic has once again eliminated the inter-national (with the partial exception of van der Pijl’s work) as a terrain of sociopolitical and geopolitical conflicts and transformations.

5 THE (RE)TURN TO CLASSICAL MARXISM AND POLITICAL MARXISM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The return to classical Marxism followed Fred Halliday’s programmatic call (1994) for a “necessary encounter” between historical materialism and international relations. It provoked a refoundation of Marxist international relations theory, reformulated as an international historical sociology, through a sustained reflection on the relation between capitalism, the state, and the states system in historical perspective. Justin Rosenberg (1994; for a similar, though less structuralist perspective see Bromley 1994; 1999) demonstrates in his early work the structural correspondence between different geopolitical systems—the classical Greek polis system, the Italian renaissance city-states system, early modern empires, and the modern system of sovereign states—and different modes of production/social structures. Although most geopolitical systems are characterized by anarchy, a “structural discontinuity” separates all pre-capitalist systems from the modern capitalist international order, premised on the distinction between personalized domination under pre-capitalist relations of production and impersonal modern sovereignty, anchored in the separation between the economic and the political in capitalism (Wood 1995). This structural discontinuity explains the co-constitution and compatibility of a system of bordered (but porous) sovereign states and a transnational international economy—the “empire of civil society.” In this perspective, the capitalist anarchy of the market, regulated by a desubjectified price mechanism, is not simply analogous to international anarchy, regulated by a desubjectified balance of power, but its condition of possibility. Modern power politics and its realist discourse are thus premised on an abstract notion of the state, grounded in a generalized differentiation between the economic and the political under capitalism.

Rosenberg’s study is marked by a tension between a structuralist understanding of Marxism and its attention to historical development (Lacher 2002; Teschke 2003, 39–41). European history is essentially reconstructed as a series of successive, discrete, and self-contained geopolitical orders, leading to the elision of the transitions between them. The crises—social conflicts, revolutions, and wars—inherent in these transformations disappear from view. Agency and especially class

conflict are underrepresented. Relatedly, the suggested structural interrelation and functional compatibility between a territorially divided states system and a private, transnational, world market obscures the complex historical dynamics of the co-development of capitalism, the modern state, and the modern states system. The latter two are analytically derived from the first, while all three are regarded as causally and temporally coeval aspects of capitalist modernity. This thesis overplays the explanatory power of capitalism, leaving the historical co-development (but not co-genesis) of capitalism, state, and states system underexplored.

These criticisms are central to Benno Teschke's historical-dialectical reinterpretation of the long-term development of the changing political geographies and geopolitical dynamics of "Europe" from the end of the Carolingian Empire to the emergence and expansion of a capitalist state-society complex in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain, tied into a cumulative narrative of regionally differential class and state formation (Teschke 2003). Theoretically, the account is premised on transformations in politically constituted and class-contested social property relations grounded in different balances of class forces, which generate variable geopolitical strategies of reproduction that define different modes of territoriality and geopolitical relations. Developing the tradition of "political Marxism" (Brenner 1985), the project examines the *sui generis* character of feudal geopolitics (Teschke 1998), reconstructs the emergence of a medieval geopolitical pluriverse, and retraces the diverging, yet interconnected, trajectories of class and state formation in late medieval and early modern France and England. Since French and continental "absolutisms" remained mired in pre-capitalist social property and authority relations, dynastic sovereignty and the persistence of "geopolitical accumulation" among European powers imparted specific premodern practices of international relations (inter-dynastic marriages, personal unions, wars of succession, mercantilist trade wars, predatory equilibrium, and empire formation) on the "Westphalian System" (Teschke 2002). Although these practices constituted a system of multiple territories, it remained composed predominantly by the social relations of dynastic-absolutist sovereignty. The Westphalian Settlement as international relations' foundational moment of the modern states system is thus fundamentally revised. In contrast, the sixteenth century rise of agrarian capitalism in England and a depersonalized form of capitalist sovereignty in post-revolutionary Britain led to the emergence of a uniquely dynamic state/society complex. Regulating continental inter-dynastic relations through the active management of the balance of power, Britain exerted economic and geopolitical pressures that forced continental polities to design diverse counter-strategies of class and state formation through "revolutions from above" in a process of spatiotemporally differentiated and geopolitically combined development (Teschke 2005). Since the states system was not "the obverse side" of capitalism, but the cumulative consequence of century-long medieval and early modern class conflicts over rights of domination and exploitation over land and people, which finally crystallized in a plurality of militarily competing dynastic

territories, the interrelation between capitalism and the states system is not theorized in terms of an invariant capitalist structural functionalism. It is rather conceived in a processual perspective that is attentive to the protracted expansion, transformation, and sometimes negation of capitalism within a territorially prefigured geopolitical pluriverse that itself underwent manifold alterations in the process. Capitalist expansion was not a transnational and even process, generating a world “after its own image,” but refracted through a series of geopolitically contested encounters between polities with diverse results in different regions of the world. This opens up a nondeterministic perspective on the historically changing geopolitical strategies of reproduction and the construction of variable capitalist territorial orders by and between capitalist states.

Hannes Lacher draws out the theoretical implications of the historical disjuncture between multiple territory formation and capitalism by tracing the changing articulations between the national and international/global, premised on the notion of strategies of spatialization (Lacher 2006). In contrast to the widespread Marxist and non-Marxist assumption of a twin birth of and co-constitution between capitalism and the states system, their interrelation cannot be conceived in terms of an invariant “logic of capital,” which either eternally reproduces the territorially segmented form of capitalist rule (as in world-systems theory) or progressively deterritorializes and homogenizes states through the transnational expansion of capitalism (as originally envisaged by Marx and Engels and many contemporary globalization theorists). Given the inherited quality of the inter-state system, the spaces of global capital accumulation and territorial forms of rule are incongruent. Competition in the world market is not directly between individual firms, but is mediated by state boundaries, enabling states to organize the external projection of national class interests through diverse strategies of spatialization. The persistent centrality of the state militates against any functional long-term trend line in the correlation between forms of governance and global capital accumulation, calling for close attentiveness to the historically changing dialectic of state projects of de- and re-territorialization (cooperation and competition) that characterize the course of capitalist modernity. Instead of identifying unchanging structural imperatives underlying “capitalist geopolitics” or a linear-evolutionary developmental trajectory—such as the alleged contemporary shift from the “international” to the “global”—there is neither a realm of “the international” spanning the period from 1648 to today based on inter-territorial competition, nor a space of “capitalist international relations” following a single identifiable logic.

Rosenberg’s later work (1996; 2006) problematizes “the international” based on a paradigm shift from Marx’s central category “mode of production” to Leon Trotsky’s notion of “uneven and combined development,” developed as a “general abstraction.” In contrast to Marx’s vision of the progressive creation of a world after capitalism’s own image, Trotsky drew attention to the generic unevenness of coexisting multiple patterns of historical development. Even in their encounter

with the spread of capitalism, these differentiated regional trajectories would reinforce themselves, rather than even out, through “combined development”—an amalgamation of the old and the new. This insight is generalized to yield a sociological—and not merely a geopolitical—theory of the international, since it arises from the unevenness of development itself, mediating the multilinear and interactive dimension of social development over time without being subsumed by it.

This raises the narrower question whether socioeconomic unevenness itself provides a criterion powerful enough to explain or sustain geopolitical multiplicity and the wider epistemological question of whether a theory of “the international” can be constructed at the level of a “general abstraction.” For unevenness has never stopped—in fact, it was usually the precondition for—the incorporation of the less developed into the more developed entity, whether by conquest, contract, marriage, cession, or migration. Inversely, empires disintegrated and fractured along a wide range of diverse fault lines (ethnic, strategic, political, linguistic), among which the lines of domestically differentially developing regions are but one. Uneven development is only contingently linked to territorial multiplicity and reveals per se little about the territorial scales and social modalities of concrete political geographies. More fundamentally, the generic terms that Rosenberg deploys—“society,” “state,” “the international,” and “development”—are themselves, as any historical semantics suggests, historical categories that refer to specific spatiotemporally circumscribed phenomena with strictly limited historical life cycles. Consequently, the method of abstraction entails a tendency toward the reification of “the international” that is simultaneously posited as the expression of and condition of possibility for uneven development, but is itself beyond history. The ontologization of “the international” as a “spatial category” (Rosenberg 2006, 318) obstructs its understanding as a “socio-historical practice” that underwent infinite alterations, as any analysis of 1,000 years of “feudal” territoriality exemplifies. More concretely, the theory provides no pointers for explaining the inter-stateness of capitalist modernity—arguably the central *explanandum* of any Marxist theory of “the international”—even though “uneven and combined development” is only operational on the basis of its prior existence. Furthermore, the theory of combined and uneven development does not specify—at the level of theory—a distinct explanatory principle that accounts for the dynamics of unevenness and combinedness and appears thus socially evacuated. Ultimately, the method of general abstraction jars with Marx’s dialectical historicization of phenomena that emerge from concrete human praxes and incurs his injunction that “the only immutable thing is the abstraction of movement—*mors immortalis*” (Marx 1976, 166). While “uneven and combined development” provides a powerful heuristic that immunizes against a facile collapsing of difference into (capitalist) identity, its elevation to “a general law” and formulation in an overly abstract and contentless register opens up a gap between the universal and the particular that requires substantiation—at the level of theory and not simply history—to recover the distance between abstraction and concretion.

6 GLOBALIZATION, EMPIRE, AND NEOIMPERIALISM

Widespread agreement among Marxists and non-Marxists on the intensifying reality of “globalization” since the late 1970s, compounded by the post-11 September US–American “unilateralist turn,” have thrown into sharp relief the inadequacy of notions of classical sovereignty and the “Westphalian system” to capture the contemporary reconfiguration between the national and the international/global. The relative decline, if not the very end, of the politically autonomous nation state has generated a proliferation of alternative but competing concepts on a scale from the internationalization of the state, via the global state, to empire and neoimperialism (for a Marxist critique of mainstream globalization theory, see Rosenberg 2000; 2005).

A dominant tendency assumes a transition from the national–international to the global, first conceptualized as “the internationalisation of the state” (Palloix 1977). The shift from international trade to integrated transnational production patterns and “finance capital” has led to a convergence of interests among transnationally oriented capitals, creating a “transnational business class” that transcends national boundaries. It simultaneously renders national states responsive to transnational class interests as “transmission belts” (Cox 1992; van der Pijl 1998), coordinating and integrating inter-state policies. This line of argument is reinforced and developed by William Robinson’s concept (2002; 2004) of “global state formation.” Locating the internationalization of the state in the postwar period, post-Bretton Woods economic globalization has brought about the subordination of the nation state to international institutions, as national bourgeoisies are metamorphosing into local (national) contingents of an emergent transnational bourgeoisie, eclipsing national rivalries. “Economic globalisation has its counterpart in transnational class formation and in the emergence of a transnational state . . . which has been brought into existence to function as the collective authority for a global ruling class” (Robinson 2002, 210). This argument is further radicalized by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s notion of “empire.” “Along with the global market and global circuits of production has emerged a global order, a new logic and structure of rule—in short, a new form of sovereignty.” Drawing on Michel Foucault’s desubjectified notion of power, empire is conceived as a “*decentered and deterritorializing apparatus of rule*” that “realize[s] . . . a properly capitalist order” in which even “*the United States does not . . . form the center of an imperialist project*” (Hardt and Negri 2000 xi, xii, 9, xiii–xiv, emphasis in original; for critiques, see Balakrishnan 2003; Bromley 2003).

Underlying these strong globalization theses is a profound economic functionalism and instrumentalism, couched into a teleological narrative, which imputes that global structures of political rule, while previously territorially segmented, have

now been restructured, aligned, and rescaled—irresistibly and irreversibly, it is often argued—to complement the universalistic potentials inherent in the unfolding of capital. Yet, the instrumentalist reduction of state orientations to transnational elites or transnationally oriented class fractions (rather than to diverse balances of class forces) glosses over regional specificities in state/class articulations and their often competing foreign-policy projects. These disparities continue to reproduce contradictions and countervailing forces in capitalist inter-state relations that any totalizing notion of “empire” or “global state” obliterates. A coherent aggregation of class interests and political authority at the global level, comparable to the institutional capacities of the nation state, is hard to detect.

More specifically, the directive role—in fact, the overwhelming organizing agency—of the United States has been underspecified in these accounts. Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin argue that, instead of a multilateral system of global governance or a global state, the current geopolitical moment is marked by a specifically American informal empire that, while formally maintaining plural sovereignties, has suspended the balance of power and moved beyond inter-imperialist rivalries to organize capitalism on a global scale (Panitch and Gindin 2003). Similarly, Peter Gowan (1999; 2006) and Perry Anderson (2002, 20–1) reject the argument that post-cold war US national interests can be straightforwardly equated with or extended to encompass the interests of transnational capital—a merger of capitalists of all countries that would herald a universal capitalist empire or, alternatively, a benign US hegemony. According to Gowan (2006, 216), the United States is a “*sui generis* hegemon,” incomparably more powerful than its predecessors and possessing economic and politico-military strengths (unipolar core, unchallenged US predominance in intra-core relations, overwhelming regime-making capacities, and feedback mechanisms for cycle-breaking) that transcend the vocabulary of hegemony and “universal capitalist empire,” calling for its appellation as an “American world empire.” Gowan and Anderson emphasize the neomercantilist dimension of US-led global restructuring that combines consensual claims to universality with the promotion of specific coercion-backed national economic and strategic interests. In this sense, while the United States is less than a global state, it has effectively resolved the coordination problem of inter-state anarchy among multiple capitalist centers of power—not by fabricating consent, but by sheer geopolitical weight. American “exceptionalism” transcends the original dichotomous conceptions of either Lenin’s inter-imperialist rivalry or Kautsky’s ultra-imperialism.

In contrast to strong “globalists,” the counter-claim regarding the persistence of the states system runs the opposite danger of overinvesting the national form with a durability that leaves the real changes in the restructuring of political territoriality unaccounted for. Ellen Wood suggests that globalization and the states system have entered into a mutually reinforcing relationship, since global capital accumulation requires a reliable system of states as the adequate form for protecting and policing capitalist social property relations. “The political form of

globalization is not a global state but a global system of multiple states” (Wood 2003, 6). US imperial hegemony is therefore primarily defined as economic imperialism, working through a reliable system of plural capitalist states. The American inter-state empire is, paradoxically, “the empire of capital.” Since coercion is necessary only at the point of implanting capitalist property relations and state structures in pre-capitalist locales and for the policing of market-sustaining institutions once capitalist markets and sovereignty are established, inter-imperial rivalry is eclipsed. In this sense, the US imperial turn, is objectless—“surplus imperialism.” This position is premised on her understanding of capitalism as a social relation in which all economic actors are market dependent, so that economic power is detached from political power, allowing for capitalist expansion across borders without the political subjugation of the penetrated state—economic imperialism. This conception defines, similar to world-systems theory, the multi-state system in terms functional to the global reproduction of capitalism, attributes to unevenness a politico-territorial blocking character, which implies a fixed multi-territorial landscape as the adequate geopolitical carapace of capitalism, and fails to offer either a theoretical derivation or a historical specification of the conditions under which capitalist class relations took shape, politically, in the form of multiple and competing sovereign states. Because of this depoliticized reading of the nature of “economic imperialism,” the current US military–political imperial turn is not theorized as a positive manifestation of specific sociopolitical dynamics within the United States, but, given the “systemic imperatives” of economic capitalist accumulation, is somehow surplus to requirement.

David Harvey, finally, suggests a reading of the neoliberal “new imperialism” grounded in the fall of profitability due to overaccumulation and the ensuing problems of capital accumulation since the 1960s. Before the onset of the long downturn, the United States followed a hegemonic project that through the international framework established at Bretton Woods was designed “to coordinate growth between the advanced capitalist powers” and “to bring capitalist-style economic development to the rest of the non-communist world” (Harvey 2003, 54–5). Consent prevailed over coercion. Post-1973, American hegemony was restructured around a much more aggressive neoliberalization project that had run its course by the turn of the millennium, leaving coercion as the only viable exit option to maintain US primacy, especially through direct territorial control of the oil spigot. Inter-imperial rivalries are optional again. Theoretically, this account draws on two distinct, competing, and separate logics—a “territorial logic of power,” pursued by state managers, and a transnational “capitalist logic of power,” pursued by firms, that are irreducible to each other but intersect in variable ways (Harvey 2003, 26–30). There are, however, two conflicting readings of the “two logics” in Harvey. One, drawing on Hannah Arendt’s definition of imperialism, suggests that unlimited capital accumulation functionally requires a geographically coextensive sphere of direct politico-territorial control, assuming compatibility if not identity of

interests between state and capital; the other suggests two separate and conflicting logics between state managers and capitalists that might contradict each other. The implication is that, if the first reading holds, much of US postwar foreign policy cannot be accounted for; if the second reading holds, then the current Afghanistan–Iraq fiasco—the “territorial logic”—is beyond an explanation in terms of capitalist interests. In any case, the theoretical ascription of *one* generic rationality of permanent politico-territorial (imperial) accumulation to state managers is as historically unwarranted and fraught with dangers of reification (constituting also an unnecessary relapse into realist verities), as the ascription of *one* generic rationality of transnational capital accumulation to capitalists. The dualistic conception of power stands in stark tension with the dialectical approach that Harvey also champions.

7 CONCLUSION

Marx and Engels left a problematic legacy for theorizing international relations because of their neglect of inter-spatial relations and alterations in political geographies for processes of social reproduction. This “geopolitical deficiency” still haunts the collective Marxist imagination. If significant progress has been made to rectify this defect, the tradition still stands in need of devising a theoretical framework wide and open-ended enough to conceptualize the nexus between social reproduction, power, and inter-spatial relations across the entire spectrum of human history. Because of the ever-growing recognition of the variable rates of regional development, the efficacy of geopolitical and transnational relations on domestic dynamics, and the complexities involved in articulating the relation between the domestic and the foreign, there has been a strong tendency to move away from teleological conceptions of history, economic reductionism, and structural determinism—legacies that have been dislodged by greater attentiveness to historical specificity and the agency of historically situated actors. The challenge remains to develop an understanding of different types and patterns of geopolitical competition and cooperation that is not held hostage to the structural functionalisms of a desocialized “logic of anarchy” or a depoliticized and de-geopoliticized “logic of capital.” In line with its critical vocation, Marxism needs to reconceptualize how balances of social forces affected the historical evolution of political communities in their internal and external aspects, to reconstruct the changing dynamics of their interactions and interpenetrations, and to specify the full range of spatial orders (within the capitalist epoch as before) devised by them in order to reproblematicize the variable relations between domination and exploitation—and chances of resistance to them. It is a sign of the ambition and ongoing vitality of Marxism as a living tradition that

this monumental research agenda has finally moved right into the center of critical reflection on the human condition.

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