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International Relations / internationale Beziehungen

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International Relations can be defined as the nexus between theory and practice associated with understanding and explaining sets of social phenomena, forces and relations that operate, actually or potentially, across jurisdictional boundaries of states and political associations in the context of particular world orders.

The British utilitarian philosopher and social engineer, Jeremy Bentham in 1780 coined the modern usage of the term ‘international’ with reference to International Law (Bentham 1996). In the nineteenth century the main usage of the adjective ‘international’ was with respect to international exchange and the relations between principalities, nations and empires. Nevertheless, the theory and practice of International Relations originates in ancient times, for example in the writings of the Chinese strategist Sun Tzu, whose *On the Art of War* was written approximately 2,500 years ago (Sun 1993) and in the writings of Greeks such as Thucydides on the Peloponnesian War of 431-404 B.C. (Thucydides 1934). Other noted historical sources include Ibn Khaldun, who wrote about the rise and fall of political forms and regional patterns of trade, war and peace in the Mahgreb in the Middle Ages (Ibn 1967).

What we understand as International Relations today was originally conceived as advice to monarchs and political leaders on how to construct enduring forms of rule and social control within their domains or territories in ways connected to strategies of war and peace. The latter were seen as means to defend, extend or consolidate political control and to accumulate social power. Thus International Relations has tended to be a rather conservative field, operating from the viewpoint and on behalf of, ‘established’ power. Indeed, even theories that originally posed a radical challenge to existing order, such as

Leninism, can subsequently serve established power, for example Marxist-Leninism under Stalin and his successors, as was noted just after the second World War by E.H. Carr (Carr 1946).

Especially following the collapse of the former Soviet Union, International Relations in the West has been dominated by established scholarship from the Anglo-American world, with Marxism and perspectives originating in the developing world at the margins of academic study, partly as a consequence of the Cold War. In the USA following a brief post-World War II period where the tradition of classical, historical forms of Realism was continued by the likes of George Kennan and Hans Morgenthau, the field came to be dominated by what has been called neo-Realism, in which the epistemological perspective of positivism was foundational (Kennan 1978; Morgenthau 1985). More critical and dialectical approaches were frequently dismissed as ‘non scientific’ or ‘ideological’.

By contrast, the lineage of Classical Marxism associated with theories of imperialism originating mainly before and during the World War I, as in the work of Hilferding, Bukharin and Lenin, sought to explain the international relations of the capitalist states. Indeed these theories underpinned communist parties’ assessments of centripetal and centrifugal forces in International Relations (Bukharin 1973; Hilferding 1981; Lenin 1939). Such international theories predominated within many communist parties, at least until the espousal of American-style liberal institutionalist theories of global interdependence by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s.

Nonetheless, in an era when American-style Neo-Realism has become the dominant orthodoxy, the main objective of the conclusion of this essay will be to show how a radical, ‘critical’ historical materialist tradition is now emerging in ways that goes beyond the orthodoxies of International Relations. So in what follows we review aspects of International Relations from the vantage points the main theoretical perspectives. We outline in simplified manner, the rudiments of Realism, Liberalism, Classical Marxism, World-Systems Theory and what I call Transnational Historical Materialism. The latter can be understood as a part of a radical and ‘critical’ tradition that has recently invigorated studies of International Relations. In the final part of this essay we discuss patterns, problems and prospects for world order, and new forms of political agency.

With this in mind the structure of the rest of this essay is:

1. An outline of Marx and Engels’ characteristic ideas concerning International Relations;
2. A sketch of modern theoretical perspectives in International Relations;
3. Analysis of the historical formation of world orders;
4. Reflections on International Relations in the twenty-first century.

1. Marx and Engels on International Relations

Throughout their voluminous writings, Marx and Engels frequently addressed the subject matter of International Relations. However they did not produce a systematic theory of International Relations—although they provided a methodological framework for its development. So, initially in this section, and then later in the dictionary entry, we highlight two aspects of their writings that are useful in pointing the way forward to a critical, historical materialist theory of International Relations: (1) analysis of issues of war and peace, including peace treaties and the way that these reflected fundamental configurations of power and (2) links between state power, class structure and the world market associated with the expansion of capital.

The most general point that can be made about their perspective on International Relations is that international conflicts originated in the basic contradictions between productive forces and social and political forms. In the modern era this often tended to take the form of a struggle between states in the context of the internationalisation of capital. Therefore, on the one hand, the international system was principally shaped by the most advanced nations that had undergone a fundamental bourgeois revolution and the development of powerful capacities for production (and destruction). On the other hand, other nations were forced to emulate the leading mode of production and try to catch up with the dominant nation or else be subjected to its supremacy. In sum, the dynamic of interstate rivalry and the development of capital form the basic framework for interpreting modern International Relations.

Here is important to indicate that methodologically, Marx and Engels did not make any significant demarcation between the internal and external aspects of power and potentials for production and destruction as is commonly made in conventional International Relations theory. Instead they saw the internal and external, the local and the international, and the ‘political’ and the ‘economic’ as being dialectically related. They were interested in both local and international dimensions of the emergence of the modern state system and bourgeois social and political forms. They interrogated how the modern state obtains a monopoly over the legitimate use of organized violence, internally, and how this might be connected to the external use of organised violence.

Characteristically, they were also interested in how the conditions of warfare were central to the development of productive forces. Warfare was a form of organised violence that helped to give rise to modern relations of production, including the wage-labour form. Indeed, Marx speculated that the institution of wage-labour might have originated in the military sphere (Marx 1973). Engels admired von Clausewitz’s view that warfare was similar to commerce and Engels believed primacy in military power depended mainly upon mobilization of advanced production and use of sophisticated communications systems (van der Pijl 1989: 14). Thus implicit throughout the work of Marx and Engels

was the idea that the most powerful military systems correspond to the use of the most advanced mode of production.

Marx and Engels saw the basis of international conflict in the outward expansion and clash of more fundamental social forces and class interests, producing historically specific configurations of power and resistance. Thus in *The German Ideology* they depicted International Relations as dependent on (a) the relative development of national forces of production, division of labour and the scale of internal commerce, and (b) their relation to the world market and the configuration of inter-state or dynastic power (Marx and Engels 1978). Thus they argue that Britain's dominance of the world market in the nineteenth century was intimately linked to the domestic hegemony of its bourgeoisie—despite the fact that the aristocracy carried out British foreign policy. The underlying goal of British strategy was to sustain and extend Britain's dominance of the oceans and of world trade and production. Its policy of the balance of power on the European continent, the development of colonies in the Americas and in India, and its stewardship of the International Gold Standard were all part of this strategy.

Put differently, Marx and Engels understood foreign policy (and the so called 'national interest') as based on the interests of the dominant classes seeking to expand their social power through the consolidation and extension of the prevailing mode of production. Consistent with their political economy, Marx and Engels saw the ultimate origin of international power as the alienation and appropriation of labour power and the products of labour. Indeed, they traced the origin of modern International Relations as the product of a long historical struggle that produced the social relations of modern capitalism, initially in England.

The links between the international division of labour and the modern inter-state system and the propensity to war were related to stages of capitalist development and a shift from merchant towards industrial capital. The modern world market was the product of dialectic of state and capital. It was formed, on the one hand by the expansion and internationalization of capital, as capital breaks free of national constraints. On the other hand, tariffs and other measures enhanced the nationality of capital in the context of rivalry between nations. Thus both the internal and external markets of nations, mediated by state power, formed the world market.

More generally, Marx and Engels' view of the prospects for socialism was linked to the development of capital. Thus communism presupposed global commerce and universal development of production, and would be international in form. As capitalist production develops it tends consistently to enlarge the scope of circulation and trade. The world market involves an ever-greater annihilation of space by time. Capital thus transforms production in a new international division of labour and in so doing, creates a new internationalist perspective on the world. In this context, whilst free trade becomes another way of ensuring the freedom of capital, capitalist development promotes

universal interdependence, and undermines the seclusion of different nationalities and dynastic order. Capital becomes world capital. History becomes world history. Revolution, whilst breaking out locally, becomes world revolution, and historically, revolutions were preceded by economic crisis (Marx and Engels 1967).

At the end of their lives, Marx and Engels expected a great war to break out in Europe, although they also seemed to believe that the revolution in Russia ultimately might eliminate the danger of war and as well as signalling the onset of a worldwide revolution. The revolution in the nature of warfare, conducted on a mass basis with giant armies and weaponry of unprecedented destructive potential meant that a new war would involve unprecedented destruction, and would drive the working classes towards socialism, destroying dynastic power and reactionary forces—a belief starkly contradicted by the Great War—World War I (1914-1918). However, the Russian Revolution was indeed triggered by its disastrous engagement in the Great War.

2. Perspectives and modern International Relations

In this section we review aspects of International Relations from the vantage points of mainstream, established theories as a prelude to a later sketch of what David Law and I have called a critical Transnational Historical Materialist perspective (Gill 1993; Gill and Law 1988).

Most conventional understandings of International Relations, especially Realism, are anchored in their interpretation of the significance of the Peace of Westphalia (comprising two treaties, of Osnabruck and Munster). Westphalia was concluded in 1648, following the Thirty Years War. To a large extent these understandings have formed the basic vocabulary of Liberal and Realist understandings of statecraft and *realpolitik*. However, as a number of International Relations scholars such as Edward Morse and Martin Wight have argued, these understandings are constructed on a myth, in so far as they are based on ideal as opposed to real historical structures (Morse 1976; Wight 1977). Thus a foundational myth lies at the centre of conventional theories of International Relations. Nonetheless, the Westphalian myth has emphasised foreign policy and military strategy as the central focus of mainstream theory.

What then, are the main assumptions about International Relations associated with the ‘Westphalian myth’? The Thirty Years’ War was the last of the religious wars of the late Middle Ages and Reformation, and the first modern secular war. Westphalian assumptions were that the highest political good was political order, found only in political society (the state); that states coexisted with others in a pre-political condition of anarchy; and that the divine-right king was the artisan of the modern state and of geopolitics (Morse). In practice, however, the Westphalian system was linked to Absolutism and projects of empire building and promotion of domestic order to strengthen the power of ruling princes—it was the geopolitical expression of the power and structure of ruling dynasties in

Europe in the seventeenth century. This project involved a hierarchical balance of power that rested on mercantilist political economy designed to achieve a favourable balance of trade. However, what is missing from in the conventional interpretation of Westphalia is any reference to the relation between geopolitical action and the forms of social power that constitute the inter-dynastic system of the time (see the following section). This is because geopolitical action is seen as being governed by a similar logic both during the Absolutist period, and in the transition towards modern international relations governed by the emergence of integral, national bourgeois state forms during the nineteenth century.

As a result, much of contemporary Realist theorising, or Neo-Realism, tends to be ahistorical and rather structuralist in its analytical perspective. Thus from an axiomatic myth of Westphalia, Realism focuses on the strategic interactions of nation-states, as opposed to different state forms constituted by different social relations and modes of production. The central assumption of Realism is that states seek power and security and their leaders are motivated by greed and fear in a situation that is akin to a Hobbesian state of nature (Gilpin 1981). Thus geopolitics is constituted by struggles between conflicting wills of different states under pre-political conditions of international anarchy, that is, the absence of an order-producing force, such as a world government (Waltz 1954). In sum, the basic unit of analysis is the state, and states are viewed as similar across time and space: territorial entities with a concept of national interest that guides policy, within the constraints of international mechanisms such as the balance of power. Realists take the common view that security is a zero-sum game: thus more security for one state must mean less security for another (although many modern realists are quick to acknowledge that nuclear weapons may mean less security for all). Of course, powerful states are less externally constrained than others, provided they have sufficient internal autonomy rationally to conduct foreign policy, notably in the sphere of national security. Even in a powerful state, domestic autonomy may be constrained by strong coalitions of forces (such as a military-industrial-complex), thus preventing aggregation or rational pursuit of 'national interests'. Since the state's central concerns are security and survival, policy is assessed in terms of the degree to which it reduces vulnerability, maximises security, and increases the relative wealth of the nation. This viewpoint also informs the view of co-operation with other states: worthwhile if it maximises relative as opposed to absolute gains for one's own nation. The gist of the Liberal view of International Relations, as exemplified in political economy in the Ricardian theory of comparative advantage, is similarly state-centric and ahistorical, and it interprets International Relations in terms of the institutional interplay between states and markets, each constituted by individual action within the broader framework of the Rule of Law (Buchanan and Tullock 1962; Hayek 1967). Its main difference from Realism lies in its stress on the absolute welfare gains from international co-operation (Realists stress relative gains) (Keohane 1984). Likewise one of the roots of modern Liberalism, the Kantian view of the conditions for perpetual peace, stresses enlightened co-operation between states (Kant and Humphrey 1985).

For Realists, the balance of power between states is crucial and if the balance changes, the level of conflict in the inter-state system may rise, after a period of relative equilibrium. As we have intimated, and in contrast to Marxism, historical change and levels of conflict are often seen as underpinned by a basic structural continuity, despite cycles where power balances shift, and empires or hegemonies rise and decline. Stable, co-operative and relatively peaceful international systems are frequently associated with periods of hegemonic domination. Kenneth Waltz, for example, suggests that although the bipolar post-war system dominated by the superpowers is somewhat unstable, it is nonetheless much more stable than a balance of power system involving a larger number of states. Thus the issue is not ideology or political philosophy, but the distribution of inter-state power (Waltz 1979).

By contrast the main abstraction and unit of analysis within Classical Marxism (early 20th-century successors to Marx and Engels) is a social system defined in terms of a dominant mode of production. To put it at its simplest, in the capitalist mode, much of the economic surplus takes the form of interest and profits for capitalists, who exploit labour. In the capitalist system, therefore, there are two basic social classes which have incompatible objective (or 'real') interests, reflected in class struggle. In the context of class struggle, whereas the workers of the world are, in theory, potentially able to unite, the formation of an international capitalist class, with common interests and a shared consciousness, is impossible. This is mainly because international competition atomises the interests and collective potential of capitalists. However, at the domestic level, given certain conditions, capitalists can and do co-operate, in order to secure the rule of capital. At the international level, the situation approximates war. For example, through their control of the state, mercantilist strategies geared to enhancing profitability on a world scale serves the interests of monopoly capital. Such strategies are often directed at undermining foreign capitalists. In turn, the capitalists of the foreign state will also use mercantilist policies to protect and extend their interests. When general economic conditions deteriorate (as in a prolonged recession), inter-imperialist conflicts intensify.

It was widely assumed by Classical Marxists that capitalism had a systemic propensity to war. However, Marx and Engels saw the ultimate constraints on the accumulation of capital and the survival of the system as a whole as resting upon the contradictory and divisive class nature of capitalism. Class struggle was manifested on the one hand, in the alleged tendency for the rate of profit to fall, and on the other, by the rise of a class-conscious and organised (urban) working class, led by a highly disciplined vanguard group of intellectuals and leaders. The role of left-wing leaders is both political and theoretical. This revolutionary role entails theorising the weaknesses and contradictions of the system in order to help strengthen proletarian parties and accelerate capitalism's downfall.

Thus within this theory there are two major arguments concerning the nature of imperial rivalry: Leninist and Kautskian. The debate between them focuses upon the conflicts

generated by the competition for raw materials, markets and cheap labour, a competition intensified by the tendency of the rate of profit to fall and for class struggle to increase.

By contrast, Dependency and World-Systems writers see the capitalist world- economy as part of a single world system defining the place of a state within the hierarchy of nations. This hierarchy is divided in terms of level (rather than the form) of development into the categories of core, periphery, and semi-periphery. This roughly corresponds to the realist concept of the inter-state system. However, the concept of the capitalist world-economy is based on a quite different appraisal of system dynamics to that of Marx and Engels. World systems theory stresses the primacy of exchange relations in its conceptualisation of global capitalism. Thus the world is not strictly divided into competing modes of production (feudal, absolutist, capitalist) but into categories of states with different levels of development, integrated through the world market (Wallerstein 1974).

What I call Transnational Historical Materialism, is inspired by the work of Marx and Gramsci, but also involves insights from non-Marxist thinkers such as Braudel and Polanyi. It builds on the political economy approach of Marx, stressing the significance of political agency and structural changes in world orders. Much recent work includes analysis of social and class forces operating within and across states (transnationally). Its key units of analysis are 'social forces'. These are *ideas*, including ideologies and theories; *institutions* such as state and market; and *material potentials*, that is of production and destruction. These forces operate at three interrelated (methodological) levels: world orders, state-civil society complexes, and the basic level of production, broadly defined (Cox 1987). Social forces serve to constitute transnational as well as national class fractions (of labour and capital), and the historical blocs that give direction to forms of state. In this view, the great powers have the maximum degree of external autonomy, whereas the former penetrate the subordinate powers.

Following Marx, Engels and Gramsci, the most powerful states are those that have undergone a profound internal development, in which the hegemony of a dominant class or class fraction has been built. In time, this revolution becomes internationally expansive. Thus, world hegemony has for its origin the outward expansion of the internal or national hegemony, established by the dominant or ruling class within the most powerful state. Hegemonic leadership occurs when international arrangements have a relatively universal conception, one characterised by not only coercion, but also by the consent of the key allies and followers of the ruling class of the dominant state, that is an order compatible with their interests. Thus, for example, Gramsci saw the basic changes in the military-strategic and geopolitical balance as originating in more fundamental changes in social relations. Thus transnational historical materialism does not suggest that the state is diminished in importance; it remains the basic entity in international relations, and the place where the hegemony of classes or class fractions is built. However, the state needs to be understood in a more complex way than Realism that is relative to civil society and the social and political

forces that constitute its historical and political basis—what Gramsci called the *blocco storico* (historic bloc).

Hegemony would be achieved when major institutions, forms of social organisation and key values of the dominant state become models for emulation in subordinate states. However, in periods of crisis, the apparatus of hegemony tends to break down, political parties fragment, and no single group obtains the broad consent with which to govern. This situation is ripe for a shift in power, the construction or reconstruction of the apparatus of hegemony, and the search for a new basis of order takes place.

3. World Orders and International Relations

The term ‘world order’ does not necessarily imply stability or a desirable set of international arrangements. Whilst many Realists stress order as a normative goal of political and strategic action, here the phrase is used analytically. It seeks principally to represent the actual configuration of social forces, social relations and social institutions that transgress political boundaries in a given historical era. In doing so, we can seek to outline the conditions of war and peace in a given era. Moreover, when used in the context of a critical perspective, it is also a term that implies an attempt to theorise the tensions, contradictions and limits that may give rise to structural change and possibilities for political agency to generate new forms of world order.

Thus world orders can be very violent and chaotic periods, such as the Thirty Years’ War that preceded the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Another example is 1914-45, involving two world wars, a collapse of the world economy and a general increase in organized violence. Both periods were characterised by disintegration and breakdown in the normative and material structures that constrain such violence: these in Gramscian terms were non-hegemonic orders. World order can also be used to describe periods when interstate conflict may be at a much lower level, such the so-called ‘Hundred Years’ Peace’ after the defeat of Napoleon. Between 1815-1914 there was no ‘world’ war, or one in which a significant number of the Great Powers were involved for a protracted period (despite internal repression and violence to suppress revolts, revolution, regional conflicts and wars, as well as to extend imperial expansion and colonialism). Likewise since 1945 there has been no major violent conflict between Great Powers (although over 200 ‘local’, ‘regional’ or ‘civil’ wars). To a limited extent, therefore, the *pax Britannica* could be described as hegemonic in Gramscian terms, at least in its early phase relative to dominant class forces in the mid-nineteenth century, perhaps until the era of rival imperialism.

In this regard, one of the central questions posed by mainstream International Relations theorists is ‘how is order possible under conditions of anarchy’? They see the system as anarchical because it lacks an order producing force such as a world state or world political authority. Of course, Realists argue that the mechanisms of the balance of

power may restrain the propensity to war. As Martin Wight once put it, for Realists, the alternatives to a stable balance of power are 'either universal anarchy, or universal dominion'(Wight 1977). However, if we look at this issue historically we can note that world order is a complex and historically fluid process. Towards the end of the Thirty Years' War, demands for 'order' and for a reduction in inter-state violence increased among rulers. Indeed, a new form of world order was made possible in part because of the superior power resources of the United Provinces (due to war-fighting techniques and technologies pioneered by Maurice of Nassau; the leadership of Amsterdam in commerce and finance) as emphasised in Realist accounts. But perhaps most crucial to the Westphalian Peace Treaty were shared interests of other rulers in sustaining their own survival and power within their own territories and domains. Thus they had a collective interest in the institutionalisation of their power in a more stable, but still largely dynastic international system. Westphalia provided a new ideological and theoretical framework (sovereignty) to allow dynastic power, authority and legitimacy to be redefined both within and between the emerging states and empires. At the same time, the political basis of rule was very narrow (about 90 per cent of the population lived in conditions of what Braudel called 'material civilisation' and were excluded from both the fruits of market society and world capitalism and from representation or participation in rule). The role of Amsterdam and merchant capital might also be emphasised as a core of class forces seeking to establish a transnational dominance of merchant capital (Braudel 1982). In sum, from a historical materialism viewpoint, this era corresponded to an early moment in the emergence of transnational bourgeois power and its hegemonic articulation—a process that only began to fully crystallise in the nineteenth century.

Indeed if we probe deeper and return to the work of Marx and Engels, we shall see that their work indicates that the origin of the modern geopolitical system was much later than at Westphalia, and involved a complex historical process, intense political struggles and frequent outbreaks of organized violence and war. Geopolitics during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in Europe for example, was constituted by patterns of conflict and co-operation, war and peace, associated with the hierarchy of dynasties and other forms of personalised sovereignty and political over-rule. Initially in Holland and England, this pattern began to give way gradually to more centralised, impersonal forms of sovereignty and private property relations that have come to characterise bourgeois state forms. The prelude to this transformation was the crisis of feudalism and the violent clashes between Absolutist states, e.g. in the period between the 16th and 18th centuries (Teschke 2002). During this period the Reformation produced the first (cultural) revolution of the bourgeoisie. Thus, although the European state system came into existence between the 17th and 18th centuries, what we understand as modern International Relations largely came into being between the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 and the Congress of Vienna of 1815. What was involved in Europe was a change in the logic of international political

action associated with a shift from inter-dynastic rivalry and empire building to the emergence of modern capital capitalism and modern political sovereignty.

The new order involved a shift in geopolitical action on the part of rulers. Under the Absolutist system, international politics involved principles of 'political accumulation' and investment in the means of appropriation—in order to wage war to exercise dynastic territorial claims and over commercial monopolies and exclusive trade routes (this pattern was the counter-part to inter-marriage between the different dynasties as a means to consolidate claims). There was then a shift from political accumulation (based upon a feudal rent-regime) towards capitalist economic accumulation (based upon wage labour). Corresponding to this was a political transformation from personalised kingly sovereignty towards depersonalisation and centralisation of political power in the modern capitalist state. Since in the modern capitalist state class power resides in private property and control over the means of production, the state intervenes less directly in production and focuses on maintaining social order and external defence in order to consolidate the regime of private property and enforcement of civil contracts (Teschke 2002: 31).

In the eighteenth century, state power and commercial rivalry intensified and Britain emerged to dominate and develop the world market, especially after 1815, when British steam power underpinned its commercial supremacy. By 1815 the French Revolution under Napoleon was defeated, and gradually the dynastic system of power was supplanted by the new form of social power of the bourgeoisie—in a world order dominated by British maritime and industrial power and as the world market was extended. As Marx and Engels saw it, the ideology of free trade imperialism—seen in the works of thinkers such as Adam Smith—idealised and rationalised British commercial supremacy as a global harmony of interests that would lead to the wealth of all nations (Smith 1967). Marx believed that when the French attempt to conquer the continent failed, and as England came to dominate the world market, this began to prepare the ground for the inevitable struggle between capital and the proletariat. Moreover, Marx and Engels noted that British commercial power sowed the seeds of its own relative demise as a result of its exports of capital to its rival the United States. They anticipated that the United States would become the dominant world power and that the centre of economic gravity in the world market would shift from the Atlantic to the Pacific. This was because the historical pattern of modern International Relations was for a declining power to export capital to a more vigorous competitor, where the rate of return on capital is higher than at home (as had been the case earlier with Holland, relative to England). Moreover the United States offered a very high degree of protection for private property rights and investment since it was the only fully formed bourgeois republic. This inspired a high degree of confidence on the part of foreign investors and thus capital tended to flow into the United States. In other words, differential profit rates explained investment flows, particularly since a more fully developed international monetary system allowed capital to become more mobile and to influence local production.

Thus while Realists stress the military power and economic primacy of Britain in the nineteenth century, especially naval power and commercial superiority based on its leading role in industrialisation, historical materialists also emphasise the growth of the capitalist class and how a new international politics went with construction of a world market, so that, as we noted, in Smith's terminology, the 'wealth of nations' could develop.

In this context the construction of British bourgeois hegemony involved the international spread of principles of free trade and fostering the emulation of economic development laid down by British industrialisation, as well as the coercive force of British military power on the seas and in its colonies. Indeed, increasingly, Britain sustained its primacy through exploitation of and extraction of surplus from its Empire, especially India. The institutionalisation of British hegemony involved the other Great Powers agreeing to new rules of international commerce and finance with Britain. The City of London played a co-ordinating role in matters of money and finance and in the administration of the International Gold Standard. This new imperial order did not simply rest upon preponderant power as such. Rather it reflected a new balance of inter-state and class forces, including measures to incorporate key elements of the working classes into imperialist projects, as well as the ratification of a global racial hierarchy. This hierarchy changed over time: for example within the ranks of the Great Powers it was reflected in a gradual shift from predominantly reactionary to more liberal-constitutional forms of rule, linked to the dominance of *haute finance* or money capital in the world market (Polanyi 1975).

Indeed, whilst Marx and Engels often tended to analyse the nineteenth century system in relatively conventional terms as *realpolitik* (i.e. clashes and rivalries between the five 'Great Powers'), they also stressed that the nineteenth century brought with it a sixth 'great power' in Europe: the revolutionary classes. They interpreted Great Power rivalry (and its concomitants, the balance of power and the Concert of Europe) as being mediated, and its warlike propensities constrained, by fears of revolution on the part of the post-dynastic regimes and ruling classes of the continent and bourgeois Britain.

For example, the Crimean War (1853-1856) was interpreted as not only a clash amongst the great powers, but also a conflict within society between rulers and ruled, and between class forces. The Crimean was a central example of how conflict was contained because of ruling class fears of revolution. As such it signalled still greater and more violent conflicts in the future. They also interpreted the American Civil War (1860-65) in class terms as a clash between two modes of capitalist production: industrial capitalism in the North and the plantation/slaveholding society of the South. The American Civil War, because of its mass mobilization, was the first great war of contemporary history. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 also seemed to confirm the existence of the 'sixth great power'. After the defeat of the French by Prussia under Bismarck, the forces of reaction

combined across Europe in a holy alliance against the International Workingmen's Association, which collapsed after the defeat of the Paris Commune (Marx 1971). The Commune was the symbol of workers' internationalism and the idea of a world republic (van der Pijl 1989: 34ff).

As we noted earlier, Marx and Engels' analysis of world trade was linked to different forms of capital, and under industrial production, trade becomes a particular form through which the internationalisation of capital takes place, as well as a means to diffuse technology and more advanced means of production. It was also related to the conditions of production and the propensity to violence in different forms of the world order. Whereas merchant capital mediates between different forms of production, but does not necessarily dominate them, industrial capital shapes commerce and trade. Colonialism was particularly associated with merchant or commercial capital, which had a particularly brutal and violent form of expansion, for example in the plunder of the Dutch East India Company throughout the seventeenth century. Britain also expanded in not only the Americas but also through colonial plunder via the British East India Company, which became a military power in its own right (Marx and Engels 1968d). Nevertheless, Marx saw Britain as having a dialectical historical role in India and in Asia, which we might summarise as one of 'enlightened barbarism': violently destroying the old order whilst creating both political resistance and preconditions for the emergence of a new, higher form of civilisation (Marx and Engels 1968c). Another example was the two Opium Wars (1839-42 and 1857-59) to force the Chinese to import opium and how the British tried to forbid the Chinese from referring to British subjects as 'barbarians' (Marx 1968b). Such was the vast scope of 'progressive underdevelopment' in the Orient (van der Pijl 1989: 80-82)

By the late nineteenth century the propensity to inter-state violence began to increase. This was partly because of the rise to Great Power status of newly-industrialising and militarising imperial nations of Germany and Japan, the USA and to a lesser extent Russia. Imperial rivalry, economic concentration, protectionism and a renewal of violent forms of colonisation were paradoxically based on a gradual widening of political rule to include the 'labour aristocracy' or skilled workers. Thus between roughly 1876 and 1914, new social forces and conditions emerged: the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a period of the second industrial revolution. Mass production, mass communications, mass political parties and universal ideologies emerged, generating the capacity for total mobilisation and war. The Great War of 1914-18, along with the Russian Revolution, meant the eclipse of the Eurocentric world order configuration. This was despite unsuccessful attempts to reinstate its institutional form with the League of Nations in the 1920s. Revolution was not confined to Europe—other key examples were in Mexico and China. The final demise of the old order was consummated with the rise of fascism and Nazism as the liberal world economy collapsed in the slump of the 1930s and new forms

of reaction became the harbingers of the most destructive war in history, the Second World War (1939-45).

The central methodological point here is that in each of these world order configurations are different sets of social forces at work: different configurations of ideas, institutions and material capabilities, that is different forms of production, state and world order. World order in each period did not simply correspond to an inter-state system with an anarchic structure; rather it was the product of configurations of, and the interaction between, different historical blocs ruling the forms of state and political association that are particular to specific historical periods. In other words, the term International Relations understood from the framework of Realism as well as some variants of Marxism and World-Systems theory may connote an ontology that may be ahistorical and inadequate to fully comprehend the constitution and contradictions of *global* structural change. Indeed, from the vantage point of historical materialist approaches to International Relations we can see that forms of state are contingent and that they serve to constitute, and are constituted by social forces, broadly defined.

4. International Relations in a New Millennium

As we have noted, the Westphalia system is said to have inaugurated the political processes and forms of International Law that facilitated development of the system of states that emerged in Europe. After the Second World War, following decolonisation and the collapse of the former Soviet Union we have seen a proliferation of formally independent nation-states. However, if we were to analyse the changing forms of state (as opposed to the numbers of states) in the post-World War II world order, one hypothesis is that the latest phase in the Westphalian states system is characterised by the accelerated internationalisation, or transnationalisation of the state, and a gradual shift towards more universal adoption of bourgeois state forms associated with what I have called disciplinary neo-liberalism (Gill 1995). This hypothesis is partly based on the proposition that the demise of Fordist production and ownership structures associated with state capitalism and the developmental state in the OECD and Third World has been partly related to the greater international mobility and power of capital in a new international division of labour. In this process, more 'national' forms of post-war capitalist development are gradually giving way to more 'globalized' post-Fordist, flexible methods and organisation of production, with capital in the ascendant relative to organized labour and redistributive elements within the state.

Such a redefinition of power and production relations implies some changes in (national) political identity, as well as changes in the form of state. We can call this process the internationalisation, or globalization of the state. The latter process is not entirely new. For example, the Westphalian system in its various mutations was the international political counterpart to the emergence of initially merchant and then industrial capitalism. In this sense, the Westphalian system has always been 'internationalised', since its inception,

although this internationalisation has taken different forms. Moreover, superpower bipolarity during the Cold War implied particular forms of the internationalisation of allied states' political and security structures in the context of the balance of terror and mutually assured destruction (MAD). Since 1945, the transformation of world order has been associated with the global restructuring of production and finance.

If we accept the idea of the internationalisation—or indeed, the globalization—of the state, we go beyond a traditional assumption of International Relations: that states, almost irrespective of their character or form, are essentially the same for the purposes of analysing international politics. From a historical materialist viewpoint therefore, it is important to analyse the different forms of state, and how they change over time, thus serving to constitute different types of international or global order. One way to do this is to use for example, Gramsci's ideas concerning the extended state (state + civil society) as a means to conceptualise the formation of global politics (Gramsci 1971).

Thus the very term 'International Relations' when used at the start of the twenty-first century may connote an ontology that may be inadequate to fully comprehend *global* structural change. As we have noted, the term 'inter-national' may suggest that the most significant entities are states and the most important forms of interaction and movement are relations between national entities, and foreign policies of governments or inter-governmental organisations. This assumption needs to be re-examined in the context of globalising social and political forces.

For example, from the perspective of what Fernand Braudel called the *longue durée*, since the eighteenth century there has been an acceleration in the scope and intensity of change within and across given social frameworks (e.g. from absolutism to the more integral nation-state; processes of industrialisation and rationalisation associated with the spread of capital) (Braudel 1980). There has also been a shift in prevailing mental frameworks associated with this process. However, what seems unprecedented in scale are the rapid growth in population and degradation of the environment—again the turning point seems to have coincided with the emergence of industrial capitalism at the end of the eighteenth century. The scale and scope of these processes has accelerated since 1950, such that virtually all human-induced ecological change in history has occurred since then, and the rate of this change is quickening, although with uneven effects in different regions of the planet. Eric Hobsbawm also notes that this has involved, at least in the OECD, the virtual elimination of the peasantry as a class (Hobsbawm 1994). On the other hand, whilst Hobsbawm is probably true that this is perhaps the most profound social change in the last millennium, it is nonetheless the case that the peasantry still forms a substantial proportion of the class structure and pattern of resistance to the power of capital in the developing world, despite rapid proletarianization and industrialisation in the so-called Third World.

We might also add that, whilst the theory and practice of International Relations goes back over the millennia, in the early twenty-first century its study must focus on problems associated with the logic of the global politics under conditions of accelerating flows of capital, information, and highly developed technological powers of production and destruction, surveillance and control (Gill 2001a). For example, weapons that can destroy life on the planet and militarize of space are features of an increasingly capitalist world order, characterised by an unprecedented level of global inequality. Whereas 80 per cent of the world's inhabitants live in harsh material and often-repressive political conditions, the USA and its major allies dominate world order in terms of the power of states. Indeed—partly under pressure from the USA and the G7, and partly because of economic circumstances, more and more states are coming to adopt liberal constitutional forms and policies friendly to business interests. Indeed, particularly since the collapse of the former Soviet Union, economic dimensions of world order have come to be dominated by the power of capital—in the form of giant transnational corporations which increasingly control the bulk of the world's productive assets and capital flows.

In this context, however, there seems to be a growing contradiction between the tendency towards the globality and universality of capital in the neo-liberal form and the particularity of the legitimating and enforcement of its key exploitative relations by the state, particularly as capital appears to exert ever more control over the patterns of social development. Whereas capital tends towards universality, it cannot operate outside or beyond the political context, and this involves planning, legitimating and the using of coercive capacities of the state, including that of extended surveillance and panoptic power (Gill 2001a). This forms a key substantive problem for a theory of International Relations, at least as seen from a historical materialist perspective.

My argument is reinforced by the identification of the sociological corollary of the internationalisation of capital: the emergence of an associated fraction of the capitalist class, whose interests is tied more and more to the world economy. This class fraction develops its own transnational networks and its 'organic intellectuals' partly through its business transactions and its involvement with policy forums like the Trilateral Commission and the World Economic Forum based in Davos, Switzerland. This nexus of transnational class and political interests consistently defends liberal economic principles and opposes any significant movement towards mercantilism (Gill 1990). Indeed, one important interpretation of International Relations shows the lineage, or *longue durée* of transnational bourgeois class formation as stretching back to the eighteenth century Enlightenment (van der Pijl 1998). By contrast, the failure of any broad based and sustainable internationalism of the orthodox left is one of the central facts of the early twenty-first century.

Nevertheless, if Marx or Gramsci were alive today they might have identified the central question of politics as how to create not only a new form of state but also new

transnational political communities, and radical-democratic hegemony within what has been called, following Marx's writing in the *Grundrisse*, the post-modern condition, associated with the annihilation of space through time and the dominant cultural forms of global capitalism (Harvey 1989). One key constraint on this political possibility, however may be that the political imagination of the left may lie trapped in ontology of world order that equates political action with territorialism and the state—although constraints and opportunities of a globalised world order are palpable (Gill 1997b). So perhaps, we need then to rethink questions of politics in both global and local frames of reference, as indeed Marx and Engels did originally in several of their writings.

We might recall that Machiavelli's *The Prince* addressed the problem of rule from the viewpoint of both the prince (the *palazzo*, the palace) and the people (the *piazza*, the town square). Machiavelli sought to theorise a form of rule that combined both *virtù* (ethics, responsibility, and consent) and fear (coercion) under conditions of *fortuna* (circumstances). *The Prince* was written in Florence, amid political upheavals of Renaissance Italy, associated with problems of Italian unification, and the subordinate place of Italy in the structures of international relations. Machiavelli linked his propositions to the reality of concrete historical circumstances as well as the forging of a myth that would galvanise the potential for transformation. And it was in a similar national and international context that Gramsci's *The Modern Prince* was written in a Fascist prison, a text that dealt with a central problem of politics: the constitution of power, authority, rule, rights, and responsibilities in the creation of an ethical political community. Thus what Gramsci saw in *The Prince* was 'not a systematic treatment, but a 'live' work, in which political ideology and political science are fused in the dramatic form of a 'myth'.' (Gramsci 1971: 125). Machiavelli's myth was the *condottiere*, who represents the collective will. By contrast, for Gramsci the myth was the *Modern Prince*, the democratic modern mass political party—the communist party—charged with the construction of a new form of state and society, and a new world order.

In today's strategic context (*fortuna*) of disciplinary neo-liberal globalization associated with a growth in the power and mobility of capital and the collapse of traditional left-wing alternatives, a central problem of political theory is how to theorise new forms of collective identity and form of political agency that might lead to creation of ethical, and democratic political institutions and forms of practice (*virtù*). Where, in other words is today's *Modern Prince*?

Here the example of broad based movements against corporate globalization of recent years is important. These forces go beyond the politics of identity and are connected to issues of ecology, social reproduction and democracy. In sum, these movements seem to organise something akin to a transnational political party, although with no clear leadership structure as such. This emerging political form is not a signal of an end to universalism in politics as such, since many of the forces it entails are linked to

democratisation and a search for collective solutions to common problems. It seeks to combine diversity with new forms of collective identity and solidarity in and across civil societies. Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that, although they may represent a large proportion of the population of the world in terms of their concerns, in organised political terms the protest groups are only a relatively small part of an emerging global civil society that includes not only NGOs but also the activities of political parties, churches, media communications corporations, scientific and political associations, some progressive, others reactionary.

Transnational civil society also involves activities of both transnational corporations, and also governments that are active in shaping a political terrain that is directly and indirectly outside the formal juridical purview of states. Indeed, as the UN Rio conference on the environment and its aftermath illustrated, corporate environmentalism is a crucial aspect of the emerging global civil society and it is linked to what Gramsci called *trasformismo* or co-optation of opposition. For example, 'sustainable development' is primarily defined in public policy as compatible with market forces and freedom of enterprise. When the global environmental movement was perceived as a real threat to corporate interests, companies changed tack from suggesting the environmentalists were either crackpots or misguided to accepting a real problem existed and a compromise was necessary. Of course a compromise acceptable to capital was not one that would fundamentally challenge the dominant patterns of accumulation.

In conclusion I use the term 'post-modern Prince' to describe the new forces and movements (Gill 2002b). However, I do not use the term post-modern in its usual sense. Rather, I apply it to indicate a set of conditions and contradictions that give rise to novel forms of political agency that go beyond and are more complex than those imagined by Machiavelli's *The Prince* or Gramsci's *The Modern Prince*. These new forms of collective action and political agency contain innovative conceptions of social justice and solidarity, of social possibility, of knowledge, emancipation, and freedom. The content of their mobilising myths includes diversity, oneness of the planet and nature, democracy, and equity. What we are discussing is, therefore, a political party as well as an educational form and a cultural movement without a centralised structure of representation. Its networks and other mobilising capabilities are facilitated with new technologies of communication. Such a 'post-modern Prince' may be an effective political form to combine the disparate forces associated with an open-ended, more plural, inclusive, and flexible form of alternative politics to the dominant forms of globalization driven by the power of capital and the state.

So, whilst one can be pessimistic about globalization in its current disciplinary neo-liberal form, the post-modern Prince gives some optimism for the future. It may help constitute radically diverse but democratic identities. Its principles of action are and will be based in local conditions, problems, and opportunities but connected to the creation of a

transnational, collective organic intellectual of the global progressive forces, understood as forces in movement.

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