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HANDBOOK OF  
**Critical International  
Relations**

Edited by  
**Steven C. Roach**



HANDBOOK OF CRITICAL INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS



# Handbook of Critical International Relations

*Edited by*

Steven C. Roach

*University of South Florida, USA*

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# 1. Introduction to the *Handbook of Critical International Relations*

Steven C. Roach

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Over the years, critical international relations (IR) theorists have drawn on a range of thinkers (Karl Marx, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Roy Bhaskar) to critique the structural forces of power, authority, and norms in world politics. Their critical interventions have allowed us to interrogate the sources of exclusion, violence, and subjugation and to devise radical strategies for resisting such domination. This in turn has greatly expanded our critical knowledge of the contradictions (i.e., economic growth that results in an increasing rate of inequality) and tensions driving the struggle for global justice and equality. But the question that many critical IR theorists face today is how to address the growing intensity of these tensions and emotions in global politics. Indeed, one could argue that it is precisely this growing intensity that makes critical theory such an indispensable source of understanding the emancipatory potential of world politics. This *Handbook* is an attempt to confront this larger challenge by reinterpreting the meaning and relevance of critical theory against today's changing events.

Although critical IR theory came into existence in the 1980s, critical theory's roots can be traced to Enlightenment thought and the radical ideas that emerged out of nineteenth and twentieth century struggles for social equality. For many Enlightenment thinkers, championing reason and science (or scientific reason) meant advancing a new secular society and ending human suffering. The idea was that equal treatment and dignity of all persons could promote universal justice and moral inclusion. By eliminating all vestiges of class privilege, then, society would come to realize the full potential of humanity, including the humane benefits of equal respect and human dignity. However, with the rise of totalitarianism in the mid-twentieth century, the viability of this ideal was no longer certain. For the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research (or Frankfurt School), the rise of Nazism marked an existential threat to this emancipatory project. To confront this threat, one needed new concepts to understand the full extent of the societal problem. In particular, one had to recognize that humanity was not simply an ideal but an open totality of society, that is, an open-ended assemblage of social and historical forces that constituted the intersubjectivity of identity, interests, cultural norms, and beliefs.<sup>1</sup> In this way, the Frankfurt School based much of its critique of society on its critical opposition to

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<sup>1</sup> The term "critical theory" was first coined in 1937 by Max Horkheimer, one of the founders of the Frankfurt School.

positivism (an approach to society in which empirical knowledge is verified by facts and numbers that exists independently of human experience), which, according to Horkheimer, turned reason into a tool for advancing technology at the expense of humanity as a whole (Horkheimer, 1992). The Frankfurt School, it could be said, furnished a complex and dynamic critique of positivism, one that has helped inspire many critical theorists in IR to work beyond the limits (and regressive tendencies) of positivism.

Indeed, to be a “postpositivist” in IR is to critique the limits of scientific and rationalist approaches. It is to confront and engage the hidden effects and tendencies of dogmatism and militant orthodoxy in world politics. Today, the task of engaging these effects involves a series of challenges that threaten democratic values and humanity, more broadly. This *Handbook* seeks to address these challenges and the implications they raise for sustaining an open-ended critique of global society. It does so in four parts: (I) approaches and emancipation, (II) concepts and configuration, (III) political economy and domination, and (IV) global transformations and challenges. By analyzing the themes of otherness, authoritarian neoliberalism, non-Western sources of international thought, agonistic recognition, and critical animal studies, it aims to appeal to scholars, theorists, and students interested in using critical IR to research the changing dynamics of authority (governance), oppression, and emancipation.

## PART I: APPROACHES AND EMANCIPATION

Broadly speaking, critical theory is comprised of various strands of thought, including Marxist/Hegelianism, Western Marxism, Freudianism, cultural aesthetics, and Weberian thought. Many of the first-generation Frankfurt School thinkers (Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse) who fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s for the United States (Columbia University) were able to formulate the new concepts of negative dialectics and one-dimensional man that synthesized these four strands of thought. However, in time, the negativity of dialectics would eventually outstrip the progressive qualities of critical theory and its orientation to political transformation and democratic freedom. In short, the first-generation thinkers had abandoned the progressive ideals of the Enlightenment and embraced a deep and even dark cynicism toward emancipation.

The early Frankfurt School’s focus on the limited potential of the political consciousness led to an important turn in critical theory: namely from consciousness to communicative action. The turn involved focusing on argumentation and discursive reason (rationality based on moral and persuasive reasoning) to understand both the struggle and potential for justice and democracy. Habermas, for instance, situated reason within the communicative action or the pragmatic struggle to live by the force of the better of argument (Habermas, 1984) (he would later apply his ideas to the European Union). The turn also coincided with a renewed interest in Antonio Gramsci, the twentieth-century Italian socialist, and his notions of counter-hegemony

and historical bloc. In the context of IR during the 1980s, Robert Cox, Richard Ashley, Rob Walker, and Stephen Gill were just a few of the early thinkers to explore and extend these ideas to the international sphere.

In time, their critical interventions would become part of the so-called “Third Debate” (or “fourth,” if one counts the earlier inter-paradigm debate) in IR, which centered around the distinction between positivism and post-positivism and drew on the opposition between epistemology (representation and interpretation) and ontology (science and immutable structures) (Lapid, 1989). The Third Debate, it could be argued, reflected the emergence of an open, yet rigorous pluralism in the field and the growing acceptance of the limitations of scientific and rationalist thought; hence the need for alternative approaches to interpret the growing complexity of global politics (e.g., identity, marginalization, and the rising influence of human rights, democracy, and nonstate actors).

The Third Debate also encompassed the critical, normative turn in IR theory in which critical theorists turned to political theory to configure the global transformations of rights, autonomy, citizenship, community, and legitimacy (of sovereign authority). Many of these thinkers drew on the works of Immanuel Kant, Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth, and Habermas to conceptualize the legitimacy and discursive rationality of institutions and agents (Diez and Steans, 2005; Risse, 2000; Haacke, 1996). The idea of this normative turn was that in the age of rapid globalization, the democratic transformation of institutions required us to move beyond the limits of the state and to refigure the cosmopolitan possibilities of individual freedom, from both a radical and pragmatic perspective (Linklater, 2008). In this sense, Habermas’s ideas have exercised considerable influence on this normative perspective in critical IR theory.

Chapter 3 critically examines this influence. Here, Ben Thirkell-White shows how Habermas, while vague on political economy issues, shed critical light on the very liberal norms that seemed to separate and isolate economics from politics. He claims that Habermas’s commitment to the possibility of rational persuasion left gaps in his thought, and that this might explain his limited popularity in contemporary critical circles. Rather than treating post-structuralist thought as antithetical to Habermas’s pragmatic project, Thirkell-White argues that Habermas’s ideas provide an important corrective to these ideas, despite his tenuous descriptions of dialogue in terms of an exchange of reasons. Effective inter-subjective communication, he goes on to argue, will be a slow, difficult transformative process, which, under present, contemporary circumstances, needs to be thought through. This means confronting the tendency for “democratic” debates to appear “equal” from a privileged perspective: for it is not enough for political theorists to wait for “progressive ideas” to emerge and triumph. Indeed, these very ideas will shape progressive democratic and economic change, requiring further development before they can make themselves heard.

What is thus required, Thirkell-White contends, is a richer synthesis of moral theory and historical materialism to understand the role of moral obligation in global society (and its constituent parts, notably, human rights, solidarity, democracy, and social equality). Indeed, for the normative turn to become more complete, it also



must counter the positivist critique and its focus on scientific rigor or the dichotomy between scientism and interpretivism in IR. In this way, it would, as he concludes, represent a self-critical lens of the production of identities and rigid boundaries between subject and other.

In her chapter on the non-Western subject, Pinar Bilgin addresses the unmet goals of opening these boundaries to further critique. She argues that otherness and the international has tended to reinforce longstanding biases against political and cultural values and identities. Otherness is a term that is all too often inscribed within the dominant critical discourses of IR which evaluate and appraise the need for inclusion. If the international is to become a prevailing means of contesting the boundaries of IR, then, as Pinar Bilgin insists, it needs to deconstruct the patriarchal structure of the IR discipline and expose the marginalization of identities in the developing world. In the end, this strategy is needed to counter the rationalist structure of IR.

In Chapter 5, Simon Koschut analyzes this dimension in terms of a critical approach to emotions (or critical emotions). Working within a constructivist lens, he argues that critical emotions research must be deepened to address the question of how emotion should be examined critically in international politics. For the most part, researchers are mainly interested in how emotions are linked to power and marginalization, boundary-making, and the politics of difference. The challenge, however, lies in capturing the communal sentiment that informs the resistance to authority and power. Conversely, social movements, such as the World Social Forum or the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community are built on strong sentiments of resistance and empowerment, which, in turn, create the possibility for various avenues of emotional resistance or transnational protests and social movements, such as Occupy Wall Street and the “Me-too” debate. The idea is that such marginalized groups and individuals can and often do mobilize collective resistance as communities of feelings. They do so by “naming” emotionally appraised global inequalities and “shaming” those deemed responsible for their underprivileged status.

In Chapter 4, Columba Peoples argues for a return to the Frankfurt School to enhance Critical Security Studies as an approach capable of engaging many of today’s global security challenges. His aim is to examine the implications and possibilities of Critical Security Studies as a specific branch of scholarship. Here, he focuses on how the concept of “emancipation” and “immanent critique” can be viewed more prominently. Peoples identifies a potential “negativist” approach to emancipation and security, an approach based on what he calls the dynamic politics of emancipation, which he treats as innately bound up with the identification and critique of human security. The issue that this approach raises is whether security and protection from violence require an extended or open-ended exploration of the political consciousness and emotion.

Lastly, in turning attention to the ontology of critical realism, in particular Roy Bhaskar’s critical realism, Ben Luongo addresses a larger ontological problem in critical IR: the limitations of both positivist and post-positivist approaches. Here, Luongo explores the problem(s) of causality in neorealism, which has long advocated for a more complex and multivariate understanding of causal relations in IR, as well

as Alexander Wendt's distinction between constitutive and causal analysis. In reducing the ontology of international politics to the cultures of anarchy, Wendt's social theory of international politics fails to articulate a mind-independent reality that can avoid the trap of Bhaskar's epistemic fallacy. Through this critical lens, then, Luongo discusses how critical realism diagnoses the limitations of the empiricist tenets that underpin both the positivist and post-positivist approaches to social science. Asserting that all knowledge derives from sense-experience, he concludes that empiricism advocates for a science predicated on methods of observation. However, in reducing the ontology of international politics to discourse and ideas, it fails to articulate a mind-independent reality and, as such commits the epistemic fallacy.

## PART II: CONCEPTS AND CONFIGURATION

In critical IR there is perhaps no more important concept than dialectics. The term has become more, not less, important in terms of conveying the building tensions and mounting pressures in global politics (Brincat, 2014; Brincat et al., 2012; Roach, 2010, 2007; Heine and Teschke, 1996). In Chapter 7, Shannon Brincat and Susan de Groot Heupner focus on the various ways of opening up dialectics. In doing so, they contend that in dialectical thinking there is developing shared interest to broaden the epistemological basis of the discipline by including far older, non-Western forms of dialectical thought (e.g., "worlded"). This suggests that developing derivative discourses from non-Western approaches, which merely reflect the concepts and assumptions of Western IR theory, requires new grounds or forms of thinking into our world. Their analysis thus builds on the overlooked vitality of dialectics in IR, including the analytical value of Axel Honneth's and Hegel's recognition theory or identity logic to configure current conflicts and movements.

Hegel's identity logic in this sense holds important implications for rethinking recognition in international politics. Kate Schick takes up this issue in Chapter 8, which offers an agonistic reading of recognition in IR. At the heart of recognition theory, Schick explains, is an emphasis on relationality, that is, on human beings not as atomized individuals but as socially situated beings. Recognition theory's relational ontology provides an important counterpoint to mainstream narratives of global politics. At present, however, the transformative potential of recognition theory in IR has failed to be fully realized. This is largely due to the dominance of overly teleological and insufficient political conceptions of recognition. In order to get beyond these limitations, Schick argues, IR scholars need to recover an agonistic conception of recognition if its critical potential is to be realized more fully.

In the following chapter, Alexander Barder examines the concept of "empire" through the historical and contemporary effects that imperial practices have had upon domestic space. Because IR theory largely reifies the distinction between the domestic and international, many scholars have missed the wide-ranging historical and contemporary connections that have accrued between colonial domains and metropolitan institutions. Barder takes up two examples: barbed wire and its pro-

liferation as a technology of enclosure, and contemporary instances of surveillance technologies being marketed to US police departments. He argues that barbed wire has been little understood as a symbol of imperial overreach. Yet, in this way, it also underscores the need to conceptualize a set of material transformations that can link core and periphery, and that takes into account the surplus of such (neo)colonial technologies and their effects.

The oppressive forces of empire return us to the troubling effects of instrumental reason or how reason can be used in multiple ways to justify oppression in the name of moral or civilizing progress. In Chapter 10, Matthew Fluck provides such a re-presentation by confronting some of the gaps in IR's engagement with instrumental reason. Fluck's detailed yet sympathetic account of the Frankfurt School's critique starts by reconstructing the idea of instrumental reason from within the writings of Marx, Weber, Nietzsche, and Lukács. Fluck argues that instrumental reason can be best understood not as the concern with technical thinking or means–ends rationality (although it certainly encompasses these) but as a way of thinking and acting which have been considered to be hostile to nature, the corporeal, the concrete, and the particular. In this way, he defends the critique of instrumental reason by pointing to its application in global politics, that is, its role of substantive reasoning in the areas of global governance, which may help to shed light on the tensions of promoting responsibility and obligation.

### PART III: POLITICAL ECONOMY AND DOMINATION

The critical research on the global political economy focuses on the tensions and contradictions of the world capitalist system. Critical political economy scholars use a variety of concepts, such as Gramsci's counter-hegemonic bloc, to analyze these contradictions of neoliberalism (i.e., the unequal distribution of resources). By critiquing the neoliberal policies of the privatization of the social sector and regressive tax rates, for instance, they have managed to shed considerable theoretical and empirical light on the modes of resistance to such policies. And yet, what many failed to foresee was the mounting appeal of nationalist populists in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis and the increased flow of refugees due to the effects of war. Right-wing populists, in fact, have managed to appeal directly to mass discontent with these policies (e.g., stagnant wages, economic and social inequality, and the laws accommodating migrant labor rights) and to gain political power in many liberal democratic countries. This, in turn, has led to wide-scale attacks on the rule of law that have destabilized many key institutions. The result has been arguably the greatest crisis facing the liberal international order since the end of the Second World War.

In Chapter 11, Stephen Gill sizes up this new reactionary political trend by examining the intensification and spread of the power of capital and market civilization and how this gives rise to a condition of organic crisis for the people and the planet. Such a crisis constitutes a central *problématique* for the critical study of IR for the foreseeable future, that is, an intensified struggle for justice concerning the future of

society, ecology, and world order. Gill distinguishes between the crisis of the global financial order (i.e., that of the world economy after the Wall Street meltdown of 2008) and organic crisis. The latter, as he points out, represents not simply an episodic crisis but a far deeper, multifaceted process. Gill claims that an organic crisis amounts to a threat to the very survival of our planetary ecology and the biosphere. Given the growing political stakes, it presupposes what he calls the “comprehensive *problématique* of our times.”

João Nunes, in his chapter, turns our attention to another challenge of the global political economy: namely, the connection between “security as emancipation” (SAE) and political economy and class. His chapter deals with a specific approach drawn from the Marxist and Frankfurt School traditions to advance a critique of security with explicit emancipatory intentions. Here he develops the idea of SAE and conceives insecurity as the symptomatic constraints placed on human life and freedom, using this idea to unpack one of the SAE assumptions regarding the materiality of security: namely, making the case for what he states is a shift towards the everyday political economy of security. As Nunes suggests, insecurity is built into the neoliberal structures of governance. In recent years, this has been manifested in an equally unsettling development of governance: the emergence of authoritarianism and neoliberalism.

In Chapter 12, Roberto Roccu examines this development through the case of Egypt, where he critically examines the Egyptian uprisings and the extent to which the neoliberal accumulation regime in Egypt emerged, starting in the late 1980s along gradualist and moderate “third wave” lines. Roccu argues that the main donors and transnational corporations (TNCs) that enabled Egyptian elites to implement neoliberal reforms not only transformed the Egyptian economy through integration in global markets, but also created the conditions for *neoliberal authoritarianism*. Such authoritarianism reflects the greater reliance on coercion, which helps in part to explain the prospects of democratic transformation of an authoritarian regime. Roccu also analyzes the asymmetric, economic, and political regimes (of authoritarianism and democracy) in a global context. The idea here is to bring together two separate bodies of research on international regimes and domestic regimes respectively. As he suggests, emancipation in today’s rapidly growing free market global economy not only involves growing counter-resistance to right-wing pluralist pressures, but also the heated political effects of neoliberalism.

Such pressures may be accumulating in a way that so speeds up the economy that it overheats it politically, as Shomik Chakrabarti shows in Chapter 14. In exploring the various counter-political protests inside the United States, Chakrabarti examines these topics under a theoretical lens that observes neoliberal consensus as having “overheated” due to the gradual (over)flow of slow, attritional violence. His approach to these factors demonstrates how labor relations have led to a more precarious, volatile society in which renewed interest in right-wing populist appeals has created a politicized response to the effects of financial boom-and-bust cycles; hence, a disaffected working class and migrant/refugee flows. He concludes that

these factors have in the end challenged the linear progression of modernity and, by extension, the assumptions of neoliberalism.

## PART IV: GLOBAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND CHALLENGES

IR scholars confront a world in deep crisis. The project of critical IR is to creatively and holistically engage the exclusionary tendencies and effects that fuel such crisis. At the very least, it involves more self-reflection to inform praxis or practical action. Critical IR must, as I and several of the other contributors have maintained, continue to open itself to the world through different forms of self-conscious thought that enable us to work beyond its own limitations and constraints of human agency and modernity or rationality.

In Chapter 15, Steven C. Tauber addresses one of these limitations. Here, he introduces the reader to the implications of integrating critical international theory with the rights and needs of nonhuman animals. For Tauber, the conscious extension of right seeks to overcome what Adorno and Horkheimer theorized in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as human domination or control of nature. Here, Tauber argues that this oversight represents an important gap in critical IR, that is, between human and nonhuman freedom. As he shows, the emerging field of critical animal studies (CAS) can fill this gap by demonstrating the (dead) ends of rationality or how human progress requires humans to brutally oppress animals to serve their own material interests. CAS thus extends the animal studies discipline by employing a critical perspective on the exploitation of nonhuman animals and adopting a multidisciplinary approach to expose the social effects of the mistreatment of animals. CAS, Tauber concludes, can help to expose many of critical theory's anthropocentric assumptions, (e.g., "posthuman" approaches and "green theory"). In this way, critical international theory must better confront the problems of its anthropocentrism by clarifying how CAS connects to critical theory through a focus on emotions of nonhuman animals. This of course means that more creative research needs to be undertaken into the role played by emotion in human affairs and the emancipation from violence.

Like Koschut, Mathias Delori sees emotions as an undertheorized political concept in critical IR. For Delori, there are two central questions that need to be asked, one that pertains to how social actors manipulate the emotions of others in war, the other to how scholars seek to treat emotions not as "objects" but rather as "subjects" of war practices. Much of his focus is trained on how "negative" emotions, such as hatred, anger, or resentment, fostered on all sides the "culture of violence." And yet, as Delori argues in Chapter 16, any consent to violence not only stems from "negative" emotions but also takes root in the neutralization of "positive" ones, particularly compassion. It is this second question that is typically undertheorized. In this way, he analyzes how the role of emotions can become naturalized and/or regulated in ways that allow war and violence to assume a necessary and normalized role in the human

consciousness. This reveals both the limits and the moral possibilities of reducing violence to negative emotions.

Still, in IR there is a reliance on the neutrality of norms or the application of law to realize these possibilities. The trend towards greater moral accountability is one that pits the neutrality of legal norms against the politics that shaped the application of these norms. Gauging this dynamic process requires the critical interventions of international legal norms to various institutions including the International Criminal Court and the United Nations.

In Chapter 18, Philip Cunliffe discusses the problematic notion of obligation under R2P (the responsibility to protect). He argues that, in order to read and interpret the concept of R2P critically, it is necessary to realize that assisting others can reinforce R2P's statist logic. Only in certain extreme circumstances of terrible crimes and human suffering can state authority be legally and legitimately limited by outside powers. If this is true, then we still need to confront the regressive logic of R2P, or how R2P represents a paternalistic model of state power and political authority in which political representation is substituted by security or conservative understanding of political responsibility. In this sense, R2P exceeds even the most authoritarian justifications for Leviathan, dissolving the dialectic of reciprocity and representation embedded in contractarian thinking. This, in turn, gives way to a circular theory of state power that can only be justified by reference to itself. In other words, collective transformation tends to lead to protection from the most extreme violence, which, as Cunliffe suggests, is a resolutely exceptionalist justification of political power, one in which power must target the subjects of politically conscious capacity building and inequality.

Raheleh Dayerizadeh examines the transnational challenge of gender inequality in Chapter 17. Dayerizadeh applies these insights to the case of the Iranian Shia women living inside the United States. Here, she discusses the key features of a post-colonial feminist perspective, showing how its critique of liberal non-Western feminism unmasks the effects of the marginalization of non-Western women's movements. In capturing the tension between religion and politics, Dayerizadeh critically examines the experiences of Muslim America, that is, the Shia women who are actively negotiating between Islamic gender complementarity (balance between the genders) and liberal gender norms. She thus argues that, in living in the West, these women are exposed to a variety of gender norms, and that they are consciously choosing from a "basket" of different and sometimes conflicting norms and relating them to their particular social environment and condition.

In sum, critical international theory will continue to face new challenges. Many will require further analysis of the biases (sexual, gender, racial, and anthropocentric) against equality and the related obstacles to realizing justice in world politics. The chapters in this volume offer detailed examinations of how critical IR theory has and will continue to deal with the changing conditions of oppression and to shed theoretical light on the social and political genesis of such biases.

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# PART I

## APPROACHES AND EMANCIPATION



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## 2. Opening up international relations, or: how I learned to stop worrying and love 'non-Western IR'

*Pinar Bilgin*

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The sub-title of this chapter is borrowed from the tag-line of Stanley Kubrick's 1964 movie, *Dr. Strangelove, or: How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*.<sup>1</sup> Kubrick's movie was loosely based on the novel *Red Alert*, highlighting the dangers of the Cold War arms race and the strategy of mutual assured destruction (MAD). While the movie's original plan was to focus on the potential of a nuclear exchange, in the course of adapting the book Kubrick found that many lines in the screenplay were quite funny,<sup>2</sup> and opted for a satirical take on the stratagem of threatening total annihilation to deter unilateral annihilation.<sup>3</sup>

Not unlike Dr. Strangelove's relationship to MAD, this chapter's relationship to 'non-Western IR' is full of dread insofar as the latter is a project of knowledge production that occludes the very avenues it is supposed to open.<sup>4</sup> In what follows, I highlight the limitations built into the 'non-Western IR' project by contrasting it with the study of 'constitutive outside' in postcolonial studies, which has affinities with critical international relations (IR).<sup>5</sup> The chapter begins by looking at the discussions on opening up IR. The following section identifies Eurocentrism as the challenge, distinguishing between three dimensions. The final section identifies two responses to this challenge: the project of 'non-Western IR' and the study of 'constitutive outside', and elaborates on the latter as a method of inquiry into the international that is sensitive to the 'geopolitics of knowledge'.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057012/> (accessed 19 December 2018).

<sup>2</sup> This is not, in any way, to make light of the horrors and the long-lasting destruction of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the Second World War, the environmental and human consequences of Cold War nuclear tests and radiation experiments.

<sup>3</sup> 'Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Dr-Strangelove-or-How-I-Learned-to-Stop-Worrying-and-Love-the-Bomb> (accessed 19 December 2018).

<sup>4</sup> I regard 'non-Western IR' as a 'project' insofar as scholars who identify with this effort have decisively set out to build a 'school' of their own. See the section 'How to open up IR: "non-Western IR" or "constitutive outside"?' below.

<sup>5</sup> On the affinities between critical theories and postcolonial studies, see Ingram (2018); Kerner (2018b).

## WHY OPEN UP IR?

Since the mid-1990s, critical IR scholars have increasingly drawn on postcolonial studies to call for opening up IR (Chan et al. 2001; Chan 1993a, 1996; Jones 2006; Bleiker 1997; Jones 2002). I begin with an overview of the arguments offered by those who, customarily, see no such need, which I then use as foil for discussing the points advanced by critical IR scholars.

Why open up IR? Those who ask this question follow it up with a second one: The academic discipline may have originated and flourished in Western Europe and North America, but how is this not merely an accident of history and therefore inconsequential for our knowledge about world politics? The questioner's anticipation is that 'properly trained' scholars from outside North America and Western Europe will 'become leading theorists at some future point' by

[standing] on the shoulders of American academics, much the way America's leading lights have stood on the shoulders of their European predecessors. This is the way scholarship advances. (Mearsheimer 2016: 149)

There is no need to open up IR according to the questioners, because the production of knowledge is not about geographical location but 'proper training'. To begin with, scholars from outside North America and Western Europe already are 'leading theorists' (even when defined narrowly in terms of 'proper training').<sup>6</sup> Yet, this does not, in any way, affirm above-mentioned claims which rest on dated understandings of knowledge production. For knowledge is not independent of, but conditioned by the context it responds to. There is no knowledge that is untouched by interests, as Robert Cox (1981) underscored when he wrote that theory is 'always for someone and for some purpose'. In the twentieth century, IR was shaped around concerns of securing the global reach of rising (as the US in the aftermath of the Second World War) or declining great powers (Great Britain after the Second World War). The same conditions did not only shape but also limited what we know about world politics. When Stanley Hoffmann (1977) declared IR to be an 'American Social Science', he not only underscored how US context and interests shaped the academic discipline, but also pointed to its limitations (cf. Agnew 2007).

Consider, for example, Ido Oren's (2014) study on democratic peace research. Oren's reflexive analysis of early generation political scientists' texts revealed that their definitions of democracy were very different from that employed by contemporary democratic peace researchers.

In the democratic peace literature, democracy is typically defined in terms of electoral process ... This definition is consistent with, and builds upon, the analytic categories and

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<sup>6</sup> The question of what/who counts as 'theory'/'theorist' (or 'proper training' for that purpose) is far from being settled. See the section 'Eurocentrism is the challenge' below for further discussion.

coding rules employed by data-gathering projects such as Polity. In the Polity data set, polities are coded on a scale that takes competitiveness and fairness of electoral processes, as well as constraints on the freedom of executive action, as the defining empirical features of democracy. (Oren 2014: 316)

Oren found striking the contrast between the categorizations contemporary democratic peace researchers made using these definitions, and those made by early generation political scientists. He wrote:

Whereas in the Polity dataset Imperial Germany is ranked significantly behind the United States, Britain, and France on the democracy scale, in the 1890s Wilson clearly regarded the German political system as superior to France's immature democracy, while for Burgess, 'there [was] no state, large or small, in which the plane of civilization [was] so high' as in 'the United States of Germany' (1915, 94). (Oren 2014: 319)

The point is that the definitions employed by contemporary democratic peace researchers are 'the product of the very same history of international conflict that serves as the testing ground of the proposition' (Oren 2014: 318). Remembering that the democratic peace theory comes closest to a law-like generality that IR's 'properly trained' scholars have generated, such findings throw a shade on their self-image as detached scientists, and their understanding of the relationship between theory, theorist and context.

Needless to say, this is not a point against social scientific endeavor, but about the need to 'remain attentive to that which gets overlooked, lost or mistranslated' in knowledge production (Seth 2014: 317). That IR has originated and flourished in Western Europe and North America is not inconsequential for our knowledge about, say, postcolonial statehood or gendered insecurities. As Ken Booth noted, we do not know how IR would look like today

if, instead of being founded by a wealthy Liberal MP in Wales (and those like him elsewhere in the Anglo-American world) what if the subject's origins had derived from the life and work of the admirable black, feminist, medic, she-chief of the Zulus, Dr. Zungu? (Booth 1996: 300)

Space does not allow for a discussion on the foundational myths of IR (see, e.g., De Carvalho et al. 2011). Suffice it to say here that postcolonial studies research on the 'constitutive outside' is not about producing a 'counter-factual history of profession' (Booth 1996), but about inquiring into 'connected histories' of world politics, with an eye on the 'overlooked, lost or mistranslated' role the Zulus (among others) have played in constituting the international (see below for further discussion).<sup>7</sup>

It is important to note here that oftentimes scholars who do not otherwise subscribe to dated understandings of knowledge production nevertheless see little need to open

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<sup>7</sup> While the former asks: 'what if ... happened?' The latter asks a 'what happened between ... and ...?'

up IR, arguing that although it is an ‘American Social Science’, IR has already gone global. It is indeed true that IR teaching and research spans the globe, organized under Political Science or in separate IR departments (Tickner and Waever 2009; cf. Chan 1994). Students of IR around the world are trained often by the same English-language textbooks (or their translated versions). Annual meetings of the International Studies Association consistently attract 5000+ researchers from around the globe. Regional IR conferences convene regularly in myriad locales beyond North America and Western Europe. Evidently IR is already open—the evidence being its embrace by students and scholars around the globe.

However, the fact that IR has gone global in terms of its reach may not be enough to remedy the constitutive effects of its origins in North America and Western Europe. This is an issue raised initially by E. H. Carr, who noted that the study of world politics had, for long, reflected the perspectives and concerns of the ‘mighty’. Carr cautioned that this state of affairs was not sustainable in the long run, and that, in the future, the less powerful should be expected to begin to make their voices heard in world politics as well as in its scholarly study (Carr cited in Barkawi and Laffey 2006). In the early 1980s, K. J. Holsti echoed Carr when he invited students of IR to take stock of the field and see ‘*who* does the theorising?’ ‘The problem of what *kind* of theories we use to understand and explain the world of international politics is not divorced from *who* does the theorizing’, Holsti (1985: 118) argued (original emphasis). Since IR ‘reflected the historical experience of the European state system in the past, and the Cold War more recently’, concluded Holsti, one should expect ‘serious challenges’ to come from those who did not share these experiences or experienced them differently.

More recent studies taking stock of IR teaching and research around the world have found that the answer to the question ‘*who* does the theorizing?’ points to a slant toward certain institutions in North America and Western Europe (Kristensen 2015b). Course syllabi in North America and Western Europe seldom include scholarship produced in other parts of the world (Hagmann and Biersteker 2014). While the global South seems to pay heed to IR as studied in the US and Western Europe in terms of teaching, scholarly output by the latter offers a more complex picture (Tickner and Waever 2009). While scholarly publications bear surface resemblance to IR scholarship in the US and Western Europe, their substance often takes forms that are not entirely familiar to those students schooled in the former (Bilgin 2012),<sup>8</sup> the point being that the international is approached differently by scholars in different

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<sup>8</sup> Until rather recently, there was relatively little information available about the details or dynamics of differences (but see Dyer and Mangasarian 1989; Groom and Light 1994). Ole Waever’s (1998) article entitled ‘The sociology of a not so international discipline’ pioneered sociology of science inquiry into the production of knowledge about world politics, highlighting differences between the study of IR in the US and Western Europe. The US-based TRIP (Teaching, Research & International Policy) survey that collects and analyses data on IR teaching and research has become more global since its launch in 2004 (Wemheuer-Vogelaar et al. 2016).

parts of the world even as their IR looks ‘almost the same but not quite’ to adopt Homi K. Bhabha’s phrase (Bilgin 2008).

To recapitulate, two related findings are offered by critical IR scholars who highlight the need to open up IR. First, sociological analyses of the field revealed it to be ‘not so international’ (Waever 1998). That is to say, scholars from outside North America and Western Europe are not always well represented in scholarly publications and course syllabi. Second, IR’s understanding of the international is less-than-sociological (Chan 1993a; Rosenberg 2006). Our existing body of scholarship does not sufficiently reflect the ‘connected histories’ of various actors who also constitute the international. The point of opening up IR, then, is also about acquiring insight into the reasons behind the differences between what each of us does in the name of IR and the implications of such variegation for our understanding of the international. Such differences cannot be explained away in terms of access or not to ‘proper training’ or wished away by pointing to how IR has become more global over the years. Such differences need inquiring into by treating scholars from outside North America and Western Europe as thinking actors (Bilgin 2016c). I will take up this point again in the section ‘How to open up IR: ‘non-Western IR’ or ‘constitutive outside?’’ below.

Opening up IR has turned out to be a more challenging task than initially imagined. Both Carr and Holsti had anticipated the field opening up to contributions from outside the US and Western Europe sometime in the future. However, come the 2000s, students of IR increasingly realized that the issue is not only about ‘who does the theorizing?’ but also what they say. And, what they say (be they from inside or outside North American and Western Europe, the mainstream or the critical fringes of IR) may be characterized by Eurocentric takes on the international.<sup>9</sup> The point is, notwithstanding significant achievements of critical IR during the 1980s and 1990s in terms of opening up IR to contributions by those hitherto underrepresented in scholarly publications, our knowledge about world politics has yet to address IR’s Eurocentric limitations (Bilgin 2016c). The following section looks at multiple dimensions of the challenge of Eurocentrism.

## EUROCENTRISM IS THE CHALLENGE

Eurocentrism of IR is often reduced to geography alone. The fact that the founders of IR were located in institutions in Western Europe and North America has not been inconsequential for our understanding of world politics (see above). Yet, reducing Eurocentrism to the centrality of the roles played by individuals and institutions in Western Europe and North America has impoverished our understanding of the persistence of Eurocentrism and limited our horizons in addressing its implications

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<sup>9</sup> For a discussion, see Çapan (2016).

(Bilgin 2010). In what follows, I will identify three dimensions of Eurocentrism in the study of world politics: normative, methodological, and epistemological.

Normative Eurocentrism is observed when scholars put Europe and its interests on top of their research agenda. For example, what allowed a historian of the twentieth century to remark that at the eve of the Second World War the ‘Middle East was secure’ (Ovendale 1998) is normative Eurocentrism. What is Eurocentric about this remark is that British and US insecurities are placed at the front and center of the author’s analysis with little or no consideration for local actors’ concerns who, at the time, were suffering under mandate regimes and/or unfair oil concessions. Most (but not all) of Orientalist literature is Eurocentric in this normative sense (Said 1978; cf. Dabashi 2017). They were produced not only in Europe but also for Europe, often without reflecting on their implications on the Middle East (Bilgin 2019).

Second, methodological Eurocentrism occurs when research is designed in a way that ‘occludes the global’ (Go 2014) by drawing a direct line from ancient Greece to Renaissance Europe to modern day West with next-to-no sociological insight into ‘connected histories’ of societies (Rosenberg 2016; Mignolo 2018).<sup>10</sup> Over the years, methodological Eurocentrism has produced a particular narrative about Europe’s place in world history. That particular narrative is considered as erroneous by many, and ‘connected histories’ are available.<sup>11</sup> Yet Eurocentric narratives have nevertheless been allowed to design research by virtue of the persistence of concepts that have been informed by the same narratives. Put differently, the very concepts through which we study world politics (such as state, development, sovereignty and security) have their limitations not only when transplanted to other parts of the world but also when studying ‘Europe’ (see, esp., Halperin 1997, 2006).

Following Julian Go, I understand ‘occluding the global’ as a consequence of methodological choices made by scholars insofar as they conduct research by ‘conceptually [slicing] or [dividing] relations into categorical essences that are not in fact essences’ (Go 2014: 125). Such ‘categorical essences that are not in fact essences’ include ‘national state’<sup>12</sup> and ‘Europe’, notes Go. For example, what renders Westphalia a myth is not only that sovereignty was exercised in only one part of the globe (and was/not allowed in other places through colonial expansion and later decolonization) but also that ideas about sovereignty were developed through connections between various parts of the globe (Grovgoui 2006). To quote Go (2014: 126–127):

National states did not develop their ideas and practices about sovereignty first *in Europe* and then transpose them outward; they developed first amidst sixteenth century colonial

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<sup>10</sup> The term ‘connected histories’ is borrowed from Subrahmanyam (1997). Edward Said also insisted on studying connectedness of things through ‘contrapuntal reading’. See Said (1993). For a discussion on its implications for IR, see Bilgin (2016b).

<sup>11</sup> For a succinct overview, see Seth (2014).

<sup>12</sup> On state-centric narratives as a ‘territorial trap’, see Agnew (1994).

claims and disputes between empires about overseas territory. And the so-called ‘external’ colonies of Britain were not ‘outside’ Britain: they *were* British. (original emphasis)

As such, addressing Eurocentrism in IR is not (only) about studying other parts of the world. Methodological Eurocentrism has implications for understanding Europe as well as the rest of the world insofar as it ‘severs societies from their constitutive connectedness’ (Barkawi 2016: 200).

Third, what emboldens some scholars to offer their definition of ‘proper training’ as a yardstick, presuming that ‘knowledge-making has no geo-political location and that its location is in an ethereal place’ (Mignolo 2009: 8) is epistemological Eurocentrism. It is also what allows some to rebuff the calls for opening up IR, by insisting that ‘proper training’ is the key (see ‘Why open up IR?’ above). Walter Mignolo (2009: 8) has followed Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gómez in characterizing epistemological Eurocentrism as ‘the hubris of the zero point’. Such ‘hierarchical patterns of epistemic judgement’ are at work in the production of knowledge regardless of one’s epistemological position (empiricism or interpretivism), Mignolo has argued. While Mignolo acknowledges that ‘reflexivity of hermeneutics might allow one to represent “both sides” (that is, colonizer and colonized) by bringing in the spatial’, he has maintained that ‘this is not a sufficient corrective, or even the best way because it leaves unanalyzed the formation of the representational itself’ (Alcoff 2007: 90). For ‘the question of what is meaningful or intelligible ... is no less subject to colonial representations than the question of what is true. Both are judged within a European frame of reference’ (Alcoff 2007: 89). Hence Mignolo’s insistence on the ‘need to take a further step back to reach the level of exteriority where representations are made possible in the first place’ (Alcoff 2007: 90).

Mignolo uses the three-worlds classification to illustrate his point. Classifying the world into First (‘free’), Second (‘socialist’) and Third (‘developing’) originated during the Cold War. After the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, constitutive effects of the three-worlds classification have remained (Bilgin and Morton 2002). One reason behind the persistence of this classification is its constitutive effects on knowledge production, as discussed by Carl Pletsch (1981) who noted that the three worlds are studied differently by different social disciplines that focus on science, ideology and culture, respectively. Pletsch elaborated in the following manner:

Western social scientists have reserved the concept culture for the mentalities of traditional societies in their pristine states. They have designated the socialist societies of the second world the province of ideology. And they have long assumed—not unanimously, to be sure—that the modern West is the natural haven of science and utilitarian thinking. (Pletsch 1981: 579)

Pletsch also highlighted the exceptions to these generalizations, including ‘subclans of each of these sciences of modern world’ who ‘make forays into the ideological regions of the second world, and area studies experts who study the process of modernization in the third world’ (Pletsch 1981: 579).

Following Mignolo, Pletsch's otherwise critical analysis was Eurocentric in the epistemological sense insofar as

it mapped what First World scholars thought of the new world order. First World scholars have the privilege of being both in the enunciated (one of the three worlds) and the enunciator (the First World). As a consequence, what scholars in the Second and Third World thought of themselves and how they were responding was not taken into account. They were classified but had no say in the classification other than to react or respond. (Mignolo 2009: 8)

The persistence of epistemological Eurocentrism has recently inspired Hamid Dabashi to ask 'Can non-Europeans think?' The occasion for Dabashi's rhetorical question was the publication of an essay on philosophy on the *Al Jazeera* website, whose author identified what he considered to be key contemporary thinkers in the world. Western European and North American thinkers were identified by name while others were acknowledged as a geographical cluster, without naming names or betraying any awareness of their contributions. Dabashi (2015)<sup>13</sup> wrote a short piece in response, questioning such oversight of thinkers from outside Western Europe and North America, asking a very basic question: 'who gets to be recognized as thinking actors?' Later, Dabashi contributed a second piece, this time asking 'Can Europeans read?', thereby admonishing fellow scholars for not engaging with works produced by scholars from outside Western Europe and North America. This is an issue previously highlighted by Robbie Shilliam in the IR context when he asked:

Why is it that the non-Western world has been a defining presence for IR scholarship and yet said scholarship has consistently balked at placing non-Western thought at the heart of its debates? (Shilliam 2011: 1)

Remembering Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan's (2007) question 'Why is there no non-Western IR theory?' as well as Arlene Tickner's (2008) observation regarding the 'invisibility' of 'third world scholarship', the question is less about an 'absence' or 'invisibility' and more about IR's obliviousness to scholars from outside Western Europe and North America, argued Shilliam. Such obliviousness is rooted in assumptions that IR shares with other social sciences as to what/who is defined as 'theorist' and 'theory' (or 'proper training'). This is also what Arif Dirlik (2011) pointed to when he questioned the definition of theory that informs IR debates. He asked:

is it possible to reverse the question, and ask not why Chinese do not have theory, or do not seem to be willing to do theory like 'we' do, as if that were a failure, and ask instead why 'we' have theory and do theory the way 'we' do? Instead of subjecting Chinese ways of doing things to the scrutiny of 'our' ways, and judging them by the standards of 'our' practices, is it possible to inquire if the way they do things may have something to tell us about the nature and shortcomings of the ways 'we' do things. (Dirlik 2011: 150–151)

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<sup>13</sup> Dabashi and Mignolo's contributions to the debate on the *Al Jazeera* website were later included in Dabashi's collection of essays entitled *Can non-Europeans Think?* (2015).



To re-cap, Eurocentrism in IR is multi-faceted and cannot be reduced to geography alone. This is not to overlook the significance of what John Agnew (2007) referred to as ‘know-where’ but to explore its implications in full. What is at stake in debates on ‘who does the theorizing?’ is not merely opening up IR to scholars originating from/located outside North America and Western Europe, but opening up to those perspectives that may question IR’s self-understandings regarding the constitution of the international and what/who counts as theory and theorist.

## HOW TO OPEN UP IR: ‘NON-WESTERN IR’ OR ‘CONSTITUTIVE OUTSIDE’?

This section distinguishes between two ways of responding to the challenge of Eurocentrism in IR: one that has affinities with critical theory and one that does not. I will begin with ‘non-Western IR’, suggesting that the project occludes the very avenues it is supposed to open. I then highlight how the study of ‘constitutive outside’ offers a method of inquiry into the international that is sensitive to the ‘geopolitics of knowledge’.

To begin with, I refer to ‘non-Western IR’ as a project insofar as many scholars who identify with it have decisively set out to build a school of their own. Acharya and Buzan’s rhetorical question (‘Why is there no non-Western IR Theory?’) did not give rise to such efforts but helped fuel them. Consider the Chinese experience. The first step in building a ‘Chinese school’ was taken in 1987 when the idea of developing an ‘IR with Chinese characteristics’ was raised (Ren 2008: 293). Initial response by local scholars took three forms, according to Ren:

For some of the skeptics, an ‘IR with Chinese characteristics’ was more or less a transplant from the well-known political slogan, ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics.’ For others, Chinese studies of International Relations, theory or not, are necessarily conducted in the Chinese way and therefore it is unnecessary to make the call ... Another basis for skepticism was the concern that Chinese IR needs to distinguish ideological pursuit from the search for national interests, and policy analysis from academic research. (Ren 2008: 294)

Not much progress was made until the 2000s when interest in a Chinese school was renewed in a context shaped by critical IR scholars’ calls for opening up IR, and global interest in China as a rising power (Kristensen and Nielsen 2013). A debate that was conducted in Chinese during the early years turned international in the 2000s as Chinese scholars found themselves a part of the discussions on ‘non-Western IR’ (Shoude 1997; Song 2001; Qin 2011, 2013; Wang 2013).

On the one hand, there is little evidence that contributing to ‘non-Western IR’ is what China’s scholars have had in mind. Close observers of IR in China have noted that efforts to develop a Chinese school were mostly modeled after the English school in terms of style and substance (Kristensen and Nielsen 2013). What is on offer is described by an outside observer as ‘Realism with Chinese characteristics’ (William Callahan cited in Dirlik 2011: 149). Consequently, the Chinese school has not offered

much in the way of a discussion on the alternatives in the way Stephan Chan (1993a, 1993b, 1996, 1997) and L. H. M. Ling (2002a, 2002b, 2013) have done: tapping into the same body of cultural resources but offering thoroughgoing criticism and openings. Indeed, Arif Dirlik (2011) cautioned that the debates on a Chinese school are better understood as an attempt on the part of China's scholars to find their own voice in the world, and not as a challenge to IR theorizing. On the other hand, there is no denying that the debates on a Chinese school have crystallized 'non-Western IR' for outside observers. This is because theirs is the most concerted effort to build a national school of IR—save for individual efforts in some local settings (Kristensen 2015a). As such, notwithstanding the aims of the thinkers behind the Chinese school, they are viewed as promising to address IR's limitations.

The project of 'non-Western IR' occludes the very avenues it is supposed to open by virtue of reducing Eurocentrism to geographical location, thereby underestimating persistent limitations of IR. For example, 'non-Western IR' does not challenge narratives on 'autonomous development' of Europe and the concepts and theories warranted by this narrative. What it offers is fresh narratives that say one of two things: if you developed X, we developed Y, or we developed X before you did. That said, neither of these fresh narratives questions assumptions regarding centrality of X for development in Europe. Nor do they offer methods that would allow studying X without severing it from its constitutive connectedness.

It is in this sense that Immanuel Wallerstein (1997) cautioned against 'anti-Eurocentric Eurocentrism'. He was referring to the efforts of those who seek to identify traces of progress and modernization outside Europe while failing to recognize how the very notions of progress and modernity are shaped by a particular understanding of world history that fails to recognize the contributions and contestations of others who were also present in their production. As such, the very design of 'non-Western IR' does not allow for much more other than (what Ina Kerner referred to as) 'decentering by addition' (Kerner 2018b: 616). This is because 'non-Western IR' "underestimates the tension between the generalizing and restricting elements" of Eurocentrism. While the products of 'non-Western IR' such as the Chinese school may 'successfully counter aspirations to generalize a particular ... it cannot at the same time shed light on the restriction of a universal' (Kerner 2018a: 554). Put differently, 'non-Western IR' leaves standing the Eurocentric edifice of IR—save for its claim to relevance across space.

Following David Blaney and Naeem Inayatullah (2008), I adopt a strategy of 'excavation' opening up IR, and not adding another body of thinking that leaves (almost) untouched the limitations of IR. 'Constitutive outside' refers to the ideas and experiences of those people and states who also constitute the international. They are constitutive in the sense that their ideas and experiences have shaped X (be it sovereignty, modernity, democracy, secularism or war). Yet, they are outside because such constitutive connectedness is not a part of prevalent narratives on X. Accordingly, the notion of 'constitutive outside' highlights a contradiction that is central to our efforts to open up IR. This is not a contradiction to be resolved, but only acknowledged and thought through.

Walter Mignolo too has elaborated on the evolution of ‘constitutive outside’, which he terms ‘exteriority’. According to Mignolo, ‘exteriority’ is not (only) a matter of geography, but epistemology.

Exteriority is not the ontic outside of Europe but the outside built into the process of building European ‘interiority’. That is, ‘exteriority’ is the epistemic invention of an ontological outside ... It is not a question of geography but of epistemological construction of colonial ontologies. (Mignolo 2018: 380)

Those who are ‘outside’ are not (only) physically outside North America and Western Europe, but because they have been left outside of Eurocentric narratives on world history (Bilgin 2016a).

Recent scholarship in history has been increasingly attentive to our ideational and material constitutive connectedness. These studies build upon but also go beyond previous studies on histories of give and take between the East and the West. In earlier accounts, material contributions of the Chinese, the Indians and Arabs (among others) were acknowledged (Hobson 2004) and self/other dynamics were noted (Neumann and Welsh 1991), but little mention was made of the ideational and institutional connections between Europe and other parts of the world (Wolf 1982). Indeed, when Franz Fanon (Fanon 1963: 102) is quoted as having argued that ‘Europe literally is the creation of the Third World’, emphasis is put on the usurpation of material resources, including labor, but not ideas or institutions. More recently, studies on the ‘constitutive outside’ have ‘excavated’ already existing connections including but also going beyond material resources (Blaney and Inayatullah 2008).

I will explore three instances of ‘excavation’ as such. First there is the recognition that ‘the content of the modern social sciences and humanities was at least in part cultivated by reference to non-European bodies of knowledge and culture’ (Shilliam 2011: 2). Consider the connections between Native Americans and American revolutionaries in the making of the idea and institutions of democracy in North America. Iris Marion Young has argued that American revolutionaries’ ideas about freedom and self-government were influenced by the ideas and practices of Native Americans. In contrast to ‘the modern Western discourse which positions in the Native Americans as the excluded Other in comparison with which the Europeans confirmed their cultural superiority’, are ‘hybrid interpretations’ of history that ‘excavate’ the relations between ‘Indians’ and ‘Europeans’ in North America, according to Young. From these accounts we learn that ‘the Indians [regarded] the Europeans as obsequious servants to distant lords and social conventions, while they [knew] freedom’ (Young 2007: 23). By excavating moments of interaction, exchange and learning between Indians and Europeans, according to Young, these studies serve to ‘hybridize the idea of democracy’, thereby grounding democratization efforts worldwide on a firmer footing. The point is, ‘connected histories’ of Native Americans and American revolutionaries as such challenge the above-mentioned ‘direct line from ancient Greece to Renaissance Europe to modern day “West”’ in prevalent narratives on ‘democracy’.

Second, there is self/other dialectics in the making of ‘European’ (and ‘Western’) identity and modernity. What is emphasized in such accounts is not only the significance of the other for self-identity construction. It is also about how self/other dialectics have shaped the social science concepts through which we make sense of our own history (Jahn 2000). Consider Beate Jahn’s study on the emergence of ideas about the state of nature through interaction with the Amerindians. Jahn (1998: 631) has argued that thinkers such as Samuel von Pufendorf and Emmerich de Vattel, whose ideas critical IR draws upon, ‘did not develop universal ideas but rather universal yardsticks which were supposed to provide them with a justification not to extend equal rights to others’. Accordingly, argued Jahn, critical IR excludes others at the moment of inclusion:

For it is on the basis of the ‘inclusion’ into humanity defined as European rationality, European political organization, European capitalism or forms of communication and morality that alternative forms of rationality, political organization, modes of production or forms of communication and morality are excluded, not only from the higher echelons of humanity, but also from certain concrete legal and moral rights. (Jahn 1998: 636–637)

In this instance, writing ‘connected histories’ is about excavating the connections that existed at a moment when ‘exteriority’ was produced. It is only through inquiring into Amerindians as ‘Europe’s “constitutive outside”’ that the roles others’ contributions and contestations in political community (a notion that has been central to critical IR) can be excavated.

Third, there is the multiple authorship of what are viewed as autonomously produced ideas and institutions as revealed by studying what Edward Said (1993) referred to as ‘intertwined and overlapping histories’ of humankind (Bilgin 2016b). Consider Siba Grovogui’s (2006) archival study on the contributions of African intellectuals to European debates on the post-Second World War order in Europe. While these intellectuals’ contributions and contestations shaped debates during the Second World War, Grovogui showed, their contributions were not always acknowledged when the intellectual history of this period was written. Nor was their advice regarding the post-war order given due value, noted Grovogui. Once the war was concluded in a way that was favorable to the allies, the camaraderie between European and African intellectuals that was formed during the war ended abruptly.

These three examples of inquiring into ‘constitutive outside’ suggest that a good place to begin when seeking to open up IR is to re-consider Europe, its place in history, and how prevalent narratives on Europe and its place in history have shaped our understanding and study of the international. One implication of inquiring into ‘constitutive outside’ for opening up IR is that we come to realize how identifying the issue as one of absence of IR theory outside of North America and Western Europe sets the problem in self-centered terms: by formulating the problem in terms of others not doing things (theorizing) in the way that we are accustomed to. Formulating the problem this way diverts attention away from inquiring into observations regarding existing theoretical explorations produced outside North America and Western

Europe not being recognized as IR. For, as captured by the notion of ‘constitutive outside’, what is absent may not be theorizing per se, but due recognition of the ways in which some others’ ideas and writings have shaped our thinking about the international.

## CONCLUSION

Opening up IR is not only (or even primarily) about opening up the field to contributions from outside the US and Western Europe (the answer to the question: ‘who does the theorizing?’), but about considering the contributions and contestations of the ‘constitutive outside’ (the answer to what do they say?). Contesting prevalent accounts that portray scholarship originating outside the US and Western Europe as ‘pre-theoretical’ (Pasha 2011) and resisting attempts to utilize ethnographic methods to study everyday life as a way of accessing others’ conceptions of the international (for a critique, see Jabri 2013), the chapter called for inquiring into ‘constitutive outside’ (Blaney and Inayatullah 2008). Opening up IR entails recognizing multiple authorship of key notions (such as human rights, see Grovogui 2011) and broadening our perspectives by excavating the contributions and contestations of others.

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### 3. Habermas and international relations: testing the critical limits of modernity

*Ben Thirkell-White*

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Habermas's political thought was an important driver of early critical theory in international relations (IR) but has had less direct influence in recent years. Many have seen his thought as too close to the liberal mainstream to offer much to contemporary critical projects. In this chapter, I offer a partial defence of Habermas's critical project. I argue that, if we are looking for peaceful large-scale social transformation, we had better hope that Habermas's most fundamental commitments can be vindicated. However, Habermas's theory is decidedly inadequate on its own. His sometimes overly glib descriptions of inter-subjective democratic communication can usefully be supplemented by critique from post-structuralist, post-colonial and agonist scholarship. His work also leaves undone much of the critical work that is required to diagnose what is currently wrong with the global society we inhabit and what might concretely be done to improve it. Nonetheless, Habermas provides a profound reminder to some more radical political traditions that critique can only produce sustainable non-violent change if large sections of society can have their minds changed. If we want change but we don't want violence, progressive political persuasion must ultimately be possible.

A superficial reading of Habermas (and, perhaps, particularly the 'Habermas' that appears in IR theory) can leave one feeling he is a slightly off-beat liberal-cosmopolitan with an abiding faith in capitalism and liberal democracy. Habermas clings to *modernity* in a way that is distinctly unfashionable for critical theorists. However, he does so in a way that is incompatible with many of the core tenets of liberalism. He offers a powerful defence of 'reason' but seeks to transform what we mean by the term, overturning much of what currently operates under that label (Habermas 1970; Habermas 1987). Habermas's 'reason' is not confined to the narrow, instrumental, technical, self-interested, 'objective', invulnerable, 'non-emotional', manipulative reason produced by isolated 'experts' and analytical philosophers. Rather, he argues, we can continue to 'reason' together about value-laden issues but *only* if we do so in a way that is inter-subjective, relational, holistic and always contingent. The humans that come together to reason are not isolated liberal-rational 'individuals', able to stand at a distance from society, but are socially produced subjects, collectively working through and revising the social structures that shape their intellectual inheritance.

Nonetheless, Habermas wishes to cling to modernity because he does not wish to abandon the possibility of achieving mutual comprehension or understanding, even if that achievement is hard won and partial. He needs to hold out the potential for com-

prehension because he still hopes that we can collectively transform our society and our world in a non-violent way. If we cannot ever reach any kind of inter-subjective understanding then there is no defensible way for some humans to persuade others to treat them well and there will be no way of securing the consent required for truly just collective political arrangements. If respectful persuasion is truly and finally impossible, what *will* make large-scale political change take place? If we reject Habermas's vestigial modernism, we appear to be left with: very limited prospects for social transformation;<sup>1</sup> with the search for counter-cultural spaces within a largely unchanged social complex;<sup>2</sup> or with some form of violence.<sup>3</sup> Attempts to escape these unpalatable options must involve smuggling in some decidedly Habermasian hope in the eventual persuasive impact of critique.

Habermas's commitment to inter-subjective reason has left him resistant to specifying the details of the just political arrangements he hopes for. However, it is clear that he envisages macro-level institutions governing over large geographical scope (Habermas 2008a). It is also clear that, at the moment, he doesn't believe our collective reason has delivered a viable alternative to some kind of managed capitalism (Habermas 1992b). Nonetheless, in sharp contrast to liberal thought, Habermas does not see the economy as a good in itself. Its value is purely instrumental in the pursuit of the more fundamental normative objectives of the 'lifeworld' that emerge through collective and inclusive debate, discussion and coordination (Habermas 1984; Habermas 1992b; Habermas 1996). Habermas is vague about what a revised political economy might look like but his vision plainly violates liberal norms of the separation and isolation of economics from politics.

Habermas's commitment to the possibility of rational persuasion has left gaps and silences in his thought, which explain his limited popularity in contemporary critical circles. Post-structuralist thought provides an important corrective to Habermas's sometimes rather glib descriptions of dialogue in terms of an exchange of reasons. Effective inter-subjective communication will be a slow, difficult and transformative process, nothing like a single somewhat academic conversation between well-intentioned participants. What that process looks like in contemporary circumstances needs to be thought through and the tendency for 'democratic' debates to appear 'equal' from a privileged perspective must be continually challenged. Equally, it is not enough for political theorists to specify enabling discursive conditions and then sit back and wait for 'progressive ideas' to emerge and triumph. The ideas that will shape progressive democratic and economic change need to be developed and championed before they can make themselves heard. Habermas has been too willing to see such tasks as somebody else's problem and to distrust the kind

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<sup>1</sup> This appears to be broadly Foucault's position (see the section 'Habermas against Foucault and the post-structuralists' below).

<sup>2</sup> That is one possible reading of Deleuze and Guattari's idea of nomadism (Deuchars 2011).

<sup>3</sup> 'Messianic' strands of post-structuralism, drawing on Walter Benjamin, especially Žižek and Agamben.

of political activism that might be required *before* society is ready to ‘hear’ excluded voices in collective ‘conversation’.

On the other hand, his thought also offers important and powerful challenges that other strands of critical theory cannot ignore. If post-structuralists suspect Habermas does too little actual *critique*, Habermasians may respond that post-structuralists have no distinctive plausible overall account of political change (except to the extent that they tacitly accept the possibility of inter-subjective persuasion). Habermas may be wrong about the potential for argument to create social transformation but, if he is, it is difficult to see where peaceful political transformation *can* come from.

I make this argument in three broad stages. In the next two sections I introduce Habermas’s ideas and the ways in which they might apply to IR. In the third section, I engage with post-structural criticisms of Habermasian thought in some detail as a way of assessing the role that his thought might play in a critical international ethics. However, Habermas is not simply concerned with questions about what ethics might ideally look like. He is also interested in the enterprise of immanent critique: of identifying the normative potential present in contemporary institutions that might provide the basis for progressive transformation. In the final section I turn to his recent political writing on national and cosmopolitan institutions. I argue that his firm commitment to quasi-universal democratic conversation is both the greatest strength and greatest weakness of his political project.

## DISCOURSE, NORMS AND ‘PUBLIC WILL FORMATION’: THE CORE OF HABERMAS’S APPROACH

Habermas’s theory centres on the idea that we can still have rational collective discussion of ethical and normative questions in a ‘post-metaphysical’ world (Habermas 1971).

He contests what is currently most often encountered as post-structuralist pessimism about ethical truth and the possibility of mutual understanding via a conversation with a German philosophical tradition he inherits through Nietzsche, Weber and the early Frankfurt School. This German tradition emphasises the rapid advances humans made in rationalising, calculating and controlling their external world from sometime in the eighteenth century onwards. In the ethical and social realms, though, the Enlightenment freed us from constraining dogmas of religion and tradition but, so the story goes, left no shared sense of purpose in their place. Our enhanced means–ends rationality came at the cost of growing uncertainty and conflict over ends themselves. Modernity, then, risked the triumph of an instrumental rationality, which treated nature and increasingly humans as ‘objects’ to be manipulated and controlled in the pursuit of ends that were largely beyond public discussion. Public debate risked being captured by technocratic discourses of steering, efficiency and system maintenance, excluding issues of ethics, art or the search for emancipatory change (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997; Weber 2001).

Habermas's project has been to rehabilitate a broader sense of post-Enlightenment 'rationality' than the means–ends rationality that concerned his early Frankfurt School predecessors (Habermas 1971). He argues that Enlightenment thought also brought in a more rational way of debating normative issues. The Enlightenment brought in new ideas of human equality and the right to human freedom, which paved the way for a distinctively modern approach to ethics (Habermas 1984; Habermas 1992c). Rather than being entirely arbitrary, post-traditional normative validity claims are ultimately based on the claim that the given norm serves a universal interest; everyone is (over time) better off if norm compliance takes place. The ethical aspect of the rationalisation that ushered in modernity was precisely the growth of a view that normative injunctions *required* such 'rational' justification in order to function as effective reasons for behaviour. A normative validity claim, then, is (intellectually and therefore politically) vulnerable to challenge on the basis that the purportedly universal norm in question serves some interests not others (contravenes the principles of human equality and freedom) and should be revised accordingly. Validity claims can be redeemed if and only if agreement is reached between participants in a debate,<sup>4</sup> entered into with open minds, amongst equal participants not subject to any form of coercion, and in which the only criterion for success is the 'force of the better argument'.

For Habermas the possibility of reaching reasoned moral agreement has always been present but conditions of modernity provide a particularly propitious environment for collective reflection on how we might live together. With the 'death of God' ushered in by the Enlightenment, we have become willing to question all kinds of social convention in order to investigate their compatibility with respect for human equality and diversity. He does not suggest that all 'mere' social convention (produced by habit or tradition) has vanished. Indeed, we cannot have meaningful linguistic and social engagement without some kind of shared 'lifeworld'. However, modernity has ushered in a process through which increasing parts of our social settlements have been and continue to be subject to rational reconstruction and rational critique. The unfolding of modernity, then, is partly an ongoing process of collectively questioning inherited social norms and (where necessary) replacing them with rationally justified rules. Where this rethinking process manages to embody ever more rational and inclusive forms of debate, we may hope that modernity may yet bear the emancipatory fruit it has promised and the structure of modern reason (embedded in deep structures of linguistic logic) itself makes inclusive rationality a logical (and therefore political) imperative.

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<sup>4</sup> This emphasis on *debating* values is a crucial move for Habermas that enables him to take 'otherness' more seriously than in the Kantian tradition of the 'philosophy of consciousness', in which philosophers reason on behalf of others. Rather than relying on that kind of logical empathy, Habermas emphasizes real-world conversations between different speakers. That puts him more squarely in the historical tradition of ethics deriving from Hegel, though Habermas remains sceptical of what he sees as the teleological aspects of Hegel's thought. (See, for example, Grumley, 2015.)

The critical potential in Habermas's thought comes particularly from the vulnerability of post-Enlightenment normative validity claims. Under modernity, normative claims can only be justified on the basis that they serve human communities (rather than, for example, on the basis of divine sanction, the authority of leaders, or a historical view that 'this is how we do things'). Subsets of communities that have been marginalised or excluded by normative consensus should therefore be in a position to achieve emancipation by challenging the justifications for exclusionary norms and pressing for more inclusive replacements (Habermas 1992b). In contrast with post-structural approaches, Habermas wants to use a certain (unorthodox) kind of truth claim as the basis on which to challenge oppression. At the same time, though, his approach maintains considerable scepticism about what we might currently take to be 'truth'. All normative claims are subject to challenge and potentially revisable.

## HABERMAS AGAINST THE REALISTS: A PLACE FOR PUBLICITY AND ARGUMENT IN CONTEMPORARY IR?

Habermas's project is an idealist one in the philosophical sense – history develops as *ideas* change, through a process of public argument that leads to transformative social learning. For his theory to have any purchase on IR, language and ideas have to matter. In this section, I review the Habermasian IR literature that is in closest conversation with the mainstream IR discipline, seeking to use Habermasian ideas to press the case for the importance of argument and persuasion in contemporary international politics.

Habermas's own work suggests that forging agreement through language is both a primordial human potential and something increasingly relevant as the process of modernity unfolds. Habermas has argued: that our ethical language makes no sense if we do not assume that agreement is possible; that universal patterns of moral development involve an increasing willingness to acknowledge the position of the Other; that we cannot develop a plausible conception of social theory that doesn't draw on the role of argument in social coordination; that, empirically, ideationally mediated agreement is ubiquitous in real-world social relations; and that the historical development of modernity demonstrates the unfolding of these tendencies to persuasion as we move from accepted tradition to the self-reflexive justification of social norms. The potential for inclusive communication is always present, but also becomes gradually realised over time through processes of historical development.

When it comes to the IR discipline, there is a strand of Habermasian scholarship that seeks to justify Habermasian idealism as a way of bringing Habermas's ideas into contact with mainstream IR (initially in terms of realism, and later as a supplement to constructivist theory). This literature has tended to draw on Habermasian justifications that can easily be related to pre-existing debates in the IR discipline. The empirical–historical side of Habermas's justifications (as opposed to his social-theoretical, linguistic or social-psychological arguments) have been particularly amenable to this approach. Scholars have tried to demonstrate that debate and

argument oriented to rational persuasion are already ubiquitous in IR and that historical developments have made them increasingly important in a changing international system.

This type of literature has its roots in a German-language debate published in the *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* (ZIB).<sup>5</sup> Habermasians suggested that communicative action was likely to be an important part of international interactions, alongside more traditional rational choice bargaining. Their German realist critics replied that communicative action was an irrelevant concept to IR because there was not enough of a shared 'lifeworld' in the international realm against which to have normative conversations. They argued that, to the extent argument and discussion were relevant to diplomacy at all, they were merely driven by an interest in information gathering (determining negotiating partners' true preferences) or by rhetorical entrapment (using claims about common interest as a rhetorical strategy and later feeling compelled to conform with those claims for reputational reasons).

Later, in the wake of the constructivist turn in IR, Thomas Risse brought some of these arguments into the English-speaking IR discipline by focussing on what Habermas's ideas about rational *argument* might say to an increasingly prominent constructivist IR (Risse 2000). Early constructivism, particularly in the US, emphasised the distinction between a 'logic of consequences' (rational choice behaviour based on interests) and a 'logic of appropriateness' (norm governed action). Risse argued that this did not exhaust the motivational possibilities for agents. Behaviour might also be driven by argument and persuasion, particularly where 'interests' were uncertain. His ideas have subsequently been particularly influential on strands of constructivist theory that seek to understand norm change and the ways in which agents are 'socialised' into existing social structures (Checkel 2007; Johnston 2008).

In theoretical terms, Habermas's work is particularly well-suited to this enterprise as the 'logic of consequences'–'logic of appropriateness' dichotomy echoes the Weberian account of modernity that Habermas set out to criticise. The division between the two suggests two quite separate realms, with (instrumental) strategic rationality seen as distinct from behaviour driven by social norms. Interest-driven calculation is seen as the dominant form of behaviour, with 'norms' playing a moderating role under some circumstances. Meanwhile, 'norms' themselves are often somewhat mysterious entities that are produced by largely arbitrary social convention (springing from historical 'identities' or produced through peer pressure as a 'norm cascade').

Habermas accepts that *some* norms spring from established tradition or essentially arbitrary social convention. However, he argues that, under modernity, increasing numbers of norms are the outcome of (temporarily) settled rational collective argument about what works in particular kinds of communities. Modern norms can be the outcome of more or less rational collective debate. This perspective helps to resolve two difficulties with cruder forms of mainstream constructivism. First a binary

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<sup>5</sup> For overview of the ZIB debates see Risse (2000); Deitelhoff and Muller (2005).

separation between a logic of consequences and a logic of appropriateness suggests some uncomfortable accounts of actor behaviour in which actors 'switch' between these two opposed logics. This may sometimes be what happens ('I want to do x, but I know I should do y, which shall I choose?'), but often actors work on the basis of hybrid motivations that sit somewhere in between ('enlightened self-interest', self-interest with an element of normative restraint, or interests that are at least partially normatively defined, for example). These hybrid motivations sit much more comfortably within a Habermasian view of reasoned argument as something broad and complex, encompassing factual and normative elements. Second, constructivists are committed to the view that structures shape agents (we are all socially created and it makes no sense to talk of a 'neutral' society-independent conception of 'reality') and that agents shape structures (otherwise there could be no social change). Processes of collective persuasive argument provide one explanation for how structural norms can change.

Whilst Habermas has provided a variety of justifications for the importance of communicative action in shaping domestic societies, IR theorists, particularly realists, have suggested that the international is a socially distinct domain in which standard assumptions about general human social behaviour may not apply. Habermasian IR theorists have responded with two strands of empirical research. One has sought to demonstrate that argument and persuasion are ubiquitous in contemporary diplomatic negotiations. The other has sought to show that historical developments in the international system have had analogous effects on the importance of public argument to those Habermas had previously documented within European states.

The first strand of empirical research was largely a German response to the ZIB debates, referred to above. A group of Habermasian scholars hoped to settle the debate about the importance of communicative action through an empirical research programme exploring contemporary diplomatic practice (with particular emphasis on the non-proliferation regime). They were ultimately disappointed that they found it difficult to conclusively demonstrate fully communicative behaviour, in the sense of an abandonment of self-interested motives replaced by a genuinely open search for coordination around the 'best policy'. However, they did note that argument was ubiquitous and, at times, effective in changing negotiators' positions. It was clear that there was enough of a shared 'lifeworld' to enable functioning debate about normative issues and that there were times in which the process of debate and discussion prevented actors from sticking to the narrowly self-interested position with which they entered negotiations (Deitelhoff and Muller 2005).

The more historical programme has been carried out by Jennifer Mitzen (Mitzen 2005). Drawing on English School writing and public sphere theory, Mitzen argues that developments in international society over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have produced a thin layer of settled inter-state norms (sovereignty, formal equality, diplomatic immunity, etc.) that can form a background against which



some forms of inter-state public debate are possible.<sup>6</sup> She draws on examples from the Concert of Europe to argue that the (partially) public diplomacy these norms enabled had a novel character, which produced more functional cooperation than had previously been possible. Face-to-face public debate, even in closed multilateral fora, creates incentives to appear impartial and fair in order to generalise interest claims in ways that others might accept. The potential for blatant hypocrisy to produce negative reputational effects may then rein in subsequent behaviour. Over time these positive potential effects may become habituated, promoting norms of (at least apparently) impartial public reason as the appropriate behaviour for multilateral negotiation. She concludes that inter-state public spheres 'establish the conditions of possibility for communicative action' (Mitzen 2005: 412).

This scholarship is important. It does useful work in connecting up Habermas's social theory with central concerns in the IR discipline, suggesting reasons why the 'international' may not be so socially different that Habermas's views can be discounted out of hand. It also opens potential avenues for theoretically guided empirical research, particularly work on norm change and socialisation.

However, in focussing on 'the international' as a distinct social space (in the form of conversations amongst diplomats) and in looking for moments where arguments produce short-term outcomes in the common interest, it sets a high bar. As Deitelhoff and Muller note in their insightful review of their research programme, Habermas's distinction between strategic and communicative action was never intended to found a positivist research programme in which one could empirically separate the two. Rather both are 'ideal-types' – 'pure' forms of action that may be more or less present in real-world interactions.

The Habermasian challenge to realism is not so much that purely communicative action already exists somewhere alongside power politics but rather that the centrality of the communicative ideal in our political expectations, particularly in the wake of modernity, exerts a normative pull capable of producing progressive change. Habermas's claim is that modern public ethical discourse takes place *as though* it were communicative action under ideal conditions. To the extent that participants in the debate feel those conditions are broadly fulfilled, outcomes are likely to be persuasive and legitimate. On the other hand, where debate obviously falls short of ideal criteria, legitimacy is likely to be weak. Failure to meet the communicative ideal grounds potential challenges to outcomes, either requiring renewed dialogue that produces further progressive change or resort to the threat or use of force to ensure compliance.

The promise of communicative action, then, is a relatively thin one. Habermas might be read as suggesting that modern conditions provide a certain kind of incentive to try to engage in communicative action but not as providing any guarantee that this incentive won't be crowded out by others, particularly in the short term. The

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<sup>6</sup> A sort of pale echo of the changes in domestic politics that Habermas documents in his work on the public sphere (Habermas 1989).

examples of progress that Habermas particularly likes to point to were not produced in a single conversation. They were examples of *social* change produced through many such conversations that gradually changed political and social expectations over many years. Deitelhoff et al.'s focus on specific instances of diplomatic negotiation, then, is likely to be too narrow to establish the overall potential for progressive change present in global society. Diplomats themselves bring certain assumptions with them into debate, which are shaped by the social context they bring to negotiations. Determining the degree to which communicative action has the potential to transform global politics in a progressive direction, then, requires a broader frame of reference in which we look to the changing social context within which diplomats work, as well as specific diplomatic conversations.

### HABERMAS AGAINST FOUCAULT AND THE POST-STRUCTURALISTS: CAN HABERMAS GIVE US AN ADEQUATE ETHICS EVEN IN THEORY?

What a broader frame of reference might look like is nicely displayed by Andrew Linklater's *Transformation of Political Community*, which remains perhaps the most ambitious piece of Habermasian theory in the IR discipline (Linklater 1998). Rather than thinking about the degree to which individual conversations in particular places conform to ideal communicative action, Linklater emphasises the ways in which Habermas's rationalised logic of ethical argument might work itself out over time through broad social processes producing ever-increasing levels of inclusion. Coming from the IR discipline, Linklater is particularly concerned with a cosmopolitan expansion of the addressees of political debate, disrupting traditional state-centric Westphalian conceptions of political authority and political solidarity. However, he argues that the requirements of rational discourse also tend to dissolve other forms of exclusion related to gender, class, inequality, race and culture.

There are two prominent criticisms of Linklater's vision. One, which I will return to at the end of the next section, questions the extent to which the normative potential of discourse can have enough political purchase to produce the progressive change Linklater envisages. The other, which I deal with in this section, takes issue with the adequacy of Habermasian ideas of discourse for grounding a truly inclusive ethics.

For a large group of critical theorists, particularly those who have been influenced by post-structuralism, even an idealised version of Habermas's discourse ethics retains too much in the way of tacitly liberal ideas to ground a truly radical ethics (Hutchings 2005). Critics have argued that the process of discourse – the 'exchange of reasons' Habermas discusses – feels too much like an elite Western activity to produce the kind of difficult listening required to truly challenge dominant ethical perspectives. They have also questioned the extent to which individuals embedded in deeply unequal, ideologically structured societies are able to acquire the critical distance required to identify their own interests and press them in public debate (Allen 2012). Finally, they have suggested that Habermas's emphasis on the possibility of

'agreement' risks closing down genuine difference in a search for uniformity that will inevitably be oppressive to some.

I address each of these critiques in turn, offering a partial defence of Habermas's work. The overall thrust of my argument is that post-structural critique points to weaknesses and silences in Habermas's work but not necessarily to fundamental failings. Meanwhile Habermas's insistence on the need for large-scale political projects underpinned by wholesale political persuasion presents an important counterweight to the social fragmentation embraced by post-structuralist writers. In short, there is space for a much more productive interchange between Habermasians and their post-structuralist critics.

### **How Does 'Dialogue' Proceed?**

The first core criticism of Habermasian ethics concerns the process through which debate takes place.<sup>7</sup>

Iris Marion Young argues that the very idea of 'rational deliberation' is far from universal and neutral (Young 2002). It is derived from Western traditions of science and parliamentary democracy that have their own 'rules of the game', in which producing outcomes is a kind of contest between (intellectually) combative participants, seeking to articulate 'better' reasons. Deliberation of this kind privileges white middle-class male speakers who are more likely to feel and act as though their voices deserve to be heard. The norms of 'rational' debate privilege: formal speech; speech that proceeds from premise to conclusion in an orderly fashion; speech operating on the basis of generalities and principles applied to particular situations; and speech articulated in a dispassionate and disembodied way. This type of speech has to be learnt and the likelihood of such learning is shaped by gender, race, class and culture. Such a restrictive conception of deliberation may also alter the content of what it is possible to say or value – if, for example, we are to put aside 'emotions' in favour of 'objective, rational' communication, do we not risk under-emphasising valid emotional needs or the concrete, embodied, particularity of individually lived lives?

Young argues we should replace ideas of collaborative–competitive 'deliberation' with a much more encompassing vision of communication through which people might come to understand one another. She emphasises forms of greeting and politeness, the use of rhetoric and the practice of storytelling as alternative ways of producing understanding. More radically, Spivak argues that discourse between metropolitan feminists and their subaltern 'others' will never be able to overcome the differences in power across which they take place (Spivak 1998). Rather understanding must be something that is reached toward but never assumed to have taken place. It is not enough to seek a situation in which power is 'bracketed' in a conversation between individuals.

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<sup>7</sup> In setting out this critique, I draw heavily on Hutchings (2005), which is an excellent source for a more comprehensive rehearsal of these arguments.

Rather, it is a responsibility, in the context of opacity of meaning and radically inegalitarian power relations, to put your own assumptions into question and strain to imagine what it might mean to be and think differently. This is a responsibility forced on many through the moral teachings of modernity, but it is something which the metropolitan feminist is not forced to do, and therefore has a greater responsibility for doing. (Hutchings 2005, p. 158)

If we take Habermas's description of an 'exchange of reasons' between individuals in quite a literal sense – imagining, perhaps, parliamentary debate or some kind of focus group<sup>8</sup> – then these accounts offer an important and valid critique. Habermas's fondness for eighteenth-century coffee houses and the tone of some of his more overtly philosophical justifications for the possibility of deliberation do tend to conjure up visions of elite academic debate. Authors like Young and Spivak provide a necessary corrective through their emphasis on the sheer difficulty of communication across radical differences in power and cultural experience. A genuine conversation of this kind, if successful, is a radical undertaking, likely to be unnervingly transformative of both self and other.<sup>9</sup> They also highlight the particular danger that elites will believe their chosen modes of discourse and engagement to be universally valid when, in fact, they privilege particular groups and particular kinds of argument.

However, it is less clear to me that their critique is *fundamentally* damaging to Habermas's theory, at least if we remember to distinguish between 'reason' and instrumental rationality. Habermas quite deliberately seeks to rehabilitate 'reason' from the narrow rationalism that is characteristic of economic thought, analytical philosophy and the new public management. The core aim of his political theory is precisely to rebalance this kind of thinking with the more holistic concerns of the 'lifeworld' (Habermas 1987). As such, his discussion of an 'exchange of reasons' surely cannot imply a discourse that is devoid of debates about divergent emotions, feelings and experiences arising from differing identities and the cultures with which they are associated. Indeed, his discussions of the validity claims implied by speech acts include a category of 'sincerity' that specifically relates to how events or actions make participants feel. It is at least possible, then, to read his use of words like 'reason' and 'argument' in quite a wide-ranging sense that can be readily supplemented by the kind of critique presented here. The point is to rehabilitate the idea of 'reason' and reasons in a way that incorporates various forms of persuasion (rhetoric, analogy, storytelling, etc.) that analytical philosophers might regard with suspicion.

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<sup>8</sup> The literature on discursive democracy, which draws on Habermas alongside other thinkers, has often emphasised debate amongst 'minipublics' – see for example Niemeyer (2011), though there is growing scepticism about their use amongst some deliberative democrats (Lafont 2015).

<sup>9</sup> For other accounts emphasising the variety of forms of communication required to create genuine meetings of minds and for the transformative impact such meetings must have, see (amongst others) Oakeshott (1962); Dallmyr (2001); Honig (2003); Schick (2016).

### **Habermas versus Foucault: Can We Know What We Want or Deserve in order to Advocate for It?**

Whilst it may be possible to escape some criticism by reading Habermas's conception of 'reason' in broad holistic terms, he *is* committed to the idea that normative persuasion is possible on some kind of epistemic basis – through altering understandings rather than through force or manipulation – converging toward mutually acceptable normative settlements. Underlying the kinds of critique of how discourse might proceed raised by authors like Young and Spivak is often a concern that it is extremely difficult to transcend privileged world views into which we have been socialised from an early age and that are ubiquitous in the societies we inhabit (Allen 2012). Critical theory is usually thought to be necessary precisely because widely accepted understandings of the societies that we live in are deeply problematic. Marxists seek to uncover ideological understandings of capitalism that are ubiquitous and that distort our understandings of our own political positions and interests. Feminists and post-colonial writers see patriarchal and imperial narratives in similar ways. If we can be fundamentally unaware of our own best interests because of such socialisation, how can we be confident that emancipation can be achieved through dialogue and persuasion (even the kind of highly demanding and transformative dialogue I gestured at in the previous subsection)?

In this subsection, I explore this question by relating Habermas's thought to that of Michel Foucault, who is one of the most sophisticated proponents of the view that knowledge is not something that can be deployed neutrally but rather something that is always-already saturated with forms of power.

Amy Allen has helpfully argued that the Foucault–Habermas 'debate'<sup>10</sup> turns on understandings of socialisation/subjectification (Allen 2009). Both Foucault and Habermas accept that human beings are socially produced. Our early experiences and upbringing shape our base understandings of the social world and appropriate behaviour in it. However, Habermas argues that, by the end of this process of socialisation, we are also capable of some kind of individuation; of obtaining some critical distance from the social world that produced our subjectivity and reflecting critically upon it. The social world is then, in turn, transformed and rationalised through subjects' subsequent behaviour, presumably improving the processes of socialisation that operate on the next generation. For Habermas, socialisation is ultimately positive and necessary in order to produce social coordination and order, though the way it takes place and the norms on which social coordination are based need to be constantly democratised and revised.

Foucault sees socialisation as a tighter, more constraining process that is both more problematic and more difficult to overcome. From that perspective, there is less

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<sup>10</sup> Although attempts were made to bring the two thinkers together for an actual debate, those attempts failed. Nonetheless, a reasonably extensive and, at times, informative manufactured 'debate' appears in the literature, see Kelly (1994) and subsequent literature.

assurance that critical self-reflection will remain possible. However, as Habermas points out, Foucault cannot take this argument too far. If it is literally impossible to obtain critical distance, how is Foucault himself able to produce the kind of critique of contemporary society that he offers (and, indeed, how could he have become such an influential social theorist if what he had to say was *so* difficult to grasp)? In fact, a careful reading of Foucault shows that he too envisages some potential for critical distance to emerge, some space for an at least relatively autonomous self. In particular, he acknowledges that communication, symbols and signs can operate with a partly autonomous logic to that of power and domination (Allen 2009).

It is possible, then, to read Habermasian and Foucauldian accounts of modernity in ways that are not radically incompatible. Both emphatically reject the idea of an asocial subject. Human beings only become fully human through interactions with one another and therefore cannot apprehend the world in a way that is not socially produced. There is no view from ‘outside’ society. On the other hand, both must also accept that this process of socialisation does not fully *determine* the subject that emerges (otherwise there could be no ‘difference’).<sup>11</sup>

The difference between the two thinkers concerns how constraining and saturated with power processes of socialisation are and therefore how difficult it is to offer critique. For Foucault, the primary danger is that we underestimate the pervasive effects of power, impairing our ability to imagine what true freedom might look like – the degree to which we might imagine a world or at least a way of being that is radically different. Foucault’s over-riding emphasis, then, is on the contamination of knowledge by power and discipline.

For Habermas, though, this emphasis can be self-defeating and even dangerous. It is self-defeating because it risks producing an understanding of ourselves as imprisoned in a kind of socially produced solipsism in which we are unable to communicate with one another and therefore unable to progressively reform society through a gradual process of social learning and persuasion. It is dangerous because a lack of faith in the possibility of inter-subjective persuasion might lead one into flirting with the idea of by-passing processes of social persuasion through the resort to violence. It is for this reason that Habermas insists Foucauldian-style (or Marxist, feminist or post-colonial) critique must ultimately continue to stand on aspects of Enlightenment heritage,<sup>12</sup> notably the notion that ethics have to be publicly justified on the basis of universal respect for human equality and freedom. The point of critique must be to

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<sup>11</sup> There is no knowledge from ‘outside’ society and language. However, there is room for debate about the degree to which we inhabit one language or many and on how significant the ‘outside’ of language needs to be. For a highly thought-provoking piece addressing slightly different philosophical traditions, see Williams (1981).

<sup>12</sup> Note that there is considerable room to question the extent to which such norms should be associated purely with the European Enlightenment. For an insightful post-colonial critique of Habermas’s conceptions of history, time and progress, see Hutchings (2007). For an attempt to reconstruct Frankfurt School critical theory without reference to conceptions of historical progress, see Allen (2016).

persuade others. Sustainable social change needs many people to be persuaded. If we abandon communication, then, we must also abandon the hope that significant progressive social change can take place without violence.

### **Universalism or Pluralism?**

The final strand of broadly post-structural critique of Habermas's position questions his emphasis on large-scale social agreement in the service of macro-level political and social progress.<sup>13</sup> Post-structural writers are often deeply sceptical of 'agreement' or 'consensus' as a political aim. They fear that 'consensus' tends to silence difference in ways that are inevitably exclusionary, painting a false unity over an existence that is permanently fractured. Rather than look for 'consensus', they argue that there is a value in constant agonistic contestation in which it is explicitly acknowledged that disagreement and difference will always persist. Too much political and social theory understands difference in terms of deviation from a 'centre', looking to create accommodation (tacitly on the centre's terms). A pluralist ethos would accept connections between people who are, nonetheless, permanently profoundly different. Its core virtue would be a willingness to respect and live alongside others whose beliefs we cannot understand or agree with (Connolly 2001).

For these writers an emphasis on pluralism is important precisely because of the sheer difficulty of the kinds of conversation that would be required to truly reach understanding across radical difference and because of the ever-present temptation to assure ourselves that problems of difference have been solved (Honig 2001), when in fact they only appear to be solved from the perspective of a dominant elite.

Here again, there is genuine disagreement but also some potential middle-ground. Habermas clings to (a reformed) modernity because he believes in the possibility of some collective problem solving – the possibility that politics might produce collective goods. For that to be plausible, there needs to be social coordination (law) and therefore some inter-subjective understanding. Habermas therefore needs to emphasise the potential for reaching democratic agreement through sustained processes of mutual justification that alter preferences as individual desires confront one another whilst seeking some kind of 'common good'. He sees a current of thought that rejects any viable basis for collective deliberation about normative issues as a more significant intellectual threat, given its presence in strands of both liberal and post-structural thought.

However, against that background, he also believes that modern ethical agreement is likely to be 'thin' precisely so that it can accommodate difference. So, although Habermas's faith in collective projects has affinities with republican conceptions of democracy, he is anxious to reject republicanism because of its connection with

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<sup>13</sup> For reasons of space, I focus on arguments about 'consensus' here, rather than on progress per se. For an excellent critique of the problematic role ideas of progress may play in Habermas's constitutional writing, see (Honig 2001).

forced conformity around a problematic and exclusionary concept of the nation (Habermas 1996). If one focusses on Habermas's acceptance that there is value in the fragmentation brought on by modernity, on his insistence that all law should be only contingently settled and open to democratic revision, and on his continued insistence on the need for an ever more inclusionary, (at least theoretically) universal communication over moral norms, the differences with agonistic pluralism might appear to be more an issue of emphasis – assuming that pluralists also accept the need for some issues to be collectively settled (albeit contingently).

## **Assessment**

My preference is to read Habermas and his agonistic and post-structuralist critics together, looking at the tension between them as something productive – pointing to the space where critical theorists need to be doing their work.<sup>14</sup> Habermasian and post-structuralist perspectives can challenge one another in useful ways.

Habermas's project has been directed against the idea that we cannot have persuasive mutual interchange over ethical issues. Because of that, he has tended to emphasise the possibility of understanding and to understate its difficulty. Post-structuralist critics' focus on the difficulty of communication across radical difference provides an important supplement. Although I think some readings of Habermas fail to understand what he means by 'reason' in ways that accuse him of being more conservative than he is, even on a more open reading, his overly tidy ideas of an 'exchange of reasons' and the 'force of the better argument' need to be revised to accommodate a messier, less certain form of communication. However, if we abandon the possibility that we might come to understand one another's needs and desires across difference, even deconstructive critique would seem to be a pointless exercise. The post-structuralist critique, if pushed too far, seems to have very high costs and Habermas plays a useful role in reminding us what those costs are. Nonetheless, politically, the ongoing normative critique of the kind post-structuralists offer certainly is an essential part of the collective public reason that Habermas sees as the still-under-realised potential of modernity.

Similarly, Habermas's modernist attraction to large-scale projects of socio-political transformation feels ominous to many post-structuralists, who tend to see central political institutions as an important site of domination and control (if Habermas would only reject such projects, he wouldn't need to stress the possibility of 'reasoned' persuasion!). On the other hand, Habermas has described Foucault as a 'young conservative' precisely because he believes abandoning the attempt to achieve such projects leaves us stuck with what we have. The interesting middle-ground comes when we try to think about how we might pursue ambitious projects for emancipa-

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<sup>14</sup> My position here is strongly influenced by Kate Schick's radical Hegelianism, which resists 'either-or' distinctions and struggles to reconcile difference with a willingness to 'risk the universal' – see Schick (2012) and this volume.



tory change, whilst doing our best to continue to respect difference and acknowledge uncertainty and contingency. Many agonistic democrats rightly question the moments when Habermas begins to be too positive about already existing law and constitutional settlements (Honig 2001). That provides Habermasians with an important critical nudge – pressing them to make sure that the search for potential within modernity that we might build upon doesn't become uncritical acceptance or political quietism. Meanwhile some agonistic democrats do see potential value in the guarantees of security that the state can provide, so long as it is a state that is constantly besieged by political struggle to secure the gains that have been made and look to further progressive change. Nonetheless, how much it is possible to reconcile respect for difference with large-scale progressive social projects (and exactly what value one might place on such projects) remains a decidedly unsettled question that will need to be worked out in the world.

I have presented a 'Habermas' here who I believe can be found in his writings but, overall, is probably more radical than 'Jürgen-Habermas-himself'. Whilst I have argued that Habermas's thought *need* not be incompatible with the concerns of more obviously radical theorists, his own practical–political writings do little to approach post-structuralist concerns with the marginalised 'Other'. Instead, they look to developments within the governing institutions we have that might yet hold open some space for radical transformation in the future. Again, it is possible to read this writing as more conservative than it is. On the other hand, whilst he is not necessarily hostile to projects of social movement activism or radical economic imagination, he sees those as tasks for 'someone else' in ways that leave a lot of necessary critical work undone. It is to these practical–political writings that we now turn.

## HABERMAS AGAINST OUR AGE? IMMANENT CRITIQUE, POLITICS AND CHANGE

Since the mid-1990s, an important stream of Habermas's work has engaged directly with existing political institutions, asking grand questions about 'what is to be done' to reshape contemporary social order. He began with a 'reconstruction' of the normative rationality of contemporary democratic nation states (Habermas 1996) and moved on to a series of articles that, together, lay out a 'political constitution for a pluralist world society' (Habermas 2001, 2008a, 2008c, 2015a). The shift from national level to global politics was driven by his conviction that, in a context of globalisation, it was only possible to pursue strategies of radical social democracy on the basis of political organisation beyond the nation state (Habermas 2001, 2015a).

In the vision he proposes, a central global institution would look after a limited set of relatively non-contentious issues such as a commitment to peace and human rights (and would thus ensure a transition to a world in which force was no longer deemed a legitimate tool of international politics) (Habermas 2008c). In a recent amendment, Habermas has also argued that this institution should be a site for developing some basic principles of global justice that other levels would be required to conform

to (Habermas 2008c). The most important tasks, from Habermas's perspective – a 'global domestic politics' (particularly economic and environmental regulation) – would take place at the regional level. In Europe, that would involve a reformed European Union (EU) which placed much less emphasis on the (bureaucratic) Commission and (inter-state) Council and much greater emphasis on the (democratic/legislative) European parliament as a site of transnational will formation. Regional institutions would then negotiate with one another but there would not be cross-regional citizen-level accountability.

Habermas presents this constitutional project in explicitly Kantian terms, arguing that it is partly utopian but that trends immanent in existing politics 'meet it half way', making it a plausible utopia. Where Kant posed a sharp choice between nation states (on one hand) and a world republic on the other, Habermas argues for a 'multi-level political system that does not assume a state-like character as a whole'. States will retain their importance but their foreign policy-making will become more democratic, enabling them to lend their democratic legitimacy upwards to higher-level institutions.

One important reference point would be the EU, but an EU that had benefitted from some 'long overdue' democratic deepening. A limited number of similar regional blocks could then emerge, learning to see themselves as 'part of a supranational community'. The progressive extension of democratic legitimacy 'upwards' is important because, in contrast with the constitutionalisation of domestic absolutist states (where law transformed the exercise of already significant power), international institutions need to gain more *power* as well as more legitimacy. For Habermas, power is ultimately communicative power, based on the mobilisation of consent.<sup>15</sup> Equally, citizens deciding whether to accept the authority of supranational institutions are not faced with the same choice between order and chaos depicted in Hobbesian theory. Rather, they need to be persuaded that the new arrangements will improve on the current value of states as already existing ethico-political communities (Habermas 2008c).

If we are to understand the rationale behind these proposals (and assess their radicalism), it is important to read them in the light of Habermas's broader theoretical project. In particular, the distribution of competencies between the different levels has appeared idiosyncratic to at least some critics (Scheuerman 2008). Why is so much emphasis placed on central regional institutions? Why does Habermas believe that issues of human rights and the use of force are 'less political' than market regulation? How do his proposals differ from any number of other liberal-cosmopolitan sketches for global order?

The key is to understand the sometimes understated radicalism of Habermas's political vision. For Habermas, the central problem with modernity remains its tendency to substitute technical steering for the difficult work of communicative action. His political theory looks for:

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<sup>15</sup> An idea Habermas borrows explicitly from Hannah Arendt (Habermas 1996).

a new balance between the forces of social integration so that the social-integrative power of solidarity – the ‘communicative force of production’ – can prevail over the powers of the other two control resources, ie, money and administrative power, and therewith successfully assert the practically oriented demands of the lifeworld. (Habermas 1992b, p. 431)

In more familiar language, Habermas is arguing that public normative debate about how we wish to live together, beginning with all our embodied diversity and difference and talking to our whole human existence, needs to return to the centre of democratic debate. Law, the state and the economy need to return to their place as mere instruments of those more vital goals.

He emphasises the regional level because he believes that, in the wake of the globalisation of economic processes, we can only practically re-establish *social* democracy through international coordination. His dogged defence of the European project is built on this conviction. On the other hand, he understands that the ambitious role he envisages central political institutions playing is difficult to scale up and the regional scale may be the most that can be hoped for.

Habermas says little about what his institutions will do in policy terms but, hidden amongst his main concerns, there are sometimes indications that what he has in mind is decidedly less liberal than what we currently experience. After he had begun his ‘more conservative’ political work, Habermas was still describing himself as the ‘last Marxist’<sup>16</sup>. When asked why it was difficult to detect any economic radicalism in his writing, he responded that:

The only way is to radicalize those institutions that we have already established in Western countries, to direct them toward a form of radical democracy that makes it possible, just in terms of delegitimization, to change or at least to affect administration. Administration is still the entry into economies ... (Habermas 1992a, pp. 466–8)

And in the ‘liberal’ *Between Facts and Norms* he argues that:

basic rights must now do more than just protect private citizens from encroachment by the state apparatus. Private autonomy is endangered today at least as much by positions of economic and social power, and it depends for its part on the manner and extent to which democratic citizens can effectively exercise their communicative power and participatory rights. (Habermas 1996, p. 121)

Habermas’s vision, then, is not the thin protection of narrowly conceived human rights across borders present in some liberal accounts of cosmopolitan democracy. Rather, Habermas has ambitions for a society able to reshape itself in accordance with its reflexively generated normative commitments.

This underlying vision sheds light on his preference for a centralised EU with a strong legislature. For many other critical theorists interested in global governance, a more plausible solution is to have multiple, overlapping, functionally fragmented

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<sup>16</sup> For a recent reiteration of his attachment to a Marxist heritage, see Hermoso (2018).

institutions (Bohman 2007; McCormick 2007). A multiplicity of institutions works with the way global institutions are already evolving and might be democratised without risking too great a centralisation of political power. Habermas, however, is scathingly critical of the kind of ‘technical’ coordination of political issues that takes place in existing international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank and, increasingly, within the EU itself (Habermas 2008b). In his writing on global constitutionalism the problems with this sort of activity are asserted but not explained in any depth. However, if this writing is read in conjunction with *Between Facts and Norms*, the nature of his concerns becomes clear.

A central theme of Habermas’s writing on domestic democracy (Habermas 1996) is that technical decisions made within the bureaucracy must be appropriately scrutinised by the legislature, which acts as a bridge to the ‘lifeworld’ concerns of the broader public sphere. The legislature is the place in which increasingly fragmented expert discourses emerging from particular ministries are re-integrated by coming into contact with one another in a setting designed for more holistic debate. Ministerial intent must be translated into the more universal language of law and, in the process, become exposed to parliamentarians who are at least somewhat accountable (through elections and civil society) to ordinary human beings with their diverse perspectives and interests, rooted in their respective ‘lifeworlds’. The legislature is specifically assigned the legitimacy to deal with ‘political’ rather than ‘technical’ issues, where civil society succeeds in identifying places in which ‘technical’ decision-making is encroaching on normative issues that are properly the subject matter of politics. Civil society can then thematise and politicise these issues, feeding them into the parliamentary system so that the legislature’s constitutional credentials as the political heart of democracy can assist civil society in ‘disrupting’ technical-administrative business as usual. Modern democracy, then, has at least some chance of creating the proper balance between communicative power on the one hand and the control resources of money and administrative bureaucracy on the other.

A global governance that relied on functionally fragmented international institutions would leave no place for the legislature and therefore very little by way of an entry point for the ‘weak public sphere’ where the public will is debated and articulated (Thirkell-White 2018). For all its apparent liberal-conservatism, then, Habermas’s vision still envisages a radical democratisation of international arrangements that would make them more responsive to ordinary people’s lived experience.

## **Assessment**

For many critical theorists, Habermas’s recent work on political institutions is disappointing. At least on the surface, it appears too close to liberal views (albeit a form of *cosmopolitan* liberalism). I have tried to point out that Habermas envisages such institutions being radicalised in the pursuit of collective social projects that would depart significantly from contemporary liberal capitalist norms. He continues to hold to a (decidedly modern) belief in the potential for self-conscious collective social transformation, making use of large-scale political institutions. That shapes his cos-

mopolitanism in interesting ways, particularly in his emphasis on the dangers of technocracy and his insistence that cosmopolitan institutions need to prove themselves superior to what he regards as the notable achievements of contemporary states. There is scope for these insights to play a larger role in contemporary theoretical and practical debates about global institutions.

However, even if one accepts the potential for central political institutions to be used in more radical ways, it is not easy to see where such radicalisation of (broadly) existing institutions is likely to come from. How exactly is the unexhausted emancipatory potential Habermas finds in modernity to manifest itself in ways that will produce substantive progressive political change?

Habermas's responses to events in post-crisis Europe have sharpened this question. He has tended to blame elites for Europe's political problems. He continues to cling to a vision of a re-democratised social Europe as the only possible future for the left. When asked directly about populist movements, he rejects any inherent attraction to authoritarian-nationalism, arguing instead that the problem is with a left that has failed to articulate a coherent progressive vision of global social-democratic capitalism.

The question is why left-wing parties do not go on the offensive against social inequality by embarking on a coordinated and cross-border taming of unregulated markets ... [the only alternative is] a supranational form of cooperation that pursues the goal of shaping a socially acceptable political reconfiguration of economic globalisation ... international treaty regimes are insufficient here; for, putting aside completely their dubious democratic legitimacy, political decisions over questions of redistribution can only be carried out within a strict institutional framework. That leaves only the stony path to an institutional deepening and embedding of democratically legitimised co-operation across national borders. The European Union was once such a project ... [but has been betrayed by a centre-left acceptance of neoliberalism's costs which have] clearly risen so high that the reaction to it has gone over to the right. And where else? If there is no credible and pro-active perspective, then protest simply retreats into expressivist, irrational forms.<sup>17</sup>

Habermas argues that left-wing political parties need to re-open class-driven political debate to redirect public attention away from the populist right, depriving it of the oxygen it is currently being given by mainstream parties, and towards an agenda of reining in the social problems caused by neoliberalism and transnational capital.

Leaving aside for now the question of whether a genuinely progressive, cosmopolitan, egalitarian democratic capitalism is theoretically achievable, there is a central political problem with this approach, which is that there do not appear to be enough elite or popular voices in Europe to share Habermas's vision.<sup>18</sup> Habermas's recent writing has shown a marked tendency to hope Europe's problems can be resolved

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<sup>17</sup> This quote is taken from Habermas (2016), which provides a very accessible summary. For the evolution of these themes over the last ten years, see particularly Habermas (2008b, 2012, 2015b).

<sup>18</sup> On political economy, see Streeck (2014). On constitutional issues, see Heins (2016).

through better leadership from the left. He then hopes that popular opinion will step in line behind a project of constitutional and social-democratic renewal.

There is considerable room to question Habermas's political judgement here. Wolfgang Streeck, for example, has argued that the European elite is far too structurally implicated in a regime of finance-driven neoliberal capitalism (privatised Keynesianism) to suddenly change tack in the way Habermas is advocating. If the communicative power is to put the power of money back in its place, presumably it will need to do so on the back of some fairly robust political organisation – without that it is difficult to see why elite behaviour would suddenly change. Streeck, meanwhile, is also pessimistic about the prospects for change 'from below'. He suggests that the same economic structures that underpin elite outlooks have also produced a fatally fractured and individualistic working class that is poorly positioned to organise emancipatory projects from below, though he sees the domestic institutional environment as more propitious than European institutions (Streeck 2013, 2014, 2016). Oddly, Habermas seems less troubled by the state of popular opinion, appearing to regard the rise of the right as an emotional moment that will subside into more measured rationality given the right leadership. His solution to the crisis puts enormous faith in cosmopolitan elites and has very little to say about popular organisation or bottom-up processes of social change.

As we saw earlier, Habermas's democratic theory emphasises a dialectical relationship between elite law-making and popular debate and will formation in the public sphere. From that perspective, we might have expected his response to populism to call for movement on both sides of that equation. An elite left does need to articulate a political agenda capable of meeting the concerns and needs of an increasingly alienated public but, presumably, it needs to do so in ways that involve real engagement *with* that public in ways that can produce a programme that meets alienated populations' concerns. Yet Habermas has nothing to say about how elites might re-engage the public in any dialogical way and there is very little detail behind his economic proposals. Not only does that seem to be an example of poor political judgement, it is also related to a longer-standing tendency to be lukewarm about some of the more radical directions in which his theory might take him.

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested one place where we might look for emancipation is as something that would emerge from social change below the level of the state as the result of many more or less reasonable conversations about normative issues, which ultimately changed the social context in which 'international relations' take place. Seeing things in that way might open up connections between Habermas's grand institutional theories and a variety of more radical critical theory (post-structuralist, feminist, socialist, post-colonial, environmentalist) that seeks to proceed through critique to social organisation and then political change from below. However, Habermas has a history of an at best ambivalent attitude toward radical social movements (perhaps, most famously, his trenchant critique of student activism

in 1968). He has also argued that social scientists need to distance themselves from radical social projects.<sup>19</sup>

This reluctance is in keeping with his commitment to universal democratic communicative agreement and is readily understandable given his early political experiences in Nazi Germany.<sup>20</sup> Habermas is concerned to ensure that social power cannot be transformed into political power without the prior restraint of requirements for democratic persuasion. So, although *Between Facts and Norms* does more to explicitly acknowledge the role of civil society in the ‘wild’, informal public sphere than some of his earlier work, Habermas still insists that institutions must ensure social power is not translated directly into political power. Institutions must put the brakes on minority enthusiasms in the ongoing search for universally acceptable political programmes.

It seems to me that there is further room for a meeting between Habermas and some more radical projects. A Habermasian response to the emerging crisis of contemporary liberal capitalism should be looking to promote and support progressive social change from below as well as a new macro-level vision for progressive politics. It is not a case of institutions *or* social activism but rather of finding a social activism that is capable of producing radical change *through* the transformation of institutions that continue to ensure change through peaceful (if robust) persuasion, rather than violence. Activist voices may well need to push the boundaries of ‘rational’ persuasion in ways that Habermas would find uncomfortable if they are to be heard and to gradually gain acceptance, but activists need to ensure they work through (perhaps radicalised) democratic channels (in Gramscian terms, that they are initially engaged in a war of position, rather than a war of manoeuvre).

I also think Habermas is plain wrong in suggesting that academics should not outline concrete political projects. If those in the privileged position of devoting much of their working lives to generating novel ideas are to be barred from straying too far into proposing experimental projects, where will new ideas come from? If we are to take seriously the view that collective democratic debate will eventually rule out socially exclusive political projects, it should be all right to pursue progressive positions that are currently seen as radically partisan, in the hope that one might eventually prevail.

Nonetheless, Habermas’s ultimate insistence on the need for political change to take place through widespread persuasion remains an important safeguard from the danger that one person’s ‘progressive’ project is another’s bigotry. Democracy slows political progress but may also help to guard against the imposition of dangerous experiments. The development of radical political projects is still something best

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<sup>19</sup> ‘I don’t think that we ... should ever again, bridge the institutional differentiation between the science system and political agitation ... That is what Lenin tried to do’ (Habermas 1992b: 471).

<sup>20</sup> See Matthew Spectre’s excellent political biography, emphasising Habermas’s place amongst a particular generation of senior German scholars for whom the experience of Weimar and its collapse exerts a particularly strong pull (Spectre 2012).

done in the context of multiple competing intellectual voices attempting to win over the population into pursuing its own emancipation.

## CONCLUSIONS

Habermas's theory continues to insist on aspects of modernity. In particular, he looks to a grand-scale progressive transformation of social and political order through the exercise of reason, a hope that is underpinned by a faith in the potential for ongoing reasoned communication about normative issues.

However, he does so in ways that bring his theory into contact with more radical approaches that are far more sceptical of the project of modernity. His insistence on *inter-subjective* reason holds open a place for authentic lived experience and participation by the excluded (in contrast with, for example, abstract Kantian meditations on what some general human interest might logically entail). His emphasis on the permanent revisability of law and democratic institutions and on the instability of normative judgements that are not based on universal dialogue brings him into contact with agonistic approaches that emphasise the vulnerability of political judgement and the need for a willingness to be transformed in the course of political debate.

There remain important differences though. In particular, in contrast to approaches that place more emphasis on ideology or power/knowledge, Habermas continues to insist on the possibility of critique from within the social structures in which we find ourselves. That insistence provides an important corrective to post-structural theories that push our inability to know too far; criticism would be pointless if we literally can't see our way to more progressive forms of knowledge and action. However, where achieving such knowledge is difficult, because of the constraints of power, Habermas has important questions to answer about how alternative, critical points of view might take hold in society more broadly. Secondly, Habermas's emphasis on grand forms of social progress produced through central political institutions requires a strong faith in gradual social transformation through reason, but with little to support it other than a conviction that non-inclusive norms will always be intellectually fragile. Such hope is most plausible over the long term. Rather than expecting 'good' arguments to triumph in every encounter, we might see Habermas's promise as one that, over time, defensible reasons will work their way to triumph in our collective consciousness. However, if in the end Habermas is offering us a promise – a basis for ongoing faith in long-term reason-driven progress – he leaves us with surprisingly little guidance about what we might do in the short term (other than wait hopefully for history to work itself out).

In some ways, we might see this gap as a reason for a further rapprochement with other strands of radical thought. If modernity is to work out its potential, presumably it will need a helping hand from political critics, utopian dreamers and social movement activists, who will be required to press the progressive political arguments that Habermas helps us to believe may yet triumph. In that case, though, do we need



Habermasian thought – wouldn't we be better off engaging with critique, utopia and activism?

I will conclude with three final answers to that question. First, Habermas's thought remains an important reminder that those kinds of critical projects need to take place within a larger whole. Habermas's insistence on democracy reminds us that, in the end, if we look for grand emancipatory change, critical answers must persuade large swathes of the population. He provides a salutary warning against retreat into critical echo chambers. Second, Habermas can serve as an important reminder of the dangers of rejecting too much of modernity. Whilst his insistence on democratic persuasion, working through institutions, provides a conservative check on many critical ambitions, it also presents a powerful reminder of the dangers that might come with a wholesale rejection of the possibility of persuasion. Third, whilst radical projects await moments for potential triumph, Habermasian ideas can help us to think about short-term projects designed to keep open the space for such ideas within the flawed institutions we currently have and to restrain their worst excesses.

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## 4. Emancipation, power, insecurity: Critical Theory and immanent critique of human security

*Columba Peoples*

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This chapter reflects on the implications and possibilities of approaching the study of security via ideas and concepts drawn from the Critical Theory tradition. Amidst the general flourishing of a variety of critical approaches to the study of security (see, for example, Krause and Williams 1997; Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2015), a specific branch of ‘Critical Security’ scholarship has explicitly cited concepts drawn from the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, as well as engagement with that broader tradition of thinking, as a way of critically reflecting on and refashioning the theory and practice of security. In particular, the concept of ‘emancipation’ and, even if to a comparatively lesser degree, the notion of ‘immanent critique’ have both been prominent within such efforts. As is discussed in greater detail below, how to define both of those terms is itself a vexed question and the subject of much critical reflection and counter-critique both within Critical Theory generally and Critical Security scholarship specifically. Yet, at an outline level, the concept of emancipation, some have argued, provides normative anchorage to security studies by equating and defining security as the progressive freeing of human beings from the multiplicity of threats they might face in their daily lives (see, in particular, Booth, 1991; 2005; 2007). A mode of immanent critique, others suggest, provides a necessary complement to the above by allowing not only for evaluation of the kinds of threats and insecurities human beings are to be freed from, but also for a degree of critical purchase in questioning on their own terms the extent to which extant theories and practices of security actually provide the forms of security they lay claim to (see, in particular, Wyn Jones 1999).

Beyond the invocation of such concepts, and before considering the contestations that exist over their definition and usage, we might well ask the prior question of why link Critical Theory and the study of security in the first place? One line of reasoning to follow initially in that respect, to quote Douglas Kellner, is that Critical Theory ‘remains of intense interest for the present conjuncture and provides crucial resources for a renewal of critical social theory and democratic politics in the current age precisely because, like the 1930s, our age is undergoing vast transformations, some of which are promising and some of which are threatening’. In such contexts, Kellner makes the case, revisiting ‘the classics in Critical Theory’ is not to be treated as a ‘mere antiquarian pleasure’: rather, ‘going back’ to key texts and concepts within Critical Theory should be a conscious process of seeking and evaluating ‘method-

ological insight, theoretical illumination, and political inspiration to carry on the tasks of critical social theory in the present conjuncture' (1993: 46–47). Although Kellner put forward that contention in 1993, his words are at least as apposite today in the current 'conjuncture' of seemingly perpetual economic crises, the spread and diversification of mass media, and the rise of radicalised forms of national security politics that increasingly seems to be predicated on exclusionary conceptions of identity and citizenship as associated with the rise of varying forms of 'new nationalism' (as termed by Altbach and de Wit 2017 among others). Similarly, although not engaged directly with security studies in terms of the disciplinary study of international security as it began to take shape in the post-Second World War era, the Frankfurt School's concerns with forms of violence produced by consumer society and commodification, as well as their affinity for consideration of the nature for and conditions of human 'emancipation' from such forms of violence and domination (see, for example Bronner 1994 for a wider discussion) have always provided potentially fertile grounds for exploring the potential relationship between Critical Theory and the study of security.

With this in mind, this chapter seeks to probe further the question of what 'going back' to the concepts of emancipation and of immanent critique as articulated by the Frankfurt School Critical Theorists may entail, and to explore and critically reflect on the extent to which this tradition of thought – to paraphrase Kellner again – might offer methodological insight, theoretical illumination and political inspiration for the contemporary study of security. To do so the chapter first briefly situates the Critical Theoretic study of security in relation to the wider field of Critical Theory and International Studies, with which it shares many affinities. It then moves on to a discussion of the more distinctive debates surrounding the concept of emancipation within the study of security, and outlines a way of approaching those debates via the mode of immanent critique as formulated by thinkers associated with the Frankfurt School (particularly the earlier phases of the 'School's' thinking). This aligns with the view that the 'Frankfurt School represents a sustained and sophisticated treatment of the issues that arise from taking emancipation seriously', and as such provides rich – but complex – intellectual resources for evaluating the 'not only possibilities but also potential pitfalls' of a concern with emancipation in security studies (Wyn Jones 2005: 232–233).

More specifically the chapter offers a critical evaluation of arguments that suggest that the concept of emancipation should serve as a kind of blueprint and normative end-goal for the theory and practice of security. Instead, drawing on scholarship that has recently returned to and has sought to revise and reinvigorate earlier Frankfurt School thinking, most prominently the work of Amy Allen, the chapter identifies a potential 'negativist' approach to emancipation and security: an approach in which the dynamic *politics* of emancipation is seen to be innately bound up with the identification and critique of ('negative' and constraining) relations of power and domination, without necessarily promising or guaranteeing (cf. Hall 1983) a 'secure' end-point or alternative.

By way of illustration of this approach, the chapter then turns to an analysis of critical reflections on the theory and practice of 'human security' as it has evolved over the past 25 years, particularly 'emancipatory' critiques of human security, and suggests that a significant portion of that critical scholarship provides, in effect, an immanent critique of human security. What this leaves us with, the chapter suggests, is the contours of a 'negativist' approach to security that challenges us to think through the complexities of the relationships between emancipation, power and (in) security in a way that does not treat any of these elements as self-evident or given but constantly takes them as an interconnected constellation that should be subject to immanent critical reflection and analysis. Rather than specifying a particular methodology or even theory of the study of security per se, this understanding of the Critical Theoretic tradition, the chapter argues in closing, might be argued to constitute instead a distinctive 'ethos' for the study of security: one where the potential mechanisms for identifying and understanding emancipation from different forms of insecurity are contextualised within multiple applications and modes of immanent critique.

## CRITICAL THEORY AND INTERNATIONAL/SECURITY STUDIES

As noted above, just as the study of security can be regarded as a relatively distinct field within the broader study of International Relations, so too can Critical Theoretic approaches to the study of security be situated and contextualised within a broader 'critical turn' in the study of International Relations (see, for example: Linklater 2008; Roach 2008; and Wyn Jones 2001 as well as other contributions to this handbook for expanded discussions of the extension of Critical Theory to the study of International Relations). The precise and distinctive place of Critical Theory, with the upper case 'C' and 'T' usually taken to denote a tradition derived from the thinking of those often identified with the label of the 'Frankfurt School', is itself something of a source of debate within this scholarship. In turn, whether it is even possible to speak of a cogent Frankfurt School tradition and a singular or homogeneous form of Critical Theory deriving from it is also something of a vexed question. Although the Frankfurt School characterisation is usually and commonly recognised as denoting work and ideas produced by those originally associated with the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research of the 1920s and 1930s (such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse) as well as later 'generations' of theorists (such as Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth, who developed their own philosophical enterprises in part by critically engaging ideas of previous Frankfurt School thinkers), the issue of what, if anything, binds these thinkers and ideas together is not necessarily a straightforward one (cf. Benhabib 1987; Bronner 1994; Held 1980). In some ways it is precisely this kind of debate that, arguably, constitutes a distinctive feature of Frankfurt School Critical Theory as a 'live' tradition. Considered in this way, that tradition of debate can thus be thought of in terms of a broad set of concerns ema-

nating from critical reflection on the legacies of Enlightenment political thought and a Marxian-inflected concern with human emancipation in particular. Bronner, for example, (1994: 3, emphasis in original) consequently argues the Critical Theory of those associated with the Frankfurt School is best thought of as ‘a *cluster of themes* inspired by an emancipatory intent’, with particular and recurring interests in the abolition of social injustice, in questioning supposedly value-free forms of science and ontology, and in preserving the integrity of the individual and maximising the scope of human freedom within given constraints.

Critical Theoretic approaches to the study of the international similarly reflect a broadly related ‘cluster of themes’ and set of concerns. Whereas, Roach argues, traditional approaches to the study of International Relations (such as realism, liberalism and their offshoots neorealism and neoliberalism) have sought to explain and rationalise the workings of the international system, ‘one of the fundamental aims of critical theory [is] to demonstrate how the ideological elements of political structures subjugate and threaten human reason, freedom and equality’ (2008: xix). In tandem with what Roach terms as other ‘radical IR [International Relations] approaches’ such as variants of poststructuralism, feminism and postcolonial approaches, Critical Theoretic approaches to the study of the international simultaneously recognise ‘the need to focus on the dark side of reason, universality, and rationality, or the systemic effects of oppression, patriarchy, marginalization and racism’.

In turn a key challenge comes into view: ‘How should we address this dark side of the Enlightenment’s legacy ... within a reflexive, yet pluralistic theoretical framework that does not allow an anything-goes approach (pure relativism)?’ (Roach 2008: xx; cf. Devetak [1995] 2008; Neufeld 2001; Linklater [1992] 2008 and 1996). This challenge to critically evaluate Enlightenment ideals without sliding in to ‘pure relativism’ has been most forcefully addressed in the work of Ken Booth as arguably the key exponent of the concept of emancipation within the study of security (Booth 1991, 2005, 2007). Most famously Booth has argued that:

‘Security’ means the absence of threats. Emancipation is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do. War and the threat of war is one of those constraints, together with poverty, poor education, political oppression and so on. Security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security. Emancipation, theoretically, is security. (Booth 1991: 319)

In later restatements and expansions of that position Booth has maintained that ‘emancipation’ remains the ‘heart of a critical theory of world security’ (Booth 2007: 110). Indeed his contention that security and emancipation are ‘two sides of the same coin’ has come to constitute one of the most notable interventions in the study of security, giving rise to lasting debates and diverging views over the extent to which security (and indeed emancipation) should be considered in this way. For some Booth’s exhortation for the theory and practice of security to be undertaken with an emancipatory intent opened the scope for deeper engagement with the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, which Booth’s initial (1991) invocation of the concept of

emancipation only alluded to but which was then explored in much greater depth in the work of Richard Wyn Jones in particular (Wyn Jones, 1999, 2005). Others have, however, been deeply suspicious of this inter-linking of security and emancipation, arguing that whereas the concept of emancipation invokes on some level a notion of enhanced human freedom (debates on what, specifically, that might entail notwithstanding), security by contrast invokes a logic of control and domination inherently connected to the maintenance of political authority and elite power and interests: the implication being that security and emancipation cannot be coterminous and are in fact in tension with – if not diametrically opposed to – one another (see Aradau 2004; cf. Peoples 2011). Mark Neocleous, for example, has explicitly critiqued the association of security and emancipation on Booth's terms by questioning:

What if the magic word 'security' serves merely to neutralise political action, encouraging us to surrender ourselves to the state in a thoroughly conservative fashion? And what if this surrender facilitates an ongoing concession to authority and the institutional violence which underpins the authority in question, and thus constitutes the first key step in learning how to treat people not as human beings, but as objects to be administered? (2008: 4; cf. Neocleous 2011: 187)

## EMANCIPATION AND THE IMMANENT CRITIQUE OF POWER AND SECURITY

While noting the pertinence of the critiques above, this chapter seeks to make the case that immanent within the Critical Theory tradition is an approach to considerations of emancipation, power and insecurity that treats *both* emancipation *and* security as concepts to be constantly and critically interrogated – rather than as ultimately defined or necessarily self-evident end-goals to be pursued – and with the unquestioning acquiescence to authority feared by Neocleous less of an inevitable outcome by consequence. A variety of scholarship has already broached this thematic to varying degrees and from a range of different perspectives within security studies (see, for example, Alker 2005; Aradau 2004; Bilgic 2015; Chandler and Hynek 2011; McCormack 2010; Neufeld 2004; cf. Wyn Jones 1999), along with a rich body of work beyond the study of security that has critically reflected on what might be termed as the politics of emancipation in a broader sense (including, amongst others, Laclau 1996 and Pieterse 1992; for an overview and related discussion see Peoples 2011).

Sharing some affinities with both those sets of scholarship, the discussion undertaken here suggests a more distinctive kind of immanent critique of emancipation and security that can be drawn from 'within' the tradition of Critical Theory itself, and a corresponding 'negativist' understanding of both emancipation and security. The latter approach can be characterised as predicated upon a general and potentially productive tension between 'immanent' and 'transcendent' understandings of emancipation and security. Booth, as discussed above, could be argued to, for the most part, articulate more of a 'transcendent' understanding of emancipation in which



emancipation appears as a kind of telos or end-point that is synonymous with the true security of human beings. It may be possible to suggest, however, as this chapter does, a mode of ‘immanent’ critique<sup>1</sup> within Critical Security Studies which is concerned with identifying and critiquing structural and institutional inhibitors to human emancipation as well as simultaneously, continuously and reflexively engaging in critical reflection on what ‘it’ (emancipation) is or consists of.

Although the proposition to move away from identifying emancipation (and hence security) as a kind of end-point or telos might appear at first both daunting and anathema to Booth’s exhortation to put emancipation at the ‘heart’ of security studies, it is in other ways possible to argue that such a move is consistent both with the notion of immanent critique as invoked by Critical Security scholarship and the complex considerations of emancipation that have been central to the wider Critical Theory tradition. As Booth himself has put it, ‘Immanent critique involves identifying those features within concrete situations (such as positive dynamics, agents, key struggles) that have emancipatory possibilities, and then working through the politics (tactics and strategies) to strengthen them. Emancipation is a politics of careful calculation as well as of hope’ (Booth 2007: 250). The notion of ‘careful calculation’ as well as the broader sentiment of the passage above already suggest that even for Booth there is a ‘politics’ of emancipation that is perhaps more complex than some of his other definitions of the concept might be read as suggesting. Similarly, the advocacy of a mode of immanent critique, as extended in more detail in the work of Richard Wyn Jones in particular, suggests a complex and reflexive process of normative critical analysis that, in relation to security, involves ‘an immanent critique of the prevailing security regimes ... comparing the justifications of those regimes with actual outcomes. When this is attempted in the security field, the prevailing structures and regimes are found to fail grievously on their own terms’ (Wyn Jones 1999: 160; see also Wyn Jones 2005: 221).

This latter understanding tallies in particular with Amy Allen’s recent (2015, 2016) re-reading of the Critical Theory tradition and, in particular, her evaluation of the early thinking of Max Horkheimer. Allen (2016: xiii), reflecting on Horkheimer, argues that ‘critical theory understands itself to be rooted in and constituted by an existing social reality that is structured by power relations and that it therefore aims to critique by appealing to immanent standards of normativity and rationality’. Horkheimer suggested that immanent critique involves a dual movement: ‘relating social institutions and activities to the values they themselves set forth as their standards and ideals’ (Horkheimer 1941, cited in Held 1980: 186); but that this is also necessarily accompanied by ‘...an attempt to salvage relative truths from the wreckage

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<sup>1</sup> For a broadly related discussion see Roach 2010 on different ‘currents’ of immanent critique, of which the discussion within this chapter might most closely fit with a current of ‘radical immanence’ (Roach 2010: 9). On the broader discussion of immanence as opposed to transcendence, which Roach traces to various religions’ conception of God as both immanent within and beyond (transcendent of) human experience, see Roach 2010: 8.

of false ultimates' (Horkheimer [1947] 2004: 124). Most prominently in his *Eclipse of Reason*, originally published in 1947, Horkheimer declared that:

Distorted though the great ideals of civilization – justice, equality, freedom – may be, they are nature's protestations against her plight, the only formulated testimonies we possess. Toward them philosophy should take a dual attitude. (1) It should deny their claims to being regarded as ultimate and infinite truth ... (2) It should be admitted that the basic cultural ideas have truth values, and philosophy should measure them against the social background from which they emanate. (Horkheimer [1947] 2004: 123)

As Allen (2016: 205) puts it, in a way that simultaneously picks up on the spirit of Horkheimer's exhortation to 'salvage relative truths from the wreckage of false ultimates' while at the same time seeking to address the Frankfurt School's general lack of consideration of the history and experiences of colonialism,<sup>2</sup> 'To inherit the Enlightenment project is to draw on its tradition of critique but to deploy critique in service of criticizing and understanding Enlightenment's own Eurocentrism and thus its ongoing entanglements with the coloniality of power' (Allen 2016: 205). In the process appeals to advance human emancipation must necessarily be informed by analysis of what emancipation might consist of and what forms of power structures and relations are inhibited or enabled. Thus, for example, Allen approaches her own research as consisting in 'asking what conception of emancipation is compatible with a complex-explanatory diagnostic analysis of contemporary gender subordination as it is intertwined and entangled with race, class, sexuality and empire' (2015: 514), where 'what is required is a precise and specific analysis of domination that illuminates the intersecting and overlapping structures of gender, sexuality, and race with those of class, culture and postcolonial imperialism, theorized in a transnational frame' (2015: 520).

Allen thus advocates what she terms as a 'nonutopian conception of emancipation', and – drawing also on the 'negative' mode of critique found in the thinking of Theodor Adorno (most notably Adorno 1973) – a 'conception of emancipation ... that defines emancipation negatively as the transformation of a state of domination into a mobile, reversible field of power relations, and thus that does not rest on a positive vision of a power-free utopia' (2015: 515). Rather than 'going back' to the 'first generation' of Frankfurt School thinkers, a less complicated way of anchoring the concept, study and advocacy of emancipation, she acknowledges, could be a strategy as found in the more recent Frankfurt School thinking of Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth: 'grounding normativity' in relation to human 'socio-

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<sup>2</sup> Allen's (2016) *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press) opens on page 1 by noting Edward Said's 'indictment' in his (1993) *Orientalism* where Said states that 'Frankfurt School critical theory, despite its seminal insights into the relationships between domination, modern society and the opportunities for redemption through art as critique, is stunningly silent on racist theory, anti-imperial resistance, and oppositional practice in the empire' (as cited in Allen 2016: 1).

cultural learning and development' (2016: xv). On this view, European modernity and development – 'or at least certain aspects or features thereof, which remain to be spelled out' (Allen 2016: 3) represent a 'developmental advance over premodern, nonmodern, or traditional forms of life' (Allen 2016: 3). The latter would thus come to serve as model or standard of human progress against which human development in general could be gauged. The problem, though, with this recourse to the ideals of enlightened European modernity and progress, Allen argues, is that it tends to underplay the 'entwinement of the idea of historical progress with the legacies of racism, colonialism, and imperialism and their contemporary neocolonial or informally imperialist forms' (Allen 2016: 16; cf. McCarthy 2009). The associated danger, she argues, is that we in turn risk 'recapitulating certain features of Kantian-style liberal imperialism' (2016: 29; cf. McCarthy 2009) and this at the expense of a 'genuinely open and open-ended intercultural dialogue on the costs and benefits of capitalist modernization'.

In a related vein that speaks directly to extant debates on emancipation and security (studies), independent of Allen's articulation of a 'negativist' understanding of emancipation but drawing inspiration and ideas in a broadly related way from the Frankfurt School Critical Theory, João Nunes (2012) makes the case that a concern with emancipation can and should still be made central to critical analysis of security politics, but with a greater emphasis on the analysis of how existing structures and relations of vulnerability and disadvantage might be identified and overcome. With the kind of 'radical understanding' of 'critique as the permanent questioning of security' articulated and as cited by Neocleous (2008) above in mind, Nunes (2012 : 350) contends that 'critique is not the questioning of security in the general sense ... Rather critique sets out to impact upon political actors' perceptions and actions, so as to pave the way for a reconstruction of security along more open, inclusive and democratic lines. Critique strives to redress immediate insecurities and to work towards the long-term objective of a life less determined by unwanted and unnecessary constraints' (2012: 351; cf. Aradau 2004 and Bilgic 2015).

Thus, also citing Horkheimer's *Eclipse of Reason*, Nunes argues that 'The internal contradictions of predominant security arrangements, made visible by immanent critique, constitute fault-lines where alternative visions of security can be fostered' (2012: 353). In a sympathetic critique of the Boothian equation of security *as* emancipation and vice versa, Nunes argues that 'while Booth and others have done much work on fine-tuning the account of *what emancipation is*, not enough attention has been given to the complexities of *what one is to be emancipated from*' (Nunes 2012: 353, emphasis in original). Crucially missing from the understanding of security *as* emancipation, Nunes' argument indicates, is an immanent critique of power relations within which both security and emancipation would be analysed and understood in context. A concern with emancipation is taken to necessarily entail a concomitant focus on 'domination' – where Nunes cites Iris Marion Young's identification of domination as consisting of 'institutional conditions which inhibit or prevent people from participating in determining their actions or the conditions of their actions' (Young cited in Nunes 2012: 356) – and where this should lead us to critical analysis

of the ‘context-specific, structurally constrained relations through which life-chances are curtailed for some and through which vulnerability is intertwined with the systematic production of disadvantage’ (Nunes 2012: 356; see also Nunes 2014).

## CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON ‘EMANCIPATORY’ HUMAN SECURITY

A common thread running through the thinking of both Allen and Nunes as outlined above, then, is their commitment to an ethos of immanent critique in which ‘emancipatory intent’ remains a feature, but with a concomitant emphasis on identifying and critically reflecting on extant relations of power and with a corresponding and ongoing questioning of what human emancipation might entail within specific contexts (see also Bilgic 2015). Debates and discussions of the prominent but contested concept of ‘human security’ provide a particularly relevant way to further illustrate this complex Critical Theoretic approach to questions of emancipation, power and security.

Emanating in large part from policy as well as academic debates in the mid-1990s (for an excellent and detailed overview, see Martin and Owen 2014; and, especially, Krause 2014), the advent of the concept of ‘human security’ was and is often identified as a kind of watershed moment in debates on security. The articulation and advocacy of human security by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994 within its *Human Development Report* is in particular often cited as constituting a challenge to ‘state-centric’ conceptions of security, instead identifying an impulse and even moral obligation to put the freedom and security of individuals to the fore:

The concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of nuclear holocaust. It has been related to nation states more than people ... Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives. For many of them, security symbolized protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards. With the dark shadows of the Cold War receding, one can see that many conflicts are within nations rather than between nations. (UNDP 1994)

Indeed as Jenny H. Peterson notes (2013: 318) ‘human security’ is often identified as constituting a ‘critical turn in international security theory and practice’, involving, as the definition above does, an additional concern with a broadened continuum of daily threats to the security of ordinary people as opposed to focusing and privileging and the narrower range of threats to states’ military security and defence as the ‘traditional’ study of security has arguably tended to do (see, among others: Krause and Williams 1997; Wyn Jones 1999; Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2015). More than just a concept – and even though the concept itself has been subject to a variety of definitional debates and disputes over its alleged vagaries (see Martin and Owen 2014) – efforts to advance human security in practice have often been denoted by the

shorthand characterisation of a ‘human security agenda’, with notion of an ‘agenda’ connoting a corresponding emphasis on a need for a multiplicity of agents (states, international and non-governmental organisations among others) to address different itemised forms of human insecurity (with the UNDP in 1994, for example, highlighting economic, food, health, environmental, physical, community and political forms of insecurity as an inclusive list of concerns to be addressed).

However, the more that human security came to be invoked within UN debates and initiatives as well as by other international organisations and certain states in the late 1990s and into the 2000s (this in some ways potentially indicating that the UNDP’s ‘call’ to action had been heard and taken note of), the more sceptical many Critical Security scholars have become of the extent to which it genuinely represented – and continues to represent – a ‘critical turn’ either in theory or in practice (Christie 2010; Krause 2014). Critics have argued that, rather than transforming how security is defined and promoted via policy practice, human security has instead tended to be invoked selectively and in ways that promote the interests of already powerful actors (see, for example, Chandler and Hynek 2011 for range of relevant contributions along these lines). Enmeshed with liberal approaches to peacekeeping and intervention (Richmond 2007, 2011: 43) and (neo)liberal approaches to economic development (Duffield 2007), the human security ‘agenda’, critics have charged, ‘has both historically and in current times served as a way of legitimizing mechanisms of dominance and control’ (Peterson 2013: 319).

In essence, it could be argued, critics of the human security agenda argue that while agents pursuing this agenda have noted and identified different and multiple forms of insecurity (with the debate then often turning to how elastic the concept should be in its terms of reference – whether to be more limited to forms of organised physical violence, for example, or to include also issues such as poverty and education), they have generally failed to recognise the extent to which those forms of insecurity are embedded within already existing forms of domination and inequitable power relations. Some analysts argue that the human security agenda, in the way which it has been conceptualised and implemented, has thus been ‘co-opted’ and ‘lost its way’ in more recent times (Turner et al. 2011), and others that the discourse of human security is framed in universalist terms as if potentially applying to everyone, everywhere, but that both its logic and implementation are pervaded by logics of ‘biopolitical rule’ (see, for example, Doucet and De Larrinaga 2011). According to the latter position, the human security agenda represents just the latest iteration of efforts to seek to control populations and the circulation of people, and to contain the risk of security threats emanating from areas and individuals affected by poverty (Duffield 2007; Grayson 2011), ultimately as a means to try and maintain as far as possible existing distributions of power, wealth and territorial control within the current international system.

As a result, in terms of its policy implementation, Peterson suggests, human security is best characterised as a ‘liberal-institutional approach in that actors seek to promote human security via current international mechanisms and institutions which operate under a liberal paradigm’ (2013: 319). Indeed, some wonder whether

this necessarily precludes questions being asked of embedded forms of political, social and economic inequality from within the ‘mainstream’ human security agenda (Grayson 2004: 357). Viewed in this light and implemented on these terms the human security agenda comes to be seen as a necessarily doomed effort to address the symptoms of an inequitable neo/liberal international system that has historically been constituted by unequal forms of state and economic power – a system that was in turn born out of racially stratified relations of colonialism and dependence – and that more often reverts to and seeks to re-establish the norms and structures of that liberal political and economic system in revitalised forms. ‘Human security scholars’, by which Newman intends those ‘mainstream’ scholars and policy makers that promote or advocate the human security agenda in a largely uncritical fashion, ‘do not tend to *fundamentally* question existing structures and institutions of power, gender, and distribution in relation to economic and political organisation ... In so doing, human security does not problematise ontology, but – perhaps paradoxically – still claims to be emancipatory’ (Newman 2010: 89, emphasis in original).

Critical reflections on human security have, along these lines, by consequence now generally tended to coalesce and converge in to a general wariness and scepticism towards the human security agenda, and although invocations of the concept continue to be made within policy discourses and debates – not least within the UN context – it might be argued that even within policy circles the human security agenda is on the wane. This in a context in which at least some states and governments appear less explicitly wedded to the form of neo/liberal internationalism and residual notions of cosmopolitan universalism that understandings of human security entail, and instead seek to re-emphasise the priority of states, the sanctity of borders, and national security and identity.

Yet it is precisely at this point of an ostensible ‘crisis’ in human security thinking and debates that Critical Theoretic reflections arguably come to be most pertinent. Rather than blithely returning or resorting to advocacy of the concept, we might instead consider the extent to which a mode of immanent critique can aid in considerations of what, if anything, might be worth ‘saving’ (to paraphrase from Horkheimer as discussed above) from the ‘wreckage’ of human security. Without necessarily using this terminology or appealing to the tradition of Critical Theory, this is arguably what at least some critical analysts of human security have already been undertaking. Thus, Edward Newman has, for example, called for a form of ‘Critical human security studies’ wherein critique of the human security agenda and the extent to which it falls short of actually enhancing the freedom and security of individuals (as critics often point to) in turn should lead us to reflect on what human security *should* entail. Similarly for Kyle Grayson, the persistence of definitional debates over human security – what it should encompass, whether to adopt ‘broad’ or ‘narrow’ understandings of the concept, how ‘it’ should be advanced and implemented – are instructive in that they may suggest how the disciplinary boundaries of thinking on security precisely struggle to contain and incorporate a concept that implies a need to hold the interests of individual humans and humanity in mind simultaneously with an international system (and within disciplines devoted to its study) that is traditionally

and conventionally predicated on the notion of *inter* and *national* relations. Thus, 'Rather than revealing a conceptual weakness, the refusal to succumb to the political trappings of the discipline's definitional project contributes to the *critical transformative ethos* that is the very strength of progressive visions of human security' (Grayson, 2004: 357, emphasis in original).

In a related vein, it is possible to detect the outlines of an approach to human security that exemplifies an immanent critique of human security's conceptualisation and implementation in which the nature and stated ends of the human security agenda are 'flipped' in such a way as to highlight the shortcomings of that political project and its ultimately limited conceptions of both 'human' and 'security'. As James Busumtwi-Sam puts it, it may be that 'the real problems stem not from the ambiguity [of concept of human security] per se, but from the way the present international institutional structure enables and even reinforces particular interpretations of human security even as it constrains and marginalises others' (Busumtwi-Sam 2002: 254). The 'critical transformative ethos' identified by Grayson might then be linked to a wider effort to question the linkages between (and constraints on) emancipation, power and security within the human security agenda, and scholars such as Jenny Peterson (see also, for example Richmond 2011: 50–51) have precisely argued that what is required is an 'emancipatory' critique of the human security agenda along these very lines. Rather than assuming that human security is a readily identifiable end-point that can be progressed towards in a unilinear way, instead, 'an emancipatory approach to human security entails a process through which' (Peterson 2013: 302–321), Peterson quotes Oliver P. Richmond, 'individuals are empowered to negotiate and develop a form of human security that is fitted to their needs ... Human security is therefore focused upon emancipation from oppression, domination and hegemony' (Richmond 2007: 461, emphasis in Peterson 2013: 321). Instead of a liberal institutionalist understanding and implementation of a human security agenda that already assumes and determines the form of human security, Peterson instead suggests an exploration of 'agonistic politics' – 'where differences exist and are negotiated among adversaries (as opposed to enemies)' (Peterson 2013: 318) – as a 'potential avenue for pursuing an emancipatory approach [entailing] the need to engage in *continual* negotiation of a confrontation with the hegemonic discourses and practices of international, regional, national and local politics' (Peterson 2013: 321, emphasis in original). This in turn seconds and builds upon Richmond's to-the-point stipulation that in order to 'resonate with everyday life in a range of different contexts', human security 'needs to be contextually mediated in every application' (2011: 51).

This appeal to 'contextual mediation' is perhaps best exemplified and extended in Gunhild Hoogensen and Kirsti Stuvøy's advocacy of an incorporation of feminist perspectives and considerations of gendered forms of violence and insecurity (see also, for example, Hudson 2005 and Marhia 2013) into human security debates as a provocation to address the question 'who decides what human security [is]?' (Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006: 219). Recast in this way as an 'epistemological perspective', human security can, they propose, 'direct analytical attention to security as

a life-world phenomenon in a societal context' and, by drawing upon gender theory, provide 'an epistemological attitude for engaging practices of security in non-state domains, exploring contextually dependent securities and insecurities'. Thus:

conceptualizing human security in terms of relationships of dominance/non-dominance introduces a lateral perspective on security: such relationships exist in all parts of the world, albeit distributed in different ways. Applied to a specific social context, a dominance/non-dominance approach to security questions how ... naturalized relations of dominance were constituted and continue to be reconstituted; and, by exploring practices of insecurity and security in specific contexts, such a perspective is making explicit the contingency of security (2006: 221; 223–224).

It is on this rendering, they argue for instance, that the domestic and sexual violence that happens 'behind closed doors' can and should be considered as much as the 'public' violence of organised conflicts. Indeed, as Hoogensen and Stuvøy argue, the identification of different forms of human insecurity becomes in part an empirical question of identifying where relations of dominance and non-dominance exist and how they become manifest in different contexts, as well as considering the concomitant prospect that our own understandings of human security and insecurity are contingent on and subject to articulation, negotiation and even contestation. Their discussion, and the contours and application of their understanding of human security, provokes and challenges us to think through what the mechanisms of a 'negativist emancipatory' can and should entail. Indeed this, in a key sense, is what the more ostensibly 'positive' and constructive 'emancipatory potential' of immanent critique might be: freeing us to consider, in contextually specific ways, the most complex questions and challenges of how 'we' come to know, understand and address forms of (human) insecurity as a 'life-world phenomenon'; and to explore in a more open way the possibilities for and constraints upon more democratic forms of deliberation and dispute of both emancipation and security where relations of dominance persist (cf. Aradau 2004; Nunes 2014).

## CONCLUSION: SECURITY AND THE ENDS OF EMANCIPATION

Immanent, 'emancipatory' critiques of the concept of human security thus leave us with a set of questions as to whether a 'post-liberal', 'post-colonial' (Richmond 2011: 52) understanding of human security is possible (and desirable) rather than taking this for granted: holding out the emancipatory possibility of the former but also attuned to the extent to which relations and power, domination and hegemony persist and can be recast in different ways. If, as the current conjuncture might suggest, the prominence of the human security agenda – to take the example considered within this chapter – may be on the wane, now is a particularly apposite time to consider what, if anything, of the concept of human security may be worth 'saving'. Although this may strike some as a particularly bleak outlook, and a less straightfor-



wardly progressive approach to (human) security and emancipation, the ‘negativism’ of such an approach may in itself be regarded in a different light if we consider this approach as entailing a constant and thoroughgoing effort to critically reflect on the ends of emancipation: what forms of emancipatory practice might be envisaged, whether these may be worth pursuing, and who they might benefit (cf., in different ways, Bourne and Bulley 2011; and Richmond 2007).

Such appeals to consider the prospect of more contextualised emancipatory critiques of human security can be related in turn to the idea of ‘metanormative contextualism’, as termed by Allen (2016: 34), which can be read as proposing a kind of ethos of ‘humility’ that she draws from the earlier thinking of Horkheimer and Adorno in particular: an ethos that suggests not that we should assume Enlightenment thinking and ideals are necessarily problematic, but that we should be open to the possibility that such ideals have, historically, been imbricated with practices of colonisation and domination in all sorts of complex ways. Precisely for those reasons, she suggests, it is problematic to approach such ideals as timeless ends to be achieved irrespective of context. Indeed, this would seem to fit with the kind of approach intimated – even if he did not pursue this fully to encompass the contexts of colonialism and decolonisation or gendered forms of power relations, for example – by Horkheimer’s suggestion as noted above that we should treat with circumspection but also critically engage ‘great ideals of civilization – justice, equality, freedom’. Conceived of and proceeding in this way, a Critical Theoretic approach to security might seek to reflexively combine immanent critique of power and security relations with an emancipatory ‘intent’ rather than end-point, and the tradition of Critical Theory might in turn be regarded as bequeathing us a set of live questions and challenges to be constantly addressed rather than gifting us a set of end-goals to run towards. In that sense, in thinking through emancipation, power and (in)security, we might, by way of closing, heed Allen’s proposition that ‘the best way to do justice to this tradition [of Critical Theory] is not to remain faithful to its core doctrines or central figures but rather precisely to inherit it’ (2016: xiii).

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## 5. A critical perspective on emotions in international relations

*Simon Koschut*

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This chapter discusses emotions in the discipline of international relations (IR) from a critical perspective, meaning that emotions are theorized as contextual, relational, and shifting. Despite the strong forces of the rational actor paradigm in the academic climate, the last decade has seen an explosion of research on emotions that is moving beyond what may be conceptualized as the first wave of emotion scholarship in IR. Whereas the first wave of IR emotion research was primarily concerned with bringing to light and critiquing the omission and neglect of emotions in IR theories and the practices of international politics, a second wave has recently moved beyond this preliminary and ground-clearing research by extending the boundaries of the discipline. This new wave of emotion scholarship has been developing its own research programs, using emotions as a category of analysis in studying real-world events, and incorporating conceptual critique into their analysis of particular emotions in concrete historical and sociocultural contexts (Van Rythoven et al. 2019, Clément/Sangar 2018; Arrifin et al. 2016). The result is the development of a field that may be called critical emotion research. While critical emotion research encompasses a broad and complex range of approaches and topics of inquiry, it shares three core assumptions: that emotions and reason are not distinct, but are intertwined in all decision-making processes; that emotions, rather than being limited to individual and private experiences, are socially constructed and experienced, particularly through language; and that every culture inculcates rules and structures of feeling that serve to produce and reproduce dominant cultural values and norms. These issues are connected to understanding emotions as socially constructed and deeply enmeshed in power relations in world politics.

Critical emotion research is rooted in a social constructivist ontology and a feminist methodology, which means that researchers are mainly interested in how emotions are linked to power and marginalization, boundary-making, and the politics of difference. Consider, for example, the emotional governing of the gendered dualism of the rational male/emotional female that serves to maintain existing hierarchies and hegemonic narratives in world politics (Kinnvall 2016). Also, socially established groups, such as the “great powers”, develop a positive self-image that reflects global power structures vis-à-vis socially non-established or marginalized groups, such as the “global periphery” or the “developing world” (Ling 2014). Conversely, social movements such as the World Social Forum or the lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community are built on strong sentiments of resistance and empowerment. This, in turn, opens up the possibility for various avenues of emotional

resistance through transnational protests and social movements, such as Occupy Wall Street, FEMEN, or the “Me-too” debate. Such marginalized groups and individuals can mobilize collective resistance as communities of feelings by “naming” emotionally appraised global inequalities and “shaming” those deemed responsible for their underprivileged status (Saurette 2006; Danchev 2006).

Besides its empirical relevance, a critical perspective offers solutions to one of the most pressing problems in contemporary emotion research in IR, which revolves around problems of method: How can we detect or even “measure” emotions and how can researchers identify the political implications resulting from their presence at the international level? Although social science offers a wide range of methods, the most prevalent are quite limited in their ability to understand the nature, role and impact of phenomena as ephemeral as emotions. As Bleiker and Hutchison (2008) have rightly argued, emotions cannot be quantified, nor can they be easily measured, even in qualitative terms. For a social scientist, investigating emotions would thus seem to entail serious risks and limitations. Critical emotion research suggests that at least some of the challenges can be met by supplementing social scientific methods with modes of inquiry emanating from the humanities. It draws on linguistic accounts as well as interpretative approaches by historians and anthropologists to advance the development of research tools and methods that would facilitate such cross-disciplinary inquiries. While such transdisciplinary border crossing does not come without problems and pitfalls, it arguably represents by far the most feasible approach to studying emotions in IR.

Let us consider two specific methodological problems. One methodological hurdle is that emotions are subjectively perceived ephemeral phenomena, the detection and impact of which can hardly be achieved by conventional social scientific methods alone (Bleiker/Hutchison 2008). It is impossible to ‘see inside’ political actors – be that interests, ideas, or emotions (Fierke 2013). Thus, one of the main challenges of emotion research is that, due to their subjective nature, we have neither direct access to the emotional states and intentions nor can we retrieve the ‘felt’ emotional reception and experience of agents. The problem of the subjective ontology of emotion can be resolved, however, by shifting the analytical focus from their internal phenomenological appraisal by individuals to their representational and intersubjective articulation and communication within social spheres. One way to study these representations, and thus gain access to emotional meanings and norms, is through their performative expression, either verbally through text or non-verbally through visual imagery and gestures.

A second methodological hurdle is the (im)possibility to attribute individual feelings to collective actors such as states, international organizations, or transnational institutions. Clearly, this is a circle that cannot be easily squared. Yet, the important question is not whether a state can feel exactly the way a person can feel (it cannot). Critical emotion research employs a social ontology that emphasizes the importance of the intersubjective and sociocultural character of emotions without necessarily denying their phenomenological expression in the sense of physically perceived feelings. Both historically and culturally influenced patterns of emotions impact

deep inside people as they are socialized into political communities. It thus follows from the above-mentioned intersubjectivity of emotions that emotions are culturally shared or “collectivized” among members of a group through the participation in social structures and practices. This allows for the possibility to assign states and other collectives with shared as well as contested emotional meanings.

This chapter is structured as follows. I begin by outlining the main ontological assumptions underlying a critical perspective on emotion in IR. I then move on to discuss one of the main research puzzles that critical emotion scholars are interested in: how emotions are linked to power relationships in world politics. Finally, I provide a concrete example to illustrate how critical emotion research can help us enhance our theoretical understanding of world politics – the social construction of liberal intersubjectivity – and close with some concluding remarks.

## WHAT AN EMOTION IS: THE SOCIAL ONTOLOGY OF EMOTION

There is a wide range of perspectives and working assumptions that encompass the term emotion, which makes it imperative to identify where one stands on such basic matters as defining emotions, how to study emotions, and how precisely emotions are circumscribed. At issue in this ‘nature/nurture’ debate is the basic claim to either a naturalist conception of emotion or a social one. In the former case, evolutionary and phenomenological theories of emotion focus on embodied experience and argue in favor of innate universals as opposed to cultural relativism. For these emotion scholars in the tradition of Charles Darwin and William James, emotions are ‘natural kinds’, meaning that they exist in nature and are largely indifferent to social labeling. Cognitivist emotion theories, pioneered by Magda Arnold, Richard Lazarus and Martha Nussbaum, depart from this viewpoint by arguing that emotions are evaluative judgments that are based on thoughts, appraisals, and beliefs. While cognitivist theories are less inclined to a naturalist conception of emotion, they do share its individualized and subjective ontology.

A critical perspective takes a fundamentally different viewpoint on emotions. It is rooted in social constructivist emotion theories. A constructivist approach to emotion does not constitute a single, coherent theory of emotions. It rather combines a set of generalized assumptions about the nature and function of emotions that have emerged across various disciplines, ranging from philosophy (Coulter 1979), psychology (Averill 1980; Harré 1986), sociology (Gordon 1988; Hochschild 1979), history, linguistics (Wilce 2009; Niemeier/Dirven 1997), and anthropology (Abu-Lughod 1986; Lutz 1988; Lynch 1990). What unites these interdisciplinary approaches is the notion that emotions are socially constructed in the sense that “what people feel is conditioned by socialization into culture and by participation in social structures” (Turner/Stets 2005, 2). Such a focus on the social construction of emotion as originating in social relationships poses an important research question for IR:

how emotions function in the collective representation of meaning, knowledge, power, and language in world politics.

Beyond the basic assumption that emotions are sociocultural phenomena, there has been considerable debate among critical emotion scholars about the scope of emotions as being socially constituted and how they can be studied (for the latter, please refer to the next section). A strong constructivist position argues that emotion is an irreducibly sociocultural product and potential similarities between so-called “natural” physical responses and emotions are merely incidental. Emotions only exist in social interaction and, more importantly, they can only be accessed by observing social interaction: “Emotions can exist *only* in the reciprocal exchanges of a social encounter and ... may be *only* understood in the social context” (Harré 1986, 5–6). Most critical scholars, however, do not take such a radical position and concede to the naturalist viewpoint that, at least at some level, emotions do have a physical basis. Many of our basic emotional expressions remain biologically hard-wired, like smiling, blushing, or crying in pain, and to study emotions involves including the biological as well as the social dimension. Hence, whereas biological emotion theories regard emotions as natural bodily activity and the strong position views emotions as socially constructed “all the way down”, most critical emotion scholars take a middle ground position by claiming that, “there is a continuum from the natural to the social, specifically that *much* of what is considered to be emotion is socially constructed” (Averill 1980, 37).

One advantage of the middle ground position is that it avoids some of the difficulties attached to the more radical viewpoint. As much as biological approaches tend to reduce emotions to the body, strong constructivist approaches may be equally accused of cultural reductionism (Reddy 1997; Lyon 1995). For such scholars, there can be no emotion until actors label it as such. However, the absence of a cultural word or label for an emotion does not automatically mean that an emotion cannot be physically experienced (Barbalet 2001). Especially in social situations when emotions are intense, our brain activates subcortical areas and pushes our emotional buttons before we can consciously put a cultural label on it. However, the radical position has one clear advantage: it ontologically and epistemologically separates critical emotion research more clearly from the conventional naturalist position because what makes emotions meaningful here is entirely accomplished socially. It is thus theoretically more consistent in relation to how language and culture shape our emotional experience.

These distinctions notwithstanding, a critical perspective on emotions shares common ground on at least three core assumptions:

1. **Culturally appraised:** Critical emotion scholars reject the view of emotions as solely physiological states or natural objects (Averill 1980). By contrast, it holds that emotions are characterized by cultural appraisals and moral attitudes about how the world should be (Armon-Jones 1986, 33). The content of such attitudes is not assumed to be naturally given but depends upon agents’ abilities to appraise a social situation as warranting a particular emotion. While thus sharing consider-



able overlaps with cognitivist emotion theories, social constructivism reverses the cognitivist account. A social constructivist conception of emotion assumes that the individual is not the origin of feeling, but it is the thickness of the social that makes emotion meaningful. Rather than emotions being understood as coming from within the body and moving outwards to the social world, emotions instead come from without and move inward. As Armon-Jones (1986, 54) puts it, “the attitudes which constitute the ‘feeling’ are explainable as internalizations of the beliefs and values of the agent’s cultural community”. Hence, what agents are feeling inside is to a significant extent predetermined by outside social structures. From a social constructivist perspective, emotions cannot be equated with or reduced to individual appraisals in the sense that “cognitive activity is a necessary *as well as* sufficient condition of emotion” (Lazarus 1984, 247). For constructivists, emotions are inextricably linked to sociocultural structures. This point is perhaps best stated by Lutz (1988, 5), who argues that emotional experience “is not precultural but *preeminently* cultural” (emphasis in the original).

2. **Learnt, not innate:** The constructivist claim that emotions are constituted by attitudes and appraisals rooted in sociocultural structures implies that emotions are learnt as part of a socialization process. By the socialization of emotion, I mean the process of how people come to feel as they do as a result of their relationship over time with others (Saarni 1993, 435). As much as socialization involves processes of learning cognitive facts, socialization is simultaneously driven by emotional attachment to significant others through “emotionally charged processes of identity formation” (Berger/Luckmann 1966, 131 and 178). Agents enter into social structures within which they synchronize and manage their emotional expressions, understood in terms of the collective values and beliefs of a community or culture. For example, human rights activists form transnational advocacy networks because they are emotionally moved by human stories of suffering and distress and, in turn, use the same logic to move other people and governments to action (Keck/Sikkink 1998). Al Qaeda is an emotional community in which its members glorify and mourn martyrdom and are united by their expression of (violent) anger and hatred against Western liberal values (Hutchison/Bleiker 2008). This presupposes a pool of shared memories and emotional knowledge that is paradigmatically linked to the identities of agents. By providing social conventions for affectively understanding the self in relation to others, emotional knowledge establishes the limits of meaningful emotional expression and experience, and thus delineates legitimate power and epistemic authority but also emotional disobedience and resistance (Rosaldo 1980). It is the accumulation of affective memories, founding myths, experience, and symbolic patterns that enables agents to make sense of the world around them within an emotionally shared reality.
3. **Socially prescriptive and purposive:** Constructivism assumes emotions to exercise significant social functions that emphasize their prescriptive and purposive character. Emotions serve both regulatory and constitutive functions in the maintenance and cultivation of shared meanings. First, in terms of regulating

social behavior, emotions underpin the moral hierarchy of values and beliefs by assigning emotional meaning to rules and norms and by restraining undesirable attitudes and behavior. As Jon Mercer puts it: “One way to test for the presence of norms is to look for emotion” (Mercer 1996, 23). Second, emotions serve important constitutive functions. The social constructivist viewpoint states that emotions can and often do vary significantly across groups and these variations are indicated in culturally local conceptions of emotions, including their meaningful expression (Briggs 1970; Wierzbicka 1999). For example, political communities in world politics are composed of emotional conventions that set the frame for appropriate interpretations and meanings of emotional performance among members of a particular group and thus incorporate sociocultural standards into the emotional lives of agents (Hutchison 2016; Koschut 2014). Conversely, resistance to comply with established emotional conventions challenges the very foundations of such communities and may thus pave the way for undermining and transforming them. For example, Martin Luther King Jr.’s successful plea to replace resentment and hate with love and compassion significantly reshaped the way Americans felt about segregation, thereby introducing political change.

To sum up, critical emotion research is based on a shared set of interrelated ontological assumptions that separate them from more mainstream emotion research. Whereas biological and cognitivist theories of emotions stick to a subjective ontology of emotion, constructivism shifts the analytical focus from their internal phenomenological perception and cognitive appraisal by individuals to their representative articulation and communication within social spheres. Critical emotion researchers employ a social ontology of emotions that is less concerned with investigating the subjectivity than the *intersubjectivity* of emotions. From this social ontology of emotions follows a social epistemology. A social epistemology of emotions states that emotions, and the hierarchies and power relationships they disclose, can only be fully grasped within the meaning systems and knowledge structures in which they are represented and known. Put differently, it is through these epistemic landscapes that emotions can become “what they are” and contribute to the construction of collective meanings, hierarchies, and power at the international level.

## EMOTIONS AND POWER

What critical emotion research tends to be most interested in is how emotions relate to questions of power. Over the last decade, many IR scholars have turned to emotions as a critical source to theorize how the discursive and culturally embedded nature of emotions intersects with political power (Bleiker/Hutchison 2014). There have been many different attempts to conceptualize how emotions underpin the construction of power relationships in IR (Solomon 2014; Fierke 2013; Hutchison 2016; Koschut 2018). For example, as I have argued elsewhere, the notion of an “emotion culture” adds a unique conceptual tool to study the empirical significance

of particular emotions to maintain loyalty and power differences between soldiers and “the state” (Koschut 2017). In many ways, individual emotions are embodied in and structured through culture. Culture provides a script for emotions that the body is expected to perform and obey (Butler 1990). By emotionally investing in a particular cultural structure, such as “the nation-state”, the individual emotionally aligns itself with a particular cultural script, which then dominates over other available scripts, such as attachment to “the local” or “the global”. In other words, socially acceptable ways of feeling and expressing emotions are tied to and reinforce one particular cultural arrangement over others. In short, emotions provide a socio-psychological mechanism by which culture moves people to defend a nation-state.

In this section, I suggest that the power of emotions in world politics involves two dimensions: (1) Emotions can be mobilized by social actors as *feeling rules* to include or exclude subjects from entering the boundaries of their respective communities. (2) Emotions can work through *feeling structures* by constituting the identities of all subjects through discourses of normality as well as by actively shaping resistance to the forces upholding power structures. Below, I explore each of these dimensions in turn.

The first dimension concerns the co-constitutive relationship between social actors and their relational capacities through emotion discourse. Here, the self-construals and hierarchies of social actors are constituted in being recognized as such by the other, as in the well-known Hegelian master–slave dialectic. Structural positions are formulated and negotiated through rule-based discourses in social interaction. What we propose here is that groups in world politics employ emotion discourse to establish what the sociologist Arlie Hochschild calls “feeling rules”: rules about the verbal or non-verbal expression of appropriate emotions in a given situation (Hochschild 1979; Stearns/Stearns 1985). Importantly, feeling rules are tied to social hierarchies and inequalities. Those actors that rank higher within a group are able to define a particular feeling rule, which means that actors in the lower ranks will be forced to adapt to a much greater extent and will thus have to work harder to adapt their emotional performance (Hochschild 1979). This is meant to say that inside a group, members are not treated as approximate equals but are woven together in asymmetrical power relationships. The self-image and ideal of the established group is formed based on the minority of its “best” members. These social superiors perform a norm building function, which Hochschild terms “emotional authority”, by exercising power over potential or actual non-compliers through defining the feeling rules and by enforcing them via othering or stigmatization (Hochschild 1979).

Feeling rules draw clear contours between insiders and outsiders. Powerful groups employ feeling rules to impress upon marginalized groups an identity that practically negates its self-determination and autonomy, thus rendering it a passive subject (Dalal 2002). For example, colonial rule over non-European societies by imperial European societies was based on the discursively constructed concept of “white supremacy”. Desirable moral attributes such as “piety” and “cleanness” were discursively linked to emotion categories of the *proud European Self*. Non-Europeans, on the contrary, were imagined and verbally discriminated against to be “dirty”, “filthy” and “dangerous” characters, linked to emotions of the *disgusting Non-European*

*Other*, forcing both sides to ontologically move apart (Hobson/Sharman 2005). Moreover, by internalizing such feeling rules, the marginalized group is left with an exogenously defined identity that came to be imposed on it by the established group, which downgrades the self-determined subject to an externally defined object (Gentry 2015).

Feeling rules thus follow a Weberian logic of power, whereby power means obtaining compliance with one's desires over the resistance of another. By such means, one subject "seems compelled to comply, against their own will, with the wishes and desires of another" (Burkitt 2005). Agents exercise power over other agents through the discursive enactment of feeling rules in social interaction. In this micro-interactional setting, emotions are often linked to particular status markers such as territory, wealth, class, ethnicity, race or gender (Muppidi 2006; Chowdhry/Nair 2002). Put differently, agents define and negotiate group-related identities and status roles through feeling rules by creating either social proximity or distance. Verbal expressions of sympathy, for example, can provide group members with a sense of communal identity while, conversely, fear toward outsiders tends to sharpen group boundaries (Hall 2015; Crawford 2014; Fattah/Fierke 2009; Sasley 2011). One can think here of the tense relationship between Israelis and Palestinians (a 2012 pro-Israel ad in the US depicts Palestinians as "savages" and Israelis as "civilized").

To sum up, the power of feeling rules enables social actors to discursively force others into compliance based on emotional resonance. It draws on an interactive account of emotion that makes the relations between subjects central: Social interaction constructs feeling rules – rules that govern how agents should feel in appropriate ways.

The second dimension draws on the emotional capacity of discourses to shape the self-understandings of actors through structures of signification and meaning. Here, researchers focus on how emotions are constituted by sociocultural and historical structures, how emotions are embedded in cultural institutions and how cultural institutions provide powerful scripts for the proper expression and experience of emotions (Åhäll/Gregory 2013; Steele 2010; Bleiker/Hutchison 2008). Put differently, culture provides a feeling structure: an institutionalized set of emotions that show a regular pattern that constrains and compels the affective experience of subjects, thereby producing and solidifying hierarchies (Koschut 2017).<sup>1</sup> Feeling structures differ from feeling rules by the nature of emotional governance: Whereas feeling rules view emotions as primarily agent-constituted rules, feeling structures regard emotions as extant features of the social environment in which actors find themselves. In the former case, agents establish linguistic rules to govern their feelings through social interaction, and thus retain direct control over their expression. This means that there is a separation between an 'outside' expression of emotion, which can be managed

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<sup>1</sup> Similar notions are reflected in Raymond Williams' concept of "structures of feeling", William Reddy's theory of "emotional regimes", Sara Ahmed's conception of "affective economies", and Alison Jaggar's notion of "emotional hegemony", see: Williams (1961); Reddy (1997); Ahmed (2004); Jaggar (1989).

and controlled according to social expectations, and an ‘inner’ residuum on which they are based. In the latter case, the way subjects can feel is governed by the discursive structures they inhabit, which means that emotions exist in diffuse sociocultural institutions and knowledge structures and are withdrawn from the direct access of subjects. In this case, the distinction between an inside emotional experience and an outside emotional expression breaks down: to say “I’m angry” is to *be* angry.

Feeling structures thus follow a Foucauldian logic of power, whereby power is not imposed directly on another subject through social interaction, but works more subtly as “a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions: it incites, it induces, it seduces ... [i]t is a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects” (Foucault 1982, 220). Foucault describes discourses as a means of exercising power through what he calls the “technologies of power” that define the social parameters of speech acts (Foucault 1982, 194). This results in a political order that specifies the status and identity of subjects not by laying down linguistic rules and regulations but through the use of discursive codes and scripts that tend to perpetuate cultural ideologies and hierarchical institutions as well as other regimes, which produce emotional subjects. For example, Foucault refers to the sense of honor or shame as disciplinary instruments (strategic formations) in discourses on nationalism or patriotism (Foucault 1991). From a Foucauldian perspective, emotions form the foundation of the “technologies of power” with the help of which certain discourses can manifest themselves as either dominant or marginal. In contrast to feeling rules, this is not done via imposition but via stimulation: Discourse shapes emotional desires for stable subjectivity.

To sum up, the power of feeling structures draws on an institutional account that views emotions as features of social structures. It positions subjects within macro-institutions of dominance and resistance that produce feeling structures – hegemonic structures that produce a desire and longing or provoke disgust and stir resistance.

## EMOTIONS AND AFFECT

Emotion and affect are often used interchangeably in the literature and there remains much confusion as to how to differentiate the two concepts. In this section I will clarify this distinction by briefly discussing some of the poststructural developments of emotion studies known as “affect theories” and their place in critical IR. Affect theories argue that theories of emotion tend to be stuck in analyzing that what is socially produced but inhibits researchers from uncovering the visceral forces that constitute the very fabric of our being. Put differently, affect theories criticize a tendency for reductionist thinking in relation to emotions and the body in mainstream constructivist theory. In IR, Andrew Ross (2006) has consequently argued that mainstream constructivist research has neglected the affective undercurrents that sustain symbols, identities, and other representations. Affect theories focus on the many ways that affective activity operates beneath and beyond pre-conceived social

categories of emotion and embodied experience. This has led to an “affective turn” as a key development in critical theories of emotion.

Emotions differ from affects (and their conceptual relatives such as feelings, moods, sensations, and arousals) based on the notion that the former is not only an elusive physical sensation but a cognitive representation of a concrete object (Goldie 2000). Affects constitute indeterminate and amorphous phenomena that operate sometimes prior but always outside their social manifestations or interpretation *as* emotions (Hemmings 2005). Once affects become fixed, they turn into prefigured emotional categories. Hence, affect theories argue that the starting point of the analysis should be relational processes rather than stable social structures. Affective experience is fluid, flowing, and always in motion: it is ‘being as becoming’.

One of the most influential works in the study of affect is the work of Gilles Deleuze (1998). Deleuze’s work has been important for critical emotions studies in IR because of its explicit focus on power. Affect, for Deleuze, is always active, never passive. Building on the seventeenth-century work of Spinoza, he understands affect as “the passage from one state to another, as an intensity characterized by an increase or decrease in power” (Hemmings 2005, 552). For him, affect forms a relational way of assembling bodies, how they vividly move and interact with other bodies in the production of everyday life in ways that escape discursive representation through text, images, consciousness, or thought. For example, we may think of the affective atmosphere when entering a room, the affectively loaded mood of a crowd of protesters, or the inability to express our feelings following a traumatic experience.

Brian Massumi has taken up many ideas from Deleuze and has turned them into a theory of power and affect in his chapter *The Autonomy of Affect* (Massumi 2002). Like Deleuze, he distinguishes between emotion and affect, the latter referring to a non-representative and non-conscious “zone of indeterminacy” that cannot be individuated or abstracted. It is a transindividual phenomenon that, in contrast to emotion, is not fixed on the socio-linguistic experience “which is from that point onward defined as personal” (Massumi 2002, 28). Massumi’s theory of affect is extremely relevant to the study of IR as he examines affective processes by which power effects circulate throughout the social field underneath the radar of linguistic grids of meanings. For example, he analyzes how “low-level everyday fear” in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks in the United States contributed to the success of the “war on terror” paradigm and the doctrine of preemption formulated by the Bush administration (Massumi 1993).

Some of the key works in critical emotion research in IR have used affect theories to demonstrate the relevance and implications of studying the non-representative and non-conscious nature of emotional experience. For example, Andrew Ross (2014) has shown how “circulations of affect” and affective contagion can produce profound change in global politics, particularly when a struggle in the present, such as the “war on terror” or the violence in Rwanda and the Balkans, can be shown to line up with emotionally resonant events from the past. Employing Lacan and Laclau, Ty Solomon (2015) makes a convincing case to take more seriously the affective underpinnings of power in producing subjectivity and illustrates this by reference

to the case of the neoconservative influence in American foreign policy. Moreover, there is the work by Emma Hutchison (2016), who makes a compelling argument of how “affective communities” emerge after trauma. Finally, there are other recent studies that focus on the micro-politics of everyday, culture, race, and gender that have drawn on affect theory (Solomon/Steele 2017; Roach 2010).

## A CRITICAL EMOTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON LIBERAL INTERSUBJECTIVITY

Based on this notion of linking emotion and affect to power, I will now provide a concrete example to illustrate how critical emotion research can help to enhance our theoretical understanding of world politics. In this example, I will engage with constructivist explanations of the democratic peace and show how feeling rules – rules that govern how agents should feel in appropriate ways – underpin the social construction of the democratic peace (Koschut 2017).

Constructivists claim that the democratic peace is socially constructed via mutual recognition between liberal subjects. Mutual recognition is based on shared moral attitudes and cognitive perceptions that construct categories of “us” and “them”. Oren’s (1995) seminal constructivist statement on the democratic peace as a “peace of our kind” suggests that this peace is the outcome of the dialectical logic of self–other relationships, and thus at least implicitly points to the socio-psychological link between cognitive and emotional categories that constitutes the basis for constructing liberal intersubjectivity. This speaks directly to an ongoing debate pertaining to the underlying mechanisms that produce the democratic peace. Scholars are increasingly pointing to significant gaps in our understanding of these mechanisms (Hayes, 2012). Particularly in conventional constructivist studies that center around notions of shared liberal perceptions and attitudes, the question looms: How are these shared attitudes and perceptions created and sustained? The prevailing assumption among conventional constructivists in IR is that cognition is “a property of intentional actors that generate motivational and behavioural dispositions” (Wendt, 1999, 224). However, as emotion scholars in IR have demonstrated, the claim that ideas, beliefs, and mental processes of acquiring knowledge have motivational force of their own is at least questionable. Knowing about “self” and “other” certainly influences thought processes and mental imagery but it does not necessarily provide motivation to act in a certain way. It is when one gets angry at the other that one feels inclined to seek revenge and embark on retaliatory acts. Conversely, if one sympathizes with members of a group, one will likely be more trustful and behave in a conciliatory way toward members of that group. Cognition that lacks emotional input fails to produce a sense of obligation or loyalty necessary for collective identification. Conversely, emotion that lacks cognition has no object, so there is nothing to get angry or sympathetic about.

Introducing an emotional perspective ties research on the social construction of emotions with scholarship on the social construction of the democratic peace in

a novel way. It shows how the social construction of the democratic peace is not solely rooted in shared cognitive perceptions and moral attitudes but significantly depends upon collectively shared emotions that underpin liberal intersubjectivity. More specifically, it suggests that such emotions form part of the sociocultural structure by which liberal agents choose meaning frames and interpretations which help align and sustain their cognitive perceptions and moral attitudes. In other words, the democratic peace is not solely constructed via cognitive knowledge about “us” and “them” but is, at the same time, underpinned by corresponding emotions of sympathy for “us” and anger toward “them”. Hence, the theoretical question of how liberals recognize each other as friends can be more fully answered by the high degree of emotional convergence among them. It is precisely this emotional convergence that can help explain why liberal selves construct non-democratic others as enemies.

To be clear, constructivists who study the democratic peace certainly do not turn a blind eye to the emotions. But while constructivist scholarship on the democratic peace presents convincing accounts of the socially constructed nature of liberal intersubjectivity in world politics, it nevertheless centers on cognitive constructions of liberal intersubjectivity and arguably takes for granted its emotional underpinnings. It is argued here that our theoretical understanding of the social construction of the democratic peace will advance significantly if we appreciate more fully and systematically integrate emotions into the study of liberal norms and communities – indeed in any norms and communities – and that a fuller engagement with the ways this reveals subtle yet powerful processes of aligning liberal subjects provides valuable insights into how collectively shared emotions underpin the social construction of liberal intersubjectivity.

However, a critical perspective on emotions goes even further. Constructivism in IR is not a uniform research program but rather a loose paradigm of related interpretations (usually divided into conventional, critical, and poststructural strands). A key difference that is significant to the argument put forward here is that conventional constructivist (as opposed to critical constructivist and poststructuralist) approaches do not dismiss rationalist-liberal conceptions outright but reconceive them in terms of the logic of appropriateness. This notion presents the specific puzzle that particularly highlights the absence of emotion and the need for its addition in the social construction of the democratic peace. Brent Steele (2007, 32), for example, follows from Wendt in arguing that such rationalist-liberal conceptions de-socialize or have the capacity to de-socialize agents so that friends and enemies may not emerge as easily as we might think. Put differently, by sticking to a rationalist-liberal understanding of the democratic peace, conventional constructivists have a hard time explaining how individually internalized liberal norms and identities provide the social glue for the emergence of liberal-democratic communities. I suggest that this is precisely why we need to incorporate emotions to explain the presence and persistence of such communities. Collectively shared emotions arguably provide the glue that helps liberal subjects “stick” together, creating the liberal intersubjectivity on which liberal communities are built, thus bridging the tension between individual liberal subjects and the political communities that make liberal subjectivity possible.



The basis of that framing is rooted in a radical departure from the overwhelming dominance of rationalism in much of conventional constructivist research which has stood in the way of taking emotions seriously in the social construction of the democratic peace. As pointed out above, one of the shortcomings of conventional constructivist approaches to the democratic peace lies in its ontological adherence to a rationalist-liberal understanding that provides a very thin social basis for the emergence of liberal intersubjectivity. As a result, the liberal narrative underlying the social construction of the democratic peace has been a very rationalist narrative that hardly accounts for emotions. If anything, emotions are regarded as confused, irrational (often violent) bodily motions that prevent any self-reflection about the conduct of liberal subjects. By contrast, a critical perspective challenges the rationalist-liberal assumption that reason ought to be liberated from the negative impact of emotions and instead confirm the view that emotions are not irrational forces but have a social pattern to them that underpins liberal (inter)subjectivity in world politics.

This conception is consistent with the argument put forward here. It builds on the more critical constructivist scholarship on the democratic peace. This body of literature has pointed to some important dimensions of this phenomenon that mainstream research essentially misses (Oren 1995; Steele 2007). Particularly relevant to the argument at hand, this literature not only demonstrates how constructivism can and needs to be distinguished from liberalism but also specifies which liberal strain of the democratic peace it is going after.

Again, Brent Steele's (2007, 33 and 45) conception of liberalism is particularly helpful here. He distinguishes between so-called rationalist "liberal-idealism", which views democracy as a universal outcome and promotes a value-free understanding of science, and "reflexive liberalism", which emphasizes self-awareness, both of theory and of the social world it studies. From the latter point of view, liberalism – and in a similar way the democratic peace – is not some abstract form of "absolute Kantian principles", but a social construction that looks at a much wider and more reflexive terrain: a theoretical concept that affects – even changes – social reality and, simultaneously, reflects the social context in which it is produced. Such a reflexive understanding of liberalism can then be understood as the social construction of liberal spaces, subjects, and institutions to which the democratic peace can be linked and from which it emerges. Exploring the emotional underpinnings of liberal intersubjectivity in the social construction of the democratic peace, it may be argued that the way liberal democracies recognize each other has to do with the high degree of emotional convergence among them. Liberal intersubjectivity is constructed not solely via cognitive perceptions and moral attitudes, but also via the construction of socially appropriate collective emotions or feeling rules. The feeling rule of amity assures that liberal selves gravitate toward one and feel comfortable and reassured in one's presence as morally likeminded selves: an intersubjective self-validation. Conversely, the feeling rule of enmity facilitates the construction of non-liberal others, generating hostility and antipathy between liberals and non-liberals.

In sum, liberal intersubjectivity can be said to be intimately linked to the affective quality of its relationships, based on the social construction of collectively

standardized emotional meanings and expressions. Put differently, emotions help “liberals” to make sense of their self and how they are situated in relation to others. From a critical perspective, liberal subjects seem to inhabit two emotional worlds: one in which sympathy is cultivated to stabilize and sustain liberal communities on the inside (amity), and one in which the social construction of “non-liberal” others simultaneously insulates from and nurtures antipathy towards illiberal communities on the outside (enmity).

## CONCLUSION

Emotions lie at the heart of world politics. But emotions not only underpin political processes. They are political in and of themselves. From such a critical perspective, emotions are inextricably linked to sociopolitical structures. What makes emotions political, and thus relevant for IR, is their communitarian nature: the affective connections between individuals and their respective communities. In this chapter, I argued that emotions are morally appraised and cultural rather than solely physiological or natural states. Second, emotions are learnt, not innate. They are learnt as part of an agent’s socialization that reflects the moral values and beliefs of particular communities and cultures. Finally, emotions are socially prescriptive and purposive, meaning that they contribute to the establishment and maintenance of status differentiation and social ties among members of a particular group. All of this highlights emotions’ central importance for critical IR. As shown above, critical emotion research undergirds and extends our understanding of power, emancipation, gender, the meaning of the international, and political transformation in significant ways. While emotions are often fluid and shifting, they also display a high degree of attachment and entanglement resulting in relatively stable patterns and webs of interconnections. This particular conception of constructing emotional worlds shares many affinities and is compatible with various other research agendas in IR. A critical focus on the social construction of emotion thus offers interesting ways to build on and enter into dialogue with critical constructivist, poststructuralist, feminist, normative and postcolonial theories of IR: how emotions function in the collective representation of meaning, knowledge, power, status, and language for different groups in world politics.

While emotions have a lot to say about critical IR, a critical perspective on emotion in IR is also necessary because it avoids two fundamental mistakes in emotion research. First, those scholars who uncritically incorporate a psychological understanding of emotion as inner feeling states ultimately fall into an ontological trap. Due to their subjective nature, we have neither direct access to the emotional states and intentions nor can we retrieve the “felt” emotional reception and experience of agents on a one-to-one basis. As Harré (1986, 4) notes, emotions constitute an “ontological illusion”, pointing to the misleading notion that “there is an abstract and detachable ‘it’ upon which research can be directed”. By contrast, a critical perspective claims no access to the inner emotional world of people but instead targets their

intersubjective and representational expression within social spheres. It emphasizes the importance of the intersubjective and sociocultural character of emotions without necessarily denying their phenomenological expression in the sense of physically perceived feelings (Averill 1980). The intersubjectivity of emotions allows us to study the ways emotions can be shared among members of a group and thus solves a key puzzle in emotion research in IR: how emotion can be “collectivized” at the international level.

Second, a critical perspective avoids the fundamental problem of universal psychologizing of international society and history. Scholars make a key mistake when they include emotions in their work in an unconscious and anachronistic manner by imposing meanings of emotion drawn from their own culture or time on other cultures or former periods, without considering whether there may have been cultural diversity or historical shifts in those meanings. Emotion scholars in IR should not repeat the same mistakes as previous generations of emotion scholars who often uncritically applied Western emotion concepts to non-Western contexts. And if we can accept that different cultures hold different understandings and expression of emotion then the same must be true for history: that individuals and groups living in different historical periods hold different understandings of and ways of expressing emotions. What emotion concepts like anger, love, fear, etc. mean may thus vary significantly from one historical context to another and what emotions may be expressed in socially appropriate ways may not necessarily be similar to the emotional standards of contemporary IR. As the historian Lucien Febvre famously asked: “And when the historian has told us, ‘Napoleon had a fit of rage’ or ‘a movement of pleasure’, is this task not incomplete?” (Febvre 1973, 14). It certainly is, for we have no idea what “rage” meant in Napoleon’s time or what such an expression might have looked like until we study it. Hence, a key move of critical emotion research is its call for reflexivity: the analysis of emotional representations in writing and images of the past and present to identify and compare emotional meanings, and how those meanings, in turn, have shaped and are shaping our contemporary understanding of world politics.

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## 6. Critical realism in international relations

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For the past few decades, international relations (IR) scholars have debated the merits of critical realism, a philosophy of science created by Roy Bhaskar, and what it can offer the IR discipline. As opposed to the empiricist orthodoxy of the social sciences, critical realism advocates for researchers to take ontological matters seriously. This has been a main source of attraction for many who argue that the IR discipline has been dominated by scientific antirealism. Among those voices have been Dessler (1989), Joseph (1998), Patomäki (2002), Wight (2006), and Kurki (2008) all of whom have made important theoretical contributions to IR critical realism. Their work has sparked a rich conversation on the advantages of an approach to ontology in IR, and some have speculated as to whether it could constitute a fifth great debate (Brown 2007, 409). In fact, Patrick Thaddeus Jackson has stated that “critical realism seems to be almost all the rage” (2016, xvi).

It is important to note, however, that Jackson acknowledges that critical realism’s growing popularity has occurred within a “small subset of IR scholars who preoccupy themselves with philosophy of science questions” (2016, xvi), and one has to wonder why critical realism is not more commonly used in the discipline. The most likely reason for this is because critical realism is not an IR theory per se. Unlike other theories commonly discussed within the IR discipline, Bhaskar’s critical realism does not offer an account of international politics. Instead, it serves as a meta-theoretical framework to scientifically research social relations. In doing so, critical realism challenges long held epistemological and ontological assumptions within the empiricist orthodoxy of the social sciences. There is real philosophical and scientific value in this, but this may also seem too abstract and trivial for scholars ultimately interested in more substantive and urgent issues of international conflict, political oppression, economic disparity, and so on.

It is a mistake, however, to disregard these philosophical/scientific discussions as trivial because they do, indeed, shape how we study those politically salient issues. Ever since IR’s “Fourth Great Debate,” scholars have been locked into conducting research along two broad methodological schools: on one side, rationalism (comprised primarily of positivist methods) advocated for a more scientific approach to IR, while reflectivism (including post-modernism, feminism, constructivism, critical theory, etc.) preferred more interpretivist approaches in light of the limitations to positivist methods. Despite their differences, however, both rationalism and reflectivism follow an empiricist logic whose focus on observation and experience prevent the discipline from exploring ontological questions. As a result, the empiricist sciences have been only *describing* the world superficially as opposed to *explaining* how it

actually works. This is where critical realism can potentially make meaningful contributions to the discipline.

In particular, critical realism's focus on matters of ontology articulates a more sophisticated theory of causality which provides a more holistic and satisfying explanation of social relations. On one front, critical realism rejects positivist forms of science which restrict causal analysis to observable empirical regularities. It holds that causal relations manifest in different and complex ways that don't always follow the logic of the constant conjunction (if A, then B forms of analysis). On the other front, critical realism takes issue with hermeneuticist approaches which favor *constitutive*, rather than *causal*, analysis in order to explain how agents and structures mutually affect each other. Critical realism does recognize that agents and structures are interrelated, but it places ontological primacy on the latter arguing that action must always be taken within a pre-existing structure.

In general, critical realism argues that the causal relations science attempts to explain are generated by empirically unobservable but ontological real structures underpinning them. This more nuanced view of cause and effect forces us to question long held conclusions made by both the rationalist and reflectivist camps in the IR discipline. For instance, critical realism's rejection of the constant conjunction raises new objections to the democratic peace theory (DPT), a research agenda comprised almost entirely of positivist methods. One must consider how DPT conclusions about peace reflect its methodological preference for measuring observable regularities to the neglect of unobservable structures generating them. Or consider how critical realism's affirmation of ontology challenges the constructivist assertion that IR is "a world of our own making" (see Onuf 1989). While critical realism agrees that social action does, to some extent, remake social rules and norms, it nonetheless asserts that agents are firmly situated in a pre-existing structure which first either allows or constrains such social action to take place. Change on the international stage, then, is not a matter of "ideas all the way down" (see Wendt 1999) but must occur within the ontologically real structures underlying it.

In addition to challenging the science of IR's empiricist orthodoxy, critical realism also rejects calls for science to remain neutral in moral issues. There is a normative dimension to critical realism in that it is not only concerned with explaining such social change but, also, bringing it about. This exposes another important point of departure from the empiricist sciences – critical realist philosophy blurs the lines between facts and values. For Bhaskar, an explanatory understanding of the generative mechanisms underpinning social relations provides the sciences with an "emanipatory impulse." After all, real social change requires more than making superficial adjustments within a social system, but challenging the underlying structures responsible for maintaining that system. For instance, Marxists do not aim to improve our current economic state of affairs, but advocate for revolution against the structure of capitalist exploitation underlying social relations. Anarchists do not want to reform a government's status-quo relations with its citizens, but aim to abolish oppressive forms of state domination underpinning modern politics. In general, critical realism's



focus on the structural explanations of social relations positions the philosophy of science to serve an emancipatory agenda.

These features of critical realism briefly discussed above (its focus on ontology, nuanced approach to causality, and emancipatory ambitions) provide the discipline with new and innovative ways to study IR. The aim of this chapter is to provide the reader with a better understanding of this. The first section discusses how critical realism diagnoses the limitations of the empiricist tenets that underpin both the positivist and post-positivist approaches to social science. Asserting that all knowledge derives from sense-experience, empiricism advocates for a science predicated on methods of observation. However, reducing all knowledge of the real world to our experience of it conflates ontology with epistemology, a problem that Bhaskar refers to as the “epistemic fallacy.”

The second section discusses how critical realism corrects for the epistemic fallacy through a dual-pronged philosophical argument. The first is what Bhaskar refers to as transcendental realism, a philosophy that articulates what the structure of reality must be like in order for science to be possible. Here Bhaskar proposes a stratified and differentiated ontology where observable phenomena at the top emerge from unobservable generative mechanisms from below. The second refers to Bhaskar’s critical naturalism, a philosophy that explains how causal relations operate in the social world differently than that of the natural world. Here Bhaskar argues that the emergent observable phenomena at the top can, in turn, affect those pre-existing structures from below.

The third section discusses how critical realism challenges portraits of “reality” painted by previous IR paradigms. For instance, Kenneth Waltz’s neorealism attempted to properly take the reality of cause and effect seriously by establishing the level of international structure as a causal force in scientific analysis. While this did contribute to a more complex and multivariate understanding of causal relations in IR, it did nothing to challenge empiricist understanding regarding the nature of cause and effect itself. Alexander Wendt attempted to correct for this by advocating for constitutive analysis (instead of causal analysis) as a way to probe the ontological nature of state and system. Contra Waltz, he argued that state and system are discursively co-constituted. However, reducing the ontology of international politics to discourse and ideas fails to articulate a mind-independent reality and, thus, commits the epistemic fallacy. I discuss how others see critical realism as moving the discipline past these errors. I finish with a discussion as to how critical realism can help IR realize its emancipatory potential.

## CRITIQUING EMPIRICISM

The IR discipline began in the wake of the First and Second World Wars with the aim to understand the causes of international conflict. While the discipline began with this singular aim, there is currently no agreed upon scientific consensus as to how to

go about studying it. In fact, scientific and methodological disagreements between scholars often leave the discipline fragmented and embattled in “great debates.”

For instance, the second great debate beginning in the 1960s pitted behaviorists against traditionalists over issues of scientific methodology. Up to this point, much of the IR research relied heavily on traditionalist scholars who favored historicist methods of interpretation. Behaviorists, on the other hand, advocated for a more scientific approach to the discipline and argued that methods of systematic observation and standards of falsifiability promised to bring a level of objectivity to a field dominated by interpretivist methods. Among the traditionalists was Hedley Bull, who worried that with “strict standards of verification and proof there is very little of significance that can be said about international relations” (1966, 361). He argued that knowledge about IR must “derive from a scientifically imperfect process of perception and intuition” (1966, 361). Arguing for the more scientific approach was Morton Kaplan who expressed his concern about such an interpretivist view saying that “generalizations are applied indiscriminately over enormous stretches of time and space. They are sufficiently loosely stated so that almost no event can be inconsistent with them” (1969, 56). Systematic methods of observation and standards of falsifiability grew in popularity afterwards and constituted the major scientific orthodoxy within the discipline.

The discipline underwent another debate beginning in the 1980s (the rationalist/reflectivist debate mentioned above), which pitted positivist against post-positivist approaches. While positivists continued to practice the scientific standards that emerged out of the second great debate, post-positivists challenged the philosophical assumptions underpinning positivist methods. In this sense, it was less of a debate about methodology and more over what epistemologically can and cannot be known. The post-positivist camp did not represent a unified school of thought but, rather, was comprised of several different perspectives, each of which challenged positivist assumptions from varying and unique philosophical vantage points. For instance, postmoderns challenged the truth claims of modern day science; feminists exposed the sciences as harboring gendered ways of knowing; constructivists argued that science reproduces a subjective understanding of reality, etc. The fact that positivism could be challenged from such a diverse set of perspectives only further demonstrated that the study of IR is more complex than how the positivist was treating it. In general, the post-positivists were united in their call for, as Balzacq and Baele say, “a more diverse, less epistemologically and ontologically naive, and more critical IR” (2014, 4)

Despite their scientific and philosophical disagreements, both rationalists and reflexivists share a deeper commitment to an antirealist ontology. Patomäki and Wight acknowledge this, asserting that “from an ontologically oriented perspective both the positivists and post-positivists share a common metaphysical structure” (2000, 217). Wight himself echoes this, stating that their theoretical divisions are “real, but that their source is ontological, not epistemological or methodological” (2006, 2). Specifically, both positivist and post-positivist research is bulwarked by an empiricist understanding of causality that prevents the scientist from studying

the world as it really is. Realists trace this empiricist understanding of causality to Hume's constant conjunction. As Kurki states, "these debates have been hindered by the fact that they have been deeply informed by the guiding assumptions of a dominant, yet by no means self-evident or unproblematic, discourse on causation, the key principles of which can be traced to the philosophical works of David Hume" (2008, 6). In general, Hume's empiricism demands that we explain the world in terms of what we can observe, rather than how it really is. Empiricist science, then, never really explains the world – it explains only our experience of it. As a result, the scientist conflates ontology with epistemology which commits what Bhaskar calls the "epistemic fallacy" (Bhaskar 2008, 16).

Bhaskar explains how positivist and post-positivist approaches each commit the epistemic fallacy by exposing the empiricist assumptions bulwarking both. Specifically, he identifies two empiricist epistemologies adopted by each: empirical realism (which takes shape in the positivist sciences) and transcendental idealism (which takes shape in the post-positivist approaches) (Bhaskar 1979, 1, 2016, 44). Positivism builds primarily on a Humean philosophy of causal relations, while post-positivism incorporates a neo-Kantian lens which frames the social world as a reflection of human thought and language. Patomäki and Wight describe this as the problem field for IR stating that "for positivists the real is defined in terms of the experienced and for many postpositivists in terms of language/discourse. What can be considered real always bears the mark, or insignia, of some human attribute" (2000, 217). The following sections explain this in greater detail.

### **Cause and Effect in the Empiricist Science**

The aim of the scientific method is to establish a causal relationship between phenomena. Despite the theoretical differences between positivist and post-positivist approaches, they both employ an empiricist scientific method in regards to the nature of cause and effect. As Bhaskar points out, "the mainstream in the philosophy of science, in both its classical empiricist (Humean) and transcendental idealist (Kantian) currents, presupposes an implicit empirical realism according to which the real objects of scientific investigation are defined in terms of actual or possible experience" (Bhaskar 1986, 5). Positivism accepts Hume's philosophy as both necessary and sufficient, while post-positivist approaches view it as only necessary (which is why they rely also on Kant). This section explains how Hume's philosophy of cause and effect advances a purely antirealist foundation, and how the positivist and post-positivist approaches work with it.

Bhaskar traces empiricism to David Hume's philosophy of cause and effect, also known as the constant conjunction. To understand his philosophy of cause and effect, it is important to first understand his theory of mind. For Hume, knowledge is either outwardly received through sense-experience or inwardly understood through reflection. The former refers to empirical matters which can be observed and verified, while the latter deals more with matters such as logic or mathematics. Hume argued that these two different processes of understanding reveal that knowledge forks into

two distinct categories (also known as Hume's Fork): those of matters of facts (or impressions) and those of relations of ideas (Hume 1777, E 2.3).

This was an important distinction for Hume because it offers us a way to think about cause and effect. He argued that causation cannot be a matter of relation between ideas because, if it were, we would know the effects of every cause. Therefore, causation must be a matter of facts – it must be an empirical problem that we perceive through sense-experience. Accordingly, Hume provides three criteria for causal events: (1) The first refers to what he calls the “constant conjunction,” which is to say that cause and effect implies a paired relationship between two empirical events; (2) the second is temporal priority where one of those events precedes the other; and (3) the necessary connection between the cause and the effect (Hume 1777, E 7.28).

Hume points out that there is an empirical problem with the third criterion. While the first two lend themselves easily to observation, the third does not. We can experience both the constant conjunction and temporal priority of causal phenomena – both of these are matters of facts. However, we can never evidence their necessity – this is a matter of ideas. We only expect the conjoining of two events to be necessary based on our previous observations, but this expectation has no real empirical meaning; it is a matter of interpretation (Hume 1777, E 7.6).

Following this line of thinking, Hume asserts that the aim of empirical sciences is to research cause and effect only as it pertains to observable constant conjunctions within space and time. This has shaped most of the social sciences as both the positivist and post-positivist strands of empiricism have adopted this view (Bhaskar 2016, 6). The following section (a) explains how both positivism and post-positivism incorporate Hume's constant conjunction as well as (b) expose the limitations of Hume's causal philosophy as it pertains to the social sciences.

### **The Positivist Camp**

Positivism advances a naturalist approach to the social world, meaning that the social sciences can study the world similarly to that of the natural sciences. If natural laws can be observed in terms of constant conjunctions, then observed social regularities should also be treated as expressing causal laws. For this reason, the positivist camp accepts Hume's constant conjunction as both necessary and sufficient (Bhaskar 2008).

However, there is a problem with researching social phenomena like the natural sciences, and it concerns how constant conjunctions in the social world react differently in closed and open systems. Closed and open systems simply refer to the environment that the researched phenomena occurs in. Closed systems refer to scientifically controlled environments while open systems do not. The natural sciences can identify constant conjunctions within a controlled laboratory environment and expect those causal laws to sustain themselves in a completely different environment. This is not the case, however, for the social world. As Kurki writes, “to assume the existence of invariant regularities and the possibility of predictive success is to misunderstand

the nature of the social world” (Kurki 2008, 169). The reason for this is that social phenomena are too complex and multi-variated to assume that observed behaviors in a controlled environment necessarily repeat themselves in real-world contexts.

Understanding the difference between natural and social phenomena as they relate to open and closed systems illustrates positivism’s flaw in assuming the necessity and sufficiency of the constant conjunction. First, it is incorrect to assume the *necessity* of constant conjunctions because observed social regularities in a closed system will not necessarily sustain themselves within an open system; observed regularities of social phenomena operate differently in open systems than they do in closed systems (Bhaskar 2008, 1989, 22–24). So, social events constantly conjoined within a closed system should not be understood as necessary causal laws. Observed regularities tested should be seen more as “tendencies that may, or may not, manifest themselves in open systems where many mechanisms interact such that some tendencies may counteract others” (Wight 2006, 51–52).

This leads to the second flaw of positivism – it incorrectly assumes the *sufficiency* of the constant conjunction. Because these approaches assume that all phenomena can be researched on the level of observation, they “do not touch upon or even claim to investigate the nature of underlying causal powers or mechanism in science” (Kurki 2008, 54). In doing so, they treat social reality as a flat surface void of structural depth (Bhaskar 2008, 1979). However, if the constant conjunction was sufficient, then social phenomena observed in closed systems would behave the same in open systems, which they do not.

In general, positivist research methods assume a flat and closed system where observed regularities are treated as causal laws, despite the fact that they do not sustain themselves in open social contexts. It thus conflates the underlying causal laws with the observed social regularities they try to describe. By framing observed regularities as natural – rather than the causal laws governing those regularities – it frames the reality of the world in terms of our ability to observe it. Positivism, then, commits the epistemic fallacy by conflating ontology with epistemology.

### **The Post-Positivist Camp**

Post-positivist approaches differ from positivism in an important way: they do not rely solely on Hume but also borrow from the transcendental idealism of Kant (Bhaskar 2008). Empirical realism considers only the observable parts of the world as independently real, but transcendental idealism considers the social construction of the world as dependent on the observer. While empirical realism assumes that knowledge derives passively from our senses, “transcendental idealism maintains that this order is actually imposed by men in their cognitive activity” (Bhaskar 2008, 27). In other words, positivism holds that knowledge is acquired from an external world, while post-positivism holds that knowledge is socially constructed internally. These approaches to science, then, do not treat the world as a surface as positivism does. Rather they treat the world more as a structure reflecting theory, ideas, models, etc.

One point of similarity with positivism is that post-positivist approaches agree that the constant conjunction is necessary for a scientific understanding of cause and effect. In fact, “post-positivists think that Hume and his followers have been right about natural sciences and their objects” (Patomäki 2002, 4). However, they disagree with positivists that constant conjunctions are sufficient. They criticize the positivist for ignoring the active role that the observer plays in the construction of causal analysis. For post-positivist approaches, observed social regularities reflect how the subject understands causal relations within society. Patomäki makes this distinction clear saying that positivists try to “reduce being to perceptions and logical sense-relations in language, post-positivists are susceptible to linguistic fallacy, according to which it is our language that constructs beings” (2002, 4). In other words, Kant’s transcendental idealism reverses the empiricist equation to make nature dependent on our understanding of it rather than the other way around.

Treating social reality as a reflection of human understanding prioritizes our experience of the world over the world itself. In doing so, it unwittingly joins positivism in conflating ontology with epistemology. Positivism’s dependence on Humean causal laws reduces social reality to observed patterns of human behavior, while post-positivism’s interpretivist methods assume that such observed patterns are constructions of the theories themselves; positivism refuses to acknowledge the real world while post-positivism frames it as a construct of the human mind. In general, both positivist and post-positivist approaches understand the social world only in terms of our experience of it.

## CRITICAL REALISM – AN ALTERNATIVE SCIENCE

While the empiricist researches social questions in terms of what can be epistemologically known (the epistemic fallacy), the realist works to understand the world as it is. After all, knowledge is about something, and what makes science meaningful is the fact that it produces knowledge that relates to those real phenomena. Critical realism aims to correct for the epistemic fallacy not only by separating ontology from epistemology but by establishing the primacy of the former over the latter. This section reviews critical realism and explains how it corrects for the empiricist limitations exposed in the previous section.

I organize this section according to the two major philosophies that comprise critical realism: transcendental realism and critical naturalism. Transcendental realism serves as a scientific philosophy that establishes the primacy of ontology and how the observable world at the top actualizes within an open and structured system from underlying generative mechanisms from below. Critical naturalism discusses how this open and structured reality shapes social phenomena in a way that makes it possible for observable phenomena at the top to, in turn, affect the very mechanisms that generate them from below.

## **Transcendental Realism**

Bhaskar's transcendental realism attempts to establish both (a) the primacy of ontology and (b) the nature of that reality, or what he calls a "new ontology" (Bhaskar 2008). He builds both arguments by correcting for the limitations of empiricism. Again, the empiricist sciences conflate ontology with epistemology by either reducing it to what can be observed (empirical realism) or by framing it as a construct of the mind (transcendental idealism). Bhaskar's argument for ontology affirms a mind-independent reality (contra transcendental idealism) and his argument for a "new ontology" asserts that reality cannot be reduced to observation (contra empirical realism). He argues both of these points by way of a transcendental argument which asks what reality must be like in order for science to be possible (Bhaskar 2008, 1979; Collier 1994). Below is a discussion of his argument for ontology followed by his argument for a "new ontology."

### **An argument for ontology – rejecting transcendental idealism**

Bhaskar builds an argument for ontology by challenging the transcendental idealism associated with post-positivist approaches. These approaches recognize that the scientist will always observe the world through the lens of their own understanding. For them, the scientist is never describing the world but, instead, their ability to construct it. As a result, post-positivist approaches reject questions of ontology as suitable scientific research. In response, critical realists assert that we must assume a mind-independent world in order for the sciences to maintain the foundations of their own intelligibility. Progress for the social sciences, then, requires that we take ontology seriously and theorize about it in a way that allows for our scientific understandings of the world to be possible.

Bhaskar's critical realism aims to accomplish this by way of a transcendental argument, a specific method of argument that asks what conditions must be necessary for something to be possible. According to Bhaskar, transcendental arguments are "from a description of some phenomenon to a description of something which produces it or is a condition for it" (Bhaskar 1986, 11). Most attribute this form of argumentation to the transcendental idealism of Immanuel Kant, who argued that our sense impressions construct knowledge only by imposing our categorical understanding of space and time on to them. Because, according to Kant, we can know the world only by making it fit our categories of understanding, we can never know the world as it really is (hence his distinction between phenomena and noumenon). Bhaskar's transcendental argument, though, breaks with Kant's idealism and pursues a realist question which asks what conditions of reality are necessary for our knowledge of it to be possible (Wight 2006, 23). Thus he begins his critical realist project not only by divorcing ontology from epistemology, but by prioritizing the former over the latter.

Bhaskar accomplishes this reprioritization through a distinction that he makes between the transitive dimension and the intransitive dimension. The transitive dimension refers to the social experiences of science and our changing knowledge base that it produces. The intransitive refers to those unchanging causal mechanisms

that science attempts to explain (Bhaskar 2008, 21–24). This is an important distinction because, as Bhaskar acknowledges, science is an inherently social process where objects of scientific knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) are not independent of the very processes that produce them. Bhaskar classifies these objects of scientific knowledge as transitive, a term which signals a directional relationship with those real phenomena that transitive knowledge attempts to understand (Bhaskar 2008, 22). This real phenomena, by contrast, are independent of our transitive understanding and, therefore, referred to as intransitive, which marks the direction of this relationship (2008, 23). As Patomäki and Wight put it, “the intransitive dimension to the world is irreducible to events and their patterns and it is these structures, powers, and tendencies that are designated in causal law, not Humean constant conjunctions” (2000, 224). Ultimately, the transitive/intransitive distinction is Bhaskar’s realist attempt to divorce ontology from epistemology where empiricist sciences have only conflated them. Articulating the ordered relationship between the intransitive world and our transitive knowledge of it serves to prioritize ontology over epistemology. This is an important step in assuming a mind-independent reality.

Divorcing ontology from epistemology through the transitive/intransitive distinction implies that socially constructed transitive objects of scientific knowledge may not portray their intransitive natural subjects with precision due to the limitations of methodological observation. Bhaskar makes this point in order to maintain scientific fallibilism (2008, 43). While we must assume a mind-independent intransitive reality in order for science to maintain the foundations of its intelligibility, we must also recognize the transitive limits of our scientific knowledge in understanding the nature of that reality. In other words, scientists should remain critical of the knowledge they produce, without surrendering to absolute epistemological skepticism. Our transitive knowledge remains fallible, but it is nonetheless about real intransitive objects, which means that some explanations will be more accurate than others.

### **An argument for a “new ontology” – rejecting empirical realism**

Bhaskar builds his “new ontology” by challenging the empirical realism of positivism. The positivist sciences reduce ontology to what can be observed and, thus, only explain the world in terms of our experience of it. In doing so, they assume a flat and closed social reality where causal laws can be identified on the same level as the regularities that they produce. Again, this reflects Hume’s philosophy, which analyzes causal relations in terms of our experience of corresponding events. Bhaskar’s transcendental realism corrects for the assumptions of flatness and closedness by articulating both a vertical and horizontal dimension (Bhaskar 2008, 1979, 2016).

First, the vertical dimension structures reality according to the transitive and intransitive dimensions. Because reality is comprised of both observable and unobservable phenomena, we cannot assume that all of reality operates on the same level of experience. Instead, reality is multilayered where different phenomena operate on different domains. Bhaskar refers to this as a “stratified ontology” where observed phenomena at the top are caused by unobservable mechanisms from below. This stratified ontology is comprised of three domains: the empirical, the actual, and the



*Table 6.1 Domains in Bhaskar's stratified ontology*

	Domain of the real	Domain of the actual	Domain of the empirical
Mechanism	X		
Events	X	X	
Experience	X	X	X

real. The domain of the empirical consists of our experience of the world, including the transitive dimension of knowledge. The domain of the actual consists of the real phenomena which science attempts to explain. The domain of the real consists of the underlying mechanisms that generate the phenomena in the domain of the actual. While our changing transitive knowledge rests on the domain of the empirical, intransitive enduring mechanisms function primarily in the domain of the real (Bhaskar 2008, 13–14) (see Table 6.1).

Second, the horizontal dimension “opens up” the world horizontally, recognizing that causal relations manifest in an uncontrolled environment. In an attempt to isolate the direct effect of causal mechanisms, positivism studies phenomena in a closed/controlled environment. As discussed earlier, however, social phenomena in the real world is generated within an open system comprising complex intervening relations. This explains how the diversity of phenomenal variations at the top can be produced by the same enduring underlying generative mechanisms from below (Bhaskar 2008, 33–35).

Because underlying generative mechanisms produce different phenomenal events depending on the conditions of the open system, the phenomenal events produced should be seen more as tendencies than hard laws. As Wight and Joseph state, “the powers and liabilities present at the level of the real may or may not be exercised depending on a particular set of circumstances” (2010, 19). Critical realism differs from positivism in a major way, then, in that it does not reduce causal powers to their manifestations. Rather they exist as tendencies which may or may not be exercised depending on the social circumstances. Understanding how causal laws operate in the social world, then, requires that we “open up” reality to include these complex causal relationships.

Together, the vertical and horizontal dimensions of Bhaskar's transcendental realism rejects Hume's “constant conjunction” by framing causal analysis in an open and stratified ontology. The vertical dimension of causal relations refutes the idea that such conjunctions originate in the same domain as they are experienced, while the horizontal dimension refutes the idea that such conjunctions are “constant” (Bhaskar 2008, 26–28). Because causal relations do not occur purely as constant conjunctions, the social scientist must consider how the resolution of such potential relations emerge from the enduring unobservable mechanisms in an open system. Such an analysis, then, understands that causal laws are basic operating functions which are always at work whether they are actualized in human experience or not.

The rejection of the constant conjunction introduces an important concept for Bhaskar: emergence (Bhaskar 2008, 1979, 1989). The concept of emergence refers to a process whereby unique objects arise from, but are not reducible to, the interactions of other more fundamental objects. “Each identified level will have its own laws and modes of operation, which, while embedded within the level out of which it emerged, are not reducible to that lower level” (Wight 2006, 110). This concept is often applied to explain how systems, which may appear to be designed or ordered, actually arise from the aleatory interactions of their smaller parts. For instance, emergence is relevant for economists interested in explaining how markets arise from self-interested actors. It’s relevant for neuroscientists interested in how psychological awareness arises from separate and unrelated parts of the brain. The concept of emergence is an important concept for Bhaskar as well because it explains how new and unique phenomena are generated in an open and stratified system. Specifically, it refers to how observed phenomena, while caused by underlying structures, are uniquely different and irreducible to those structures.

### **Critical Naturalism**

Critical naturalism is Bhaskar’s philosophical argument which expresses how transcendental realism can be used for the social sciences. First, Bhaskar agrees with the post-positivist that social phenomena are inherently different than natural phenomena and that they should be studied differently as well. However, he disagrees that this requires social phenomena be studied through an anti-naturalist form of science. For him, cause and effect still functions in the social world the same as it does in the natural world. The primary difference between the two is that social scientists must also research how the unobservable causal mechanisms underlying observable behavior are, in turn, also affected by the very phenomena that they produce (Bhaskar 1979). Critical naturalism, then, attempts to articulate how this recursive relationship occurs within a stratified and differentiated ontology.

This complex relationship between observable and unobservable phenomena is indicative of a philosophical/scientific problematique that Bhaskar refers to as the “prevalence of dualism” (Bhaskar 2016, 44). The argument that observable phenomena at the top can, in turn, affect the very unobservable structures that generate them from below complicates foundational debates in social theory. As Patomäki says, “attempts to overcome the dualism of agents and structure, ideas and matter, and superstructure and base structure, are at the core of the CR [critical realist] social ontology” (2002, 64). For Bhaskar, the prevalence of dualism persists precisely because empiricism’s rejection of ontology cannot conceptualize a starting point within these dichotomies. Critical realism’s focus on ontology resolves these issues because it recognizes the recursive relationship between observable and unobservable, while simultaneously placing ontological primacy with the causal structures that generate phenomena. I discuss this in detail below.

**The Transformational Model of Social Activity**

The prevalence of dualism within the social sciences simply refers to the disagreements over philosophical/theoretical/methodological questions. The most obvious dualism within the social sciences refers to the naturalist/anti-naturalist debate between positivist and post-positivist approaches. However, several others persist within the social sciences including agency/structure, society/individual, theory/practice, cause/effect, material/concepts, facts/values, etc. Applying transcendental realism to the social sciences, then, requires some synthesis of the prominent dualisms that persist in social research. Bhaskar’s Transformational Model of Social Activity (TMSA) aims at accomplishing this by focusing on the structure/agency and society/individual dualism (Bhaskar 1979, 43–46, 1989, 73–77). Before I explain this, it is important to understand how the TMSA was designed in response to the limits of previous social models.

There are two models of social theory associated with the positivist and post-positivist approaches: positivist models are built on Durkheim and post-positivist models are built on Weber (Bhaskar 1979). Sociological theory often draws on a distinction between Durkheim and Weber because each viewed the relationship between the individual and society differently. Durkheimian theory often considers social structure as a reality independent of individual agency. These pre-existing social structures serve as a constraint on behavior which frames the agency of the individual in terms of what social structure allows. Durkheim called these structures “social facts” (Durkheim 1895, 52).

Weber reverses the relationship to make society dependent on the individual. Rather than serving as a constraint on agency, social life is instead constituted by the individual’s meaningful thoughts and actions. As Ager points out, “the former have historically wanted to reduce the subject matter of psychology to the status of mere epiphenomena of the social structure, whereas the latter wish to reduce sociology to the epiphenomena of cognitive psychology” (2014, 29). Figure 6.1 illustrates these two models.

The Durkheimian assumption that behavior is governed by social structure reflects the empirical realism of the positivist sciences. Durkheim’s positivism did draw significantly from Humean assumptions about cause and effect (Kurki 2008, 63) in order to assert that real structures serve as the determinants of social phenomena. Hence, positivist social theory subordinates agentic-behavior to social structure.

The Weberian model, predicated on the transcendental idealism associated with post-positivist approaches, reverses this to make social structure dependent on agency. Again, transcendental idealism highlights the active role that the researcher



Figure 6.1 *Durkheimian and Weberian social theory*

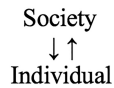


Figure 6.2 *Dialectical social theory*

plays in constructing reality. In this view, science is not a structure that we depend on to understand society but, instead, actively constructs our subjective understanding of society. By prioritizing agency over structure, social theory subordinates social reality to the agency of individuals acting within it.

There is a third model that Bhaskar refers to which he attributes with the work of Peter Berger and associates. He calls this the “dialectical model,” which attempts to correct for the linear relationship expressed in the previous two by recognizing how the social structures that constrain our actions are also remade by them as well. According to this third model, neither the individual nor society at large is completely independent of the other. Instead, there exists a reciprocal relationship between the two where structure and agency co-constitute each other (Bhaskar 1979, 40–41) (see Figure 6.2).

On the surface, this dialectical model seems like an acceptable resolution to the structure/agency and individual/society dualisms. However, Bhaskar takes issue with this model arguing that people are not “related ‘dialectically.’” They do not constitute two moments of the same process. Rather, they refer to radically different kinds of thing” (Bhaskar 1979, 42).

Bhaskar’s comment that the individual and society are “radically different kinds of thing” refers to their place within the transitive/intransitive distinction. The historically contingent nature of the transitive dimension is comprised of the meaningful and intentional agency of individual behaviors. The relatively stable social structures that agency occurs within refer to the intransitive social reality that makes those behaviors possible. Society at large, then, comprises those underlying transcendental structures that make individual behavior possible. Structure must serve as a pre-existing condition for agentic individuals to act within (Dessler 1989, 452–453).

However, the produced behaviors at the top do, in turn, affect the underlying structures that produce them. How the agency of individuals in turn affects the structure of the group, though, is very different than how the structure of the group affects the agency of the individual. How they affect each other differently is a matter of time. Bhaskar refers to this as an “ontological hiatus.” Social structure always pre-exists the actions taken within it, so agents can only affect structures in ways made possible by it. Agents, then, do not create social structure but, instead, either reproduce or transform it. Future iterations of social activity depend on this reproduction/transformation (Bhaskar 1979, 43–46, 1989, 73–77). This is expressed in Figure 6.3.

Following the graph in Figure 6.3 from left to right, it illustrates how the relationship between social structure and individual agents is governed by time. Society serves as the intransitive structure that either enables or constrains the individual’s action through processes of socialization. The actions of those individuals, then,

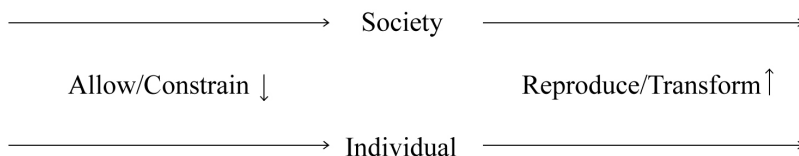


Figure 6.3 *The TMSA*

either reproduce or transform those parts of the society that constrained or enabled their behavior to begin with. Variations of behavior allowed by the structure may transform the system to allow future iterations of those behaviors, thus transforming the system over time. Bhaskar's TMSA properly reconciles the Durkheimian model with the Weberian model by framing social structure as the intransitive reality which allows for the transitive agency of individuals to either reproduce or transform it. Importantly, the reproduction/transformation stage of the TMSA demonstrates how the social sciences are different than the natural sciences (in agreement with post-positivism) but in a way that does not resort to anti-naturalism (in agreement with positivism).

### **Critical realism's emancipatory impulse**

Critical naturalism's resistance towards dualism isn't limited only to debates about agency/structure or individualism/collectivism. It also challenges the fact/value distinction and argues that realist attempts to explain the structural forces of reality allow for an emancipatory critique of social life. Inspired by Marx's call for philosophers to change the world, Bhaskar calls for critical realists to take seriously a critical realist program as an "emancipatory social practice." For him, no scientific program is neutral and requires both a "practical intervention into social life" and also "logically entails value and practical judgment" (Bhaskar 1986, 169). The social scientist researches issues of violence, oppression, and domination precisely because we care about these issues and, "based on the recognition of the epistemic significance of these ideas, affords to the human sciences an essential emancipatory impulse" (1986, 169).

It is important to note that Bhaskar modifies Marx's call for change arguing that social transformation requires an accurate interpretation of the real social forces at work. For Bhaskar, such an understanding requires an explanatory critique of the generative structures underlying empirical forms of oppression. According to Bhaskar:

It is only if social phenomena are genuinely emergent that realist explanations in the human sciences are justified; and it is only if these conditions are satisfied that there is any possibility of human self-emancipation worthy of the name. But, conversely, emergent phenomena require realist explanations and realist explanations possess emancipatory implications. Emancipation depends upon explanation depends on emergence (1986, 103–104).

In no way does Bhaskar argue that speculative knowledge logically leads to practical action, but the latter is dependent on the former where explanatory (realist) critique frames normative discourses in a way that “dissolves rigid dichotomies – between fact and value, theory and practice, explanation and emancipation, science and critique” (1986, 167).

Bhaskar’s philosophy of emancipation implicates the structure–agency debate. Emancipation refers to the actualization of one’s agency and therefore requires an understanding of the deeper structural constraints on empirical human action. Emancipation, then, requires transforming those underlying structures that constrain human action. Science aids in these efforts. Without such an explanatory understanding – in other words, with only a descriptive understanding – knowledge only facilitates social reform, not transformation. And because “science informs values and actions, which in turn motivates science” (1986, 172), it is important to approach science as an emancipatory social practice.

## CRITICAL REALISM AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

This next section discusses critical realism in the context of the IR discipline. It should be understood by now that critical realism is a philosophy of science and not a theory of international politics. As such, it offers no specific insights regarding the behavior of international actors or how they relate to each other. It does, however, serve as meta-theoretical framework to research social relations. The aim of this section, then, is not to outline a new “critical realist theory of IR” but, rather, to critique the empiricist portraits of IR. Exposing the limitations of the discipline’s antirealism allows us to incorporate critical realist principles into the discipline making it possible to understand the nature of political reality. I finish this section with a prospective framework to consider the emancipatory potential of IR.

Several in the field have turned to critical realism in the hopes of advancing our scientific understanding beyond the confines of a stale positivist/post-positivist debate. Patomäki has argued that “since the international problematic is based on irrealist and false understandings, illusions and mystification, CR [critical realism] can help overcome the international problematic” (2002, 4). Wight agrees, asserting that, “what IR theory needs is, first and foremost, some ‘ontological investigations’” (2006, 13). Kurki echoes these statements saying that “ontological questions are, in fact, fundamental to understanding causation and its role in science, natural as well as social” (Kurki 2008, 10–11). Generally, critical realists agree that taking ontology seriously can provide new insights into the causal relations of international politics.

It is first important to consider how our current understandings of world politics reflect empiricist assumptions and how they have stymied a more sophisticated understanding of causal relations in world politics. Recognizing those antirealist assumptions buttressing the discipline makes it possible for a critical realist intervention to re-conceptualize causal relations in world politics. Critical realists trace the IR discipline’s dominant theoretical framework – organized primarily around the state

and the system – to Kenneth Waltz’s levels-of-analysis problematique, a framework that advances a purely positivist form of science. Authors have pointed out its weaknesses inherent in its antirealist assumptions (Patomäki 2002, 68–81; Joseph 2007, 345–359; Kurki 2008, 245–252) or critiqued it through the agency–structure debate (Dessler 1989; Wendt 1992a; Wight 2006, 90–98). I discuss this below.

### **Levels-of-Analysis in International Relations**

Politics on the world stage is shaped by multiple different actors interacting with each other in complex ways. Researching this would be difficult without some method to break down and categorize those component parts so as to better understand how they relate to each other. Waltz’s *Man, the State, and War* (1959) does this by demarcating those factors of world politics into “levels-of-analysis.” He proposed that international politics is the result of actions taken on a vertical ordering of three levels, or what he calls “images”: the individual, the state, and the system. The individual refers to the interactions of people and how they affect international affairs. This level of analysis often implicates specific individuals or political officials, but it is broadly concerned with the sociology and psychology of people generally. The state level of analysis refers to the institution of the nation-state and its characteristics that shape its interactions with other actors. The system level refers to those international or global factors that function outside the state’s borders (global markets, international laws, balance of power, etc.) but which shape state actions/behaviors.

By breaking international politics down to its component parts, Waltz’s level-of-analysis schema aimed to make IR research more systematic by compartmentalizing which factors can causally relate to each other. In his own words, “I used the term ‘levels of analysis’ to fix the location of the presumed principal cause of international political outcomes” (1959, ix). This systematized IR research and, published during the second great debate, shaped how the discipline conceptualized the world of international politics in more scientific terms. However, critical realists disagree that Waltz’s “images” of international politics actually aid in analyzing causal relations. This may seem counterintuitive at first given critical realism’s tendency towards hierarchical models of reality, but Waltz’s levels-of-analysis schema shares nothing in common with Bhaskar’s stratified ontology. This is an important point because the political realism associated with Waltz is a political theory, not an epistemological/ontological one. So, despite the fact that his neorealism boasts its ability to describe politics as it really is, Waltz never engages in questions regarding the nature of reality or causality. He takes these questions for granted and, associated with the behaviorist attitudes of the time, his levels-of-analysis are firmly situated within a positivist logic. Specifically, Waltz’s images function to analyze causal relations as they are understood in terms of constant conjunctions.

It is first important to provide some context regarding the scientific and disciplinary goals behind Waltz’s neorealism. He intended to reform causal analysis, especially how it was conducted in line with classical realism. According to Waltz, “neorealism retains the main tenets of realpolitik, but means and ends are viewed

differently, as are causes and effects” (1988, 616). For him, classical realists see “causes as moving in only one direction” (1988, 616) primarily because they conceive of causal relations as comprising only the unit of analysis and the outcomes of their actions. Waltz argued, however, that considering only the state’s internal characteristics and its actions on the world stage was insufficient for explaining the outbreak of war. For him, IR theory needed to incorporate a system-level-of-analysis to conceptualize how international structure creates the conditions that lead states to war (Waltz 1959, 160). His inclusion of international structure modifies causal analysis such that it “reconceives the causal link between interacting units and international outcomes” (1988, 617).

No matter how Waltz “reconceives” causal analysis, his neorealism never accurately portrays the reality of IR because his understanding of cause and effect still follows a positivist logic. Waltz’s portrait of international politics functions purely as a closed system due to the fact that causal relations are categorized and controlled along their respective “level of analysis” (Patomäki 2002, 78–79; Kurki 2008, 248–249). These levels, or “images,” serve merely to control which relationships may be subject to empirical investigation. Outlining these boundaries upon which researchers may record controlled regularities treats politics as occurring solely at the level of observation. As a result, causal analysis is reduced to recording constant conjunctions between entities within their closed level of analysis.

Not only is Waltz’s portrait of international politics closed but, despite its use of the term “levels,” it also lacks depth. His tiered ordering of individuals, states, and system refers purely to spatial domains rather than ontological levels. Each of these domains operates on the same flat surface and, as a result, never gives rise to the other. Interactions between these spatial domains is limited to the international system structuring the agency of states. This parallels Durkheim’s social theory which presumed that cause lies in the structure affecting the agents within it.

Ultimately, Waltz never succeeds in demonstrating that causal relations in international politics do *not* “move in only one direction” because he never accepts a framework capable of realizing the multidimensional nature of cause and effect. Instead, his positivist commitments frame cause in terms of Hume’s constant conjunction. As a result, he paints IR as occurring within a closed and ontologically flat system. This portrait of international politics parallels the empirical realism of Durkheim who subordinates agency to structure. In the end, Waltz’s neorealism suffers from the mono-directional form of causality that he worked to overcome.

### **Structure/Agency Debate in International Relations**

The Fourth Great Debate arose in the 1980s challenging the positivist orthodoxy of the IR discipline, and neorealist IR theory along with it. Those from the reflectivist side of the debate argued that Waltz’s levels-of-analysis framework falsely assumes the socially constructed nature of state and system as objectively natural (Ashley 1984; Walker 1993).



Not every reflectivist argument, though, was resistant to theorizing about the state. For instance, constructivism emerged during this time as a social theory of the state by way of challenging neorealist assumptions regarding the causal primacy of international structure. While neorealism assumes the causal power of structure as naturally given, constructivism argues instead that both state and system are discursively co-constituted. In this light, constructivists hold that anarchy is not destined to be a self-help system – it only becomes one when states behave in accordance with neorealist assumptions. This line of argument was popularized by Alexander Wendt in “Anarchy is What States Make of It” (1992a).

Wendt is well known for his contribution to constructivist theory. He aimed to challenge the positivist assumption that state behavior is determined by international structure. For him, this approach to international politics neglected the important role that language and ideas play in shaping state behavior (Wendt 1999). In challenging the notion that states are determined by structure, Wendt’s social theory of the state inverted the argument asserting that the structure emerges from state identities and ideas. In doing so, he brought into the fold the structure–agency debate as a way to problematize the leveled divisions between state and system, and argued that we should consider the agentic role that states play in constructing the international system (Wendt 1992a).

An important point to highlight about Wendt’s approach to IR is that it is one of the first attempts to incorporate principles of scientific realism. He saw this as a way for the discipline to move past the rationalist/reflectivist debate. For him, “Part of the gulf that separates positivists and post-positivists in social science stems, I believe, from a mistaken view of these two types of theorizing” (Wendt 1999, 77). For him, these differences led scientists to study cause and effect differently in IR – positivists relied on *causal* analysis which asked “how” and “why” questions, while post-positivists encouraged *constitutive* analysis more concerned with “what is” and the things that make it possible. He sees this as a false rivalry because “in fact, all scientists do both kinds of social theory” (1999, 77–78). Because scientific realism recognizes the importance of both, Wendt sees its potential in moving the discipline forward.

There is an irony, however, in Wendt’s attempt to introduce principles of scientific realism through the constructivist theory associated with him – that is, constructivism isn’t really seen as taking matters of ontology seriously. Constructivist approaches to IR operate within a narrow ontology comprised primarily of language, norms, and ideas (McCourt 2016) which parallel the transcendental idealism of Kant rather than the critical realism of Bhaskar. As a result, constructivism doesn’t aid in bridging the gap between rationalist and reflectivist approaches to IR. Perhaps this is due to Wendt’s inability to properly represent principles of scientific realism, or to clearly articulate how such principles may be incorporated into IR research. There are two points of criticism worth taking up against Wendt. The first is on cause and effect, and the second is on structure and agency.

In terms of cause and effect, Wendt follows Bhaskar in drawing a distinction between the Humean forms of causal analysis conducted by the positivists and the

constitutive form of analysis conducted by the post-positivists. In doing so, he agrees with Bhaskar that both allowed their causal/constitutive preferences to prioritize epistemology over ontology. While Wendt sees this as a problem, however, he does very little in terms of a solution. He doesn't recognize any alternative method, nor does he offer a new path forward, which begs the question as to what exactly is realist about his approach. Causal theorizing is an important exercise for realists, yet he never engages in it. He even goes as far as to imply that taking ontology seriously requires no new causal theorizing. He says:

In one sense this changes nothing, since everyone can go about their business as before: empiricists looking for behavioral laws, rationalists building deductive theories, process tracers doing case studies, critical theorists thinking about deep social structures, postmoderns doing constitutive theory. But the point is that everyone gets to do what they do: from a realist stance epistemology cannot legislate scientific practice. (Wendt 1992, 91)

This is a rather superficial understanding of scientific realism. Wendt employs it merely as a philosophical attitude meant to “diffuse these [epistemological] anxieties by turning our attention to ontology” (Wendt 1992, 91). Fair enough, but if we are to “turn our attention to ontology” then we must begin by problematizing the nature of causal relations. Wendt doesn't do this – he simply accepts the limited choices between constitutive analysis and Humean causal analysis. He never moves past the positivist/post-positivist horizon and, as a result, never arrives at a realist approach. Kurki is critical of Wendt for similar reasons stating that “his treatment of the causal-constitutive theorizing dichotomy actually ends up reproducing the very divisionary logic that he, through philosophical realism, tried to transcend” (2008, 179).

The second point regards Wendt's use of the structure–agency debate as a way to move past the levels-of-analysis schema. Wendt argues, quite correctly, that levels-of-analysis are helpful only if we are to take the actors within it as given – it tells us nothing as to how those actors or conditions are socially constructed. For this, we have to probe into the role that agents play in constituting state and system (Wendt 1992b, 185). For him, engaging in the agency–structure debate is an important part of theorizing because “all social scientific theory embody [sic] an at least implicit solution to the ‘agent–structure’ problem” (Wendt 1987, 337). In other words, social theory typically assumes a causal relationship between social entities and the conditions that they act within. Theorists simply disagree over the direction of that relationship. Individualist approaches give weight to agents, while structuralist approaches prioritize the conditions they act within.

Building on the work of Giddens, Wendt asserts that both are important and refers to a “structurationist” approach which “tries to avoid what I argue are the negative consequences of individualism and structuralism theory by giving agents and structures equal ontological status” (Wendt 1987, 355). In doing so, Wendt counters Waltz by dispensing with the ontological primacy of structure affirming the agentic role of the state in constructing the international system.

Wendt's solution to the agent–structure problem, however, reproduces the dialectical logic associated with Berger and, therefore, suffers from the same irrealism present in his understanding of cause and effect. In arguing that agent and structure constitute each other simultaneously, he overlooks the fact that they are “radically different kinds of thing” with reference to the transitive/intransitive distinction. Again, the transitive dimension is comprised of the intentional agency of individual behaviors, while the relatively stable social structures that agency occurs within refers to the intransitive social reality that makes those behaviors possible. Structure, then, serves as a transcendental necessity underlying agent's actions. Agent and structure are not co-constituted simultaneously but, instead, governed by time – social structure always pre-exists the actions taken within it. Therefore, agents can only cause social change in ways such that structure either allows or constrains their action (Bhaskar 1979, 43–46, 1989, 73–77).

### **Reconfiguring the Reality of International Relations**

One can see, given Waltz's levels-of-analysis problematique and Wendt's agency–structure solution, how currents of irrealism run throughout the discipline. Waltz's neorealism pushed the discipline into a more positivist direction after the second great debate. While it assumed the reality of an international system, its levels-of-analysis served to identify observable causal relations and, therefore, framed structure purely in empiricist terms. Waltz's neorealism, then, reflects the empirical realism of Durkheim, which not only subordinated state agency to international structure, but also reduced the ontology of that structure to what can be empirically observed.

Wendt's challenge to Waltz's neorealism attempted to take ontology seriously by incorporating principles of scientific realism. For him, moving the discipline in a more ontological direction required asking “what is” questions, a type of questioning done in constitutive analysis. In questioning the nature of state and system, Wendt argued that they are mutually constituted through ideas, discourse, behavior, etc. This positioned him to challenge neorealist assumptions regarding the ontological primacy of structure and, instead, focus on how structure is socially constructed. By arguing that state and structure are simultaneously co-constituted, however, Wendt never really establishes an ontological framework. Instead, his focus on the social construction of state and system reduces reality to the ideas and discourses expressed within it, a framework that resembles Kant's transcendental idealism. As a result, Wendt never frames reality as mind-independent and, thus, fails in his mission to move the discipline in a more realist (scientific) direction.

In the end, portraits of IR painted by both Waltz and Wendt are trapped within an empiricist horizon. Waltz owes his neorealist approach to a Humean understanding of causality, while Wendt's attempt to move past the positivist/post-positivist divide ultimately wound up adopting both Humean and Kantian models of science. Portraits of political reality emerging from the great debates, then, never divorced ontology from epistemology. Scholars interested in adopting an ontological approach to IR must work to overcome the epistemic fallacy committed by both Waltz and Wendt.

This requires adopting an understanding of causal relations that doesn't commit the epistemic fallacy. Bhaskar's critical realism provides a useful framework to do just this. Additionally, his stratified ontology (articulated in his transcendental realism) and his TMSA (outlined in his critical naturalism) serve as powerful tools capable of addressing the limitations of Waltz's levels-of-analysis problematique and Wendt's structuration modeling.

IR scholars within the critical realist tradition have worked to incorporate Bhaskar's ontological framework in an effort to move the discipline past the traditionally assumed empiricist frames. For instance, Patomäki took issue with Waltz's levels-of-analysis arguing that "from the critical realist notions of causality and social ontology ... the levels-of-analysis problematic cannot be plausibly defended" (2002, 72). For him, Waltz's levels speak only to categories of *analysis*, not of *reality*. Therefore, this limits our scientific investigation to actors whose place in world politics seems arbitrarily chosen. Instead, Patomäki argues that "we should talk about different kinds of interpenetrated, relational contexts and look for depth in other directions" (2002, 72).

Kurki makes a similar argument. For her the structure of world politics isn't limited to only the traditional state and system framing. A critical realist approach encourages us to "open our analysis to other forms of social relations. It is important to notice other discourses and social relations, which are even less institutionally concrete than the international or world systems, but embedded within these structures, such as patterns of patriarchal and racial relations" (2008, 258). For her, critical realism allows scholars to problematize entities that empiricism takes for granted.

Wight provides a thorough critique of IR levels-of-analysis but does so in a way that doesn't do away with them entirely. He brings into the fold Bhaskar's concept of emergence to discuss how one level could arise from another. Again, the idea of emergence refers to how social structures derive from, but are qualitatively different than and irreducible to, the smaller parts constituting them. Wight considers how this notion of emergence may reconfigure levels-of-analysis in IR. In such a reconfiguration, states and system do not function on separate and autonomous "levels" but, instead, relate to each other in complex ways. Specifically, the international system can be seen as emerging from the behaviors of states yet acquiring characteristics not reducible to them (2006, 110–112).

This brings into the equation the structure–agency debate as a way to demonstrate the complexity of causal relations between higher and lower levels. For instance, it's possible to conceive of how the international system emerges from the behaviors of states comprising it while simultaneously structuring their agency. However, it is important to remember that Bhaskar's TMSA resolves the structure–agency debate very differently than Wendt's structuration model. While Wendt asserts that structure and agent are mutually constitutive, Bhaskar speaks of an "ontological hiatus" where the structure–agency relationship is governed by time. Specifically, the international system always pre-exists, and, therefore, allows or constrains state behaviors which either reproduce or transform that structure.

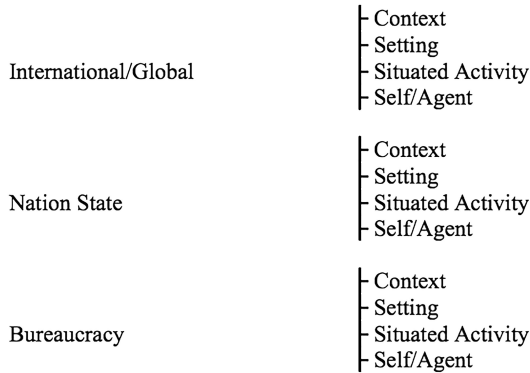


Figure 6.4 *Wight's reconfigured levels-of-analysis*

Wight acknowledges, though, that this isn't the only way to think about it. He agrees with Patomäki that as critical realists “we can talk of ‘interpenetrated contexts’ whilst recognizing that we need to think clearly about the properties of the entities said to be interpenetrating each other” (2006, 111). In this light, Wight is careful not to reduce states to an ontological flat framework and, instead, disaggregate them into component parts. He borrows from Derek Layder to offer four suggestive criteria in which to research the properties of each level (2006, 111). In doing so, he discusses how each level emerges from the “interpenetrated contexts” constituting them. His reconfigured version of levels-of-analysis is shown in Figure 6.4.

Wight's model reconfigures the levels-of-analysis problematique in a way that is consistent with critical realism. Contra Waltz, who treats each level of phenomena as closed and independent from the other, Wight opens them up and relates them in a way that follows the logic of emergence. In doing so, he establishes a stratified ontology consistent with Bhaskar's transcendental realism. He goes further to recognize how higher emergent levels in turn affect their component parts. Each level not only emerges from its component parts (in addition to the levels below them) but also structures their agency.

**Prospects for an Emancipatory Discipline**

In this last section, I propose an additional reconfiguration in the spirit of critical realism's emancipatory impulse. While IR research tends to study politics as it relates to the levels of state and system, I argue that critical realism provides the discipline with an opportunity to shift analytical priority to the level of the individual. As stated before, this level is broadly concerned with the sociology and psychology of people generally. Reorienting the discipline's attention to this level carries an emancipatory potential to elevate the values and interest of people in a discipline which traditionally frames international politics in state-centric terms.

Much of the discipline's analytical attention has been spent developing an understanding of state and system, but this doesn't mean that scholars care less about the experience of politics on the level of the person. On the contrary, IR scholars are drawn to the study of war, oppression, poverty, etc., precisely because of the urgency of these problems and the toll it takes on people. Studying such subjects is easier when considering higher levels of analysis, primarily the state, because it offers a manageable unit of observation from which one can extrapolate generalizable claims. The focus on the state and system, however, leaves the discipline's theoretical understanding of the needs, desires, rights, and values of people greatly underdeveloped. People are the real-world subjects that have to live and cope within a world that is constantly theorized and studied in state-centric terms. As a result, IR research focuses on those units of analysis which govern over people without understanding how they wish to be governed.

A popular term in reference to this criticism is "methodological nationalism" (Beck 2000; Wimmer and Schiller 2002; Chernilo 2006; Amelina et al., 2012). Methodological nationalism refers to assumptions within the social sciences that presuppose the state as the natural form of social organization and uncritically accept and reify it as the ordering principle within world politics. This is a problem for critical realists because, as discussed earlier, "science informs values and actions, which in turn motivates science" (Bhaskar 1986, 172). As a result, methodological nationalism not only demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of social life by framing human interest and values in terms of the state, but it also reproduces false assumptions regarding its role as a natural entity. Thus, the privileged status of the state, through which political interests and values are studied, erects a discipline without a truly human purpose. The task at hand, then, is to treat the IR discipline as an emancipatory social practice so that we may change the privileged status of the state in both politics and science. I propose that the discipline reorient its attention to place the individual level of analysis at the forefront of international politics, and I argue that critical realism provides the tools to do this.

Wight's reconfigured levels-of-analysis does this to some degree. As Figure 6.4 illustrates, he disaggregates each level into component parts that reflect the role that people play. In doing so, he argues that "there is no need for a distinct individual level since individuals feature in every level and are tied into their social contexts" (2006, 111). In fact, it is by embedding individuals at every level that his reconfiguration allows those levels to relate to each other; in his words, "it highlights the fact that it is through differing 'positioning' of individuals that the various levels interact" (2006, 111–112). For him, "what is important to convey is the idea that each and every level includes individuals and their various structural contexts" (2006, 112).

In one sense, Wight's reconfiguration does highlight the role of the individual by embedding them into all others. One could argue that this omnipresence of the individual reprioritizes the role of the person by placing them everywhere in international politics. The problem with this framing, though, is that the "everywhere" of international politics lacks a space for people to act on their own. In this frame, the agency of people can only be realized within the framework of bureaucracy, states, and system

which not only subordinates human agency to bureaucratic and state structures, but also treats these structures as ahistorical which continues the discipline's methodological nationalism. Fixing this requires re-establishing an individual level with the agency to transform world politics in a way that makes the state dependent on people, not the other way around.

I argue that Bhaskar's critical realism and his argument for emancipation provides the tools to think about the primary and ethical status of the person and its role in transforming international politics. For Bhaskar, the concept of human emancipation owes much to his critical naturalism. Again, critical naturalism attempts to reconcile the prevalence of dualism through his TMSA. His TMSA reconciles the agency/structure dualism (as well as the individual/society dualism) by illustrating how the recursive relationship between agent and structure is governed by time. Structures always pre-exist agents and, therefore, allow or constrain their behavior. Emancipation occurs when the intentional actions of the agent transforms those structures so as to remove unwanted sources of determination.

Discussing emancipation in terms of the TMSA not only entails the agent/structure dualisms, but the facts/values and theory/practice dualisms as well (Bhaskar 1986, 172). In terms of the facts/values dualism: the actions of agents express their values with regard to the facts of social structure while these social facts provide the space for our value-oriented agency to express itself. Emancipation, referring to the agent's intentional transformation of structure, remakes the facts of social life according to the values expressed in their agency, but not before those facts provide a structure allowing those values to be expressed. Thus the recursive relations between agent and structure blur the lines as to where facts end and values begin.

Emancipation also entails the theory/practice dualism because science, in its endeavor to understand the generative structures underlying social action, informs the transformative efforts of social agents. A scientific understanding of what those structures are, and the potential alternatives that may replace them, serves as the theoretical conditions that allow for the agential practices of social reproduction or transformation. The blurred line between theory and practice demonstrates the deeply embedded role of science in social change – science informs the practice of social change where the values expressed in that practice in turn reproduce/transform science.

In general, Bhaskar's notion of emancipation relates the facts/values and theory/practice dualisms together in way that affords science an emancipatory impulse. Science, then, should not be seen as a socially neutral endeavor; whether the scientist realizes it or not, they are part of a larger practice of social change. Scientists do not merely identify and explain the structures conditioning social action – in many cases, they are or become those conditioning structures. The IR discipline is a case in point: its methodological nationalism reproduces a political order without a truly human purpose – agency and values at the individual level can only be researched within the structures and facts of the state. Fixing this requires that scholars not just theorize about politics but also practice it by elevating the scientific and ethical role of the individual in IR.

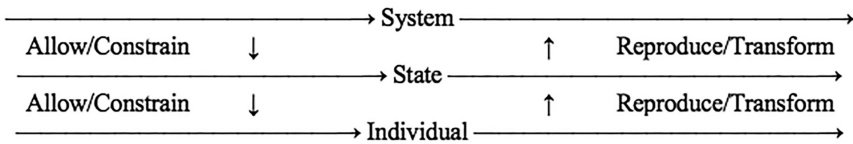


Figure 6.5 Provisional TMSA model of international politics

There are several actors in world politics, but the primary actors are subjects on the individual level, without which other actors (bureaucracy, state, and system) would not exist. It is not incorrect to claim that bureaucracies and states are also important agents of change in international politics, but it is incorrect to claim that they are autonomous levels separate and independent from the individual level. In reality, they are emergent structures constituted in part by the same people whose agency they condition. The subjects on the individual level are therefore not only the primary actor in world politics, but also the ones whose agency is met with the most amount of structural conditioning.

Scholars interested in a more emancipatory IR discipline should envision a new portrait of world politics that recognizes the individual level as the primary actors, the structural constraints that condition their agency, and the prospects for transformation. I offer two representations with this in mind. The first representation may appear to do this on the surface, but it is really meant to illustrate certain theoretical flaws so that they may be avoided in the future. After discussing those flaws, I discuss the second representation. The first is shown in Figure 6.5.

Inspired by the TMSA, it places each level as structuring the one beneath it. The international system structures the behaviors of states which, in turn, can either reproduce or transform the system. In doing so, the state also structures the agency of individuals who serve as the primary actors from which the other two emerge. While this representation does recognize the potential for the individual level to transform politics at the state level, it frames their agency to do so in opposition to the downward pressure that the state receives from the system. Because the relationship is governed by time, the system's structural constraints imposed on the state pre-exist the individual's agency to transform it. In effect, the individual level's emancipatory potential to transform world politics must be actualized within the structural constraints of the international system, two levels above their own. Not only does this provide little opportunity for people to transform the system, but it fails to visualize the potential for political transformation outside of what the state-system allows.

The question remains as to how we can understand people's transformative political actions without subordinating them to state politics. This may best be explored in an example where the expression of their agency challenges state structure. Consider how the advancement of transportation and communication technologies have increased the international mobility of people. The modern state is accustomed to regulating who does and does not cross its borders, but this is becoming harder for states to do in an era of globalization. States may cap immigration, implement



waiting periods, institute work permits, etc., all of which serve as a structure for agents to follow when entering into the country. Many people for many reasons, though, enter countries outside the official procedure, or they may reside within a country irregularly, or they may work without documentation. Many of these people are fleeing from violent conflict or hoping to find work. The important point here is that their decision to move from one place to another is an expression of their agency and values. The fact that many do so outside official state procedures serves as an example of a transformative political action – it affirms the values driving the free movement of people in a way that does not reproduce the authority of the state.

This obviously doesn't mean that these transformative actions have led to a more open global society. Many Western governments in recent years have made it a priority to curb irregular migration or deny the entrance of refugees. So, while many people do enter and stay in a country irregularly, many others are caught and deported. The state, then, still serves as a structure that prevents many from actualizing their agency and values. In this effort, the state works to affirm its place in international politics.

This presents the IR discipline with a choice. Scholars can either explain the structural constraints of the interstate system which impedes the free movement of people, or they can consider alternatives to that system by researching how the transformative actions of irregular migrants and refugees leads to social change. In doing the former, they merely reproduce the facts of state structure. In doing the latter, science places the agency and values of people at the forefront of politics.

This doesn't mean that research can understand agency and values at the individual level without contextualizing it first in some structure. That would be impossible. As stated earlier, critical realism asserts that structure serves as the transcendental necessity for agents to act. So, understanding the agency and values of irregular immigration and refugee flows would require situating them in some structural context. Examples may include economic, cultural, environmental, geographic, public health related, etc. The point here is to think about politics with reference, again, to what Patomäki calls "interpenetrated contexts" (2002, 72). These structures provide the context to understand the agency and values of people whose transformative actions occur outside or against the state. The second representation of this relationship is shown in Figure 6.6.

The design of this representation, as mentioned before, is to envision a new portrait of world politics that recognizes subjects on the individual level as the primary actors, the structural constraints that condition their agency, and the prospects for transformation. The top level of world politics may consist of states, intergovernment-

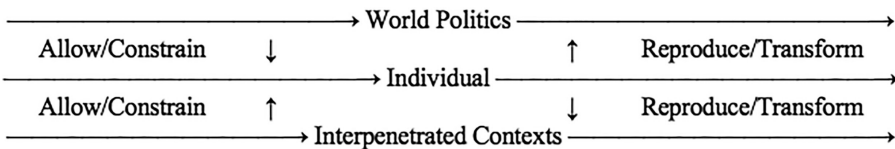


Figure 6.6 *Emancipatory model of political transformation*

tal organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multinational corporations (MNCs), and other IR actors familiar to the discipline. The middle level of the individual may refer to a specific group of people (refugees, indigenous people, the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer), women, etc.), social movements, or influential individuals. The bottom level of interpenetrated contexts refers to the other social conditions structuring the agency of actors and giving them ethical meaning.

As opposed to the previous representation, this one situates the individual level at the center in order to relate subjects on this level to the myriad other structures that people act within in addition to international politics. This prevents subjects on the individual level from being conditioned by only the politics of state and system. In this representation, people are only partially conditioned by international politics.

An emancipatory approach to IR should not only consider how world politics partially conditions the individual level but, more importantly, how they transform politics. The central positioning of the individual level serves a secondary purpose in isolating political structures so as to research their transformation. The top level, then, is really meant to understand how the value-oriented agency of people transforms the international structures that partially condition their agency. While they shouldn't ignore the conditions imposed by international politics (the top left arrow pointing down in Figure 6.6) they should be more interested in how people transform world politics (the top right arrow pointing up in Figure 6.6).

How we make sense of people's intentional actions is by grounding their agency within the interpenetrating contexts at the lower level. The agency and values of people are informed by a plurality of social, cultural, economic, historical, psychological, etc. structures, each conditioning their intentional actions and giving them ethical meaning. So, the purpose of this level is to understand the people that we are researching. Scholars, then, should be more interested in the bottom left arrow pointing up rather than the bottom right arrow pointing down.

## CONCLUSION

The aims of this chapter were to highlight the strengths of a critical realist approach and discuss the contributions it can make to the discipline. In general, IR can benefit from an approach that takes ontology seriously. This chapter's critique of Waltz's levels-of-analysis and Wendt's structuration modeling illustrates the flaws inherent in a purely empiricist approach to social relations. Each of the "images" in Waltz's levels-of-analysis demarcate units of research along spatial lines within a closed system. As a result, his portrait of IR fails to understand the complexity of causal relations in world politics. Wendt's research also fails to accurately portray the causal complexity of IR. He claims to offer a scientific realist approach to politics, but he never establishes a political ontology. As a result, his structuration modeling never fully understands the recursive relationship between structure and agency.

While critical realism is not a theory of IR per se, its focus on ontology provides a framework to research world politics in new ways. In this light, critical realism carries the promise to move the discipline beyond the trappings of a stale positivist/post-positivist debate. The chapter discussed three themes in pursuit of this goal. First, critical realist efforts to correct for the epistemic fallacy constructs an ontological framework that provides a much more sophisticated understanding of causality than our traditional empiricist paradigms. Second, this understanding of causality articulates a model that can resolve prominent debates or “dualisms” prevalent in the social sciences. Third, its ability to resolve specific dualisms, such as the facts/values or practice/theory dualisms, affords it an emancipatory potential to transform how we conduct social research. Essentially, it is through the establishment of an ontology that critical realism discovers its emancipatory potential.

The link between ontology and emancipation is an important point to conclude with. Again, emancipation refers to the actualization of our agency to transform the structures that constrain us. This sense of agency, however, has been forgotten among empiricist academics who falsely assume their research to be somehow removed from the phenomena they study, as if it takes place in a closed system. In reality, theory and practice are recursively related, and scientists have always been part of the transformative social processes that they seek to understand. It is only in recognizing this fact that the IR discipline can itself achieve emancipation, but moving in this direction requires the discipline to first take matters of ontology seriously.

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## PART II

# CONCEPTS AND CONFIGURATION

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## 7. Dialectics in critical international relations theory

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Dialectics has an incredibly rich, though relatively modest, place in the field of international relations (IR) theory. While the influence of dialectics has remained largely confined to a handful of scholars working within Marxism and critical international relations theory (CIRT), more recent developments have also seen its application in those approaches concerned with “worlding” the discipline of IR (Ling, 2013).<sup>1</sup> As we endeavour to show in this chapter, dialectical thinking has great utility in bridging ontological, epistemological and methodological interests across the entire discipline regarding the problem of analysing *flux*. As an approach that seeks to grasp the inherent changing nature of world politics, dialectics promises a deeper analytic into such diverse phenomena as the rapidity of global changes, interlocking environmental and political crises, and the massive social-cultural dislocations that have accompanied the advance of late capitalism.

Dialectics is an approach – *a way of thinking* – that “understands things through their own development, change, and movement, and, in their relation and interconnectivity with all other things” (Brincat, 2014, p. 588). It involves a certain way of seeing our world: “as an interconnected, contradictory, and dynamic whole or totality (ontology), as a way that we can understand the contradictory nature of our world (epistemology), and as a way to explore or ‘think’ through our world (methodology)” (Brincat, 2014, p. 3). From this dynamic core follows the key analytical benefits of dialectics: the ability to better understand the contradictory relations between all elements and phenomena and the radical potentials for the change this generates. Instead of dualisms and simplistic binaries that bifurcate between phenomena, artificially separating them under taken-for-granted abstractions, dialectical thinking can move freely through to the relations that are constitutive of the phenomenal world and compel human thought to move through to what we call in this chapter “*the between*”.

With this concept of “*the between*” we aim to shift analytical focus to the relations between all elements and phenomena that are in actuality constitutive of them. So, for example, instead of focusing on a relation that exists between A and B that assumes the relation as something separate from them both, emphasis is placed on the

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<sup>1</sup> Here, ‘worlding’ the discipline refers to Ling’s idea of recreating IR theory so that it is more inclusive and epistemically open to approaches outside the Western and modern canon. In this example, dialectics has been utilised in what can be viewed as postcolonial approaches to IR theory.

nature of the relation itself without which  $A \neq A$  and  $B \neq B$ . It is this relation of “*the between*” that other approaches to relationality and change typically overlook. From our dialectical perspective, A and B consist of the multiplicity of relations between them. The importance of emphasising the constitutive nature of relations themselves lies in its ability to redirect commonsensical human thinking that is inclined to categorise and distinguish between A and B and thereby overlook the mutual implication of relationality itself, to instead focus on the relations as inherent to A and B in-themselves. On the basis of this ability to capture “*the between*”, we argue the power of dialectics is not only found in its explication but also within its analytic. Namely, its analytic may help reveal what exists in the past, being, and negation of elements and phenomena; the historical development and fluidity of all things in their relation and movement (Marx, 1990).

## A SHORT REVIEW OF DIALECTICS IN IR

Arguably, one of the seminal texts to explain the outbreak of the First World War (which many regard as the foundational question of the entire discipline of IR) was dialectical in nature (Ashworth, 2000). Lenin’s *Imperialism* (1999), we contend, is far more dialectical in its method than usually seen.<sup>2</sup> Its mistranslated full title, which should have been “the *latest* stage in capitalism” (emphasis added), was intended to demonstrate the open-ended processes of change in the geopolitical competitions between national bourgeois classes, finance capital, and colonial-imperialism (Lenin, 1999). Its translation as “the *final* stage of capitalism” completely overrode this purpose, instead giving licence to the determinism of dialectical-materialism (“Diamat”) and its thesis of the inevitability of communism. One could highlight the same dialectical underpinnings of Trotsky’s combined and uneven development thesis, since only substantively taken up by Rosenberg in IR (see for example Rosenberg, 2012). This utilised dialectical thinking in its rejection of the notion that human society must inevitably develop through a unilinear sequence of “stages” of development towards emancipatory communism, an idea which gave great explanatory power not only to the relative differences in economic development between states but also to the necessity of permanent revolution. Nevertheless, these open dialectical aspects of both Lenin and Trotsky’s work that emanated from the developmentalism as the key aspect of dialectics were largely subsumed under the dogma of Diamat whose determinism took such a stranglehold against thinking dialectically in the early twentieth century.

After this early period, dialectics went into hibernation in IR theory. In its place, classical approaches prevailed, consisting of any number of undialectical beliefs

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the title should have been translated as “The Latest Stage in Capitalism” (thus indicating the ongoing process of change in world politics) rather than the “Highest Stage of Capitalism”, which gave it a determinist quality. If one looks to the original German edition, it gives a far better reflection of its dialectical title.



from unverifiable conjecture on human nature to romantic notions of tragedy. These would, in turn, give way to behaviouralism and to a crude positivism that were equally undialectical, trapped as they both were in notions of stasis in an anarchical system of recurrence and repetition. It was not until Robert W. Cox's (1981) path-breaking article "Social Forces, States, and World Orders" that the discipline was led back to the fundamental importance of dialectics. The article is most famous for its contrast between critical and problem-solving approaches with its methodological component outlining what Cox called a "framework of action for historical structures" looking at the potentialities of three interacting forces in world politics: ideas, material capabilities/agency, and institutions (Sinclair, 2016). For Cox, these took the form of a particular configuration between social forces, forms of states, and world orders with each "containing, as well as bearing the impact of, the others" (Cox, 1981, pp. 135–138). Structures were no longer inert in this approach but in movement and theory could now grapple with this by understanding the configuration of forces as the framework in which human agency operates. With this simple methodological intervention, dialectics was once again pushed to the forefront of theoretical developments within critical approaches during the so-called Inter-Paradigm Debate.

Yet despite the centrality of Cox's thought to all of CIRT, it was not until Alker and Biersteker's (1984) work that dialectics would appear as an operative term within the theory-building of IR. Theirs was the first to look at developing a synthetic dialectical approach that was to be comprehensible to Soviet thought and thereby enable East/West dialogue. Alker's (1982) work, in particular, was concerned with a form of dialectics that was to be communicable with and across other approaches. In their famous "The Dialectics of World Order" article, Alker and Biersteker (1984, p. 133) attempted to foreground dialectical approaches in IR as leading to more "worldly" and "sophisticated" research and teaching as opposed to the myopia of "parochial behaviouralism" that limited IR to scientific and traditional approaches. In their much larger *Dialectics of World Orders Project* (with Amin, Gilani, and Inoguchi), it was asserted that the application of a dialectical approach would be most productive to "analyze and comprehend the complexity of contemporary world order and disorder" across both East and West.<sup>3</sup> Arguably, the challenge is now to achieve such comprehension across North and South simultaneously. Alker and Biersteker argued that the importance of an open-ended dialectics was that it specifically included positivist approaches, was non-deterministic, and remained focused on social processes that proceed from contradictions. For them, our world is composed of multiple and often contradictory world ordering theories and practices. These interrelationships are pervasive, changing, and often identity-modifying, and therefore require an ontology of change that dialectical understanding is primed to achieve.

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<sup>3</sup> This manuscript is yet to be published and includes the work of Alker and Biersteker, with Tahir Amin, Ijaz Gilani, and Takashi Inoguchi. A draft was generously provided to the authors by Thomas Biersteker, for which we are grateful.

Yet despite Alker and Biersteker's insistence on the importance of dialectics in IR, the discipline has remained largely unmoved (Marlin-Bennett & Biersteker, 2012). The only entry of dialectics into IR theory that gained much notoriety was Heine and Teschke's call for a "dialectic of concrete totality", which sparked debate in *Millennium* (1996). Like Alker and Biersteker, they too sought to wake up the discipline to the utility of dialectics, through a model that was to be reflexive, combining empirical and immanent modes of critique. Heine and Teschke's model had three premises: (i) that just as reality is contradictory, so too must our mode of thinking reflect these social contradictions; (ii) place as central praxis and human agency in production, cognition, and communication; and (iii) providing a non-determinative understanding of history as the potential site for reason to emerge through social praxis – or what Marcuse would have called towards a rational society. This process is historically mediated and through it dialectics can help us perceive "human praxes (plural)" within concrete contexts (Heine & Teschke, 1996, p. 415). In their dialectical method, parts are not isolated from their social history or genesis, nor is the whole emptied of its parts to become abstracted as some fixed system or (pre-)determined structure (Heine & Teschke, 1996). For Heine and Teschke (1996) given its historically informed basis for understanding social praxes, dialectics was the most appropriate mode of analysis to understand social development and differentiation in the dynamic context of global processes.

Outside the debate and replies that followed Heine and Teschke's piece, it has only been in recent years that a new undercurrent of dialectical scholarship has emerged – a trend that promises to broaden the historico-cultural basis of dialectical thinking in IR. Agathangelou and Ling (2005) were essential catalysts in this development. Together they sought to overcome the automatic oppositional perspectives, dualisms, and Eurocentrism through the development of what they called a "worlded" IR – one that was derived from the multiple ways of being and living in the world (Agathangelou & Ling, 2004; Ling, 2013). Accordingly, Ling pioneered a unique Daoist dialectical approach to world politics (2013) and was, before her untimely passing, completing a work exploring the dialectical relation between Daoist *yin/yang* theory and the seven categories of *anekāntavāda* argumentation (from Jainist philosophy, which we will briefly discuss in the next section).<sup>4</sup> These explorations have been allied ways of furthering an open-ended, negative, and social-relational dialectic for world politics (see Brincat, 2009, 2011; Brincat & Ling, 2014). With this impetus, in 2015 a joint project on *Dialectics in World Politics* (2015) was able to draw together a range of dialectical approaches in IR, ranging from Marxism and Critical Realism, to Daoism and Postcolonial theory (Brincat, 2014). What seems to unite this new form of dialectical thinking in IR is a shared interest to broaden the epistemological basis of the discipline by including far older and non-Western forms of dialectical thought, i.e. "worlded". This suggests that it is no longer enough to develop derivative discourses from these non-Western approaches (that are made

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<sup>4</sup> This was to be called *Culture & World Politics: Journeys beyond Westphalia*.

then to merely reflect the concepts and assumptions of Western IR theory), but to reclaim what has been lost, to establish new grounds, forms of thinking, and fresh insights into our world (Shahi, 2018).

One key example of the fecundity of bringing in older and non-Western dialectical insights into IR is the symbol of the *spiral* that encapsulates the dialectical understanding of change-time. The overwhelming view of time across approaches in IR is unilinear, that is, things/phenomena emerge from point A to point B. To these are sometimes added either progressive or regressive assumptions and narratives: that change/s occur in some upward trajectory (a teleology of progress) or of decline (teleology of regress). For an example, one key area of tension in IR has become the contestation by postcolonial scholars against modernist narratives whose underlying assumption is of progressive linear change. In dialectics, on the other hand, change/s occurs as if in a spiral, the spiralling arms symbolising the history of sublation in the movement of flux. That is, all the past movements of things/phenomena are retained with this process as it spirals. This captures how dialectical thinking is, ultimately, historical – as Benjamin et al. (1985) said, it provides an approach for thought to have the winds of history in its sails. Symbolised within the spiral, *being* carries within itself all its prior sublations, all those elements of its past, its genesis, and its relationality. Indeed, it cannot be understood – it cannot *be* – without these. One could say the arms of the spiral are the history of its past *beings*, preserving them. Engels (1925), following Marx, called this the “spiral form of development”: everything is made of the mutual penetration of polar opposites and the negation of this relation leads to gradual change.

But such conceptions of a spiralling dialectic are thousands of years older. In Daoist forms of dialectical thinking, for instance, change takes place in a temporal continuity of spatial varieties and differences: complementarity and contradiction are the “two phases” of this “advancing spiral”. As explained by Tian (2005, p. 36), “[t]his is because change is seen not from the ontological viewpoint, which gives formal privilege to the formal aspect of phenomena and separates time and space, but rather in light of the ceaseless transformation of things, in which ‘things’ are rather seen as ‘events’”. So, “from yin to yang and yang to yin, again, indicates an advancing spiral” (Tian, 2005, p. 36). A similar process is observable in the dialectical logical structure of the Buddhist *Bhāvaviveka*. Here, a formalised system of debate includes the repetition of certain claims so that the discussion accretes additional material with each new pass that the parties make over the topic. The repetitions are not circular – they add new concepts/ideas, and hence accumulate in the spiral through which the debate reaches ever finer logical organisation (Lieberman, 2007). The symbol of the spiral is thus an heuristic to visualise flux from a dialectical viewpoint: nothing is lost in this process, new things arise in their genesis and interconnection, what was prior remains preserved in the spiral arms, and what is possible is present within the spiral-shaped movement itself.

## KEY COMPONENTS OF DIALECTICS: FLUX AND INTERNAL RELATIONS

Since very few studies have employed dialectics in IR, rather than continuing to survey this small body of literature this section will focus on explaining two key ideas of dialectics that we think are both unique to its approach and constructive for how we should “think” in IR. The first is the problem of understanding change, the inherent and essential nature of the universe as *flux*. For dialecticians, nothing is permanent; all things move, alter, and change – the process which dialectical analysis is primed to uncover. The second is the philosophy of internal relations that we define simply as the position that the relations of things/phenomena are essential to them – they would not be what they are without these relations. Of course, such relations may be thin or thick (Johansson, 2011), strong or weak, but they are intrinsic to or constitute “the between” of all things. Both of these ideas are, ultimately, aspects of a metaphysical theory about the nature of our universe – part of a universal philosophy that applies to all *changes* of things/phenomena and all *relations* between things/phenomena in the phenomenal world.<sup>5</sup> We understand both of these ideas as part of the ontological assumptions of dialectical thinking. In the next two sections we will address the methodological implications that arise from these twin philosophical commitments.

### **Flux**

In order to move away from the mystification of dialectics, it is important to recall the words of Engels when he emphasised the laws of motion are not imposed upon nature and history but rather deduced from them. Just so, “[if] we turn the thing round, then everything becomes simple, and the dialectical laws that look so extremely mysterious in idealist philosophy at once become simple and clear as noonday” (Engels, 1925). By reprising its constitutive ontological elements, we can remove dialectics from its mystical trappings in order for it to be effectively deployed as a comprehensive means of analysis. With this purpose in mind, we propose that dialectics can be best understood as a cognitive approach for those with a knowledge-constitutive interest in understanding change and transformation, or “flux”, that denotes the constancy and indeterminacy of change in our universe.

On the grounds of this ontological premise of flux, nothing is static insofar that every element that constitutes the whole exists in a perpetual state of becoming. Contrary to the ontological assumptions of most other modes of analysis in IR, dialectics privileges motion and fluidity in the conceptualisation and theorisation of the social world. Indeed, the very purpose of dialectics is to challenge the appearance of stability that is both the foundation and the product of traditional modes of IR theory. For example, the realist thesis of system reproduction within anarchy is the

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<sup>5</sup> For a defence of this position in dialectics see Sayers (2015).

foundation of its theoretical conceptions that the theory then reproduces through its analysis. This is merely its own presupposition that it endlessly confirms. Dialectics, in distinction, is understood as an approach to understanding “processes of motion, change and transformation” that form the basis of all existence in their singularity and in their totality. To return to the spiral conception of change-time outlined above, *being* relies on all the parts of the past for what it is *becoming*. Sublation – in the Hegelian sense of *aufheben* – captures this idea of the motion of past, present, and future that assumes both the permanency of flux as well as the preservation of parts in this movement. This is the term preferred to “synthesis” (a term Hegel never used) which serves to focus on some aspect while recognising its inherent position within the whole. Moreover, instead of time as a measure of change in the Aristotelian sense, the dialectical measure of change embodies the perception of time as well. Indeed, it is this relative perspective that is crucial to the experience of time and change for human thought.

Non-dialectical approaches to understanding “change” are typically *stagist* – that is to say, where two or more differentiated states form the basis of the development of a thing/phenomena. Change, under this conception, is as an intermittent process in which the external relations between things/phenomena direct change but in which each thing/phenomenon, in-itself, remains static. There is a tipping point whereby *some* thing transforms into *an other*. In this non-dialectical approach, the concept of change is determined by a linear conception of time insofar as it is a momentary capture of two or more stages. In contrast, dialectics perceives of change beyond its momentary existence in which time is not the sole referential point. Of course, we may choose to abstract such moments to focus our attention on any such “moment” but we must not mistake this as the whole or as the process of change. Both past and future, relations and moments, make possible what may be. Thus, on the basis of this historicity and contingency, dialectics is inconsistent with any causal reductionism that seeks for cause and effect by way of the overdetermination, or underdetermination, of certain elements. Dialectics breaks down the actual processes and relations (the “contradictions”) between elements that reveal contingency. This focus is essential because, as we already stated, the relations of a thing, and between all things, is part of its being (i.e. the present state) and its becoming (i.e. the future state). Thus, change is the interpenetration of past and future which, given the meaning of the concept of time in relation to and as part of things/phenomena, can only be considered as a process of continuous *flux*.

To recall one of the most renowned of all dialectical aphorisms of Heraclitus, “everything flows, nothing stands still” (*Panta Rhei*). In his Presocratic cosmology, the ongoing process of change (*flux*) comes about through the relations or exchanges that he calls “strife” and which he symbolises as the process of transformation in the element of fire. His demonstration of this principle is perhaps even better known regarding the impossibility of entering into the same river twice: “On those stepping into rivers staying the same other and other waters flow”, or “We both step and do not step into the same rivers; we both are and are not” (Barnes, 2013). In this logic, the river is never constituted by the same waters at two different points in time, and

yet, though the waters are always changing, the river appears the same and can be identified as such in human thought. It is not just that those things that appear most stable in their identity are actually not so. More so, the river is a metaphor to reveal how seemingly permanent entities are always undergoing change and at the same time can be known however temporally – as posited by Graham (n.d.) it is “precisely *because* the waters are always changing that there are rivers at all”, and without which would be something else entirely. How a thing changes, then, is inherent to its very being. Dialectics is an ideal method to assist in the analysis of this ongoing movement between identity and difference.

Dietzgen (2010, p. 34) helps us go a step further with this logic. He writes:

The universe is in every place and at any time itself, new, and present for the first time. It arises and passes away, passes and arises under our very hands. Nothing remains the same, only the infinite change is constant, and even the change varies. Every particle of time and space brings new changes.

He uses this against the materialist/idealist dualism claiming both positions fail to see “the relation of content to form” (Dietzgen, 2010, p. 122). As against the materialists, he claims we never meet anything but perishable forms of matter. Matter changes and flux itself appears eternal to us: “[t]he essential nature of the universe is change. Phenomena appear, that is all” (Dietzgen, 2010, p. 36). Against the idealists, Dietzgen (2010, p. 38) claims their belief that “there is an abstract nature behind phenomena which materialises itself in them” is nothing less than the admission that this hidden nature is made by the human mind. Research or understanding how “hidden nature” materialises cannot take place *a priori*, but only *a posteriori*, and on the basis of empirically given effects, our sense perceptions, and human faculties of mind. In this way, dialectics transcends the materialism/idealism debate and pushes us to view the universe in a fundamentally relational manner.

### **Internal Relations**

As a corollary to the ontology of flux, dialectics requires a philosophy that focuses on those processes that constitute its object of analysis. As stated by Hegel (1975[1830], §81), the purpose of dialectics is “to study things in their own being and movement and thus to demonstrate the finitude of the partial categories of understanding”. So, the knowledge-interest in understanding flux leads to, even presupposes, the philosophy of internal relations: that relations are intrinsic to the nature of one or more of the relata (an *essential* relation), without which thing/phenomenon would not be as they are. This philosophical commitment implies that things/phenomena exist only insofar as they are “in contact with other things, in reality ... [things/phenomena] manifest themselves because they are existent, and they manifest themselves in as many different ways as there are other things with which they enter into relations of time and space” (Dietzgen, 2010, p. 38). As these things relate to each other in space–time, they undergo change, and, concurrently, so does the whole. But rather than focusing

more on this aspect of how relations generate flux, we will explore the implications of internal relations for how to think or understand things/phenomena more fully. Here, we are not concerned with the dispute of Bradley, Russell and Moore regarding internal relations but the far more advanced form presented by Joseph Dietzgen (1828–1888) and, more recently, Bertell Ollman (1976, 1993, pp. 28–36, 2003), who offers the most thorough account of how the philosophy of internal relations is intrinsic to the dialectical method.

According to Ollman (2015, p. 9), the distinction between the philosophy of external and internal relations is the “most important philosophical question of the day”. Whereas the philosophy of external relations considers “relations” and “things” as independent of each other, the philosophy of internal relations regards “things” as constitutive of “relations”. In other words, in the former, change is perceived to affect the “thing” or “relation” in their totality but is not considered to alter the internal qualities that come to define the “thing” or “relation”. In the latter, on the other hand, it is the “relations” that constitute the “thing” that are subject to change – these relations are essential to the object without which it would no longer be the same. Dietzgen declares: “Any thing that is torn out of its contextual relations ceases to exist. A thing is anything ‘in itself’ only because it is something for other things, by acting or appearing in connection with something else” (Dietzgen, 2010, p. 29). In other words, the conditions of things or the existence of phenomena are taken to be part of what they are. This implies that everything has some relation, however distant, to everything else. Marx riffs on this theme: “The sun is the object of the plant – an indispensable object to it confirming its life – just as the plant is an object of the sun, being an expression of the life awakening power of the sun, of the sun’s objective essential power” (Marx, 1959, p. 157). The sun’s effect on the plant is an “expression” of the sun itself, a part of it, just as is the plant to the sun.

In the Western canon, Hegel was the first to construct the type of total system that internal relations implies. He altered the notion of identity used by Kant (the “in-itself”) by replacing both the notion of mathematical equality ( $1 = 1$ ) and Aristotelian identity ( $A = A$ ) with “relational equality”, that is, where the entity in question is “considered identical with the whole that it relationally expresses” (in Ollman, 2003, p. 41). That is, “the thing under examination is not just the sum of its qualities but, through the links these qualities (individually or together in the thing) have with the rest of nature, it is also a particular expression of the whole ...” (Ollman, 2003, p. 40). Thus, Hegel maintains that truth “is the whole” (in Ollman, 2003, p. 41), or as Dietzgen (2010, p. 41) would later claim “[t]he universe is the truth”. The importance of this philosophy is crucial to how dialectics is able to understand identity and difference. So, within Aristotelian identity ( $A = A$ ), the unit ( $A$ ) has already been declared different from everything else so that identity and difference are necessarily mutually exclusive, and the relation between any two units must be one or the other (Ollman, 1976). The philosophy of internal relations, in distinction, allows for “the logical coexistence of identity and difference” (Ollman, 1976, p. 21). For Dietzgen (2010, p. 41), semblance and truth “flow dialectically into one another” – and hence our conceptions like hard and soft, good and bad, right and wrong – in

which they can be related and at the same time remain different. Kant's "thing in-itself" disappears in the universe of relations – behind the appearance of identity, the object is much more, it is part of the totality of relations, it is everything. It only appears in such and such a way in a particular moment and place in space–time, and to a specific perspective of human perception and mind that is ultimately relative. As for Hudis, the act of dialectical thinking enables us to see that the thing's otherness is itself a moment in the effort to annul this otherness by knowing the object as itself (see Hudis, 2007). As Dietzgen (2010, p. 40) affirms, "[e]very existence is relative, in touch with other things, and entering into different relations of time and space with them". There are many examples of understandings of internal relations throughout the history of dialectical thinking in other philosophical traditions. In the dialectical tradition of ancient India, for example, the notion of the *svarupa* relation denotes the inherent "non-independent status" of identity and emphasises the interpenetration of qualities of the self and the other (Ruegg, 1981). So, dialectical thinking does not impose static holism reducible to the identity of a particular thing – when Hegel extols that "the truth is the whole" he discerns the whole in temporality and not in permanence. The "truth" signifies only temporal stability, and incompleteness is representative of the "whole". The lesson is to be on guard against any "unit" of analysis being presented as given in-itself and/or unchanging.

For the philosophy of IR, the universe provides the basis for all thought. We cannot think or imagine outside of this. So mind/matter are no longer seen as dualistic, as "either/or". Indeed, they "are real only in their inter-relations" (Dietzgen, 2010, p. 21). Mind exists as a part of the entire universe so that its content is only the effect of the other parts – the universe is what furnishes the material for thought, through which mind can then both generalise and distinguish. As Dietzgen wrote to Marx, "*thinking means to develop the general from what is given by the senses, from the particular*" (Dietzgen, 2010, original emphasis). At the same time, because of internal relations, to fully understand one object at one moment in time requires, ultimately, the truth of *everything* else. So, any "thing in-itself" is *factum*, something made, something *only* ever a "concept of the mind": the universe can be seen as one unit, and every part of it can be seen as an infinite number of relations and perceptions thereof. Hence, the importance of the dialectical method in sorting through contradictions and oppositions, generalisation and differences of all things, *and* its insistence on the necessary movement of thought to see such abstractions as a concrete part of one and the same whole. This mutual interdependence of all things – the infinite nest of relations that constitutes the universe – can be viewed in any way by the human mind. The difference is merely one of perspective of focus, of our interest in pursuing knowledge, and of the questions we wish to answer.

So, the question that inevitably arises when attempting to think dialectically is where to *begin* and *end* analysis, given that both are potentially infinite. As stated by Ollman (1976, p. 226), dialectics:

views the whole as the structured interdependence of its relational parts – the interacting events, processes and conditions of the real world – as observed from any major part. Since



the ordering of elements and their relative importance varies according to the vantage point adopted, this view admits as many totalities (structured wholes) as there are take-off points for analysis.

This leads to the question of *abstraction* – the choice of the human mind in what it focuses on and, for a moment, removes from its relations (Ollman, 1976). For scholars this is a necessary part of analysis – we cannot hold all things in mind at once. This means that the *interests* and *purposes* behind all analysis are fundamental (to recall the famous line of Robert W. Cox). It also means that what we can know of any particular thing in any particular moment is only ever partial and hence the need for a system of thought in which each part is seen as related to and a facet of the whole. Dialectics requires the movement in thought from abstraction of the thing/phenomena, and its placement back in the whole. Without this movement, the method becomes one-sided and the depiction of reality (the “whole”) distorted. So, while all things are transitory and related, dialectical “thinking” can generalise, can discern differences, can account for changes in qualities and quantities, can individuate based on similarities, can deduce and infer – but with the steadfast recognition that the materiality of relations is grasped by the human mind. It is the vantage of the researcher, their choices and interests, that determine what is included in analysis, where it begins, where it ends, just as it is the researcher who manipulates their subject through abstractions (Ollman, 1976). It also accounts for the difficulty in undertaking dialectical analysis, not just in terms of the length of such studies (like *Capital*, and its attempt to examine the many sided relations of this economic system) but the difficulties in language for the different abstractions deemed necessary to capture the complexity of the thing/phenomena under analysis within all its manifold relations. With this admission, the researcher must possess humility that knowledge is never complete or full. That is, any account, when viewed against the whole, is necessarily a one-sided version, or, in the words of Ollman (1976, p. 273) “uni-dimensional and therefore incomplete”. Moreover, what is taken as rational is only relative, that is, applicable as rational for a particular time and place. Previous forms of analysis and knowledge claims that are exposed as being limited may be sublated but are never useless, they are “ascending stages of understanding ... which contain ever more truth and ever less error ...” (Pannekoek, 1902, p. unknown). Indeed, for dialecticians, the only real error is “unwanted assumptions” and the only mistake is when subjectivities are taken as objective “without further inquiry” (Dietzgen, 2010, p. 49).

What the philosophy of internal relational does for IR theory is to help overcome its tendencies towards both binary (“either/or”) thinking and its entrapment under identitarian thinking. Recall the surprise of the neo-realists at the end of the Cold War, at the absolute failure of this theory to explain this fundamental systemic change. Think, too, of the hierarchical relationalism in mainstream constructivism, for example, in which norms “cascade” downward and are advanced through “entrepreneurs” in successful forms of norm diffusion in IR (see Price, 1995). Even though some have shown that political change is not the inevitable outcome of the initiatives

of norm entrepreneurs (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998), the primary social relation taken into account is this hierarchical form that privileges a specific actor above all others. The importance of the context of such events – shifts in polarity or in normative change – are neglected and undervalued in both of these theoretical approaches. Change evokes either “surprise” (and the contradiction of the foundational claims of the theory, in the example of neo-realism) or is explained in a linear causal manner (in which wider relations are neglected, as in constructivism). Only those relations that appear *immediately* (and therefore superficially) to such theories are taken into account – all others are assumed not to exist, are completely ignored, or are at best neglected. As Hegel expressed so matter-of-factly, “a one-sided relation is no relation at all”. Yet within these approaches the reality of change and the internal relations between all forces in IR is reduced to one-sided causal accounts in which certain factors become determinative – but they are determinative only because they have been abstracted without placement back into the whole. Neo-realism constructs an unchanging system whose emergence in the history of world order remains as inexplicable as its demise.

Constructivism, on the other hand, dismisses crucial parts of the processes and relations responsible for normative change becoming incapable of accurately comprehending change instead privileging a certain actor or certain event as determinative. By isolating entrepreneurs and the norms themselves from the social relations that they are merely an expression of, constructivism hides relevant relations and distorts others. The objective features or conditions of which human beings are a part are grossly undervalued. Such approaches have fallen to the error of “unwanted assumptions”, mistaking some subjective judgement as objective “without further inquiry”. It is only dialectical accounts – premised on the philosophy of internal relations – that ensures thought moves from the whole to the part and can overcome these problems acute within traditional theories. Specifically, it is “only the prior acceptance of the identity of each part in the whole, [that] permits adequate reflection on the complex changes and interaction that constitute the core qualities of the real world” (Ollman, 1976, p. 19).

It must be pointed out that internal relations does not rule out causal relations, in fact it presupposes them: but it is sceptical of claims where one element or factor is made primarily responsible and/or where immediacy of causal analysis becomes over-determined. Indeed, dialectics is the method for exposing such over-determined claims because it is the method of *doubt*. Dialectics makes us qualify such claims of certainty in causation, compelling us to recall the mutual interdependence of all things that are in constant interaction, that the interactive/relational context limits the possibilities of what is being asserted as causal and what, apparently, is being denied. As argued by Sayers (2015, pp. 27–28):

The philosophy of internal relations is not about what is immediately apparent. What it says is that the more we go beyond what seems immediately evident, the more we learn about a thing or event, the more we come to see its necessity. A complete understanding of things would reveal their full necessity, the internal nature of their connections with all

other things ... In doing this, we must presuppose that these facts or events are necessarily related, though for the present, we do not understand how ... [and that] We have no guarantee that it [our analysis] will be vindicated.

Dialectics, then, compels thought to dig deeper. It rejects the surfaced causality of cascading norms or presupposed state behaviours within the security dilemma. These are simple answers. Instead, the full complexity of internal relations must be made a focal point of thought. For example, we need only look at economic flows, migration movements, or environmental crises, to see how our lives are so intimately bound with all others and other things on the planet – and which gives to the concept of internal relation concrete meaning of our global interconnectedness. It pushes us towards the constellations/networks/valences of our relations in the world. For us in IR, the subject of study are real people, conditions, and events of global society, but the units are individuated and must vary according to the purpose of research and the limits of knowledge at any one time. Yet in order for such ideas to be known, they must be *analysed* “into a practical, tangible, perceptible, concrete thing and into a theoretical mental, thinkable, general thing” – and hence the importance attached to dialectics (Pannekoek, 1902, p. unknown). What is needed then in IR is “practical dialectics” that can help us make dialectics a practice of thought – a way to help *move* through thinking – and which we outline an example of in the next section (Pannekoek, 2003, p. 92).

## DIALECTICAL “MOVEMENTS” IN FIVE PARTS

Based on these two pivotal ontological assumptions of flux and internal relations, in this final section we describe a potential way for applying dialectical thinking in IR through five movements that we have modified from the work of Ollman (2003) and what he describes as the “dance of the dialectic”. The methodological movements of dialectical thinking – the choices dialecticians make in apprehending and analysing its subject matter – operate in both linear and nonlinear directions. This may seem contradictory, but the potential of dialectical analysis is located in this entanglement. Dialectical analysis is always multidirectional, and hence our deliberate choice of terminology to describe this process of thinking as “movements”. This terminology denotes the need for thought to continuously move, to not stand still, as evidenced in Hegel’s insistence on moving through Being, Essence and Concept (and back again) in *Logic* (Dunayevskaya, 2003, p. 39). Every abstraction contains elements of *an* other: it has characteristics of the specific (or particular) and the general (the universal), neither of which can be understood in isolation. Dialectical thinking is able to capture the constitutive elements on the macro and micro scales in this entanglement as it is always understood in relational and processual terms. To borrow from Ollman (2003), in this entanglement dialectics discerns each constitutive element microscopically and provides different magnification glasses to recognise the multiplicity of functions, relations, and qualities of each element. It does not ask *if* things are chang-

ing (because they are already changing) but asks *why* something appears to change the way it does, or why this process of change appears to have stopped; and *why* relations take different forms and may appear as independent (Ollman, 2003, p. 14). This demands forward, backward, and multidirectional analyses to view the different ways in which the elements, processes, and relations of the thing/phenomena operate in the totality. Thus, rather than fixed methodological steps, the dialectical approach can be seen as a systematic operationalisation of different modes of abstraction embodied in successive movements of thought that regards the various forms and entanglements as movement and relation.

### **Movement One: Choice of Abstractions**

After the initial step of choosing the subject matter of research from the infinite array of those possible within the whole, the first movement – or “step” in the dance of dialectic – is abstraction which, in the dialectical tradition, is understood as an activity, as a verb. This mental activity involves the deliberate and systematic selection and deconstruction of certain elements (or abstractions in the noun form) of a thing/phenomenon that constitutes a particular totality removed (for the purposes of analysis) from the larger whole. It is removed so that it can be analysed more closely but in full recognition that removed from its relations in this way it can only remain partially known. Ollman (1990, p. 27) explains that abstraction denotes the “simple recognition of the fact that all thinking about reality begins by breaking it down into manageable parts”. This choice of abstraction may appear arbitrary to non-dialectical thinkers but the selection is part of the critical process of judgement and evaluation of what elements in the totality of relations are most relevant to the thing/phenomena – as Cox (1981) always reminds us, our knowledge is always for someone and some purpose. This flexibility of selection is anything but arbitrary in the sense that there exists, of necessity, a logical relation between these elements with respect to the whole. For example, in the context of IR, we might say the environment, economy, and politics are “logically internal” to one another in that the social relations contained in each are necessarily intertwined and mutually dependent. For methodological purposes, these abstractions are of one particular aspect of the totality. As Ollman (1990, p. 39) writes, “boundaries are never given and when established never absolute”. In other words, the object of study is the premeditated range against which the dialectician determines what and how to abstract – but this is never mistaken for the totality itself – and which compels thought to constantly place its abstraction back within the whole.

### **Movement Two: Levels of Analysis**

As already mentioned, the choice of subject matter is not arbitrary for dialecticians. Given its acceptance of the ontologies of flux and internal relations, those who are concerned with using dialectics are typically concerned with questions of how and why things are seen to change as they do – and how relations between things generate

these ongoing processes of flux within a given context and as seen from a specific perspective. Ollman (2003) classifies three strategic modes of dialectical analysis, namely: level of extension, level of generality, and vantage point (which we consider as so important we treat it as a separate “movement”). These assist analysis to recognise the internal relations and the changes that occur when abstractions are understood from different positions, functions, or points of entry. The level of extension refers to the boundaries of a particular spatial and temporal totality of related parts. The level of generality brings a particular function or quality of the abstraction into clear focus, which, in turn, allows thought to discern the distinct relations of each part in relation to the totality. This involves a shift from particularity to universality, or difference to equivalence respectively, of the functions and qualities of each element in relation to each other. Vantage point refers to the point of entry in which a particular abstraction occupies a central position to examine its relative importance in function and purpose to other elements and the totality. With each change in position, in the words of Ollman (2003, p. 75), “there are significant differences in what can be perceived, a different ordering of the parts, and a different sense of what is important”.

The level of generality refers to the breakdown of parts from the most specific quality to the most general. If we look at the idea of subjectivity, an example taken from Ollman, from its most specific to the most general quality, the “subject” can be subdivided into any number of forms of their identity: as unique individual, occupier of specific trade/profession, producer/consumer of goods and services, embodiment of surplus value, citizen of society, species in the natural world and, most generally, an element of the metaphysical realm (Ollman, 2003). Thus, abstractions of any kind are necessarily situated in one or another category of level of generality. This is intended to compel thought to move abstractions across these various levels in order to perceive all the different relations, interactions, contradictions, and functions crucial to understanding the object in its complexity. This analytical process of re-abstraction (as verb and noun) is imperative for the immanent relations to become apparent. At this level of generality, the abstractions (as nouns) undergo a process of deliberate conversion from being temporally fluid to temporally stable. This temporal stability by means of the process of re-abstraction enables thought to capture, however momentarily, the interaction and interpenetration of different variables (abstractions as nouns) and the set of conditions within and among these variables regarding potential change.

### **Movement Three: Vantage Point**

Vantage point (often referred to, unhelpfully, as the “interpenetration of opposites”) or what we would prefer to call “dialectical relativity” goes to the idea that how a thing/phenomenon appears is due to its conditions and the conditions of the observer. It is this “perspectival element” (Ollman, 1993, p. 16) that ensures dialectical analysis remains relative and requires constant reflexivity on behalf of the observer: the dialectician. Arguably, one of the earliest to formulate the importance of vantage to dialectical analysis in Western philosophy was Aristotle who pushed

for the examination of objects/subjects from “each side” in order to expose the truth/falsity of such claims.<sup>6</sup> He showed how the alteration of vantage and context can reveal different things about the object/subject. This was the key reason why Marx praised Aristotle as the “greatest thinker of antiquity” (McCarthy, 1992, p. 2). Aristotle placed vantage points (from “each side”) to context, relation, and opinion as essential to the dialectical process. Given his Principle of Non-Contradiction ( $A = A$ ), that something cannot “be” and “not be”, the addition of vantage point helped situate analysis in a reality in which the dialectician and interlocutor were present and relative within their knowledge community. In this manner, Aristotle introduced many of the categories of dialectical thought later developed in Hegel’s *Logic* (Being, Quantity and Quality, Part and Whole, Necessity and Accident, Potential and Actual) through which dialectics became a system of investigating the many aspects under which an object can be regarded – a way in which thought could apprehend that  $A \neq A$  or that  $A = A$  dependent on perspective.

Earlier still, we can locate a related form of thinking in the concept of *Anekāntavāda* – the “many sidedness of reality” – that emerged at the beginning of 500 BCE in the thought of Mahāvīra and the Jainist theory of judgement (Schwartz, 2018, p. 91). Jainist ontology holds that no substance will terminate, nor any new substance originate in endless time, and that things are always undergoing change. Of this endless change, we perceive mere single facets of this process for a thing cannot be held or known all at once by the human mind. The stable character or appearance of identity is merely relative to one of perspective (Wald, 1975). *Anekāntavāda* led Jainist thought to commit to a range of epistemological choices: plurality, an ethics of toleration, and, most importantly for our purposes, the multiplicity of viewpoints. As all perspectives are necessarily one-sided and cannot comprehend the entire truth, *Anekāntavāda* compels thought to *Nayavāda* (partial viewpoints) and *Syādvāda* (conditional predication, or the dialectic of seven-fold predication). *Nayavāda* is the theory of partial viewpoints and the necessity of the plurality of perspectives. From this position, to gain knowledge/experience from only one *naya* (one individual character) would be to become like one of the seven blind men, who, each feeling separate parts of an elephant, conclude the single part they hold represents the elephant’s true form. *Nayavāda* therefore pushes thought towards the recognition that the viewpoints we adopt are limited by our subjective capacities (i.e. our position, fallibilities, vantage, experience, and so on) and that the viewpoints we adopt are defined by the very interests or the purposes by which we pursue thought (including not only personal biases and social conditions, but also the goals of knowledge). It does not reject such incomplete knowledge but sees in them *partial* (limited) expressions of the whole, elements that allow us to comprehend a part of reality (Shah, 1998). As such, it developed a method – the seven-fold predications of *Syādvāda*, or the seven categories – to form a system of logic to exhaust the possibilities of *all*

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<sup>6</sup> See *The Politics*, I I, s 3; 8. This was also taken up by Al Farabi, in *Ibna Sina’s Logic of the Shifā*; and Ibn Rushd’s short and middle commentaries, as well as by Maiomonides.

knowledge claims. This does so by emphasising the relativity of each predication. That is, “*Syād*” (loosely translated as “from some viewpoint” or “may be”) is affixed to every statement to demonstrate its conditional or partial aspect, and, thereby, every such statement is able to retain its *relative* truth. When expressed as a whole, these perspectives can cover all claims to knowledge of a thing/phenomena. The *Syādvāda* are: (1) may be, it is; (2) may be, it is not; (3) may be, it is and it is not; (4) may be, it is indescribable; (5) may be, it is and yet is indescribable; (6) may be, it is not and it is also indescribable; (7) may be, it is and it is not and it is also indescribable.

None of this should be mistaken as implying that dialectics reverts to an absolute relativity. Not all perspectives are equally valid, as Ollman often repeats. Alongside the levels of extension and generality, abstractions can be “manipulated” into vantage points through which to view the distinctive relations that exist within the whole. This can be seen as a change of perspective and focus from which to understand more comprehensively the complexity of internal relations. Such representations should not be mistaken as “either/or”, or, as “static/fixed” notions of identity. Instead, different vantages expose the different embodiments and facets of what appears to a perspective as identity. Hence, the mode of vantage point serves as a systematic exposition of the complexity of the social relations that exist within the relational whole.

#### **Movement Four: Contradictions**

Contradiction is the best known aspect of dialectics and its most important aspect – as stated by Hegel (in Brincat, 2009, p. 456), contradiction “is the root of all movement and vitality; it is only insofar as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, has a drive and activity”. Premised on the ontologies of flux and internal relations, contradictions appear through dialectical analysis because its approach does not view things as static and lifeless, or as externally related and independent, or with fixed identity. Rather, as stated by Engels, “as soon as we consider things in their motion, their change, their life, their reciprocal influence on one another. Then we immediately become involved in contradictions” (in Ollman, 2003, p. 84). Dialectics enables cognition to move beyond the appearance of contradiction as paradox or opposition to interrogate the relations of which it is constituted. For Ollman (2003, p. 17), contradiction is best described then as the incompatible development of different elements within the same relation, that is, elements that are interdependent. He continues:

Consequently, their paths of development do not only intersect in mutually supportive ways, but are constantly blocking, undermining, otherwise interfering with and in due course transforming one another ... The future finds its way into this focus as the likely and possible outcomes of the interaction of these opposing tendencies in the present, as their real potential.

For example, wealth and poverty within the capitalist world economy are revealed as two sides of the same coin; they cannot be conceptualised without or in the absence of the other. In fact, the existence of one presupposes the other. Contradictions are the unions of such processes, as they undermine and support each other and must therefore be properly regarded as different elements of the *same* unit as it moves and shifts over time, historically and organically. As Ollman explains, contradiction contains various movements including mutual reinforcement and subversion, escalation, transformation, and, lastly, resolution. For analytical purposes, abstractions (and re-abstractions) of these same relations expose these contradictions in their various movements and give content to the internal relations of each, helping thought to move beyond the appearance of contradiction to its essence as the possible outcomes of this interaction at a given moment.

It is these inner contradictions within internal relations that are responsible for all change. Yet non-dialecticians typically focus on one “factor” or one “determination” in their linear and mono-causal narratives because they cannot regard all the sides of the contradiction equally, nor do they have a method by which to abstract these many sides from one moment to the next. The result is a one-sided analysis that leads to causation bias. Such approaches, as stated by Ollman (2003, p. 18), “can never adequately grasp the way processes actually interpenetrate, and can never gauge the forces unleashed as their mutual dependence evolves from its distant origins to the present and beyond”. In distinction, for dialecticians, tracing how certain social contradictions unfold – whether those within capitalism, the state, or patriarchy (and so on and so on) – is a key way for “discovering the main causes of *coming* disruptions and *coming* conflict” (Ollman, 2003, p. 18). It is because of its perspective – its vantage – that dialectics can discern contradictions that exist in fact but which other approaches would miss, misconstrue, or ignore (Ollman, 2003, p. 108). Dialectical analysis, taken in its methodological form, is therefore fundamental to the “tracings” of such contradictions by focusing on the movements/forces/relations that simultaneously reproduce the existing status quo (or equilibrium) and those that are undermining it (Ollman, 2003, p. 85).

Over time these contradictory relations may lead to the overwhelming of one side or the other, leading to either partial or total resolution. However, real contradictions – such as those in the social life of IR – are categorically different from contradictions in logic. Whereas logical contradictions are a sign of error that necessitates reformulation and correction, in relations of “real” contrariety between persons/groups, these social contradictions are unsuccessfully mediated problems of intersubjectivity that may, or may not, be sublated (Brincat, 2011, p. 678). Such a move was made explicit by Adorno (in Alker, 1982, p. 85) in his critique of the material contradictions in liberal society:

If social science takes the concept of a liberal society as implying freedom and equality ... [and then] disputes, in principle, the truth content of these categories under liberalism – in view of the inequality of the social power which determines the relations between people – then these are not logical contradictions which could be eliminated by means of



more sophisticated definitions, nor are they subsequently emergent empirical restrictions of a provisional definition, but, rather, they are the structural constitution of society itself.

Dialectics exposes the unfinished process of the development of human potential, reveals its incompleteness, and exposes the potentialities that are as yet unrealised but which are, potentially, realisable. At this point dialectics moves towards a transformative critique of existing conditions that can overcome the separation between ideal as it appears (the promises of social order) and its actuality. But reality is seen as “complex multi-path developmental processes that can be interwoven or contradictory in numerous ways” (Patomäki, 2017, p. 173). As such, there is no predetermination, guarantee of progress, or any other teleological claim in dialectics because all such potentialities are dependent on the constellations of social relations that form the conditions of social change. Dialectics merely informs social analysis to the relations supporting or blocking such change. History has a “double character”, things/phenomena that may appear inert, or appear static in in the conditions of the status quo, are nevertheless potentially dynamic. They too form part of the arms of the spiral of history. As explained by Neufeld (1997), social contradictions cannot be sustained over time, and dialectics’ real value is in assisting thought to better understand how these antagonistic forms *may* resolve themselves. In this way dialectics can be an aid in human emancipation.

### **Movement Five: Open-endedness**

Aetiologically the idea of dialectical analysis as a “crystal ball” is an impossibility, for one cannot not know *a priori* which social factor(s) will have causal effect, nor can one prove that certain processes are historically necessary (Ollman, 1971). So, the idea of dialectics’ detractors that it is either predictive or teleological is merely an aspersion by those who do not understand it. Distinctively, given the ontological interdependence of and between relations, the mode of dialectical enquiry does not allow for reductive explanations found in causation and determination. These may have specific truths within specific contexts but they are never complete or whole. As we have seen with the movement of “abstraction”, dialectics always requires any abstracted thing/phenomenon to be re-integrated into the whole, into the complete nest of internal relations. It requires thought to constantly move between these movements simultaneously, to never rest, or, to borrow from Tolkein’s *The Hobbit*, for mind to go “there and back again”. This was the essential part of Hegel’s *Logic* and should remain the key methodological insight of this endless movement of thought.

Dialectics does not claim that human comprehension can ever be complete. Rather, the process of comprehension is open-ended, an ongoing process of (potentially) greater knowledge of the totality with the acknowledgment that any such knowledge claim is ultimately partial and transient, based on vantage that is likely to change in time, place, and context. Positing internal relations as primary, Dietzgen (2010) shows the relativity of all truth claims, how they are all partial truths, but that knowledge can develop and expand, and therefore that there are better and worse

forms of thinking. In this way, dialectics can help overcome the limitations of many approaches to IR that get stuck within given causal explanations by ensuring that at its level of abstraction of the particular (i.e. where an object, phenomenon, or moment is analysed in its particularity) is always re-integrated within the whole, that is, within the manifold relations and interconnections that make up world politics.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have traced the importance of dialectical thinking in IR theory, detailed two of its core ontological premises in flux and the philosophy of internal relations, and outlined steps for its application that anyone interested in critical approaches in IR could take to deploy dialectics in their own research. Dialectics is best regarded as a process of thinking, an approach to thought itself, and should not be mistaken as the product thereof. The aim, at its core, is in getting us to think on “the problem of thinking” within a world that is not static or independent, but a world that is in flux and constituted by internal relations. Because of these ontological commitments of flux and internal relations, dialectics pursues understanding relations further than any other approach and comes to a far greater analytical understanding of “*the between*”, the mutual implication of relationality itself that can be of acute significance when studying the dynamic forces of world politics in movement. But we must always remember that the focus of any emancipatory theory must be on using ideas to change the materiality of social conditions – to change how we relate to each other and nature – and not in using ideas to just change ideas.

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## 8. Recognition reframed: reconfiguring recognition in global politics<sup>1</sup>

*Kate Schick*

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Over the past two decades, recognition theory has become an influential strand of political theory and, more recently, has begun to shape international relations (IR) theory. One of the keys to its ascendance is its pursuit of justice in a way that eschews the austerity and abstraction of liberal theory. At the heart of recognition theory is an emphasis on relationality, on human beings not as atomized individuals but as socially situated beings. Recognition theory's relational ontology provides an important counterpoint to mainstream narratives of global politics. At present, however, the transformative potential of recognition theory in IR is limited by the dominance of overly teleological and insufficiently political conceptions of recognition. In this chapter, I argue that IR scholars need to recover an agonistic conception of recognition if its critical potential is to be realized more fully.

The chapter has four parts. First, it traces the dominant reading of recognition theory in contemporary political theory, highlighting its victim-centeredness and focus on suffering as a positive teleological force. Second, it considers some of the work recognition theory is doing in international political theory, tracing the movement towards a relational cosmopolitanism that moves away from the centrality of the state. Third, it outlines some of the limitations of recognition theory in IR, arguing that it remains wedded to an overly robust notion of moral progress and pays insufficient attention to global structures of power. Fourth, it suggests reorienting recognition as dynamic and agonistic, starting from 'what is' rather than 'what ought to be' and emphasizing the ongoing difficulty of coming-to-know. I conclude by briefly exploring the outworking of agonistic recognition in the context of the Mohawk nation's politics of refusal (Simpson, 2014, 2007) and the City of Sanctuary movement's everyday border politics (Squire and Darling, 2013).

### TRACING RECOGNITION

The term 'recognition' stems from G.W. Hegel's philosophy of consciousness.<sup>2</sup> Hegel maintains that our self-consciousness depends upon the process of mutual

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<sup>2</sup> For a fuller overview of recognition theory, see Hayden and Schick (2016a).

recognition: we become individual persons by recognizing, and being recognized by, others. He draws our attention to our deep-seated interconnectivity, asking us ‘to see the I as We and We as I’ (Hegel, 1977, p. 110) and insisting that we are inescapably relational. Recognition, on this reading, ‘implies the Hegelian thesis, often deemed at odds with liberal individualism, that social relations are prior to individuals and intersubjectivity is prior to subjectivity’ (Fraser, 2003, p. 10). Hegel’s conception of recognition, then, proffers a relational ontology that stands in sharp contrast to liberal normativity.

For Hegel, however, the process of recognition is struggle-filled and accompanied by inevitable contradictions and failure. This struggle is powerfully illustrated in the account of the master–slave dialectic in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel, 1977, pp. 114–117), where self and other confront one another as adversaries. What is initially a struggle for life and death changes into a struggle for dominance and subordination as self and other realize that they are dependent on one another for affirmation and that annihilation of the other would deprive them of the satisfaction that comes from recognition. What emerges from the struggle is the asymmetry of master and slave, as one ego cedes power to the other. Thus, ‘[t]he ego pushes its own limited view of certainty upon the other and through force and the threat of death sets up a limited “universal” of right and truth, which is also a regime of mastery and domination’ (Kochi, 2012, p. 139). Of course, the asymmetrical regime of master and slave also proves unsatisfactory, as the slave’s submissive recognition is not worth so much as full mutual recognition of equals. Over time, Hegel suggests that the master might become less self-certain and more able to reflect on the relation between self and other.

Recognition, then, is an ongoing struggle that, over time, brings freedom into being, where freedom is the ability to ‘be with oneself in the other’ (Hegel, 1970; Pippin, 2002, p. 156). For Hegel, ‘freedom only becomes actual ... if the ego gives up its immediate solipsistic tendencies towards self-certainty and instead finds itself in, and gives itself to, the radical project of mutual recognition’ (Kochi, 2012, p. 138). Hegel’s project of mutual recognition is a dynamic and ongoing project whereby subjects come to see themselves not as atomized, independent beings, but as radically dependent. Over time, they come to see themselves *in* the other, becoming less self-certain and independent as they realize that they ‘always already [contain] infinite difference and otherness within the self’ (Kochi, 2012, p. 137). The struggle inherent in Hegel’s notion of recognition is implicit in the structure of the word itself—re-cognition—which signals the need to re-cognize what is initially not fully known. Re-cognition, for Hegel, is an ongoing journey that entails inevitable misrecognition and failure: what we think we know at first will be partial and flawed and require re-knowing.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For more, see the discussion on ‘reframing recognition’ in the final section of the chapter. See also Kochi (2012, pp. 133–134); Rose (1981, p. 71); Schick (2015, p. 98).

Over the past few decades, there has been an enthusiastic revival of Hegelian recognition theory in contemporary political theory. Its emergence as an influential strand of political theory is due in part to its reflection of lived political struggles and concomitant resonance in the public sphere. The emphasis on social suffering as a relational and experiential category draws our attention to the ‘ordinary violences’ that otherwise remain ‘unthematized as part of any established political agenda’ (McNay, 2012, p. 232). Neo-Hegelian philosophers such as Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth have been particularly influential in shaping contemporary recognition theory. By drawing attention to particular suffering, they return the critical theory tradition to the concerns of early Frankfurt school thought, saying with Theodor W. Adorno: ‘The corporeal moment registers the cognition, that suffering ought not to be, that things should be different’ (Adorno, 1973, p. 203; McNay, 2012, p. 238). Nancy Fraser’s materialist reconfiguration of recognition provides a sharp critique of subjectivist accounts by drawing attention to the centrality of power and inequality to shaping relations of recognition.

Taylor’s work on multiculturalism and the politics of recognition extends Hegel’s recognition framework to intercultural relations. He speaks of recognition as a ‘vital human need’ (Taylor, 1994, p. 26) and maintains that social struggles centered on identity are struggles for recognition. In an oft-quoted statement, Taylor argues ‘our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by *misrecognition* of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people of society mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves’ (Taylor, 1994, p. 25). Not only are all persons and groups deserving of recognition, the lack of recognition or active *misrecognition* by others causes positive harm.

Honneth’s account of recognition also highlights the harm caused by a failure of recognition. He argues that we are born with an innate desire for recognition from others and that we experience failures of recognition as inequality, disrespect, and denigration. According to Honneth, ‘feelings of discontent and suffering ... coincide with the experience that society is doing something unjust, something unjustifiable’ (Honneth, 2003, p. 129).<sup>4</sup> The social suffering and discontent that ensue ‘possess a *normative core*’ (Honneth, 2003, p. 129): they prompt social struggle to address and rectify injustice and in so doing promote positive social change.<sup>5</sup> The emphasis on recognition-as-struggle references its Hegelian roots; however, Honneth’s account

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<sup>4</sup> Note that the victim-centered emphasis on the *experience* of suffering in Honneth’s recognition theory provides a strong point of difference from both classical realism and liberalism: it places normative importance on suffering itself rather than ignoring it as irrelevant to political strategy or rushing too quickly to prescribe or enact abstract, universalizable solutions. See Heins (2012, pp. 214–215). See also Schick (2006).

<sup>5</sup> Shannon Brincat argues that Honneth’s account of social struggle operates on two levels, nominal and ontological: ‘At the nominal level, it is the individual or group’s moral sense of wrongful violation of a moral expectation for recognition that motivates struggles. At the ontological level—and why recognition is deemed to have a universally emancipatory character—[it] is because all humans require recognition as essential for their own stable

emphasizes more explicitly the centrality of social struggle as a means to achieving societal progress. For both Hegel and Honneth, freedom is a *social* achievement—freedom is being with oneself in the other—and the project of mutual recognition is a project that seeks to make freedom more actual. This project is perhaps particularly needed in the context of late capitalism, where the ‘pathologies of reason’ (Honneth, 2009)—under the guise of liberal modernity—work against the goal of ‘leading a successful undistorted life together’ (Brincat, 2017, p. 5; Honneth, 2009, p. 24).

Fraser maintains that an overemphasis on identity in Honneth and Taylor’s work limits its emancipatory power. She recasts recognition as a problem not merely of identity, but also of social status. Her more embedded approach proposes a status model of recognition that takes cultural, economic and political barriers to social participation seriously. The status model has participation at its heart: it advocates ‘a politics aimed at overcoming subordination by establishing the misrecognized party as a full member of society, capable of participating on a par with the rest’ (Fraser, 2000, p. 113). To do this, it examines the various forms in which misrecognition is socially embedded, be it in formal law or societal norms, to name just two examples, and ‘seeks institutional remedies for institutionalized harms’ (Fraser, 2000, p. 116). She criticizes ‘affirmative’ approaches to problems of cultural discrimination and material inequality, which attempt to address inequality without changing underlying structures, and advocates instead a ‘transformative’ approach that examines deep structures of injustice (Fraser, 1995).

## RECOGNITION AND (CRITICAL) IR THEORY

The ascendance of recognition theory in contemporary political theory does a great deal of work. It draws attention to the lived experience of social suffering, which is all too often passed over as theorists focus instead on answering the central ethical question: ‘what ought we to do?’ (Geuss, 2005, p. 3). Recognition theory gives suffering normative force, drawing attention to the mundane or everyday violence that shapes the lives of those at the margins. It also challenges the liberal fantasy of the independent, invulnerable subject, returning us to a Hegelian relational ontology that highlights our mutual dependence and vulnerability.

In recent years, there has been an increase in scholarship at the intersection between recognition theory and IR, with scholars arguing that recognition theory has much to offer normative reflections on global politics.<sup>6</sup> The relational ontology that pervades recognition theory profoundly unsettles the individualism and statism upon which the majority of IR theory is predicated. It challenges the purposive rationalism

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construction of personal identity and self-actualization, a basic pre-requisite to their freedom’ (Brincat, 2017, p. 6).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Brincat (2017); Haacke (2005); Hayden and Schick (2016b); Lindemann and Ringmar (2012); O’Neill and Smith (2012); See also the discussions in Greenhill (2008); Ringmar (1996); Wendt (2003).



of realist accounts of international politics, which seek to maximize security and power; it also challenges the moral rationalism of liberal accounts of global politics, which seek abstract technical solutions to global suffering. In what follows, I argue that recognition theory presents a robust counterpoint to realist, liberal and cosmopolitan theories, pushing IR scholars to not only to think beyond material accounts of the state but also beyond the state.

Jürgen Haake highlights the resonance of Honneth's recognition theory for students of IR, calling the struggle for recognition 'one of two or three core motivational dynamics (next to the search for security and the profit motive)' (Haacke, 2005, p. 194). While the search for security and maximization of power are central to dominant realist accounts of international politics, recognition scholars argue that obtaining recognition from other states is also central, ensuring that states' 'identity and status in the international order is secured' (Murray, 2014, p. 558). Recognition matters in international politics in part because it helps to explain state behavior in non-material ways, challenging rationalist theories that account for state behavior exclusively in terms of 'purposive-rational behaviour' (Honneth, 2012, p. 138) (primarily military and economic power). However, the extension of recognition theory to thinking global politics is not straightforward: for example, Honneth rejects the simple 'conceptual transfer' of recognition theory from 'the level of group struggles to relationships between nation states' (Honneth, 2012, p. 140), because states are complex entities whose diversity precludes the uncomplicated 'shared experience of exclusion, indignity or disrespect' that motivates struggles for recognition (Honneth, 2012, p. 139).<sup>7</sup>

Part of the reason for the ascendance of recognition theory in IR is that it provides a robust counterpoint to other dominant IR theories: it meets the conservatism of political realism with a belief in moral progress, and the abstraction of political liberalism with situated relationality and social struggle. A superficial notion of recognition can be found in political realism; indeed, Hans Morgenthau acknowledges the importance of social recognition as a 'potent dynamic force' (Morgenthau, 1985, p. 87). However, he conceives social recognition in terms of *prestige*, whereby the perception of prestige (or lack thereof) influences position in the international system of states (Heins, 2012, pp. 214–215). Social recognition, on this reading, is about the appearance of prestige and a primary goal of statespersons is to maximize others' perception of power and prestige in the service of self-preservation and self-interest. The lived experience of persons inside the black box of the state is not prioritized; survival is primary. In contrast, recognition theory conceives of social recognition in terms of *justice*, whereby the lived experience of persons and groups is central and where political struggles result in tangible moral progress.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See also, however, the discussion in Mattias Iser's chapter on recognition in international politics, which reframes recognition in terms of normative expectations, rather than identity, in order to better conceptualize recognition between states (Iser, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> A robust belief in moral progress is at the core of most contemporary renditions of recognition theory; however, for thinkers such as Morgenthau, faith in progress is at the heart

Recognition theory is perhaps more compelling as an alternative to liberalism: both approaches are strongly normative and provide theories of justice; however, unlike liberalism, recognition theory is victim-centered and strongly rooted in social relations. As Volker Heins puts it, ‘recognition theory holds a special place among different forms of moral cosmopolitanism because it does not start from principles of justice generated by thought experiments but from the empirical needs of human beings for recognition in the form of legal respect, social esteem and love’ (Heins, 2012, p. 213). Where (Kantian) liberalism uses abstract reason to devise rules for how best to achieve a good life, recognition theory starts with the experience of suffering and maintains that social struggle for recognition—in order to alleviate that suffering—is what prompts moral progress. This (Hegelian) ‘antagonistic’ theory of society and politics challenges the tidy liberal conception of reason and ‘presents instead a theoretical model which helps us better to understand the role of antagonism, struggle and violence within the creation of ethical norms, moral principles and legal orders’ (Kochi, 2012, p. 129).

Recognition theory productively challenges exclusively materialist accounts of states and state behavior. Even more provocative and productive, perhaps, is the use of a recognition framework to think *beyond* the state in global politics. In critical IR, some thinkers have turned to Honneth’s recognition theory as a way of thinking beyond the narrow rationalism of normative IR theories. Shannon Brincat argues that recognition theory can rehabilitate moral cosmopolitanism, which is constrained by two key limitations: narrow statism and nominal individualism. Drawing on Honneth’s recognition theory, he reconstructs cosmopolitanism as always already relational, situating it ‘within ... already existing relational practices and institutions of personal, private, and public spheres of social life’ (Brincat, 2017, p. 2). Brincat emphasizes recognition theory’s rootedness in the Hegelian ‘intersubjective notion of freedom’ (Brincat, 2017, p. 2) and argues that:

[i]ts defense of a lived social freedom for *all* members through the mutual recognition of the needs, respect, and esteem, of individuals and groups, establishes a grounding of cosmopolitan politics within a positive account of diversity and difference in social relations—thereby distinguishing itself from those cosmopolitan approaches that operate under a close monistic horizon or fixed institutional model. (Brincat, 2017, p. 2)

On this account, recognition theory offers cosmopolitanism in IR a way to escape the stagnation of thinking primarily in terms of states or individuals, enabling it to think in terms of social relations ‘*across, over, and beyond* the state’ (Brincat, 2017, p. 2). Brincat illustrates cosmopolitan recognition with three vignettes, pointing to the ‘unique transnational solidarism’ (Brincat, 2017, p. 18) of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex (LGBTQI) communities struggles for recognition; Anti-Apartheid struggles in South Africa as an example of ‘cosmopolitan social

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of the ‘disease’ of liberal thought and the pursuit of this fantasy merely compounds humanity’s problems (Morgenthau, 1946, p. 202).

relations helping to bridge the abstract right of personhood to a lived social freedom' (Brincat, 2017, p. 21); and emergent cosmopolitan public sphere(s) marked by solidarity and 'active care for strangers' (Brincat, 2017, pp. 23–27).

Other thinkers maintain that Honneth's recognition theory remains too wedded to moral rationalism and turn instead to Taylor's recognition theory. Volker Heins argues that the conceptions of recognition elaborated by Honneth and Jürgen Habermas are overly individualist and teleological and that this constrains their emancipatory power (Heins, 2016). Heins maintains that, despite Honneth's aspiration to ground recognition theory in lived experience, his 'overly harmonious and teleological approach' (Heins, 2016, p. 70) ends up dealing in generalized categories that pay too little attention to particular moral claims. Many struggles of cultural minorities are not focused primarily on securing equal rights or the esteem of others, but on 'living an authentic life' (Heins, 2016, p. 77). Honneth's overly individualistic and legalized account of recognition has implications for his reflections on global politics, which take existing political boundaries for granted and remain wedded to a statist and capitalist account of the international. For this reason, '[s]truggles for recognition are conceptualized as struggles for inclusion, not as more radical struggles about the kind of community into which people want to be included' (Heins, 2016, p. 77). In Taylor's work on multiculturalism, Heins finds a more agonistic framework for thinking through recognition in global politics, one that allows space for victims of disrespect to struggle for recognition from those they deem worthy sources of recognition.<sup>9</sup> However, as Lawrence Blum argues, despite Taylor's emphasis on recognizing the distinctiveness of cultural *groups*, his conception of group recognition is hampered by its reliance on an individualistic conception of equality (Blum, 1998, p. 88). Thus, while Taylor argues convincingly for the recognition of groups' cultural distinctiveness, he fails to capture their desire to be 'seen as non-inferior' (Blum, 1998, p. 88) or to recognize that an important part of this recognition must include recognition of the 'distinct historical experience ... that is intimately connected with *inequality*' (Blum, 1998, p. 98, emphasis in original).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Heins quotes from James Baldwin, here: 'I do not know many Negroes who are eager to be "accepted" by white people, still less to be loved by them' (Baldwin, 1992, p. 21), cited in Heins (2016, p. 80). In the context of indigenous politics, see also the discussion of Audra Simpson's engagement with ethnographic refusal later in this chapter (Simpson, 2007, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Blum agrees with Fraser's implicit critique of Taylor's overemphasis on cultural distinctiveness and concomitant neglect of inequality; however, he argues that her work 'presents precisely the reverse problem' (Blum, 1998, p. 91)—her commitment to an analysis of structural mechanisms of inequality ends up 'masking the entire issue of recognition of cultural distinctiveness' (Blum, 1998, p. 94).

## RECOGNITION CONSTRAINED: LIMITATIONS OF RECOGNITION AND IR THEORY

The theory of recognition is a compelling lens through which to understand and enact global politics. It offers a theory of justice that moves away from the prescription of universal rules for living and towards socially situated engagement with particular practices and institutions. This relational understanding of global politics facilitates engagement beyond the state, offering a potentially transformative approach to international political theory, which too often remains caught between statism and individualism (Brincat, 2017). More fundamentally, it has the potential to re-orient the way we think about IR theory, prompting a critical unsettling of moral rationalism and the emergence of an emancipatory ethics that knows, relates, and acts differently (Schick, 2018).

In what follows, however, I argue that the recognition theory that sounds loudest in contemporary politics and IR remains wedded to an overly robust notion of moral progress and insufficiently attuned to global structures of power. Although standard recognition theory develops a theory of justice based on social suffering, its ‘reductive ontology’ (McNay, 2012, p. 231) depends too heavily on the recognitive dyad of recognizer and recognized and pays too little attention to the structures and power relations that facilitate social suffering.<sup>11</sup> It also risks becoming captured by moral rationalism—whereby recognition becomes instrumentalized as a ‘tool’ to facilitate moral progress—or by a ‘romanticised ontology’ (McNay, 2012, p. 231)—whereby our task is to retrieve a fundamental mutuality to counter reified social relations.

The recognition theory that dominates both contemporary political theory and critical IR is Honneth’s conception of recognition, which is wedded to an overly robust conception of moral progress and underpinned by an acceptance of the capitalist and statist status quo. Honneth’s account of recognition is strongly teleological, which is part of its appeal: he highlights the unjustifiable suffering that attends misrecognition, the concomitant struggle for recognition, and the justice that emerges as processes of recognition become embedded in social practice. This account resonates strongly with the ‘folk paradigm’ (Bingham, 2006; Fraser, 2003, p. 11) of recognition whereby ‘recognition has become an “obvious” good, one that should not be questioned or even explained’ (Bingham, 2006, p. 327). On this account, injustice stems from misrecognition of people’s identities and the solution for this misrecognition is ‘*more* recognition’ (Markell, 2003, p. 180) and more respect. Justice is achieved by securing legal equality and working towards better representation and representa-

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<sup>11</sup> As I have already noted, Fraser’s critique of Honneth’s work draws attention to this limitation of his work and provides an important corrective of his overly subjective and individualist account of recognition (Fraser, 2003, 2000, 1995). However, as discussed above, although Fraser rightly insists on attention to structures of power and inequality, her resolutely objectivist conception of recognition fails to capture the important subjective dimensions of misrecognition. See, for example, the discussion in McNay (2008, pp. 147–161); Mookherjee (2016).

tional practices that promote understanding and esteem. For Honneth, the linear progression from misrecognition, through struggle, to recognition facilitates positive self-relation and self-actualization.

A more nuanced account of Honneth's recognition is found in his 'transcendental' (Honneth, 2008, p. 152) account of recognition, which goes beyond the normative to root recognition in social structure. Honneth's transcendental account maintains that persons are fundamentally attuned to one another—built for empathetic and caring relations—but that dominant social structure and ideology foster a 'forgetting' of this originary stance that might be termed reification. Honneth argues that 'this primordial form of relating to the world' is "recognition" in its most elementary form' (Honneth, 2008, p. 37). His transcendental account of recognition productively highlights the structural and ideological dimensions of recognition. However, it also problematically suggests that recovery of this fundamental attunement would address the pervasive problems of misrecognition and relieve unnecessary suffering. In so doing, Honneth roots his theory of recognition in a romanticized ontology that is reminiscent of a 'secularized version of the fall' (Lear, 2008, p. 131; McNay, 2012, p. 244). This account, too, is predicated on a strong version of moral progress that portrays recognition-as-care-and-empathy and maintains that reconnecting with our fundamental relationality is a life-giving return to an originary position.

Honneth's primordial account of recognition suggests that unlearning entrenched habits of prioritizing the self and recovering the empathy we were built for may well involve struggle; however, the struggle is part of a teleological journey towards self-actualization. On this account, the cognitive journey is primarily a forward-looking journey of identifying needs for respect and self-esteem and taking constructive steps to address these—whether those steps are taken by the recognizers on behalf of the misrecognized or by the misrecognized for themselves.<sup>12</sup> However, it pays too little attention to the *desires* that underlie entrenched patterns of misrecognition (Foster, 2011)—the existing social structures and ideology that Honneth highlights as working against recognition (Honneth, 2008, p. 37)—or to the social, historical, material and political forces that foster misrecognition. Furthermore, there is a danger that by emphasizing recognition as a path towards self-actualization the process of coming-to-know is romanticized as a joyous and positive life-giving journey.

The individualism and overly teleological thrust of recognition theory in critical IR go hand-in-hand with insufficient attention to global structures of power. That is, dominant strands of recognition theory focus too closely on the experience of suffering as a motivator for struggle and progress without attending sufficiently to the social and political factors that facilitate that suffering. The victim-centered orientation of Honneth's recognition theory is a radical shift from realism's focus on great power

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<sup>12</sup> This forward-looking dimension of standard recognition theory is captured by Heins when he describes Honneth's model of recognition as giving 'more attention ... to phenomena of social suffering than to the analysis of the causes of suffering' (Heins, 2012, p. 215).

politics and liberalism's focus on developing abstract universal moral guidelines; however, its radicalism is undercut by a failure to adequately consider the social and political dimensions of (mis)recognition. As Heins puts it, 'recognition theory, as it stands today, is not a very good *explanatory* theory of social conflicts, since it proposes to start with an analysis of the raw materials of moral feelings without offering an account of the social factors that shape and organize this inert material into a political force' (Heins, 2012, p. 216). Instead, it is 'silent' on the factors that would foster or hinder the 'necessary preconditions for individual self-realization' (Heins, 2012, p. 216), undercutting its critical potential to attend both to particular suffering and to the 'objective social conditions' that foster that suffering (Adorno, 1986; Schick, 2009). It is silent in large part because it *cannot speak to them*. In her critique of Honneth, Lois McNay argues '[u]ltimately this ontology results in a psychologically simplistic account of power where social relations are persistently viewed as extrapolations from a primary dyad of recognition' (McNay, 2012, p. 242).

It is telling that Honneth refers to his recognition framework as providing a '*moral grammar of social conflicts*' (Honneth, 1996, emphasis mine). Indeed, he purposively avoids referring to his recognition theory as a '*politics of recognition*' (Deranty and Renault, 2007, p. 92, emphasis in original). Jean-Philippe Deranty and Emmanuel Renault maintain that Honneth's theory of recognition is effectively 'pre-institutional in essence' (Deranty and Renault, 2007, p. 99): institutions are useful primarily as vehicles of recognition for individuals. They disagree, however, that individual subjectivity can be considered outside institutional frameworks. Instead, they argue, 'existing recognitive interactions are always structured by material conditions such as natural and artificial things, bodies and institutions, and we also believe that the normative content of these interactions cannot be fully described independently of their material conditions' (Deranty and Renault, 2007, p. 100). Recognitive relations between individuals are always situated in, and shaped by, institutions; institutions, likewise, are situated in relation to each other and to underlying social, historical and economic structures and processes (Deranty and Renault, 2007, p. 100). Understanding recognition as constitutive rather than merely expressive draws our attention to the role that institutions play in producing and denying recognition. For Deranty and Renault, acknowledging the *politics* of recognition by attending to structures and institutions is imperative: it makes space for recognition theory's 'radical political critique' (Deranty and Renault, 2007, p. 93).

Global politics is, of course, pervaded by structures of power that constrain recognition. Perhaps most obviously, international relations are structured by great power politics, which fundamentally shapes (non)access to power and prestige.<sup>13</sup> Going

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<sup>13</sup> Returning to the earlier discussion of prestige in political realism, Heins remarks: 'The privileged legal standing of great powers combined with the absence of an agreed-upon international principle of achievement means that international society bears many similarities with the prestige order that Honneth believes has been overcome. It would be mistaken to believe, as Honneth does, that there is anything pre-modern about prestige. In fact the pursuit of the particular form of respect and indirect power that is generated by prestige is one of the

beyond the international system of states, global politics are also profoundly shaped by deeply rooted structures of privilege and domination that are maintained, in part, by repression and denial.<sup>14</sup> It is (or ought to be) impossible to discuss theories of justice without attending to relations of power and mechanisms of recognition are not exempt from capture by dominating or paternalistic relations. Indeed, much of the literature on justice as recognition calls for powerful voices to recognize the ways of life of marginalized groups and agents. In Fiona Robinson's interrogation of the problem of paternalism in the ethics of care, she argues that recognition in global politics is shaped by and reinforces existing structures of power. She maintains '[r]ecognition is not meaningful if it involves powerful agents recognizing a version of the other that has little relation to who or what they are, or if it involves the "production" of others as subjects whose existence serves to support or uphold existing, unequal relations of power' (Robinson, 2016, p. 162). In the place of paternalist mechanisms of recognition, Robinson draws on Marion Barnes' work on care to advocate transformative recognition, which unsettles the categories of givers and recipients of recognition by emphasizing agents' mutual vulnerability and interdependence (Robinson, 2016, pp. 170–174; Barnes, 2012). In so doing, she disrupts the dyadic conception of recognition that permeates global care ethics, saying 'a global ethics of care cannot simply "care about" unfortunate, weak, or vulnerable others without critical reflection on the historical and contemporary norms, structures and institutions that shaped the positionalities of these caring relationships' (Robinson, 2016, p. 174).

## RECOGNITION REFRAMED: RECONFIGURING RECOGNITION IN GLOBAL POLITICS

Recognition theory in IR remains overly wedded to a robustly teleological conception of recognition that fails to take global structures of power sufficiently into account. In what follows, I argue for a return to a radical Hegelian conception of recognition that takes account of the social, material, and political forces that foster misrecognition and promotes an ongoing, agonistic work of recognition.<sup>15</sup> I maintain that critical recognition needs to recover the dynamism and agonism of Hegel's original conception of recognition and prioritize a relational ontology that goes

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distinctive features of the international order. Unlike recognition, prestige is not a *prerequisite* of agency and autonomy but a *consequence* of public displays of power and agency. Prestige is a positional good that is held and enjoyed by a few and cannot be shared with all without losing its value' (Heins, 2012, p. 225).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Robbie Shilliam's interrogation of the white supremacist psyche that shores up Western liberalism, which is maintained by deep-seated ignorance and denial of 'its own illiberalism' and 'culpable relationships to the non-Western/un-liberal worlds' (Shilliam, 2013, p. 133).

<sup>15</sup> Note that the 'radical Hegel' (Rose, 1981, p. viii) I draw on here is a particular reading of Hegel that differs from conservative readings (see, for example, Butler, 1987; Hutchings, 2003; Kochi, 2012; Rose, 1981; Schick, 2015).

beyond the interpersonal, situating recognition between individuals and groups in the context of institutions, social and political structures, and historical processes. This would address two central problems with the theory and practice of recognition in global politics: its failure to attend sufficiently to social and political structures that foster misrecognition; and an overly robust teleology that risks romanticizing the intersubjective process of recognition and minimizing the difficulty of enacting emancipatory change.

A more agonistic and political conception of recognition eschews a robustly positive teleology and is attuned to global structures of power. It recovers the struggle of Hegel's account of recognition, which emphasizes the ongoing, difficult process of coming-to-know. A return to a more agonistic Hegelian conception of recognition starts with *what is*, seeing philosophy's task as 'comprehending the world and ... comprehending *how* we come to know the world' (Kochi, 2012, p. 130).<sup>16</sup> As discussed above, the *difficulty* of re-cognition is captured in the very structure of the word: our initial cognition is partial and flawed and requires re-cognizing or knowing again (Rose, 1981, p. 71; Schick, 2015).

Agonistic recognition's emphasis on coming-to-know sits in sharp contrast to a moral rationalist prescription of more recognition or respect, including removal of barriers to participation, bestowing equal rights, and increased understanding of the other. Rather than prescribing positive steps to address misrecognition (and in so doing, answering the central ethical question: 'What ought we to do?' (Geuss, 2005, p. 3)), an agonistic conception of recognition prioritizes a slower and deeper engagement with suffering that comes to know its contours—including the underlying desires and denials, the refusals to come-to-know. Suffering does indeed have normative force, as Honneth argues; however, there is danger in rushing too quickly to alleviate suffering without examining its contours and our own implication in fostering that suffering.

Part of the process of recognition is coming-to-know the desires that shape our engagement with ourselves and our world—and one of the key desires shaping that engagement is 'the desire of the ego to become "(self)-certain"' (Kochi, 2012, p. 131; see also Hegel, 1977, p. 104). In a radically countercultural move, Hegelian recognition theory works *against* certainty, asking us to become open and vulnerable.<sup>17</sup> An unsettling journey towards recognition involves becoming less self-certain

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<sup>16</sup> Adorno cites a passage from Hegel that beautifully captures his insistence on attending to the 'concreteness' of particular experience: 'It is part of the cowardice of abstract thought that it shuns the sensuous present in a monkish fashion' (Adorno, 1993, p. 78; Hegel, 1962, p. 101). He continues that 'Hegel felt the sterility of all so-called intellectual work that takes place within the general sphere without dirtying itself with the specific; but rather than lament it he gave it a critical and productive turn' (Adorno, 1993, p. 80).

<sup>17</sup> Indeed Kochi argues that a willingness to give up self-certainty is at the heart of the radical project of recognition: 'What is rational (or reasonable) is the realization of the freedom of being which can only occur if the ego gives up its immediate solipsistic tendencies towards self-certainty and instead finds itself in, and gives itself to, the radical project of mutual recognition: the positing of itself in and through its others; the re-cognition of truth claims as shared



and more willing to question ourselves and our location in oppressive relations and structures. Gillian Rose insists that it is ‘possible to mean well, to be caring and kind, loving one’s neighbour as oneself, yet to be complicit in the corruption and violence of social institutions’ (Rose, 1993, p. 35). Coming-to-know *what is* means that we cannot remain ‘strangers to ourselves as moral agents and as social actors’ (Rose, 1993, p. 36); part of an agonistic journey towards recognition is to be willing to become vulnerable, to turn our gaze inwards and examine our complicity in fostering misrecognition (Schick, 2015, pp. 99–100).

In their call to politicize Honneth’s ethics of recognition, Deranty and Renault note that ‘[o]ur ethical life rests upon a positive relation to ourselves, because one can try to choose the good or the just only if one has a positive image of one’s existence’ (Deranty and Renault, 2007, p. 101). This is partially true: where embodied domination enacts silence and undermines agency, part of the struggle for recognition is rewriting ‘experiences of deprivation that are lived as feelings of shame, boredom, hopelessness and so on’ (McNay, 2012, p. 230). I maintain, however, that a properly critical account of recognition insists that the privileged, in particular, be willing to *revise* often closely held positive images of our existences. The process of coming to understand the contours of suffering can involve coming-to-know that which we would prefer not to know—including the ways we benefit from and continue to uphold (or fail to challenge) structures that systematically disadvantage minority groups.

A cornerstone of recognition, for the privileged, must be to *listen* to those from the margins and, in so doing, become discomfited. As Emily Beausoleil points out in her recent work, persons in positions of power can choose not to listen to marginalized voices ‘with impunity’ (Beausoleil, 2017). Opting not to attend to voices from the margins protects privileged egos from knowing that which they would prefer not to know, sustaining willful ignorance: ‘a systematic process of self-deception, a willful embrace of ignorance that infects those who are in positions of privilege, an active ignoring of the oppression of others and one’s role in that exploitation’ (Tuana, 2006, p. 11).<sup>18</sup> For the privileged, living an ethical life requires a willingness to acknowledge vulnerability, to become discomfited, and to unsettle one’s positive relation to oneself. The privileged must be careful not to place additional burdens on oppressed peoples to educate or forgive their oppressors, however. As Robbie Shilliam cautions, the focus of the privileged ought to be to ‘save their own souls’ (Shilliam, 2013, p. 141), to respond not with sympathy but with anger ‘about and for the debilitating effects that white supremacy had upon whites themselves’ (Shilliam, 2013, p. 140). It is no accident, of course, that white supremacy is permeated with a culture of individualism that is privileged in mainstream institutions—the very antithesis of a deep relational ontology.

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and negotiated normative commitment; the acknowledgement of the shared power that underlies the constitution of moral norms and political institution; the speculative comprehension of its always already social being’ (Kochi, 2012, p. 138).

<sup>18</sup> See also the discussion of willful ignorance in Gilson (2011); Schick (2016).

I finish with two reflections on agonistic recognition in practice, illustrating its powerful unsettling of politics-as-usual in the context of indigenous politics and border politics. The politics of refusal outlined in Audra Simpson's ethnography of Mohawk nationhood and citizenship illustrates an agonistic version of recognition that refuses the teleology and statism of mainstream recognition theory. Mohawk nationhood falls across accepted state lines (United States and Canada) but refuses recognition-as-inclusion into status quo structures and highlights instead the central importance of intra-community recognition. Simpson highlights the poverty of 'categorical forms of recognition and misrecognition' (Simpson, 2007, p. 69) that interpret indigenous aspirations 'in ways that [are] not their own' (Simpson, 2007, p. 70). Her ethnography '[pivots] on refusals': it traces the ways in which the people of Kahnawake '*refused* the authority of the state at almost every turn' (Simpson, 2007, p. 73, emphasis in original). Rather than seeking recognition from the state or inclusion into existing state structures, political sovereignty in these communities adheres to alternative logics, including "'feeling citizenships" that are structured in the present space of intra-community recognition, affection and care, outside of the logics of colonial and imperial rule' (Simpson, 2007, p. 76). By refusing recognition-as-inclusion into existing state boundaries, the Mohawk nation refuses the paternalistic extension of recognition by the privileged mainstream (state and culture)—a mainstream conception of recognition that continues to be structured by colonial logics and fails to acknowledge the ongoing historical legacy of misrecognition. Instead, it occupies the space of refusal, embodying an agonistic form of recognition characterized by intra-community relationality and dependence. In so doing, it presents a profound challenge to the institution of the border with its fixed inscription of belonging and exclusion—it re-inscribes those borders as uncertain and ambiguous and invites the state to come-to-know—to re-cognize—the specific contours of the suffering that are writ therein.

The City of Sanctuary movement in the UK also embodies agonistic recognition in its disruption of logics of inclusion and exclusion at the border (City of Sanctuary, 2018; Squire and Darling, 2013). City of Sanctuary originated in Sheffield in 2005 and has since become a network of groups operating in cities, towns and villages throughout the UK. Its vision is 'that the UK will be a welcoming place of safety for all and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution' (City of Sanctuary, 2018). Through its activities and events it seeks to 'build a culture of welcome, hospitality and inclusiveness' with relationality at its core.<sup>19</sup> Vicki Squire and Jonathan Darling argue that the City of Sanctuary movement can be understood not only in terms of its "'major" orientation' of hospitality, but also in terms of the "'minor" politics of "rightful presence"' (Squire and Darling, 2013, p. 61). The movement is profoundly political in the way it disrupts status quo assumptions

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<sup>19</sup> City of Sanctuary activities and projects include social, cultural, and educational events such as community gardening, social evenings, school visits, workshops, and volunteering opportunities.

around membership and belonging by enacting the legitimate presence of those seeking sanctuary. This disruptive and embodied politics of presence emerges ‘out of a series of everyday encounters that potentially question statist distinctions such as “guest” and “host” or “citizen” and “noncitizen”’ (Squire and Darling, 2013, p. 62). In challenging the binary distinctions that inhere in essentialist and anti-essentialist ethics of hospitality (Squire and Darling, 2013, pp. 63–64) the politics of presence can be understood in terms of an ‘alternative rendition of relational justice’ (Squire and Darling, 2013, p. 64) that is concretely embedded in the here and now.

The politics of ‘rightful presence’ enacted by the City of Sanctuary movement embodies an agonistic politics of recognition. Its agonistic politics of everyday engagements ‘make[s] present ... concrete histories and geographies of injustice’ (Squire and Darling, 2013, pp. 61, 65). By making concrete injustices visible to those actively involved with the movement and, potentially, to those who observe its activities, the City of Sanctuary movement fosters the re-cognition—or re-thinking—of simplistic binaries of inclusion and exclusion that perpetuate ongoing injustice. It draws attention to borders as ‘zones of uncertainty’ (Rainey, 2018, p. 159) and affirms ambiguity as the starting point for engagement (Rainey, 2018, pp. 158–159). An agonistic approach emphasizes the *ongoing* project of recognition: it calls for the enacting (and re-enacting) of a ‘politics of the ordinary’ (Honig, 2009, p. xviii) in our everyday lives (Rose, 1996, p. 122; Schick, 2012, p. 73).

As we have already discussed, agonistic recognition is ‘unsettled and unsettling’ (Rose, 1992, p. 155): it asks us to listen to voices from the margins and be discomfited in the process. In another project that unsettles the contemporary politics of migration through storytelling, *Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat*, Squire points to the productive unsettling of relations between ‘new arrivals’ and ‘receiving communities’ (Squire, 2018, p. 447). The project ‘bear[s] witness to the violence of contemporary migration policies’ (Squire, 2018, p. 455) both through the process of conducting in-depth interviews with ‘people on the move’ (Squire, 2018, p. 455) and through the dissemination of their stories through ‘interactive mapping’ (Squire, 2018, p. 454). It calls those on the receiving end of migration to *listen* to voices from the margins and to be willing to be unsettled and to re-cognize—to re-examine what we think we know—in the process. Squire argues that the process ‘contributes to the creation of conditions for positive change by grounding the connections between diverse constituencies in relations of equality and respect and by provoking a discomfort that can prompt action on the part of “receiving communities”’ (Squire, 2018, p. 455).

## CONCLUSION

Recognition theory provides an important counterweight to dominant IR: it meets the conservatism of political realism with faith in moral progress and the abstract universalism of liberalism with situated relationality and lived political struggle.

However, its critical potential is limited by an overly robust teleology and a failure to take global structures of power sufficiently into account.

A more *agonistic* understanding of recognition-as-learning attends more closely to the social and political dimensions of (mis)recognition and emphasizes the ongoing difficulty and political risk of re-cognizing and re-configuring global politics. My insistence on an agonistic conception of recognition connects social and political actors more honestly to their embeddedness in particular histories and structures, with resultant economic, social, and political winners and losers. Its relational ontology goes all the way down and sees global politics not as something that happens ‘out there’ but as inextricably connected to our lives and relations.

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## 9. Empires at home: critical international relations theory and our postcolonial moments

*Alexander D. Barder*

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The shooting of Michael Brown, a high school student, outside a convenience store in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014, provoked widespread unrest. Protests centered not only on the perceived injustice of the act itself – the policeman Darren Wilson suspected Brown of having carried out an armed robbery – but also on the prevalent oppressive relationship between the police and the African-American community. The protests, however, were met with overwhelming displays of policing power. SWAT team members, clad in armor, rifle in hand and riding in military issued Humvees, appeared ready to confront an opposing army. One iconic image during the protests shows a police sniper sitting atop a police vehicle, sights locked on the protestors. He is clad in army fatigues and he is wearing an Enhanced Combat Helmet, hand on the trigger of his sniper rifle. Nothing gives away the fact that he is a police officer except for the word police on his bulletproof jacket.

The militarization of the American police is certainly not a recent phenomenon. It accelerates and intensifies during moments of American imperial intervention abroad. From the subjugation of the Philippines in the latter part of the nineteenth century to the Vietnam War with the advent of SWAT teams in police departments, there is a history that connects actions abroad and their domestic ramifications. A more recent moment is the acceleration of militarization with the advent of the global war on terror in 2001 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Department of Defense Excess Property Program – (also known as program 1033) – is specifically designed to subsidize excess military hardware to police departments across the country. The Department of Justice and Homeland Security have also initiated programs to facilitate the transfer of military hardware from battlefields abroad back into the United States.

The events of Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, among many other responses in recent years, highlight how the perpetuation of violence abroad has repercussions at home. The militarization of American streets is directly tied to the militarization of American foreign policy and a larger neo-imperial context that constitutes American global hegemony. While neo-imperialism is understood to reflect the perpetuation of indirect forms of control through capitalist modalities of production and distribution, we have seen since the beginning of the Global War on Terror, a more robust attempt at asserting political control in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. Importantly, these

spaces serve as laboratories of disciplinary control which continue to reverberate within the United States itself.

To be sure, what I'm describing as the set of imbrications between imperial forms of control and their effects within the metropole is not new. Historically, imperial powers have used their colonial domains to experiment with a wide variety of practices and technologies before repatriating them for use at home. This chapter examines two such cases (one historical and one contemporary) that elucidate this nexus between imperial practice and its domestic reverberations. The first examines the history of the concentration camp as an apparatus of spatial enclosure that has its origins in various colonial crucibles. The camp and the colony share a family resemblance: the camp crystalized as a solution to an ever-present problem of colonial security, spatial demarcations and control, populations management and eventual political suppression and mass murder in its proliferation with Nazism. The apparatus of the camp is illustrative of imperial circuits of knowledge, adaptations of practices and implementations of material technologies of control that become applicable in a variety of settings. However, the dominance of Eurocentrism in international relations (IR) theory blinds us to the proliferation of imperial modalities of security, practices of violence, and material technologies of control that have long constituted the colonial space.

The second example that I discuss is the more contemporary case of the US invasion of Iraq and the domestic consequences of this (neo-)imperial experience. The United States was ill prepared to rebuild and manage Iraq. It faced a growing insurgency that risked breaking up the country. The insurgency forced the US military to adapt and develop new techniques of counterinsurgency, new technologies such as wireless fingerprinting, biometric scanning, and experimentation with neo-liberal reforms. In a sense, Iraq became a laboratory to experiment with a variety of practices and technologies that would accrue back into the United States. The case of Iraq isn't unique in history; over a hundred years earlier, the US takeover of the Philippines acted as a similar laboratory crucible with momentous implications for the development of domestic national security institutions. Faced with a significant insurgency, US authorities in the Philippines likewise had to adapt new technologies and techniques of social control to maintain American suzerainty over the area. As Alfred McCoy argues in *Policing America's Empire*, 'colonial veterans came home to turn the same lens on America, seeing its ethnic communities not as fellow citizens but as internal colonies requiring coercive control' (McCoy 2009, p. 294).

## NORMATIVE AND CONCEPTUAL IMPLICATIONS FOR A CRITICAL IR THEORY

The events of Ferguson naturally raise normative questions about the prevalence of military-style policing within a constitutional democracy. The acceleration of military policing in the United States continuously calls into question the stability of legal norms that restrain policing power and violence. If domestic state power con-



tinuously draws from its neo-imperial experiences and practices, then what are the long-term consequences for maintaining a liberal domestic space free of unrestrained coercive power? Indeed, the fundamental normative question that emerges is one that has a long history dating back to debates about the collapse of the Roman republic: is an imperial republic a contradiction in terms? Does the pursuit of empire abroad lead to the corruption of domestic republican institutions at home?

Such normative questions have gained renewed urgency. Moreover, grappling with them should be a central concern in any emancipatory project within critical IR theory. As Kenneth Booth recognized back in 1991 in his classic article ‘Security and Emancipation’:

‘Security’ means the absence of threats. Emancipation is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do. War and the threat of war is one of those constraints, together with poverty, poor education, political oppression and so on. Security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security. Emancipation, theoretically, is security. (1991, p. 319)

However, any emancipatory political project needs to recognize the crucial linkages between the pursuit of security abroad and the domestic percolating effects within the domestic space. Imperialism is never just, or primarily, a practice situated outside the borders of the empire; its ramifications and implications always implicated domestic politics and domestic governance. Therefore, the pursuits of any form of domestic emancipatory politics needs to fundamentally recognize instances of foreign imperial or (neo)imperial violence and security. Indeed, Martin Luther King Jr. recognized this clearly in his ‘Beyond Vietnam’ speech given in 1967.

Now it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war. If America’s soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read ‘Vietnam.’ It can never be saved so long as it destroys the deepest hopes of men the world over. So it is that those of us who are yet determined that ‘America will be’ are led down the path of protest and dissent, working for the health of our land. (King 2013 [1967], p. 83)

Such normative concerns are necessarily linked to how IR theory recognizes the division between the international and domestic. For too long, mainstream IR theorists have tended to draw hermetically tight boundaries between state actions in the international sphere and domestic institutional changes. Norm diffusion happens in ways that imbricate states together. But it tends to be theorized or discussed as a process of socialization of non-Western states into a dominantly conceived Western hierarchy (Risse 2016; Keck & Sikkink 1998). Moreover, as Kenneth Waltz stipulated in his canonical *Theory of International Politics*, what defines IR as a discipline is not a concern with violence, and especially with the potential transnational proliferation of security practices. ‘The distinction between international and national realms of politics’, Waltz writes, ‘is not found in the use or nonuse of force but in their different structures’ (Waltz 2010 [1979], p. 103). Violence is endemic to both the anarchical

international level and the domestic hierarchical one. The difference for Waltz is that the domestic or 'national realm' is one where the state possessing 'some standard of legitimacy, arrogates to itself the right to use force', whereas the international remains a condition of perpetual self-help among like units (2010 [1979], p. 103). Waltz's division between anarchy and hierarchy, between international and domestic, attempts to bracket so-called forms of 'domestic' violence.

This stark division between the international and domestic also has consequences for security studies. Traditional security studies emphasizes three main attributes of its field of study. The first is that the state remains the primary actor in international politics; second, states make up the international system and this system is anarchical (i.e. there is no central legitimate authority to adjudicate disputes between states); third, as a consequence of the previous point, violence between states is the main feature of international history and international politics. Security studies, then, centers its theoretical concerns on the conditions of possibility of violence between states in an anarchical order (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams 2010, p. 20). It is not concerned with linking theoretical questions with that of emancipation; given the extent to which neo-positivist epistemologies underpin traditional security studies such approaches are 'problem-solving' and assume the inevitable maintenance of the status quo (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams 2010, p. 19; Cox 1981). Critical security studies, however, problematizes many of ontological and epistemological assumptions made in mainstream IR theory and in security studies. State-centrism, for example, has been criticized as too limited in its focus on security and acts to reify the state-system when an emancipatory emphasis may be more important for other polities in the Global South (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams 2010, p. 21). Importantly, the emphasis on state-centrism occludes the various processes that, as Stanley Hoffmann recognized, 'from the point of view of systemic empirical analysis, the theory [of political realism] stresses the autonomy of international relations to the point of leaving beyond its pale the forces which work for change and which, *cutting across the states*, affect the states' behavior' (Hoffmann 1959, p. 352, my emphasis).

In this chapter, I take up Hoffmann's point because I'm interested in showing how certain state practices abroad have repercussions at home, and the reification of the domestic and international needs to be undone. Rather than taking an artificial conceptual division between the domestic and the international sphere, I illustrate their mutual imbrications in ways that render intelligible the practices of international violence and securitization for the domestic space. My starting point is broadly in line with a range of postcolonial approaches in IR and security studies (Barder 2015; Seth 2013; Ling 2002; Sajed 2013; Chowdhry & Nair 2004; Jones 2006; Grovogui 2006). Postcolonialism generally problematizes Eurocentric assumptions about the autonomous development of the Western state-system and about the socialization of the non-West into a specific Western order. It sees historical and contemporary imperial practices as central features of international politics and the development of international order. Moreover, postcolonial approaches question the dominant state-centric and anarchical ontology in IR by highlighting the prevalence of hierarchical (political, economic, racial, etc.) relations between various polities. Such

hierarchical relations have implications not only for the subservient polity, but also, as I highlight in this chapter, for those states or institutions that maintain hierarchy. Postcolonial approaches also have important implications for security studies. As Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey noted in their canonical essay ‘The Postcolonial Moment in Security Studies’, ‘Understanding security relations, past and present, requires acknowledging the mutual constitution of Europe and the non-European world and their joint role in making history’ (Barkawi & Laffey 2006, p. 330). In the next two sections, I turn to how critical IR can reveal the mutual imbrications between these two spaces and the implications of this.

## CAMP AND COLONY: MATERIALIZING ENCLOSURE WITH BARBED WIRE

In *Duress: Imperial Disabilities In Our Times*, Ann Stoler reminds her readers that what is generally understood as a ‘colony’ is often too limited to recognize its historical connections and mutations. A colony is typically understood as ‘a physical and social location, a geographical place distinct from its metropole, a specified disaggregated population of colonizer and colonized and those caught in between’ (Stoler 2016, p. 71). However, this attempt at imparting an essence to the concept of colony fails to recognize the manner in which its ‘architects and agents’ at the time recognize it as such (Stoler 2016, p. 71). By opening up the concept of colony, Stoler shows how the multiplicities of imperial formations proliferated across what appear as tightly marked boundaries. Colonial history cannot be separated from national histories. As Stoler continues, ‘today, it is the exterminating and genocidal colonial policies that are seen to have provided the “precursors,” “incubators,” and “models” for the technologies and visions that have been the cornerstones of European nation-states’ (Stoler 2016, p. 73). Early postcolonial thinkers such as Aimée Césaire (2000 [1955]), Frantz Fanon (2004 [1961]), and W.E.B. DuBois (1965) recognized that Nazi violence had its precursors in colonial violence. Likewise, Hannah Arendt, in her classic *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (problematically, to be sure) argued that European dehumanization and racism was the product of colonial interactions that would boomerang back to crystalize Nazi totalitarianism (Arendt 1994 [1951]). Furthermore, opening up the concept of colony allows for conceptual connections between different material apparatuses to emerge and to reveal a history of security that transcends its typical anchoring in the nation-state and international politics. For Stoler, the colony and the camp ‘make up a *conjoined conceptual matrix*, twin formations that gave rise to social deformations with different effects’ (Stoler 2016, p. 77, emphasis in the original). ‘Colony and camp’, Stoler continues, ‘borrow and blend essential features of their protective, curative, and coercive architecture. They are in a deadly embrace from the start’ (Stoler 2016, p. 77–78).

Stoler’s epistemological and ontological suggestion to denaturalize the connections between colony and camp is an important starting point in rethinking a genealogy of security. Though her focus is on examining the specific history of the French

*colonies agricoles* (agricultural colonies), which housed orphans from the metropole, of mid-nineteenth-century Algeria, my interest is in showing the material linkages between colonial practices and the formation of camps as a novel type of spatial enclosure. This specific history combines transformations in international politics with the development of a novel technology – that of barbed wire – which redefines the very ‘conceptual matrix’ of security that Stoler alludes to.

The history of barbed wire lies in the colonization of the American Midwest. The vast expanse of the American plains required a means of enclosure for agriculture and for the channeling of cattle from the plains of Texas to the slaughterhouses of Chicago. Barbed wire was invented specifically for this purpose. It proved to be exceptionally cheap to produce, easier to install and allowed for the enclosure of farmland. Barbed wire comprised of coils of wire with sharp edges at regular intervals. Barbed wire worked because it inflicted a form of passive – yet painful – violence on any object that brushed or pressed upon it. As Reviel Netz describes in *Barbed Wire: An Ecology of Modernity*,

Therein lies our misfortune: our skins, just a little beneath the surface, are endowed with special nerves activated by pressure rising above rather low thresholds. You can use those nerves against us. By cutting through the boundary of our skins, you can act to protect the boundaries of your property, your prison, your border. Iron, for instance, is a useful tool. It is harder than flesh; pressed against it, iron will first push the flesh inward and then ... cut through the skin to impact on the nerves. The nerves send a report to the brain, and there the report undergoes some process ... this is what we call pain, and apparently it is something truly universal, cutting across species, places and time. A useful tool of globalization, then. (Netz 2009, p. 39)

Netz’s passage is striking in drawing our attention to the material connections between the thresholds of pain and the abilities to shape forms of enclosure and mobility, two essential features of security. It is such material connections that re-define our political concepts such as property, prisons and ultimately camps that begin to proliferate over imperial domains in the late nineteenth century.

Indeed, barbed wire proved to be an incredibly useful tool beyond its original function, as Netz correctly notes, in an international context of upheaval in which imperial Spain and the Netherlands began to shed their imperial holdings. This was a period in which the great continental empires, the Ottoman Empire, the Austrian–Hungarian Empire and the Russian Empire began to wobble. New imperial powers asserted themselves throughout the world including Franco-British consolidation in Africa. The Spanish–American War of 1898 ushered in the United States as a formal colonial power with the management of diverse populations. And, by 1905, the Japanese victory against the Russian Empire ushered in Japanese imperial dominance of the Far East. As Eric Hobsbawm notes, the period roughly from 1880 to 1914 was characterized by a constant revolutionary instability throughout the global periphery in conjunction with the continuous imperial expansion by new powers. Imperial transitions and the corresponding set of peripheral crises ushered in colonial conflicts that required novel means of suppression. As Hobsbawm writes, ‘The bourgeois century

destabilized its periphery in two main ways: by undermining the old structures of its economies and the balance of its societies, and by destroying the viability of its established political regimes and institutions' (1989 [1987], p. 277).

This destabilization across the imperial periphery opened up a series of security challenges for newly consolidated imperial powers. To an extent, the Spanish suppression of the Cuban insurgency prior to the Spanish–American War prefigured the problem of population management and security. Popular support for the Cuban rebellion made Spanish imperial hegemony on the island increasingly precarious. The appointment of General Valeriano Weyler shifted the strategy from simply targeting insurgent forces to the forcible removal of populations (*reconcentración*) from the rural country to the urban environment. This facilitated surveillance and control in ways that would preclude local aid to the insurgents. The policy of *reconcentración* (concentration) was not matched with any concern about the welfare of the local population. Simply a means of control, the result was the inevitable increase in mortality due to lack of food and disease. Indeed, one of the rationales for the US war against the Spanish Empire was its cruelty towards the Cuban population. At the time, US president McKinley justified US intervention in Cuba on the basis that Spanish actions were 'not civilized war; it was an extermination' (Barder 2015, p. 62).

Nonetheless, General Weyler's innovations were not lost on other colonial powers. When the British were themselves faced with an insurgency in South Africa by local Dutch Boers between 1899 and 1902 they innovated from Weyler's own methods in Cuba. But while the Spanish held little regard for the local population, the British consolidated the local population by concentrating them in camps enclosed with barbed wire. Furthermore, the British used barbed wire for the first time in military operations. The British army was faced with hit and run attacks throughout the Transvaal and with the severing of railway lines that were essential to its transportation needs. A solution of encasing the railways lines with barbed wire and constructing blockhouses at certain intervals presented itself. It also had the intended consequence of encasing the insurgents within clearly demarcated zones and making it easier to trap them (Netz 2009, p. 103). Importantly, the refugee camps became crucial laboratories for public health – with the exception of the African population caught by the British (van Heyningen 2010). Welfare replaced violence as a tactic of social control, which included the so-called virtues of British rule mainly revolving around inculcating in Boer women techniques for better nursing infants, the importance of clean water, providing better rations, etc. In other words, the British concentration camp became a sort of micro-imperial laboratory for what may be understood as a positive form of biopolitics that would restructure Afrikaner society as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, barbed wire proved to be a crucial innovation that seamlessly adapted itself to a variety of contexts in the imperial periphery. What worked to

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<sup>1</sup> For the development of the concept of biopolitics and biopower see Foucault (2003, Chapter 11).

control the movement of animals in the plains of America also worked to exert security and forms of passive violence against insurgents and populations deemed to be a threat to imperial security. Such a technology merged with a whole host of other innovations that accrued in various colonial crucibles of warfare and violent suppression and appropriation. In brief, colonial warfare proved to be, as Gilroy argues, a central crucible for the ‘creative deployment of killing technology in their different confrontations with the world’s uncivilized hordes’ (Gilroy 2005, p. 20). If anything, the lesson of the Boer War, for example, was the seamless conjunction between violence – the burning of Boer farms – and the forcible transfer of women and children to concentration camps enclosed by barbed wire. Camps were essential to the maintenance of spatial control of colonial populations. Nonetheless, imperial authorities placed special emphasis on military technology for the violent suppression of local insurgents. The conjunction between the innovations and applicability of internment and the application of wholesale massacres for the sake of maintaining European hegemony, what constituted important aspects of what is part of the ‘colonial archive’ (Conrad 2012, p. 162), created a novel arrangement or apparatus that would significantly affect developments in Europe over the first half of the twentieth century.

The outbreak of the First World War was a crucial event on many levels. One of the particular consequences of the war was the substantial increase in prisoners of war on both sides. Accommodations beyond military barracks had to be implemented to control and surveil such a large number of individuals. The cost-effectiveness and simplicity of barbed wire camps proved enormously appealing: ‘Surround a school with barbed wire – and you have a camp’. Or, as Netz quotes a text from 1919 by C.P. Dennett entitled *Prisoners of the Great War* describing the emerging camp form: ‘enclosures surrounded by barbed wire fence about ten feet high; in some camps a single fence, in others an extra fence about fifty to seventy-five feet outside the first fence. To be caught in the space between the two fences meant death’ (Netz, 2009, p. 213). In the case of France at the beginning of hostilities, the state declared that all ‘foreign nationals of enemy powers, along with prostitutes and ex-convicts of all countries are liable to be interned starting the first of September 1914’ (Kotek and Rigoulot 2000, p. 100). Camps proliferated across Europe and could be used to control not only prisoners of war but also anyone deemed to be a security threat.

The camps that were pioneered in the imperial crucibles of the late nineteenth century and with the First World War proved to be a remarkable material apparatus of security control and violence that could adapt itself to a variety of contexts. The First World War essentially normalized as a convenient space to house, monitor and control individuals that were deemed to be a potential threat to the state. Even so, with the collapse of the major continental Eastern European empires such as the Austrian–Hungarian empire, the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, and the resultant creation of new East European nation-states, the proliferation of stateless peoples across Europe presented itself as a fundamental challenge to how states control their borders. Hannah Arendt’s great work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which not only articulated the historical boomerangs between colonial spaces and

the crystallization of totalitarianism within Europe, understood that the emergence of statelessness was an important element in this genealogy. Statelessness exposed a series of contradictions at the heart of the nation-state system: the emergence of self-determination, denaturalization of minority populations, lack of enforcement of international rules and norms and the ability to be caught in a juridical no man's land (Arendt 1994 [1951], p. 270). The result of the spread of stateless populations from Eastern Europe strewn across Europe was the empowerment of the police. As Arendt avers, 'increasing groups of stateless in the nontotalitarian countries led to a form of lawlessness, organized by the police, which practically resulted in a coordination of the free world with the legislation of the totalitarian countries. *That concentration camps were ultimately provided for the same groups in all countries ...* was all the more characteristic as the selection of the groups was left exclusively to the initiative of the totalitarian regime ...' (1994 [1951], p. 288, my emphasis).

When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June of 1941 its main goal was to establish a continental empire that would rival the main Anglo-American sea powers (Snyder 2012, p. 156). As such, it devised a series of plans to essentially annihilate the local populations in order to colonize the Soviet Union with ethnic Germans. 'General Plan East', for example, involved the mass starvation of the Slavic population. Moreover, the 'East' proved to be in the minds of the SS planners at the time 'a tremendous opportunity to put their theories [of "agricultural settlement, racial science and economic geography"] into practice'. However, the camp proved to be an indispensable apparatus to establish control, first in terms of managing Soviet prisoners of war by the millions and, subsequently in 1942, to begin the process of the genocide of European Jews. The camps constructed by the Nazis were initially extraordinarily sparse; what distinguished them was precisely the mass of barbed wire that enclosed them from the outside world. Later on, with the development of the well-known extermination camps, the iconic electrified barbed wire was used in double lines to create the very kill zones to preclude escape.

The case of barbed wire is revelatory for IR theory and security studies in two important ways. First, it reveals the ways in which colonial history itself has profound connections with developments in the West. Colonial spaces have typically been spaces to conduct a variety of experiments on populations that are more recalcitrant than metropolitan ones. Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler have referred to colonies as 'laboratories of modernity' in which many of the modern technologies of power and control were actually developed (Cooper and Stoler 1997, p. 5). Timothy Mitchell, for example, argues that many of Foucault's ideas about the materialization of disciplinary power, i.e. the panopticon, were developed in the colonial periphery as opposed to Western Europe. As Mitchell writes:

Foucault's analyses are focused on France and Northern Europe. Perhaps this focus has tended to obscure the colonizing nature of disciplinary power. Yet the panopticon, the model institution whose geometric order and generalized surveillance serve as a motif for this kind of power, was a colonial invention. The panoptic principle was devised on Europe's colonial frontier with the Ottoman Empire, and examples of the panopticon were built for the most part not in Northern Europe, but in places like colonial India. The same

can be said about the monitorial method of schooling, also discussed by Foucault, whose method of improving and disciplining a population ... came to be considered the model political process to accompany the capitalist transformation of Egypt. (Mitchell 1991, p. 35)

This traces how the apparatuses and practices of control, security and violence need to fundamentally take into account how they coagulate within a wide variety of imperial crucibles before returning as ‘normalized’ into Western polities.

Second, what the case of barbed wire reveals is the importance of examining not only the conceptual linkages between metropole and colony but especially the materiality of specific objects and how such objects form new patterns of connections. As mentioned above, barbed wire had a specific usage in the American Midwest related to agriculture and cattle. However, its utility was significantly expanded to be applicable in a wide variety of settings, especially colonial warfare. In other words, barbed wire became associated with what Bruno Latour terms a ‘translation’ in that its use by an assortment of actors developed a new set of relationships – to the land, to other people, to ideas about control and surveillance, and, ultimately, to death (Latour 2015). Actor–network theory (ANT), by focusing on the relationships that emerge between a variety of objects instead of the so-called ‘social forces’ that are assumed to explain the efficient causes of events, allows the researcher to understand transformations in the wider material and discursive environment. Importantly, this transformation, as mentioned above, can be the result of human and/or non-human actors (actants) that act in the world. Barbed wire acted in the world insofar as it radically reshaped the way in which human actors conceptualized the relationship between space and security, between violence and the control of mobility. And the history of barbed wire took place, as Netz argues, ‘precisely at the level of the *flesh*, cutting across geographic and biological boundaries’ (Netz 2009, p. xiii). Its most disturbing manifestation was the creation of the camp.

## OUR CONTEMPORARY BOOMERANGS: (NEO-)IMPERIAL LABORATORIES AND THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, the history of barbed wire and its proliferation across geographical zones to create the concentration camp is by no means the only instance of how security technologies accrue from imperial zones back into metropolitan ones (see especially Barder 2015). This is a phenomenon that is becoming increasingly evident since the start of the American global war on terror and the various neo-imperial laboratories that involve American forces. I use the term neo-imperial because I believe that the US invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 reflected a new imperial moment in American grand strategy and foreign policy, which, as we know, had profound consequences at multiple levels. Even if this neo-imperial moment of nation-building (i.e. invasion, occupation and transformation) proved to be disastrous and has since been repudiated, the aftereffects of



such experiences continue to resonate in fundamental ways within the United States. Both Afghanistan and Iraq were, in their respective ways, laboratories of experimentation that would leave material effects in American institutions and practices, especially in policing. In this section I explore the contemporary ramifications of such neo-imperial laboratories and why this needs to be better understood in critical IR theory.

To be sure, as I alluded to above, this is not the first instance of American actions abroad having had repercussions at home. When the United States emerged as a global political power, it assumed a distinctly neo-colonial role in the Western Hemisphere and in the Philippines. In particular, as Alfred McCoy has shown, the United States began to face a large-scale insurgency in the Philippines, which required it to significantly adapt a broad range of information technologies in this context. Between the 1870s and 1880s, a broad range of technologies such as 'Thomas A. Edison's quadruplex telegraph (1874), Philo Remington's commercial typewriter (1874), and Alexander Graham Bell's telephone (1876) allowed the transmission and recording of textual data of unprecedented quality, at unequal speeds, and with unsurpassed accuracy' (McCoy 2009, p. 21). The combination of the technologies in this information revolution would find an important applicability in creating a grid of legibility of the population in colonial Philippines. The success of putting down the colonial insurgency would have vital ramifications for the development of the American national security state in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Essentially, what the accrued experience of colonial administration resulted in was the establishment of a surveillance state at home that conceptualized security in terms of threats emanating from a varied population. As McCoy writes, 'In this process of imperial mimesis, a state such as the United States that creates a colony with circumscribed civil liberties and pervasive policing soon shows many of the same coercive forces in its own society. As the metropole's internal security apparatus starts to resemble the imperial, so its domestic politics begin to exhibit many attributes of the colonial' (McCoy 2009, p. 295). Indeed, C. Van Woodward, in his classic work on the history of segregation, argues that the context of American empire was a significant element in the legitimation and perpetuation of racial discrimination. For Woodward:

At the very time that imperialism was sweeping the country, the doctrine of racism reached a crest of acceptability and popularity among respectable scholarly and intellectual circles. At home and abroad biologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and historians, as well as journalists and novelists, gave support to the doctrine that races were discrete entities and that the 'Anglo-Saxon' or 'Caucasian' was the superior of them all. It was not that Southern politicians needed any support from learned circles to sustain their own doctrines, but they found that such intellectual endorsement of their racist theories facilitated acceptance of their views and policies (2002 [1955], p. 74).

Imperialism abroad, the legitimation of a domestic surveillance state that saw certain minority populations as an intrinsic security threat, and the maintenance of a racist legal and political order formed the basis of America's political order until the crisis of the 1960s and the civil rights movement.

This concatenation of a renewed imperial mission coupled with the incredible expansion of the national security state characterized the years following the terror attacks in New York and Washington DC. Moreover, a racialized domestic and international politics was increasingly seen in American discourse about the world (Mamdani 2005). By 2003, with the invasion of Iraq and the destruction of Saddam Hussein's Baathist state, the United States military faced an increasingly difficult task occupying Iraq. Its plans to enact neoliberal experiments by privatizing state owned industries was in disarray and divorced from the realities on the ground (Chandrasekaran 2007). Increasingly, the military faced an intractable insurgency that called into question the entire American position in the country. As a result, the military began to experiment with new technologies, much as it had done in the Philippines over a century ago. Wireless fingerprinting machines, automatic license plate readers, biometric databases, facial recognition software, and the ubiquitous use of drones to map and monitor entire urban areas were developed with the explicit purpose of imposing a grid of intelligibility on Iraq itself. An illustrative example of this is that of the MIT engineer Ross McNutt and his innovative use of drones. McNutt surmised that if an Iraqi city or town were under 24-hour aerial surveillance with drones, American authorities would be able to create an archive of video footage whenever an IED (improvised explosive device) would detonate. The archival footage could then be rewound to see exactly where the perpetrator was located. McNutt saw that this innovation wasn't only applicable in a battlefield city; any city essentially could have a 24-hour surveillance fleet of drones that could tackle a whole range of issues such as crime. In 2007, McNutt then created a company aptly entitled Persistent Surveillance Systems, specifically to market this aerial surveillance system in the United States. Baltimore, Maryland, for example, hired Persistent Surveillance Systems to fly a Cessna as much as 10 hours a day monitoring areas of the city without any explicit warning to its residents. In other words, this is a clear example of how battlefield technologies migrate from their use abroad to their marketization at home. This should not be surprising given that the particular form in which the expansion of American national security/surveillance revolved around public/private partnerships. Indeed, the Washington Post reporters, Dana Priest and William Arkin show how police departments across the United States have been buying up technologies from such private/public partnerships and 'building ever more sophisticated localized intelligence systems' (Priest & Arkin 2011, p. 147).

Another important element that connects America's (neo-)imperial laboratories and the homeland is the application of counterinsurgency practices in various urban environments. One of the remarkable consequences of the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq was the need to resurrect counterinsurgency practices from the Vietnam era that the US military had long abandoned. Between 2005 and 2010, counterinsurgency became *the* buzzword and perceived to be *the* magic bullet that would address the stability of both Afghanistan and Iraq (Kilcullen 2010). Because counterinsurgency was not just a military doctrine but reflected a set of practices designed to reassert the legitimacy of the (occupied) state, its applicability within the

United States, at the time at least, could be plausible.<sup>2</sup> If domestic criminality, as the late criminologist William Stuntz argued in an op-ed entitled ‘Law and Disorder: The Case for a Police Surge’, is essentially equivalent to an insurgency, then expanding police presence on American streets will have the same effects as it did in 2007 Iraq. As Stuntz writes:

Most American cities are underpoliced, many of them seriously so. Instead of following the Bush/Petraeus strategy, the United States has sought to control crime by using small police forces to punish as many criminals as possible. As all those who have even a passing familiarity with contemporary crime statistics know, that approach – call it ‘efficient punishment’ – does not work. Like the Army in pre-surge Iraq, the nation’s criminal justice system is in a state of crisis. America needs another surge, this one on home territory. (Stuntz 2009)

Applying counterinsurgency techniques on American streets was in vogue around this time period. The American television show *60 minutes* profiled a Massachusetts State Trooper by the name of Mike Cutone. Cutone served in Iraq at the height of the counterinsurgency applications in 2006 and 2007. He subsequently became a state trooper based in Springfield, Massachusetts where he believed that his counterinsurgency experience would help tackle gang-related crimes. Cutone pioneered C3 policing, ‘Counter Criminal Continuum’, which involved a broad range of practices from gang demobilization to community outreach. ‘The end state of the process’, as Bruce Hiorns argues, ‘ideally, is a re-shaping of the community environment, which makes it inhospitable for gangs, drugs, and violent criminal behavior’ (2014). Salinas, California was another area in which former counterinsurgency officers applied their experience in Iraq to the United States. For a certain Colonel Hy Rothstein, as a *Washington Post* story notes, Salinas was ‘a little laboratory’ in which to test battlefield techniques of population management and control’ (Barder 2015, p. 135). To be sure, the adaptability of such techniques has been mixed. Courts have generally taken a skeptical view of the constitutionality of expansive surveillance that counterinsurgency practices imply. For example, programs such as ‘Stop and Frisk’ in New York City or warrantless cell phone tracking in Washington DC were deemed unconstitutional.

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<sup>2</sup> The main reference to counterinsurgency here is the US military field manual FM 3-24, which defines counterinsurgency as ‘military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency’ (FM, 2007: 1-1). Moreover, the manual stresses the central importance of reasserting political legitimacy in a counterinsurgency campaign:

Political power is the central issue in insurgencies and counterinsurgencies; each side aims to get the people to accept its governance or authority as legitimate. Insurgents use all available tools – political (including diplomatic), informational (including appeals to religious, ethnic, or ideological beliefs), military, and economic – to overthrow the existing authority. This authority may be an established government or an interim governing body. Counterinsurgents, in turn, use all instruments of national power to sustain the established or emerging government and reduce the likelihood of another crisis emerging. (FM, 2007: 1-1)

Nonetheless, the sheer expansion of the national security state and the percolation of technologies and techniques accrued in America's wars on terror have radically changed the domestic sphere. As Steven Graham argues, 'the US Military's paradigm of urban control, surveillance and violent reconfiguration now straddle the traditional inside/outside binary of cities with the US nation versus cities elsewhere' (Graham 2011, p. 20). Here, the very notion of boundary between domestic and international needs to be radically problematized. For Carlo Galli, for example, in our contemporary period the very foundation of state control and enclosure over territory has begun to lose its meaning. As Galli writes:

modern political spatiality – the State, with all its right and its ability to enclose an internal sphere with order and security, creating a space where 'not everything can happen' – has ceased to be fully in effect, challenged as it is by the power of economic flows and the needs of capital, which demand a new politics and which no longer allow the State to be the operative center of political reality and its interpretation. (Galli 2010, p. 157)

Galli's point echoes what I've been trying to illustrate as the need to rethink the very terms of inside/outside that structure the ontological assumptions of IR theory. Though the state evidently maintains a central place in international politics, as we can see there are a whole variety of diffuse practices that cut across the political boundaries, some of which involve the state but many operate as private extensions of state power. As the state continues to devolve its social functions under neoliberalism, for example, it intensifies and accentuates its policing functions in response to proliferating social unrest (Wacquant 2009). Under acute conditions of political or economic crisis, proliferating natural disasters due to climate change or regional wars that accentuate refugee flows results in the conflation of spatial zones. The result is an acceptance that an American or European city, or parts thereof, might increasingly be seen to resemble the war zones in our contemporary (neo-)imperial crucibles.

## CONCLUSION

Looking at the proliferation of imperial technologies and practices that permeate into metropolitan spaces has epistemological and methodological implications. As I argued above, because of a rigid differentiation between domestic and international within IR there is insufficient attention given to the variety of ways in which the two are fundamentally linked. One way of drawing attention to the manner in which technologies travel is by looking, as was the case with barbed wire, at the manner in which material objects act in novel ways in the world. Its ability to activate pain receptors in our skin the moment it presses on it reveals a chain of connections that have significant political implications. My chapter relies on the epistemological assumptions developed in ANT to show how material objects create new forms of associations and connections. Rather than relying on stable social concepts, ANT doesn't assume the *a priori* existence of social forces behind action. ANT helps illus-

trate the manner in which non-human actants are part of networks of connections that create novelty in the world. An object like barbed wire, which is an essential material object for enclosing space, will have ramifications beyond the original intent of its use. It will begin to create new associations between the human mobility and security within various imperial laboratories. Moreover, the very idea of an imperial laboratory conjures up Bruno Latour's own way of rethinking the scientific laboratory: the laboratory isn't necessarily the space of scientific verification but rather the space in which networks of association emerge to render legible scientific truth outside the laboratory. In other words, to make scientific truth appear as such, the outside world has to be transformed in order to reflect the validity of scientific knowledge (Latour 1993). This is a process that similarly happens between the imperial laboratory and the domestic metropolitan space.

However, what is less apparent in ANT is any sense of its immanent capacity to critique. While it is helpful in illuminating the traces of connections between a whole host of human and non-human agents, the normative and political implications of which remain beyond the scope of the approach. In other words, critical IR scholars can productively use ANT as a way of making apparent connections that positivist approaches neglect, but critique emerges from a particular sensibility to the lack of freedom that forms of neo-imperialism continue to perpetuate abroad and at home. Indeed, aside from just conceptual implications, I believe it is important to examine what connects imperial peripheries and metropolises as a way of revealing common struggles and emancipatory projects beyond Eurocentric terms. Critical postcolonial IR should highlight the ways in which assumed ontological commitments (i.e. the separation of the domestic and the international; or the closing off of Western metropolises from influences from their colonial domains) in fact reveal political and normative commitments. Focusing on the history and contemporary features of imperial and (neo-)imperial reverberations is a first step towards a global emancipatory political commitment.

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## 10. Instrumental reason

*Matthew Fluck*

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Concluding his classic account of the ascetic spirit of capitalism, Max Weber described a modern economic order that determined the lives of individuals with ‘irresistible force’. Action for its own sake had become a quasi-spiritual ‘calling’, duty to which ‘prowls about our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs’ (Weber, 1930, 193). The result was a society that ‘imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved’ but that is inhabited by ‘[s]pecialists without spirit, sensualists without heart’ (Weber, 1930, 193). This combination of expertise and vacuity, ‘civilisation’ and disenchantment was central to the pathological instrumental rationality later described by leading Critical Theorists.

The critique of this instrumental reason has occupied a key place in the development of Frankfurt School Critical Theory. Starting in 1940, for three decades it constituted the main paradigm in which the School’s research was conducted, replacing the earlier, more conventionally Marxist form apparent in Max Horkheimer’s ‘Traditional and Critical Theory’ (Benhabib, 1986, 179; Horkheimer, 1972 [1937]). According to Horkheimer and colleagues like Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, by understanding the development and operation of such reason it might be possible to explain both the failure of revolutionary movements and the eruption of unprecedented European ‘barbarism’ just as the West seemed poised to reach its technological and cultural zenith (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947]; Marcuse, 1964). Through the critique of instrumental reason, they reflected on the shift from the liberal era of free-market capitalism to that of totalitarianism and mass democracy. In the new era, ‘total administration’ had replaced class antagonism, and ‘one dimensional man’ the revolutionary subject (Marcuse, 1964).

The critique of instrumental reason was central to the development of Critical Theory in another respect. For a later generation of Frankfurt School thinkers, it was the defining error of their predecessors. It therefore lies at the heart of the split between the early generation and later Critical Theorists like Jürgen Habermas (1984) and Seyla Benhabib (1986). Criticism of the concern with instrumental reason led to the remoulding of Critical Theory such that it moved further from the Marxian materialist paradigm towards one defined by its concern with relations of intersubjectivity. Habermas’s (1984) theory of communicative rationality has been the most influential product of this shift.

It is against the background of this latter development that instrumental reason has generally been understood in the discipline of International Relations (IR). While reference to the concept has been fairly common in IR, the early Frankfurt School critique has generally played an indirect or passing role in discussions (see e.g. Hoffman, 1977). As noted above, the most familiar work of early Critical Theory



in IR, Horkheimer's 'Traditional and Critical Theory', lies outside of the paradigm constituted by the critique of instrumental reason. Where the critique of instrumental reason has appeared, it was until recently only with reference to the pessimism which supposedly rendered it of little use for the discipline (Linklater, 1998, 162; Wyn Jones, 1999). The Habermasian position, on the other hand, has been widely accepted – or at least recognised as an improvement (Wyn Jones, 1999).

While there might be problems with the critique of instrumental reason, there is a danger that through this relative neglect IR scholars have missed the opportunity to engage with a rich seam of critical theorising. By way of introduction we can identify several broad reasons for IR students to give the critique of instrumental reason more careful consideration. First, IR scholars have recently begun to question the prevailing forms of Critical IR Theory in ways that point to the importance of re-engagement with early Critical Theorists like Horkheimer and Adorno (Fluck, 2017; Levine, 2012; Linklater, 2007). If there are problems with the prevailing paradigm, it is worth investigating whether elements of the critique of instrumental reason might be of use to IR.

Second, with the increasing perception that Western-led global economic and political structures are undergoing crisis and decline, the undeniably pessimistic outlook of the early Frankfurt School is starting to appear rather less problematic than was previously the case. It is perhaps no coincidence that there has been a renewed interest in the work of the Frankfurt School beyond academia (Jeffries, 2016). In the era of 'fake news' and 'post-truth' it once again seems plausible to suggest that there might be pernicious and deeply rooted flaws in the modes of knowing and reasoning central to liberal societies, and that countervailing progressive tendencies are hard to find. For example, one recent account of the current crisis of capitalism suggests that, as the neoliberal tide recedes, its erosive effects will likely leave a society in which instrumental reason constitutes the primary mode of interaction (Streeck, 2016, 14).

A third reason to reconsider the Frankfurt School critique of instrumental reason – one to which we will return at the end of the chapter – relates to the intellectual history of IR. Until recently, the discipline's relative neglect of the critique obscured the ways in which it overlapped with Classical Realism. Recent scholarship has uncovered this connection; further exploration might offer useful theoretical resources while contributing to ongoing efforts to develop a more sophisticated disciplinary self-understanding (Cozette, 2008; Behr and Williams, 2017).

Bearing these points in mind, this chapter aims to fill some of the gaps in IR's engagement with instrumental reason by presenting a detailed and relatively sympathetic account of the Frankfurt School critique. It starts by reconstructing the idea of instrumental reason from within the writings of Marx, Weber, Nietzsche, and Lukács. It then summarises the critique of instrumental reason as formulated by the early Frankfurt School, focusing on Horkheimer's *Eclipse of Reason* (1974 [1947]) and Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2002). Instrumental reason, it argues, is best understood not as the concern with technical thinking, or means–ends rationality (although it certainly encompasses these) but as a formalistic mode of thinking and acting which Critical Theorists believed to be hostile to

(amongst other things) nature, the corporeal, the concrete, and the particular. The chapter then considers some of the criticisms which have been directed against the concept. These pose serious challenges, but the chapter points to some ways in which the critique of instrumental reason might be defended. The final section explores ways in which the concept has been used in IR, paying particular attention to recent innovative uses and relatively unexplored possibilities.

## ORIGINS

While the members of the Frankfurt School identified similarities between their Critical Theory and Ancient Greek accounts of the relationship between reason and the good life (Horkheimer, 1972 [1937], 205), the idea of instrumental reason is best understood in relation to the European accounts of reason which emerged at the time of the Enlightenment (Benhabib, 1986, 5–6; Habermas, 1984, 146). Habermas (1984) begins his account of the critique of instrumental reason by considering eighteenth-century philosophical history. According to thinkers like Condorcet or Kant, he explains, progress was the result of learning processes understood in terms of increasing scientific knowledge. Reason was located in the public and was to be realised through their education (Habermas, 1984; Schecter, 2010). At the same time, progress so understood was thought to involve moral perfection – through enlightenment humanity could reach maturity and overcome prejudice (Habermas, 1984, 145–147). By reflecting on the advance of reason, philosophy could therefore provide an account of the good life (Benhabib, 1986).

As social complexity and functional differentiation increased through the nineteenth century, the idea that reason might be realised through a process of public enlightenment which philosophy might explain seemed increasingly distant (Schecter, 2010, 7). Practical philosophy, which sought rational answers to the question of the good life, was increasingly replaced by new sciences of society (Benhabib, 1986, 1–2). On the one hand, thinkers such as Herbert Spencer adopted an evolutionary perspective in which rationalisation was understood in terms of the evolution of ‘quasi-organic’ social systems (Habermas, 1984, 151–152). This made it easier to account for the fact that progress no longer appeared to be tied to scientific knowledge alone, but to have occurred through advances in the production process, through political revolution, and through developments in the economy. The latter in particular was seen as a distinct subsystem that could be understood by analogy with a living organism (Habermas, 1984, 151–152). Such ideas did not go unchallenged. The idea that societal change could be understood in terms of natural evolution was challenged by historicists and cultural scientists like Dilthey, for whom forms of reasoning and knowing were seen as temporally and culturally relative (Habermas, 1984, 151–152).

Both reacting against and drawing on this background, some thinkers argued that rationalisation had occurred but that it had done so in ways that revealed earlier accounts of reason to be misplaced, deceptive, or self-defeating. These critical per-

spectives on rationalisation provided the foundations for the critique of instrumental reason which was, for a long time, at the heart of Frankfurt School Critical Theory.

One key influence was Friedrich Nietzsche, who presented rationalisation as a form of mutilation which had subdued the creative subject and condemned humanity to a monotonous existence, ‘pettier’ and ‘meaner’ than previous ages (2013, 3). Nietzsche was hostile to the evolutionary, ‘scientific’ perspective of thinkers like Spencer, describing its ‘narrowness’ and ‘aridity’ along with its failure to recognise the importance of the *desire for power* and ‘the plastic forces of spontaneity, aggression, and encroachment’ (Nietzsche, 1973, 185, 2013, 9).

A more significant influence was Karl Marx, who subverted liberal understandings of the connection between economic progress, on the one hand, and rationalisation and social progress on the other. His later work depicted a rationalised, technologically advanced world in which the individual remained at the mercy of mysterious, uncontrollable forces. Key for Frankfurt School thinkers would be his distinction between use-value and exchange-value, where the latter abstracted from concrete objects and practices to render them into exchangeable commodities. While this provided the conditions for the spread of capitalism and the demise of traditional social structures, it also represented a process of mystification – commodity fetishism – through which the products of social interaction appeared as objective, alien forces (Marx, 1976 [1867]).

Perhaps the most significant inspiration for the Frankfurt School was Weber’s account of processes of rationalisation in modern capitalist societies. In keeping with earlier historicist arguments, according to Weber rationality ‘is a historical concept’ covering a range of different activities. His concern was with the origins of ‘the particular concrete form of rational thought ... from which the idea of a calling and the devotion to labour in the calling has grown’ (Weber, 1930, 78). This rationality had its origins in protestant asceticism, which displayed a number of features which would pave the way for the infamous ‘iron cage’. First, we find ‘the valuation of the fulfilment of duty in worldly affairs as the highest form which the moral activity of the individual could assume’ (Weber, 1930, 80). Protestant doctrine also created individuals concerned with self-discipline and orderly conduct. This ascetic rationalism ‘turned with all its force against one thing: the spontaneous enjoyment of life and all it had to offer’ (Weber, 1930, 166). Herein lay the origins of the ‘powerful tendency to the uniformity of life’ which aided the ‘capitalistic interest in the standardization of production’ (Weber, 1930, 169).

Weber connected this rationalisation to an ideal-type of legal rational authority and legitimacy according to which ‘obedience is owed to the legally established impersonal order’ (Weber, 1978, 215). This bureaucratic form of power, which can be found at different times and in different cultures, contains the greatest potential for the efficient organisation of society (Weber, 1978, 223). It is grounded in *Zweckrationalität* – ‘purposive’ or ‘instrumental reason’ characterised by a formalistic mode of organisation which ‘develops the more perfectly, the more it is “dehumanized,” the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape

calculation' (Weber, 1978, 225). Capitalism finds this impersonal mode of power especially useful.

Weber gave a new twist to the old Enlightenment narrative. He suggested that the process of rationalisation only briefly gave rise to the 'heroic bourgeois citizen' before coming to rest in the emergence of 'volatile and manipulated masses' subjected to new forms of power (Schecter, 2010, 8). As Darrow Schecter points out, there was something remarkably prescient in this diagnosis, coming as it did twenty years before the emergence of Fascism in Europe (Schecter, 2010, 8).

The combination of Marxian theory with this Weberian account of formalistic rationality would characterise the Frankfurt School critique of instrumental reason. Their development of such a theory was preceded by that of the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács. In *History and Class Consciousness* (1971 [1923]), Lukács traced the restrictive nature of rationalisation to the exchange-value described by Marx. The prioritisation of exchange- over use-value under capitalism gave rise to reification in all spheres of society, not just the economic and legal-bureaucratic spheres described by Weber. For Lukács, it also generated a form of 'contemplative' knowledge, which scrutinised reified social structures from a perspective blind to the role of capitalism in shaping them. Unlike Weber, who saw the only prospect for (limited) change in the combination of bureaucracy with the rule of charismatic individuals, Lukács believed that the proletariat occupied a unique socio-economic position as a result of which they might overthrow this system.

## THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL'S CRITIQUE OF INSTRUMENTAL REASON

### **From Economics to Politics**

Starting in 1940, these currents came together in the work of early Frankfurt School thinkers, especially Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse. For these scholars, the rise of totalitarianism and the ensuing carnage of the Second World War – along with violence, ennui, and complacency of liberal democracies – were to be understood in terms of the pathologies of instrumental reason (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947]; Marcuse, 1978 [1941], 1964). Behind their theories lay a Marxian critique of the exchange principle and a Nietzschean belief that the stifling effects of rationalisation led to a devastating nihilism. They shared Weber's concern with processes of rationalisation, but like Lukács considered the ways in which these extended into the cultural, philosophical, and psychological spheres. In contrast with Weber, too, they believed an alternative, progressive reason might be possible. However, they rejected Lukács' faith in the proletariat as the source of change – a move which gave their critique its distinctive and notorious air of pessimism and melancholy.

IR has seen relatively little detailed consideration of the critique of instrumental reason and of the careful, if often idiosyncratic, fashion in which it was articulated. That the critique was developed against the background of Stalinism and the rise of

fascism is fairly well-known, but the immediate intellectual and institutional context is less familiar (but see Wyn Jones, 1999). Key to the latter is the theory of state capitalism developed by the Frankfurt School's Friedrich Pollock (Pollock, 1978 [1941]; Benhabib, 1986, 160; Postone, 1993, 104). Starting around 1940, this had a significant impact on the critical theories of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse.

In 'Traditional and Critical Theory', Horkheimer (1972 [1937]) had still claimed that the task of Critical Theory was to formulate a theoretical critique that might link up with the praxis of the working class, who were to be the agents of change. Pollock's work inspired a move away from the traditional Marxist belief that domination and emancipation should be understood in terms of class struggle between the bourgeoisie and proletariat (Postone, 1993). According to Pollock, following the First World War, there had been a shift from 'a predominantly economic to an essentially political era' (Pollock, 1978 [1941], 78). With the demise of free-market liberalism, he argued, the traditional Marxian model could no longer account for the nature of social power. Ruling groups no longer possessed power in virtue of their place in the capitalist economic system but instead relied on technical control and political manipulation. While the structures of capitalist competition and commodification were still central, power therefore involved strategising and manipulation on the part of the state or powerful groups seeking influence.

With this approach, Pollock could apparently explain the diminishing possibility of revolution in the early twentieth century. Both authoritarian and democratic societies maintained control in ways that suppressed the tensions which earlier generations of Marxists had supposed would lead to revolution and emancipation (Postone, 1993). Their hope had been that the contradiction between the forces and relations of production would lead to revolution. Private property and bourgeois rule were at odds with industrial production based on the power of the proletariat. If the production process was now administered by the state – totalitarian or democratic – rather than by the bourgeoisie, however, the contradiction which had previously been the basis for immanent critique and revolutionary praxis had disappeared (Postone, 1993, 95–96).

Starting in 1940, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse sought to understand the 'social, psychological, and philosophical consequences of this transformation' (Benhabib, 1986, 160–161; Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947]; Marcuse, 1978 [1941]). The concepts of 'rationalisation' and 'instrumental reason' were employed to 'describe the *organizational principles* of social formation as well as the *value orientations* of the personality, and the *meaning structures* of the culture' which had emerged (Benhabib, 1986, 162). Seyla Benhabib summarises the features they identified: state capitalism (Horkheimer and Adorno) or monopoly capitalism (Marcuse) was correlated 'with the fascist state, authoritarian family, and authoritarian personality type' or 'with mass democracies, the disappearance of the bourgeois family, the submissive personality type, and the "automatization" of the super ego' (Benhabib, 1986, 161–162). The sorts of autonomy associated with liberal capitalism, the modes of social organisation and the psychic resources it offered for those seeking to overthrow it had, it seemed, disappeared.

### *Eclipse of Reason*

One of the clearest and most concise accounts of instrumental reason is Horkheimer's (1974 [1947]) *Eclipse of Reason*. Horkheimer starts by explaining how reason had once been objective, a force 'inherent in reality' (1974 [1947], 2). Reasonableness could be determined by looking at the degree to which an action was in harmony with the wider totality – a belief apparent, for example, in the philosophy of Plato, for whom reason involved the pursuit of the Good, which in turn required the construction of a just society. In fact, the objectivity of reason is apparent in just about any pre-Enlightenment thinker or belief system (1974 [1947], 2). A similar attitude was still present in the work of those Enlightenment thinkers for whom reason would be realised through the public and in national constitutions.

The idea of objective reason, Horkheimer argues, has been replaced by the modern assumption that reason is 'a subjective faculty of the mind' to be deployed in pursuit of any number of ends (1974 [1947], 2). Where reason does connect to specific objects or external values, it increasingly does so only in virtue of their connection to some purpose (1974 [1947], 3). The result is a hollowing out of reason – '[a]s reason becomes subjectivized, it also becomes formalized'. In keeping with the arguments of Weber and Lukács, and with Marx's account of exchange-value, this formalism is a central characteristic of instrumental reason – it becomes a tool of action or exchange devoid of substantive content (1974 [1947], 4).

Horkheimer identifies the roots of instrumental reason in humanity's struggle to control nature. Through the pursuit of self-preservation, it has increasingly deprived nature of all intrinsic value and meaning (1974 [1947], 71). As Horkheimer and Adorno (2002 [1947], 2) would put it in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, enlightened reason is defined by the 'extirpation of animism' – from the perspective of instrumental reason, any vitality and particularity of objects in the external world reflects anthropomorphism, and is to be erased as the natural world is subsumed in universal categories and laws. This process is pursued to the extent that even as it liberates humanity, it becomes a form of compulsion just like earlier, mythic attempts to appease terrifying natural forces through ritual and magic: '[t]he principle of domination has become the idol to which everything is sacrificed' (Horkheimer, 1974 [1947], 74).

Of course, some kind of instrumental thinking is unavoidable. But while domination of nature reflects pragmatic attitudes which predate modernity, the idea that reason 'is solely concerned with instruments, nay, is a mere instrument itself, is formulated more clearly and accepted more generally than ever before' (Horkheimer, 1974 [1947], 73–74). Not surprisingly, Horkheimer is highly critical of Positivist and Pragmatist philosophy, each of which views knowledge in instrumental terms. Similarly, when it comes to practice, it is 'not technology or the motive of self-preservation' per se which generates the pathology but 'the interrelationships of human beings within the specific framework of industrialism' (1974 [1947], 108). Society has 'made usefulness its gospel', but its progress is sustained by the banali-

ties of the culture industry while 'in the face of starvation in great areas of the world', it 'allows a large part of its machinery to stand idle' (1974 [1947], 101).

The instrumentalisation of reason has far-reaching implications for modern organisational, normative, and psychological structures. Initially, during the Enlightenment, reason had been a principle of cohesion, embodied in the nation. The national community had replaced religion as the basis for objective reason. Its constitution was the 'expression of concrete principles founded on reason' and 'the ideas of justice, equality, happiness, democracy, property, were all held to correspond to reason, to emanate from reason' (Horkheimer, 1974 [1947], 13). The autonomous, rational individual was central too. Horkheimer claims that these 'basic concepts' have since undergone the same process of 'devaluation' to which nature has been subjected. By being formalised they have been deprived of human content (1974 [1947], 15). In some respects progressive, this process nevertheless leaves society at the mercy of powerful interests. Reason ceases to involve the judgement of autonomous subjects concerning goals and actions (1974 [1947], 65). Instead, it 'has turned them over for ultimate sanction to the conflicting interests to which our world actually seems abandoned' (Benhabib's "'automatization" of the super ego') (1974 [1947], 5). That is to say, the result is not, as we might expect, greater freedom or plurality, but rather a surrender to powerful social forces and processes (1974 [1947], 13).

This process applies to 'internal nature' too. Here, Horkheimer's argument draws on the psychoanalytic notion of the 'return of the suppressed'. In each individual, the ego is moulded through the 'domineering aspect of civilization' (1974 [1947], 77). Internal nature in the form of instincts and desires must be repressed and controlled. However, as rationalisation proceeds it becomes unclear what the individual has gained. Because the repression of nature starts to proceed without any discernible goal it gives rise to a 'revolt of nature' through which repressed instincts re-emerge (1974 [1947], 66). In some cases, this re-emergence manifests itself in identification with those in power and cruelty to outsiders and minorities.

While Horkheimer highlights the contrast between earlier objective reason and modern subjective instrumental reason, his point is not a conservative one. Indeed, one of the characteristics of instrumental reason is the way in which it can appropriate both tradition and rebellion. Much of the backlash it might inspire can be appropriated for the purposes of manipulation (Benhabib, 1986, 175–176). For example, German folk traditions had once represented a basis for popular resistance to bourgeois authority. However, once instrumentalised in Nazi propaganda, such traditions became 'tools of modern politics' (Horkheimer, 1974 [1947], 47). A similar pattern is apparent in conservative appeals to traditional religious values. By the time they are deployed in argument against modernisation such values have already been instrumentalised. Instrumental reason is conservative in its own way, however, since 'all theoretical means of transcending reality become metaphysical nonsense' and 'reality, thus glorified, is conceived as devoid of all objective character that might, by its inner logic, lead to a better reality' (1974 [1947], 59).

### *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

*Eclipse of Reason* provides a summary of themes explored at greater length in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the most extensive articulation of the Frankfurt School critique of instrumental reason. This is a difficult and potentially problematic book (Benhabib, 1986, 163). It proceeds not as a conventional philosophical argument but via reflection on Western culture littered with, at first glance, confusing chiasmic statements such as '[m]yth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology' (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947], xviii). As in *Eclipse of Reason*, instrumental reason is traced to the earliest stages of Western culture and beyond, to the human struggle to survive in the natural world. This involves a number of grand historical and anthropological claims which, if taken literally, are now (and were even at the time of writing) untenable.

We will consider criticisms and some possible responses below, but it is worth noting at this point the care with which its authors approached their task. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* appeared in several editions, over the course of which careful adjustments were made to the terminology and content (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947], 239). At the same time, Horkheimer and Adorno were reluctant to make significant changes. In 1969, they prefaced a new edition by making clear that 'we do not stand by everything we said in the book in its original form' because to do so 'would be incompatible with a theory which attributes a temporal core to truth instead of contrasting truth as something invariable to the movement of history' (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947], xi). Nevertheless, they note that with the defeat of fascism the 'development toward total integration identified in the book has been interrupted, but not terminated' (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947] xi–xii).

The problem with which Horkheimer and Adorno were concerned is summarised at the start of the book: 'Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at delivering human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity' (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947], 1). The cause of this collapse is the pathology of instrumental reason. Contrary to the promise of greater respect for the individual, this has produced a formalistic coldness which easily degenerates into outright violence; contrary to the goal of autonomy, it has generated new forms of compulsion.

At the heart of this pathology is the pursuit of 'pure immanence' (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947], 11; Bernstein, 2001, 87) through which all that is external and other (i.e. not immanent to the reasoning subject) is neutralised by being subsumed under the subject's categories. This is true of objects (including human beings themselves) and of events, which are subsumed under laws (Bernstein, 2001, 87). As J.M. Bernstein explains, the principle of immanence is 'the joint between myth and enlightenment' (2001, 87). For example, in mythic thought the putative role of the deities as *representatives* of the elements rather than as spirits *identical* with them already represents a way of classifying and thereby controlling the world (Jarvis, 1998, 24). The same principle is at work in practices of sacrifice, in which the par-



ticular victim is selected as a representative of a category whose death might appease the gods (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947]).

In its enlightened form, immanence is pursued in various ways – perhaps most significantly via Positivism and the commodity form. In each case, through appeal to laws or categories, instrumental reason destroys the concrete, particular, and vital – the power of nature or the ‘other’ still apparent in mythic fate and ancient gods, but also in monotheistic religion. While it facilitates control of nature, as reflected in the success of modern science, the pursuit of immanence draws enlightenment back towards myth by generating new forms of compulsion and taboo. Humanity becomes trapped within the laws and categories it has created, increasingly unable to appeal to substantive values or to engage with the natural and social worlds other than through the exchange principle or through data. Like *Eclipse of Reason*, then, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* presents an account of instrumental reason as self-defeating *subjective* reason which develops through attempts to dominate nature only to result in humanity’s ‘enslavement to nature’. Moreover, if in earlier times control was sought by means of sacrifice to the gods, enlightenment involves its own internal sacrifice – the individual must give up something of themselves in order to survive.

These arguments are illustrated in the first part of the book with two ‘Excurses’ which chart the operation of instrumental reason by subverting foundational texts and beliefs of the Western canon. The first, ‘Odysseus, or Myth and Enlightenment’, draws on Homer’s *Odyssey* to illustrate the origins of enlightenment in a struggle to survive in the face of hostile nature, represented by the monsters encountered by the hero. Survival requires self-denial and compulsion on the part of Odysseus, a ‘prototype of the bourgeois individual’ whose story ‘reflects the transition from myth to enlightenment’ (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947], 35). The epic charts ‘the path of the self through myths, a self infinitely weak in comparison to the force of nature and still in the process of formation as self-consciousness’, showing that ‘the self must throw itself away to save itself’.

This is apparent in Odysseus’ encounter with the Cyclops, Polyphemus, who for Homer is not a proper self because he represents a pre-enlightened age of ‘hunters and shepherds’ in which ‘no systemic, time-managing organisation of work and society, has yet been achieved’ and no private property yet exists (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947], 50–51).<sup>1</sup> Having been captured by the physically more powerful Polyphemus, Odysseus escapes by blinding the giant and then tricking him with a play on words and act of self-denial according to which he declares his name to be ‘*Udeis*’ – ‘Nobody’. The uncivilised Polyphemus cannot understand this cunning use of language – to his mythic mind, word and thing are intimately connected, and this leaves no scope for wordplay. This allows his captive, to whose flesh he had a right, to avoid pursuit by the other giants who are told that ‘nobody’ did this to

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<sup>1</sup> That Polyphemus and his kind represent an earlier mythical age of stupidity and barbarism, living in lawless isolation from one another is a ‘civilized judgement’ revealed as a lie later in the *Odyssey* when, having been blinded by Odysseus, Polyphemus is comforted by his neighbours (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947], 51).

their neighbour. While he escapes fate through this cunning, Odysseus succumbs to hubris – he cannot resist the temptation to boast by revealing his true identity as he flees. Thus, having triumphed over nature, ‘the self is drawn back into the same compulsive circle of natural connections from which it sought through adaptation to escape’ (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947], 53). A similar combination of cunning, self-denial, and compulsion is apparent when Odysseus and his men escape the Sirens whose song would guide their ship onto the rocks. The leader can hear the song, but is tied to the mast to prevent him acting. The men have their ears plugged with wax, and through being denied the experience of the song can maintain the labour of rowing (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947], 53).

The second excursus, ‘Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality’ illustrates the disastrous moral implications of instrumental reason through an account of ‘the dark writers of the bourgeoisie’, represented by the Marquis de Sade and Nietzsche (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947], 92). The significance of these thinkers lies in the fact that, ‘unlike its apologists’ they ‘did not seek to avert the consequences of enlightenment with harmonistic doctrines’ (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947], 92). As explained above, a key feature of Western tradition has been the association of rationalisation with moral improvement. Horkheimer and Adorno explain how Kant, whom they take to be the most sophisticated representative of this attitude, believed that formal reason provided the basis for morality. He advocated moral ‘apathy’ – the denial of enthusiasm and particular interest – as a virtue through which this could be achieved. Far from rejecting enlightenment, the writings of Sade and Nietzsche reveal that this excision of substantive values or moral feeling leaves no basis upon which to prefer respect to exploitation, liberty to the unrestrained pursuit of power – a fact recognised by totalitarian regimes which have given this ‘calculating thought’ free rein (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947], 68). For this reason, Horkheimer and Adorno believe the ‘dark thinkers’ to be far more honest representatives of enlightenment than a thinker like Kant (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002 [1947], 93).

In *Eclipse of Reason* and *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno formulated a critique of much more than a simple means–ends thinking. At the heart of their argument is the idea that modern society increasingly involves a form of reason which deprives itself of concrete content and denies its connection to corporeal individuals embedded in the natural world and to the relationships which have previously given their lives meaning. In describing the operation of such reason, Horkheimer and Adorno highlight the pernicious effects of the modern formalism Marx identified in exchange-value and Weber in modern bureaucracy. As these forms extend beyond the economic and legal-bureaucratic spheres, they penetrate culture, morality, and psychology in ways which render meaningful knowledge and interaction increasingly hard to achieve, and cruelty and domination more likely.

## BEYOND INSTRUMENTAL REASON?

### Criticisms

The critique of instrumental reason has been subjected to wide-ranging and influential criticism, as a result of which it has largely been superseded by later strands of Critical Theory. The most influential beneficiary of this demise has been the Habermasian Critical Theory of Communication, which has had a significant influence on the shape of Critical IR Theory. This section summarises a number of criticisms, before considering some ways in which the critique of instrumental reason – or elements of it – might be redeemed. In general, the tone of the critique of instrumental reason can seem problematic. Closely bound to context of fascism and Stalinism, and couched in sociologically and psychologically imprecise terms, it can seem outdated and distant from current concerns (Honneth, 2000, 116). The best-known and apparently most damaging criticisms, however, have alleged that the critique is philosophically and politically untenable because it remains trapped in the ‘philosophy of the subject’ (Honneth, 2000, 117). The result, it has been argued, is a perspective *external* to the society being criticised and therefore unable to engage in meaningful and practically relevant immanent critique (Honneth, 2000, 117).

Habermas’ (1984) criticism of his predecessors proceeds along these lines. Its basic elements are fairly familiar in IR – earlier forms of Critical Theory adopt a monolithic conception of reason concerned with the interaction between humanity and nature. Via a careful reconstruction of the critique of instrumental reason starting with Weber, Habermas argues that it must implicitly rely on a wider conception of rationality and its possibilities from the perspective of which concerns about instrumental reason can be expressed (1984, 222). Weber’s account of Occidental rationalism is unnecessarily narrow, however, due to his focusing on existing capitalist society structured around the rationalised economy and bureaucratic state. The result is that he fails to give sufficient weight to other forms of rationality apparent in non-economic or non-bureaucratic spheres of activity (1984, 221).

This error – the failure to consider other forms of reason – was compounded in the Frankfurt School critique of instrumental reason, where such reason is apparently detached from any historical context and is generalised to cover all human activity (Habermas, 1984, 379). The limitations of this Critical Theory are the product of fundamental problems with the paradigm within which it operates. Because they totalise instrumental reason, Horkheimer and Adorno are forced to adopt an ‘external’, totalising perspective on society. And while they believe that non-instrumental reason would involve ‘reconciliation’ with nature, they have prevented themselves from explaining what exactly this would involve (1984, 382–383). Unlike Lukács, who similarly believed reification to have penetrated all spheres of activity, they do not identify any limit to the formal rationalisation of the world of the kind he finds in the proletariat (1984, 377).

According to Habermas, the aims of Critical Theory – immanent critique attuned to the connection between theory and praxis – can only be salvaged by means of

a paradigm shift from subjective to intersubjective communicative reason (1984, 366). Instrumental reason aimed at the subject's manipulation of objects is, he argues, only one form of reason; another is the coordination of human action through communication (1984, 397; see also Habermas, 1972). This can be understood, partly, from the perspective of communication oriented to mutual understanding, the formal-pragmatic characteristics of which supposedly provide the basis for progress (Habermas, 1984, 397).

Benhabib has articulated similar criticisms. She argues that the critique of instrumental reason is based upon an 'undiscriminating polemic' against the Marxian idea of self-realisation through labour. According to the critique, rather than progress, increasing control of nature involves the 'internalization of sacrifice' – a process which, as we have seen, is tied to the 'genesis of the self'. Horkheimer and Adorno therefore 'project back to the beginnings of human subjectivity pathologies which they themselves diagnose as belonging to its historical development, for the fear of otherness becomes pathological only in the case of the rigid authoritarian personality'. The result is 'a profound ahistoricism' (Benhabib, 1986, 168). So totalising is this philosophy that it no longer identifies contradictions within society which might provide the basis of immanent critique (1986, 179). The resultant choice, Benhabib suggests (following Claus Offe), is between limiting the critique of reason, on the one hand, or the critique's giving up on any attempt to explain its conditions of possibility, on the other (1986, 171). Like Habermas, Benhabib believes that Critical Theory requires a paradigm shift to intersubjectivity to extract itself from these difficulties.

An alternative, Marxian critique can be found in Moishe Postone's (1993) *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*. Postone is highly sympathetic to the critique of instrumental reason, suggesting that Pollock, Horkheimer, and their colleagues rightly identified that Marx was not, as is assumed by traditional Marxists, simply concerned with the ways in which processes of industrial production might be wrested from the hands of the bourgeoisie. Instead, they demonstrated that he offered 'a theory of the historical constitution of determinate, reified forms of social objectivity and subjectivity' and that 'his critique of political economy is ... an attempt to analyse critically the cultural forms and social structure of capitalist civilization' (1993, 15–16). By means of this account, the Frankfurt School could provide insights into the demise of liberalism and rise of totalitarian or interventionist democratic states. They also revealed the problems with traditional Marxist accounts of emancipation, which, because they had overlooked the pathological implications of exchange-value in modern Western societies, mistakenly assumed that revolution was imminent.

While the Frankfurt School succeeded in providing such an account, however, Postone argues that they succumbed to pessimism due to a fundamental weakness in the foundations of their analysis. This arises from the fact that they retained a *traditional* Marxist understanding of labour as a transhistorical – rather than historically specific – process through which humanity interacts with the natural world (Postone, 1993, 118). As a result, having shown traditional Marxism to be mistaken, they appeared to be left with no way to explain what non-instrumental reason might look like or from where it might arise. Clearly this is similar to the criticisms articulated

by Habermas and Benhabib. However, if Postone is right, the turn to communicative reason simply extends the problem, since the solution cannot lie in the identification of other transhistorical forms of rationality and action which sit alongside instrumental reason.

## Responses

While IR has tended not to engage with these criticisms in depth (but see Wyn Jones, 1999), there is wide acceptance of their underlying claims. The critique of instrumental reason has been portrayed as too pessimistic and as ignoring the possibility of other forms of reason. We will consider some of these portrayals in the following section. Given the role of these assumptions in determining the course of Critical IR Theory, it is first important to consider the extent to which they are sustainable. Careful consideration is all the more important here in light of recent suggestions that Habermasian IR might have represented a misstep in the development of Critical Theory in the discipline (Fluck, 2017; Kaltofen, 2013; Levine, 2012; Linklater, 2007; Schmid, 2017).

One important consideration concerns the mode of argument adopted by Horkheimer and Adorno in their critique. Most of the criticism of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (generally assumed to be the most important statement of the critique) takes its philosophical anthropological claims at face value or assumes that it is engaged in a self-defeating effort to formulate an immanent critique. However, it is not clear that either assumption is justified. The authors adopted a complex position aimed at avoiding the perspective of dictatorial subjectivity that they were criticising and at revealing the embeddedness of reason in nature, corporeality, and social change. In doing so, they made use of some unconventional methods.

For example, Honneth suggests that *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is best read as a ‘world-disclosing’ critique of modern society aimed at throwing a new light on its pathological tendencies (2000, 121). ‘Pathology’, he explains, refers to the ‘deficient developments’ whereby ‘the desires or interests characteristic of a society are taking a false course’ or where ‘the mechanisms by which they are generated’ are problematic (2000, 122). Such critique is necessarily external rather than immanent – it cannot appeal to existing standards since these are located within the social totality being criticised. However, this does not represent the kind of totalising perspective alleged in the criticisms above. As Honneth points out, Adorno and Horkheimer were well aware of the dangers of ‘anthropological metaphysics’ and it is implausible to suggest that they were engaged in the project of describing some transhistorical human story (2000, 124). Rather, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* deliberately draws on historical narrative, exaggeration, and chiasmic statements (e.g. myth is enlightenment, enlightenment is myth) to describe ‘familiar facts of capitalist culture ... in a way which presents them to us in a completely new light’ (2000, 126). It seems important that we retain the possibility of such critique, but it cannot be achieved by immanently grounded argumentative justification of the kind which Horkheimer and Adorno are accused of lacking (2000, 123).

Simon Jarvis (1998) points out that the authors of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* made conscious use of rhetorical strategies which required the grand historical scope which characterises their argument. For example, their descriptions of Odysseus make use of a ‘burlesque’ strategy by bathetically describing the ancient hero as if he were a modern bourgeois citizen. Elsewhere a ‘mock-heroic’ strategy is employed to make modern life seem comical by describing it as if it were a ‘more ancient and solemn order’ (1998, 23). The purpose of employing these strategies is, Jarvis explains, to both emphasise and bridge the gap between ancient and modern, and thereby to correct some prevailing modern ways of understanding reason. Contrary to common humanist assumptions, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* shows that there is no timeless truth borne by all civilised culture. Contrary to historicism, however, ancient forms of reason cannot be completely incommensurable with our own (1998, 24). The point in this strategy is to show that there is no neutral reason unconnected to domination, but also that supposedly ‘uncivilised’ or archaic practices are already forms of rationality. By situating reason in this way, this ‘corrective’ opens the way for the claim that it might be otherwise (1998).

Another important question concerns the apparent status of instrumental reason as the monolithic core of a negative philosophical history, in which humanity slides inevitably into domination. It has been argued that this is due to pessimism and elitism born of academic detachment from praxis (Wyn Jones, 1999) or, as we have seen, to fundamental philosophical error. But, as explained above, Horkheimer was clear that while some form of instrumental thinking was unavoidable, his concern was with the form it had taken in modern societies. Why, then, present an account in which the march of instrumental reason seems to be rooted in the very origins of human society and to be all but unstoppable? Some reasons for doing so are apparent in Adorno’s later work. In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno (1973 [1966], 320) makes the oft quoted claim that ‘[n]o universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb’. He prefaces this, however, with the statement that ‘[u]niversal history must be construed and denied’. This means that *interpreting* the past, we can describe the unity of the control of nature, progressing to rule over men, and finally to that over men’s inner nature (1973 [1966], 320). However, the unity of this trajectory is only *construed* from the perspective of the present – we should not assume that history is *actually* a matter of the unstoppable march of instrumental reason. Rather, Adorno and Horkheimer believed that history consisted of ‘chaotically splintered moments and phases’ (Bernstein, 2001, 237). Their point is that, as Bernstein explains, the co-development of rationalisation and domination ‘interpretatively unifies the past in relation to the disposition of present institutions and forms of rationality’. This *interpretation* takes priority because ‘*now* no other forms of social and historical practice are evident as real alternatives’ (2001, 237). Adorno (1973 [1966], 320) argues that ‘it would be cynical to say that a plan for a better world is manifest in history and unites it’. Thus, the apparently totalising claims made in the critique of instrumental reason should not be read as a pessimistic philosophy of history. Rather, they are part of a critique of a totalising administrative reason to which there are no apparent challengers.

At this point the criticism that Horkheimer and Adorno fail to identify an alternative form of reason might be raised. One result is that the status of their own critique seems problematic – if all is instrumental reason, how is critique possible? Here, we can remember that one of the points of the critique of instrumental reason is to draw attention to the way it obscures reason's embeddedness in nature, corporeality, and concrete relationships. Its authors therefore need to avoid the kind of formalism that they condemn. In fact, it is possible to read the very structure of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as representing something of the non-dictatorial reason that could acknowledge this embeddedness. Rather than surveying its subject matter in conventional fashion, the critique of instrumental reason emerges through a series of excursions and fragments. This aphoristic, fragmentary approach is a recurring feature of Adorno's later work in particular (see e.g. Adorno, 1974) and possibly reflects the musical training that led him to compare philosophy to composition as a process involving expression rather than assertion. The *Dialectic* provides an example (albeit a necessarily imperfect one, given the current state of society) in its very structure, of what non-dictatorial knowledge and reason would involve. Rather than 'capturing' reality, the aim is to express it (Fluck, 2017). Habermas (1984, 385) is critical of this approach, taking it as a sign of the cul-de-sac into which the critique of instrumental reason has led. However, as Daniel Levine (2012) has shown, contrary to allegations of pessimism, it is possible to read the theoretical stance reflected in Adorno's work as one of legitimate intellectual humility from which IR has much to learn.

## INSTRUMENTAL REASON IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### Interpretations

References to instrumental reason have been common in IR, where the term has been used to denote means–ends thinking as opposed to communicative or normative reasoning. Realists, Liberals and other 'traditional' IR theorists have been accused of focusing on the former to the exclusion of norms, identities, and communication. This has been a useful corrective in a discipline which has often paid little attention to the role of norms and identities. However, there are significant differences between this conception of instrumental rationality and the Frankfurt School critique outlined above. Indeed, the latter has had surprisingly little impact in the discipline, perhaps reflecting the often tenuous nature of Critical IR's connection with the Frankfurt School theory (Wyn Jones, 1999, 3). This engagement has tended to reflect widespread acceptance of Habermas' critique, or at least implicit acceptance of its premises and conclusions. The discipline has not generally engaged in depth with the crisis of modernity described in Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of instrumental reason.

The tendency to bracket instrumental reason as one category of rationality rather than an all but overwhelming pathology is apparent in Thomas Risse's discussion of reason in international politics. Risse (2000, 3) links instrumental rationality to the

'logic of consequentialism' central to rational choice approaches. The concern of the latter, along with neoliberal institutionalism and regime analysis, has been with an 'instrumentally rational logic of action' (2000, 4). Risse contrasts these concerns with those of Constructivists, who investigate the 'normative rationality' involved in rule-guided behaviour (2000, 4). Following Habermas, he identifies the importance of a third form of argumentative rationality, which involves communication through which actors challenge existing norms, reach mutual understanding, and arrive at a new consensus (2000, 7). This represents the 'true reasoning' towards which political interaction might 'evolve' (2000, 9). Risse gives the example of the end of the Cold War when, he argues, the pursuit of 'instrumentally defined goals' by the US and Soviet Union was abandoned in favour of communicative rationality (2000, 25).

The idea that instrumental reason represents one category of reason which, while important, can be supplemented or circumvented by turning to others has shaped the course of Critical Theory in IR from its earliest stages. For example, in *Men and Citizens*, Andrew Linklater (1990, 27–28) identified a 'mechanistic realism' that obscured the fact that states are 'moral communities'. There are clear parallels with Horkheimer's arguments concerning objective reason here, but Linklater searches for civilising influences and a moral learning process in a manner with much closer affinities to Habermas than the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. This was confirmed in his later work, which drew directly on Habermas's theory of communicative rationality (Linklater, 1998; see also the appendix to Linklater, 1990).<sup>2</sup>

A Habermasian approach to reason is also central to another foundational statement of Critical IR Theory, Richard Ashley's (1981) 'Political Realism and Human Interests'. Once again, the focus is on instrumental reason as one sphere of reasoning upon which it is dangerous to focus exclusively, but which might be supplemented by turning to others. Ashley identifies a close connection between Neorealism and 'technical cognitive interest'. Via this route, instrumental reason was associated with the Neo-Realist and Positivist removal of cultural and normative content from the subject matter of IR. He draws on Habermas – in this case *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1972) – to identify alternative 'practical' and 'emancipatory' interests linked to communication.

Where the Frankfurt School critique of instrumental reason has been considered in detail, the tendency has been to view it as unduly pessimistic and devoid of empirical or practical relevance. Richard Wyn Jones (1999) provides one of the most detailed considerations. He concludes that the authors of the critique are guilty of 'aridity and scholasticism' and that they outline 'a telos – or perhaps an anti-telos' to history in which it is conceived of in 'totally mechanistic and deterministic terms, as the inexorable march of instrumental rationality' (1999, 40). While Wyn Jones does not accept the alternatives outlined by thinkers like Honneth and Habermas, he finds that these 'are still creative, interesting, and instructive, and certainly an improvement on the ideas in the work of both Horkheimer and Adorno' (1999, 52).

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<sup>2</sup> As explained below, Linklater has since turned away from this approach.



Rengger gives more serious consideration to the critique of instrumental reason than has often been the case in the discipline. He agrees that Adorno all but abandoned hope of escaping instrumental reason. At the same time, he suggests that IR theorists have not given adequate consideration to the possibility that the Habermasian attempt to outline a more positive Critical Theory might be condemned to be ‘domesticated or co-opted by instrumental rationality’ (2001, 104).

### **Possibilities**

Doubts of the kind expressed by Rengger have recently become more widespread in the discipline, where there has been a growing sense that Habermasian IR theory, and ‘emancipatory’ Critical IR Theory more generally might be more problematic (Fluck, 2017; Kaltofen, 2013; Levine, 2012; Schmid, 2017). In his more recent work, Linklater (2007) has suggested that the linguistic turn might represent the problematic formalism identified by Adorno and Horkheimer. Criticism of earlier forms of Critical IR Theory suggests that (re-)engagement with the critique of instrumental reason might prove productive. This potential is apparent in a number of recent uses of the concept in IR and in other areas where we find the potential for further research.

One of the most interesting areas of inquiry has concerned the intellectual history of the discipline. A sense of the connection with the critique of instrumental reason is apparent in Stanley Hoffman’s influential account of IR as ‘An American Social Science’. Hoffman (1977, 46) draws on Ralf Dahrendorf, an associate of the Frankfurt School who described America as the ‘applied Enlightenment’, and describes faith in instrumental reason as a central part of the ‘national ideology’ of the United States (Molloy, 2006, 18). A more direct connection has been identified in the shared experiences, cultural background, and concerns of Classical Realists and Critical Theorists. As William Scheuerman (2009) and others have explained, in the 1920s Hans Morgenthau worked at the University of Frankfurt under the left-wing legal scholar Hugo Sinzheimer, through whom he was introduced to left-wing scholars, including members of the Frankfurt School.

According to some IR scholars, elements of the critique of instrumental reason can be found in Classical Realist theory (Cozette, 2008). Behr and Williams (2017, 11) point to the shared concern with ‘Western modernity, its historical legacies and related attempts of overregulation according to naïve beliefs in social engineering and reason’. Daniel Levine (2012a, 96) explains that ‘Morgenthau harbored fears about both the crisis potential of late-modern politics and (though never in this particular idiom) the problems of theory and practice for which the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* would become the locus classicus.’

Murielle Cozette (2008) has argued that the influence of the critique of instrumental reason is central to Morgenthau’s work. One of his key concerns was, she argues, that in claiming to be ‘value-free’, science had lost its ‘transcendental sense of direction’ (2008, 23). This argument, most extensively outlined in *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, shows that he shared the Frankfurt School’s ‘critique of

an instrumental reason that can potentially degenerate into totalitarianism' (2008, 23–24; Morgenthau, 1946). From this perspective, Classical Realist criticisms of liberal internationalism concern its tendency to abstract from substantive power relations and particular interests. In the formalistic fashion typical of instrumental reason, these are dismissed by liberals as irrational and violent, to be swept away by the development of more rational economic and bureaucratic systems. In a further parallel, for Classical Realists power politics does not disappear, but simply reasserts itself in an unconstrained and more dangerous form.

Clearly, however, there are limits to such connections. While acknowledging certain overlaps, Levine (2012a, 96) warns of the dangers of presenting Morgenthau as a Critical Theorist, explaining that he was 'ontologically *conservative*', appealing to the 'fundamental stuff of politics' to ground his theory. We might also wonder to what extent Morgenthau's position resembles that of the conservatives criticised by Horkheimer in *Eclipse of Reason*, who hark back to traditional values (in this case those of traditional aristocratic diplomacy) without realising that in the very formulation of an argument for doing so they are instrumentalising, and thereby destroying, tradition.

One of the most striking features of the critique of instrumental reason outlined by Horkheimer and Adorno is its account of hostility to external nature. At several points in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the authors discuss the cruelty to other species which accompanies Enlightenment, along with the gentleness of the pre-enlightened relationship with nature. For example, the blinded Polyphemus displays a moving love for his flock of sheep, calling out to 'the lead ram, his friend, asking whether it is the last to leave the cave because it is grieving for its master's eye' (2002, 52). Inspired by this dimension of the critique of instrumental reason, Stephen Hobden (2015) has explored the resources it might offer a posthumanist IR theory. He suggests that precisely that element of the critique which has attracted most criticism – its focus on relations between humanity and nature – might be the source of some of its most important insights for IR scholars. Hobden argues that Adorno and Horkheimer provide a powerful account of the connections between domination of nature and the production of suffering in human–nonhuman and intra-human relations. Part of the solution lies, as their account shows, in recognising our embeddedness in nature (2015). It is worth adding that Adorno and Horkheimer see domination of nature as essentially patriarchal – Odysseus' struggles against women such as the Sirens and the sorceress Circe are employed to demonstrate this aspect of enlightenment. This suggests that there might be unexplored connections between the critique of instrumental reason and the concerns of Feminist IR scholars.

A further, as yet relatively unexplored, connection between the critique of instrumental reason and the concerns of IR scholars lies in its connection to questions of legitimacy. Schecter (2010) suggests that one way of reviving the critique of instrumental reason lies in reformulating it as a critique of instrumental legitimacy. This would require exploring the connection between accounts of reason and knowledge, on the one hand, and accounts of political authority and legitimacy on the other (2010, 3). This chimes with Jens Steffek's (2017) suggestion that Weber's account

of rational legitimacy could be further utilised in IR to understand the role of international organisations. Such a line of enquiry seems promising given the formalistic emphasis in contemporary global governance, and Western society in general, on data and information, and on the importance of ‘transparency’ as a source of institutional legitimacy (Fluck, 2017, 229).

## CONCLUSION

Until recently, the critique of instrumental reason developed by the Frankfurt School in the 1940s had received very little attention in the discipline of IR. The result is that instrumental reason has been understood simply as one possible type of reason alongside others. Such an understanding differs in important respects from that outlined in *Eclipse of Reason* and *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. As we have seen, for Frankfurt School Critical Theorists like Horkheimer and Adorno, instrumental reason was to be understood as the formalistic rationality central to modern Western societies, with close links both to bureaucracy and to capitalism. Their critique describes its pathological implications at organisational, moral, and psychological levels and the ways in which these contribute to an overarching crisis of modernity. As explained above, the pathology in question is the result of the principle of immanence, which is destructive of particular relationships, substantive values, and nature. Despite the grand historical claims involved in the critique, a carefully developed critical stance lies behind this perspective, one that has received little consideration in IR. While the difficulties the critique encounters cannot easily be dismissed, further careful engagement has the potential to provide IR with significant insights.

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# PART III

## POLITICAL ECONOMY AND DOMINATION

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## 11. Critical international relations and the global organic crisis<sup>1</sup>

*Stephen Gill*

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My central hypothesis for this chapter is that the intensification and spread of the power of capital in an expanding market civilization is giving rise to a condition of organic crisis for the people and the planet. This unprecedented situation constitutes a central *problématique* for the critical study of international relations for the foreseeable future. It is a situation involving an intensification of struggle between old and new concerning the future of society, world order and the biosphere.

Whilst much critical effort has gone into the analysis of particular events and crises, e.g. that of the world economy after the Wall Street meltdown of 2008, it remains the case that economic crises do not necessarily lead to political crises, nor do they necessarily lead to fundamental historical change. By contrast, an organic crisis is more deep-seated and structural, and involves a process rather than a set of particular events and developments. It suggests that there is a political moment that is exceptional and relatively intractable politically since it is rooted in the inherent character and contradictions of a society. It signals a condition in which the old order is in decay but the new is yet to emerge.

Gramsci (1971) theorized the 1930s as a global situation of fundamental or organic crisis – as a struggle of old and new that was both a crisis of civilization and of capitalism. It produced Nazism and fascism and ultimately led to the violence and destruction of the Second World War. Today's organic crisis similarly relates to crises of representation, authority and hegemony – with domination and authoritarianism rather than consensus and consent increasingly coming to prevail to maintain and to reshape the social and political order. However, today's organic crisis is now far more multifaceted and possibly more intractable. This is because it involves not only fundamental threats to society as we know it, but also to the very survival of our planetary ecology and the biosphere.

With these issues in mind this contribution argues for a critical, historical perspective in international relations, grounded in a comprehensive *problématique* of our times. This involves an ontological sketch of key historical structures of world order

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<sup>1</sup> Some of this chapter is based on my 'Critical Global Political Economy and Organic Crisis' (2016) in A. Cafruny, L. Talani & G. Pozo Martin (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Critical International Political Economy* (pp. 29–48). London and New York: Macmillan-Palgrave. I thank Blake Stewart, Thibault Biscahie, Isabella Bakker and Matthew Dow for their helpful and constructive comments.

and actually existing capitalism and discussion of some of its “morbid symptoms”. I then offer a concluding reflection.

## POWER, ETHICS AND JUSTICE: TOWARDS A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

So, what precisely is a critical perspective on international relations? There are many ways in which it can be defined, but my short answer is that it puts the questions of power, ethics, justice and transformation, and the historical contingency of world orders, at the centre of its analysis. Critical theory is concerned with not only the demystification of power but also the development of alternative frameworks to expand human potentials and possibilities. A critical perspective must go beyond what Marx once called “the ruthless criticism of all that exists”. As Marx put it: “if constructing the future and settling everything for all times are not our affair, it is all the more clear what we have to accomplish at present: I am referring to *ruthless criticism of all that exists*, ruthless both in the sense of not being afraid of the results it arrives at and in the sense of being just as little afraid of conflict with the powers that be” (Marx 1843: emphasis in the original).

Indeed Marx, like many other critical theorists – and one could cite a long list of thinkers from Thucydides to Ibn Khaldun, from Machiavelli to Vico and up to the present – have consistently sought to demystify relations and structures of power and to provide analysis of present and of future potentials premised on a sober and critical realism – a “pessimism of the intelligence” as Gramsci once called it, in analyzing the nature of politics and society and struggles over the making of the future. Gramsci also saw this process as involving new ways of thinking and acting in the world so as to create a new “common sense” (a form of “good sense”) that is built from what I would call a *problématique* appropriate to the conditions of our times. Critical theorists have therefore often sought to identify and to advance new forms of knowing and innovations in political agency to promote more legitimate and less violent social and political orders and a flourishing of human potentials and more sustainable forms of livelihood.

In international relations today this necessarily involves an attempt to understand the lineages, forms and actually existing power relations and the way they relate to crises of capitalism, representation, provisioning and livelihood. Indeed, present-day political crises of representation emerging worldwide are associated with authoritarian and neoliberal, often plutocratic governance and the practices of a transactional, “reactionary internationalism” (De Orellana and Michelsen 2019). Reactionary internationalism seeks to stabilize, legitimate and intensify unjust sets of global social relations and to extend existing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, including militarization and waste, well beyond the carrying capacity of the planet.



## SOME ASPECTS OF ACTUALLY EXISTING CAPITALISM AND MARKET CIVILIZATION

Our point of departure then is to attempt to analyze the global situation as it actually is. Here we might begin with a review of a geopolitical context where communism and the lefts have weakened, and, partly in consequence during the last 30 years, there has been a remarkable and truly global restructuring of power. It is reflected in transformations in conditions of existence that reflect, amongst other things an extraordinary intensification of inequality and accelerating concentrations of capital and wealth in a tiny proportion of the world's population. We live in a geopolitical order that sustains a global plutocracy supported by a governing class that principally rules on behalf of capital. By 2019 the world order was one where 26 men held more wealth than almost half of the people on the planet, namely the poorest 3.8 billion people of a global population of around 7.7 billion (Oxfam 2019; see also Hardoon et al. 2016). Their wealth is heavily concentrated in the ownership and control of income-generating assets (i.e. stocks, bonds, commodities, etc.). The bulk of their holdings were in the control of many of the world's biggest corporations in banking, pharmaceuticals, distribution, computing and software, energy and non-renewable resources as well as media (see FT 2015).

Moreover, capital is increasingly concentrated in relatively small numbers of giant firms in the key sectors of the world market, e.g. media, computing, energy, pharmaceuticals, autos and finance. Previously state-owned or public enterprises are being rapidly privatized, and in some cases with the public sector also becoming more disciplinary, coercive and interventionist, as in the UK with its extended policies of austerity since the global financial meltdown (Alston 2018). Such developments are taking place amid a more general process of the commodification of public goods, knowledge and public services.

The new capitalist order is structured hierarchically: it is simultaneously class-based, racialized, and gendered. It operates to systematically empower privileged social strata and the affluent and as such the principal beneficiaries of *market civilization* (Gill 1995, 2008).

“Market civilization” is now the dominant model that is accelerating and intensifying capitalist development and culture – a culture that is possessively individualistic or me-oriented, consumerist, exploitative of human beings and nature, unequal, energy-intensive, wasteful and ecologically myopic (on its links to fossil fuels and unsustainable use of non-renewable forms of energy see also Di Muzio 2011 and 2012, who has coined the term *petro-market civilization*). This pattern of civilizational development is exclusive and more generally its fruits can be only available to a minority of the population of the planet. That minority, nevertheless, consumes the vast bulk of global resources.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> It is also exclusive in the more precise and obvious sense that ownership and control of income-generating assets (i.e. stocks, bonds, commodities, patents, etc.) are keys to attaining

The conception of market civilization therefore suggests that capitalism has entered a new phase requiring a more wide-ranging and integrated ontology. Critical international relations therefore needs to reflect how the hold of capital over life-worlds, societies, cultures and its influence over production and social reproduction is deepening and, in so doing, transforming world order. Indeed, capitalism in its contemporary market civilization form encompasses the reshaping of general *social reproduction*, of nature and the biosphere, provided they offer opportunities for profit and further accumulation.<sup>3</sup>

This system of governance that oversees this market-based mode of development, which I call *disciplinary neoliberalism*, is backed by the systematic use of unequal geopolitical arrangements. It involves the extended use of surveillance by the CIA, the US National Security Agency and its “Five Eyes” partners, and, more generally, it relies upon systems of policing/military power and securitization of the state that have proliferated since the attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001. Such mechanisms of global policing and capacity for intervention, principally all those dominated by the United States, outflanked the key geopolitical rival to capitalism, the USSR. The United States holds massive military preponderance with over a thousand bases and installations worldwide. In sum, the United States – along with its key allies – uses military and security power as well as extended panoptic mechanisms, to keep friends and enemies alike under a condition of constant surveillance, thereby guarding the citadels of corporate and political power. Corporations also use similar data-based panoptic systems to extend opportunities to make profits and minimize losses. These elements all reflect the post 9/11 increasing securitization of world politics and capitalism under continuing conditions of *de facto* or *de jure* political and economic emergency (Gill 2015).<sup>4</sup>

This growth model is nevertheless consistently riven by economic crises of increasing severity, is socially exclusive and rests upon the subordinated labour of around 3.5 billion workers worldwide operating in often unhealthy working conditions, especially in China and South Asia (Selwyn 2014; Mezzadri and Lulu 2018; International Labour Organization (ILO) 2019). Of these workers, perhaps 90 percent of the world proletariat are “unprotected” or precarious workers, who are

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wealth; this in turn involves the money (credit) to buy such assets, and credit systems are highly hierarchical, gendered and racialized (Gill and Roberts 2012). I am grateful to Matt Dow for emphasizing this.

<sup>3</sup> Social reproduction involves social processes, relations and institutions “associated with the creation and maintenance of communities and ... upon which all production and exchange ultimately rest” (Bakker and Gill 2003:19). Tim Di Muzio adds that this in a wider sense involves “ways in which any society produces, consumes and reproduces its life and lifestyles, how it conceptualizes and understands its actions and how it defends and/or justifies its particular pattern of historical development” (Di Muzio 2012: 76).

<sup>4</sup> To this we could add the formal institutions of global economic governance and surveillance such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, as well as the “informal” central bankers’ and financiers’ clubs such as the G30, that are dominated by private interests in the capitalist west.

non-unionized and deemed to be disposable by the employers, and a full 70 percent of them have no social protection (ILO 2015). They are often landless workers and peasants who are marginalized from integration into world capitalism but still subjected to many of its forces and pressures, insofar as they are dispossessed of their basic means of livelihood, subjected to “expulsions” (Sassen 2014), and forced to migrate to the urban centres of the Third World, usually to live in slums, searching for work in entirely unregulated labour markets (Davis 2006). Development patterns are generating planetary urbanization and enormous internal and international migrations (Brenner 2019) with many of the 3.5 billion workers worldwide on the move. Dramatic population shifts from rural to urban, e.g. in the global South, have involved over a billion regional and international migrants; within 40 years, these numbers may double because of violence, climate change, debt, the restructuring of production and a new global division of labour (Nail 2015, 2019).

None of this means, however, that the market civilization model and the disciplinary power of capital that governs it primarily through market mechanisms is uncontested. Indeed, one of the reasons why such power is not hegemonic and subject to resistance and struggle is because of its distributional consequences, which raise fundamental issues of inequality and social justice.

With such observations in context, this chapter assumes that the present crisis is very deep and it involves much more than a crisis of capitalist accumulation or a necessary self-correction aided by macroeconomic intervention and bailouts. To capture the scale and depth of this crisis, this chapter therefore reformulates and extends Gramsci’s original concept of organic crisis.

## MANY MORBID SYMPTOMS

I will suggest that any resolution of the global organic crisis with its many morbid symptoms requires a revitalization of democracy and much wider mobilization of progressive social forces to press for measures that are sustainable and that are not one-sidedly implemented on behalf of capital and the principal imperial powers.

In this context a central hypothesis of this chapter is that the future of the world involves a multiplicity of intersecting and interrelated crises, each of which presents moments of danger and opportunity for different political forces, although these limits and possibilities are structured by the relations of force – economic, political and military – that operate in and across jurisdictions and regions.

When Gramsci reflected on the 1930s he particularly saw organic crisis as involving a *crisis of representation* and decay in prevailing forms of ideology and political organization – this was reflected in not only the eclipse of the old order in Russia but also in the collapse of liberalism and the rise of fascism, which came to the rescue of capital in Italy in a process that he called *passive revolution*. In the early twenty-first century there is also a crisis of representation although it is structured in different ways. Certainly, recent substantial evidence in much of the world indicates that mainstream political parties (such as Christian and Social Democrats, Conservatives

and Liberals in Europe) associated with varying degrees of endorsement for orthodox forms of neoliberal governance have rapidly lost members and support (Gill and Soltz 2013; Gill 2017b). At the same time there has been a growth in support for alternatives, many on the right, for example in Europe, where in some countries, neo-nationalism, fascism, Nazism and authoritarianism is on the rise; in others new left forces seem to be emerging, for example in Greece and Spain. It seems that once again there is an *impasse* for the old frameworks of politics and a search for new directions.

Nevertheless, we should not underestimate some of the other developments that have emerged in recent decades and the consequences of the political shift towards more supremacist and coercive (as opposed to hegemonic) strategies that are seeking to contain challenges to the status quo. One tendency is associated with intensification of state surveillance and discipline, along with criminalization of dissent and, indeed, of the working poor, the sick and the disabled and more generally people who are not normalized or integrated into the prevailing forms of market civilization (Alston 2018).

Moreover, what is also frequently overlooked in mainstream reflections over the current global conjuncture is the institutionalization of measures to prevent incursions of democratic governance from applying to key elements of the global political economy and, with that, threats to the status quo arrangements of economic governance. A good example of the latter is *new constitutionalism* (also discussed below in relation to central banking). New constitutionalism encompasses a myriad web of domestic and international measures. The latter include bilateral, regional and multilateral so-called “free” trade and investment agreements. All of these measures are concerned with locking in corporate/investor rights and freedoms, particularly private property rights, and are often allied to balanced-budget laws and other mechanisms to discipline government finances. These measures embody a most peculiar version of the rule of law: one that guarantees the overriding status to private property rights, including full entry and exit options for capital (“free trade”) and full security of ownership for capital whilst simultaneously limiting workers’ rights and more generally preventing democratic control over the political economy (Gill 1998a, 1998b; Gill and Cutler 2014). The attempts by the major capitalist powers, especially over the past 30 years, to consistently apply new constitutional measures to provide these so-called “rules-based” guarantees stand in contrast to the world geopolitical arrangements, which have a decidedly arbitrary quality that operates well beyond any coherent or consistent conception of the rule of law.

Many morbid symptoms are experienced unequally in the global North and the global South, although some of the conditions in both regions seem to be converging with the effects of debt, imperialism, dispossession, authoritarianism, dictatorship and foreign intervention – underlining the vast disparities in life chances within and across classes, nations and peoples (for examples from Latin America see Gordon and Webber 2016; Shipley 2017).

Nevertheless, contestation is emerging over questions of lifestyle and sustainability, and deadlocks over climate change and food and health security are linked to

political struggles over corporate domination and private control of world agriculture, life sciences, medicine and pharmaceutical industries. The world food crisis involves global patterns of malnutrition and health: 25 percent of the world is obese or overweight; 25 percent is starving (Albritton 2009); indeed about one in seven people on the planet go hungry in the face of plenty. In a market system prices and incomes determine if one eats or starves or has medical care: if you have no income you cannot be a consumer or a buyer of medical services or drugs. Indeed, capital is not focused upon the promotion of global health but on the accumulation of capital via the profit system. Capital will profit from obesity as well as from hunger. Similarly, food prices are increasingly determined through a global market-based system relying on the control of agriculture by a relatively small number of giant corporate oligopolies. Corporate controlled agrarian systems have tended to increase use of non-renewable sources of energy and chemical fertilizers as well as the world's freshwater supplies. This fossil-fuel intensive and export-orientation of agriculture is driving crop monocultures and massive damage to biodiversity whilst contributing substantially to global warming.

## DISPOSSESSION, DEBT AND THE POWER OF CAPITAL

Accelerated privatization of water, land, natural resources, and public goods such as education and health systems is occurring at the very moment when broad swathes of public opinion support social protection and universal access to public education and health care – this dispossession is sometimes called “new enclosures”, that is the expropriation of the “social commons” and their exploitation by capital.

Such dispossession of formerly public goods is paralleled by the wholesale defunding of the development potentials of many of the countries in the world as they struggle to pay their accumulated debts, typically to the very foreign bankers who have made reckless, highly leveraged investments that have been bailed out by governments. Third World indebtedness – and increasingly that of the metropolitan heartlands of capitalism – constitutes a means of expropriation akin to what Marx – in *Capital* – characterized as primitive accumulation through colonization. It has been estimated that many of the poorest countries pay up to 20 percent of their annual fiscal revenues in foreign debt servicing, often in repayment of debts whose principal has already been repaid several times over, even though the original loans may have been used to fill the coffers of dictators and potentates – now in offshore bank accounts, as has been revealed by the Panama Papers and other recent contributions by critical investigative journalism.

Global “public” debt obligations are overseen by combinations of private banks and public institutions such as the World Bank along with the governments of wealthier countries, for example the so-called “Troika” (the IMF, European Commission and the European Central Bank (ECB)) in the European Union (EU). The trillions of dollars paid by the global South for the debt servicing since at least the early 1980s involves opportunity costs, such as cuts in social programs, which particularly affect

women and children, especially with respect to education and health care, although some recent policies of the World Bank have attempted to mitigate such effects in the global South.

Put differently, recurring financial and debt crises, with their devastating social and economic effects, are not new in the global South, even though, up until recently, they have been largely avoided in much of the North. After 2010, financial and debt crises migrated to Europe and to other heartlands of global capitalism – to be followed by a politics of austerity and, with it, a further expropriation of the social commons. Such globalizing contradictions have important gender and racial dimensions. A majority of the world's work, including unpaid caring work, is done by women and a majority of the world's poor are women in the global South.

Nevertheless, the forces of disciplinary neoliberalism have so far retained the upper hand in defining the responses to the organic crisis – the various lefts of the world have appeared relatively weak or internationally isolated, with a number of notable exceptions such as in Latin America. This seemed to be the case when Syriza was elected in January 2015 on a radical anti-austerity platform in Greece to be encircled by opposition from all other Eurozone members who stood in line behind Germany's form of neoliberalism. What was remarkable in this situation was the virtually unwavering solidarity of the leaders of the other Eurozone Member Nations in refusing to allow Greece to deviate from the strict policies of austerity and privatization mandated as a quid pro quo for receiving further sovereign loans and bailouts.

Indeed, after Syriza once again took the issue of austerity to the ballot box in the form of a referendum in mid-2015, a referendum that resulted in a rejection of the bailout conditions, the disciplinarians of the Eurozone, along with the IMF, insisted on conditions and measures that were even more draconian than before. The Greek parliament eventually voted to accept the new measures, despite the fact that they involved no commitment to either write off or reduce the sovereign debts of the Greek government, and despite the fact that most economists, including those of the IMF, believed them to be unrepayable and counter-productive in terms of pulling the economy out of its depression.

These developments took place against the backdrop of rapidly deteriorating material conditions, compounded by a devastating humanitarian crisis for Greece, caused by enormous numbers of refugees taking their lives into their hands in perilous crossings of the Mediterranean Sea as they attempted to flee the conflict zones of North Africa and the Middle East – particularly from Syria.

If we step back from the immediacy of events in Greece and the Mediterranean to reflect upon key elements in the restructuring of global politics which have occurred in the past 30 years we should highlight how political contestation and indeed representative democracy – for example over key aspects of the economy – is contained by various institutional and legal arrangements.

For example, in the tortuous 2015 negotiations over the Greek situation, the German Minister of Finance argued throughout that it was illegal and against the very constitutional arrangements agreed to by all Eurozone states for Greek debts to be written off. Measures that virtually any credible economist would see as necessary

for Greek economic growth to resume, were categorically ruled out. The idea of constitutional constraints on what is possible politically, particularly in relation to limiting the democratic measures that can be taken to govern the economy, reflects a centrepiece of neoliberal (and in the German case ordoliberal) governance. This “new constitutionalism” forms the legal counterpart to the strict neoliberal economic orthodoxy that has tended to prevail in the European economic crisis. As was noted by the BBC Economics Correspondent when denial of credit to Greece by the ECB began: “The ECB will be seen in Greece to have punished the Greek people for daring to vote for an alternative to Eurozone economic orthodoxy.”<sup>5</sup>

More generally, if Greece had been allowed to write off some or most of its debts (as recommended for the poorest countries by many economists and activists) or indeed to default, as many nations did in the 1930s, it would have significant implications for the neoliberal management strategy for debt crises throughout the world.<sup>6</sup>

Put at its simplest, therefore, new constitutionalism involves legal and constitutional mechanisms intended to win the confidence of capital that the political and economic conditions for profit making – including the full repayment of interest and debts to creditors – will be established and maintained. This is attempted partly by seeking to insulate the commanding heights of economic policy from democratic control or scrutiny and, in so doing, placing it indirectly in the hands of capital, and primarily in the hands of those sets of financial interests that have become dominant in global capitalism. Whilst central banks are “independent” of governments, their boards of governors are largely drawn from the ranks of private financial interests (not from trade unions or from the ranks of progressive or heterodox political economists).

Indeed, this “independence” gave central banks substantial latitude to act as a lender of last resort and thus to massively bail out banking interests as well as other corporations following the crash of 2008. Central banks have been the principal drivers in the issuance of massive and rising sovereign debts since the 2008 crash. Debts have been estimated to have risen by US\$57 trillion (government debts have increased by US\$25 trillion) since 2008 to stand, by 2016, at around US\$199 trillion or 286 percent of gross domestic product. Global debt (government, financial, corporate and household) totalled US\$244 trillion in 2019 (World Bank 2019).

The wider structural context for indebtedness is characterized by the acceleration of a competitive, consumerist, energy-intensive, growth-oriented market model of capitalism (Heede 2014, 2019) allied to rapid population growth, with unprecedented effects on the biosphere, society, the health of people and the planet (Gill and Benatar 2019). Indeed, financial accumulation, production and social reproduction are increasingly dependent on growing consumption patterns, increasing use of fossil fuels, and the continued ability of households, firms and governments to service mounting indebtedness (Di Muzio and Robbins 2016, 2017). In this situation, also,

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<sup>5</sup> See Peston (2015). See also Gill (2017b).

<sup>6</sup> See Jones (2018).

we can expect huge political battles over future fiscal stringencies to pay for sovereign debts, as global indebtedness on this scale clearly tilts the balance of power into the hands of creditors and bondholders.

Much of the monetary expansion has enriched super wealthy plutocrats in the context of rapidly accelerating global inequality to levels that were last seen in the 1920s. Normally the class-based nature of central banking and monetary policy is rarely debated in mainstream media and political discourse, but it was demystified by one of its primary beneficiaries, wealthy financier George Soros, in a speech at the 2015 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Soros warned that the planned Eurozone stimulus measures under the aegis of the ECB, to inject (in effect to create) €1.1 trillion into the Eurozone economy (i.e. make cheap money available to private banks) in the form of “quantitative easing”, would “increase inequality between rich and poor both in regards of the countries and people”. Soros pointed out that “excessive reliance on monetary policy tends to enrich the owners of property and at the same time will not relieve the downward pressure on wages” (cited in Gill 2016).

The primary political forces associated with the situation just described are advocates of neoliberal policies to underpin the power and disciplines of capital. The power of capital can be conceptualized as having both structural and direct dimensions. The structural dimension concerns the ways in which the conditions and institutions of accumulation, regulation and legitimation structurally favour the holders of large capitalist private property in the determination of social outcomes. In this sense the spread of market civilization constitutes a key socio-cultural structural aspect of the power of capital. The dominance and market power of large corporations is reinforced by the increasingly greater mobility of capital across jurisdictions versus the generally national context of politics and regulation and, of course, of most workers who are relatively immobile between jurisdictions (and largely trained and educated in and by national public provisions).

These arrangements enable large firms to play off one jurisdiction against the next to maximize their conditions for accumulation. So, in a world of free capital mobility, capital tends to hold the best cards, although it requires politically secure conditions/guarantees for accumulation and the constitutional enforcement of capitalist private property rights and contracts, including the right to move capital into and out of particular jurisdictions. Nations therefore must compete to obtain and retain investment in the context of the global market.

The direct power of capital is usually conceptualized as being outside the state proper (although capitalist states by their very nature seek to further the conditions for capital accumulation), involving lobbying and the application of political pressure on politicians and governments to provide business-friendly policies and laws, tax reductions and loopholes, et cetera, and to apply discipline and flexibility to labour laws and regulations as well as to enforce policies on immigration. This conceptualization is partly reflected in the phenomenon of the circulation of elites and ruling class members into and out of government. Good recent examples in the EU of a neoliberal vanguard would include Manuel Barroso, Mario Monti and Peter Sutherland, all of whom combined their careers as leading Eurocrats with significant



and lucrative private banking positions at Goldman Sachs. However, one of the more striking characteristics of the recent neoliberal era is the way in which large capital has come to be increasingly *directly* represented in all key agencies of governments, and not simply in so-called “independent central banks”, or ministries of treasury and finance, but also in ministries of defence, labour and other agencies of the state.

## GOVERNMENT BY PLUTOCRACY, NEOLIBERAL NATIONALISM AND THE REACTIONARY INTERNATIONALISM OF DONALD TRUMP

The case of the Trump administration almost represents the direct control of the US government by a particularly conservative hyper-neoliberal and nationalist grouping of billionaires. That pattern of government takeover by hyper-neoliberal plutocrats is of course replicated in many other countries where billionaires have increasingly come to take not only leading positions but actually to be presidents or prime ministers of countries, usually presiding over intensified neoliberal policies and rolling back laws and regulations that large corporations and the wealthy find onerous. Often these policies are linked to a transactional view of international relations allied to nationalist and racist discourses of divide and rule, and, in the case of Trump, the “othering”, belittling or scapegoating of opponents and the lauding of an (imaginary) US/Western Civilization that is opposed to “Others” or as conservative strategic thinker, Samuel P. Huntington (1993) put it, “the West versus the Rest”.

Trump also strongly supports the so-called “carbon combustion complex” (Oreskes and Conway 2013). This is the complex of energy corporations, investors and sympathetic political figures who deny climate change and are in favour of continued expansion of the carbon-based energy and other non-renewable resources as the lifeblood of market civilization. In this regard, the profile of the current US Trump administration has somewhat of an Orwellian character, particularly given individuals such as Rick Perry. Perry is in favour of dismantling virtually all environmental protections and opening US onshore and offshore resources to practically unfettered exploitation by energy corporations. He is now head of the US Environmental *Protection Agency*. The US Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, one of the principal financial contributors to the Republican Party, describes herself as “a proven leader, innovator and disrupter ... passionate about quality education”.<sup>7</sup> She is intent on further privatizing the US educational system. Her brother is Eric Prince, the founder of Blackwater USA, the private military services contractor. In her confirmation hearings she suggested that guns might be needed in some schools threatened by grizzly bears. Her confirmation hearings were extremely controversial and resulted in a 50–50 split in the Senate, broken only when Vice President Pence cast the tiebreak vote (on other dystopian aspects of the Trump era see Gill 2017a).

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<sup>7</sup> See [www.betsydevos.com](http://www.betsydevos.com). Accessed 26 January 2018.

President Trump might be categorized as a “neoliberal nationalist”, with his positions honed over decades by right-wing think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation. His perspective – and that of many in his administration – is of course stridently opposed to the United Nations, to multilateral institutions and associated forms of public interest regulation, and to any international agreements on trade and investment or on climate change mitigation that might tie the hands of the American administration or US corporations. Trump’s reactionary internationalism opposes much (but not all) of what constitutes ruling class establishment internationalism and its construct, the so-called “liberal international order” institutionalized under American hegemony ever since the Second World War. Indeed, Trump is the first president to have run under the banner of American decline, criticizing his predecessors as well as rallying support, with his slogan “Make America great again!”

It might be noted, however, that the US has traditionally been suspicious of many international organizations and has always used various forms of unilateralism and bilateralism, including special relationships with countries such as Canada, Japan, Korea and Germany, as well as Israel and Saudi Arabia, to cement its global domination. Recent examples of unilateralism include many of its foreign policies following 9/11, including the subsequent invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the long continuing war in Afghanistan.

So, what other characteristics are associated with the presidency of Donald Trump? Neoliberal nationalists like Trump seek pro-market, business-friendly (de) regulation across the board, denying the legitimacy of concepts of public interest regulation. The strategy is to use federalism and multilevel governance to locate regulation on many such matters – and on migration and labour relations – to the national or local level – whilst reinforcing at the federal (and international) level guarantees for capital, especially secure private property rights and relatively free movement of capital across borders, also pressing for much lower levels of federal taxation for corporations and higher income earners (Harmes 2019). In that sense they are closer to a competitive federalism that is a more Hayekian or “pure” neoliberalism than the more cosmopolitan and “compensatory neoliberalism” of the Obama administration – who were in favour of some redistribution and international co-operation.

Trump’s strategy also reflects the willingness to engage in a more conflictual, militarist and more purely transactional international relations – reflected in growing geopolitical rivalry with China, including over virtual (computing and digital) power and specifically over the development of artificial intelligence, and Trump’s ongoing threats and possibilities of a trade war – and not least his open willingness to embrace much more authoritarian forms of neoliberalism and reactionary forces throughout the world. Again, the embrace of foreign dictatorships that are pro-American has a long pedigree and is typical of American foreign policy traditions, so in this sense Trump is not new.

On military matters President Trump seems to have continued the policies of President Obama and his immediate predecessors that are premised upon the doctrine of “full spectrum dominance” developed by the United States in the 1990s, aimed at supremacy in all theatres of warfare (land, air, sea, virtual), expanding military

budgets as well as the global reach of the Pentagon's military footprint. He differs, however, (as did many of his presidential predecessors) on questions of diplomacy by dismantling large parts of the apparatus of the State Department, which is seen as too aligned with "neoliberal cosmopolitanism".<sup>8</sup> The latter perspective is more in tune with what I have called "compensatory neoliberalism" and the need for the political management of some market forces and more cooperative relations with primary allies.

Neoliberal nationalism in the form of Trump can be characterized, then, as a "supremacist" (as opposed to a hegemonic) strategy, since it is premised upon the intensification of a hierarchical, unequal, competitive, transactional and increasingly coercive world order that seeks to guarantee the rule of white male plutocrats partly by means of a strategy of political domination of divide and rule, one that is, in his case, fundamentally racist and misogynist.

This is one reason why there are rivalries and tensions within the ranks of the plutocracy and global ruling classes. As noted, for much of the neoliberal era the predominant ruling class format has tended to be associated with "neoliberal cosmopolitanism" that supported the postwar "liberal international economic order" and endorsed international institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank and agreements such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the former North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (now replaced by the Trump administration in similar form). It supported national and regional constitutional agreements promoting competitiveness and fiscal discipline and trade openness such as in the EU. Neoliberal cosmopolitanism is also associated with so-called "humanitarian intervention" on the part of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and US-led "coalitions of the willing". Neoliberal cosmopolitanism could be characterized as the more hegemonic strategy that seeks to co-opt and make some concessions to opposition and thereby to gain legitimacy within the "international community" for imperial interventions and related geopolitical arrangements.

## THE "EXTREME CENTRE" VERSUS FORCES OF REACTION?<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, the trends noted above in relation to the Trump administration have also been accompanied elsewhere by the rise of neoliberal nationalism, coupled with anti-immigrant and more generally reactionary political forces and authoritarian leaderships – encompassing the likes of Trump, Vladimir Putin, Jair Bolsonaro, and others such as Duterte, Modi, Erdogan, Orban and Johnson. They have emerged amid a generalized dissatisfaction with neoliberal cosmopolitan globalization. In Western

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<sup>8</sup> I am grateful to Blake Stewart for elaborating distinctions between Trump's perspective and neoliberal cosmopolitanism.

<sup>9</sup> I am grateful to Thibault Biscarie for suggesting the phrase, "extreme centre," which originates in the work of Chantal Mouffe (1998).

Europe alone the list also includes such highly reactionary figures as: Geert Wilders, leader of the far-right Dutch Party for Freedom; Matteo Salvini of Lega Nord in Italy; Marine Le Pen of Front National in France, whilst the Alternative für Deutschland won 12.6 percent of the vote in 2017 and an unprecedented 94 seats in the German Bundestag.

Nevertheless, despite the rise of Trump and his xenophobic allies such as Madame Le Pen, Nigel Farage and the so-called Brexiteers in the United Kingdom, along with sundry other Islamophobes and immigrant-haters, in the EU, at least so far, what has been called “the extreme centre” of neoliberal governance has been able to hold, although many of the positions of “centrist” leaders have drifted to the right, e.g. hardening their stance towards immigrants and refugees. Paradoxically, Trump’s threats to leave NATO and his links to Putin and support for sundry autocrats and dictators, alongside the shambolic process of Brexit, has helped to prompt some political impetus towards a renewal of European integration – at precisely the moment when neo-nationalism, “populism” and centrifugal tendencies such as Brexit had been threatening to splinter the EU apart (Gill 2017b).

So, assuming that the “extreme centre” will continue to hold, what are the policies that the restoration of “normalcy” would continue? One centrepiece – alongside more immigration controls and discipline for labour – is continuation of pro-capital taxation structures: direct taxes are increasingly cut for corporations and the very wealthy, whilst regressive indirect taxes are increased for the general population. When corporations do face tax bills, an estimated 40 percent of all Foreign Direct Investment is “phantom” investment, simply designed to avoid taxes by corporations (Financial Times Editorial 2019).

A second issue therefore concerns the offshore world: governments of the extreme centre would continue to allow the sequestering of wealth in offshore centres by the wealthy and corporations to avoid/evade public interest regulation and higher direct taxation – taxes that might otherwise be used to fund public goods. Indeed, the super-rich are reputed to evade up to one third of their due payment of taxes, even when they are located in low tax regimes (to say nothing of virtually zero tax jurisdictions such as Monaco).

On these questions – the continuation of regressive tax regimes and the protection of the categorical imperative of the plutocracy in the form of the offshore option – virtually all neoliberal leaders – from Trump to Emmanuel Macron – are effectively agreed, despite the fact that the use of offshore wealth to fund conservative political causes, e.g. wealthy backers of Trump and Brexit such as the right-wing hedge fund billionaire Robert Mercer, has become increasingly politically controversial. This is partly because of evidence that intervention took place in the elections and referenda partly due to skilful use of panoptic/digital electoral strategies using databases from Facebook, developed in concert with a previously unknown and private Canadian political consultancy called Cambridge Analytica.

## CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS: DELUSIONS OF NORMALCY

I noted at the outset that an organic crisis may involve a stalemate or *impasse* of the prevailing order in which new possibilities are inherent but have yet to fully materialize. Here I reflect on elements of that situation in which we might suggest the *de facto* strategy of at least some of the supremacist and dominant (as opposed to the hegemonic), neoliberal forces since the Wall Street meltdown has been to seek to reassert “normalcy”, albeit with a more authoritarian reordering of the status quo. The purpose of this is to consolidate and to deepen capitalist market civilization and the rule of market forces and to attempt to politically stabilize the governance of the organic crisis. For reasons of length I will restrict this part of my discussion to North America and the EU.

I consider such a strategy of the return to normalcy to be ultimately delusional for both ecological and political reasons and it cannot resolve the organic crisis – for that to happen a radically different approach to governance would be necessary.

Why is this the case? First, and most immediately, the organic crisis involves crises of authority, representation and hegemony that are partly reflected in the rise of so-called “populist” forces of principally the right, including fascism, but also of a remobilized left, amid more general political contestation, anger and disillusionment across the population. Indeed, “normalcy” has entailed the deeper securitization of politics, the criminalization of the poor and efforts to quell and incorporate political dissent. Second, the dominant ruling strategies are patently at odds with maintaining the integrity of the ecological and biological systems of the biosphere to say nothing of addressing the problems of climate change and mounting inequality. The logic of “normalcy” therefore involves the deepening commodification of bodies, wombs, human tissue, plants, animals, water, food and health, land grabs, dispossessions, as well as the colonizing practices associated with the capitalization of new but distant frontiers of accumulation associated with inner and outer space.

What might this all mean politically, for example in the affluent countries in the immediately foreseeable future? In most of the North Atlantic countries about 70 percent of workers are in services, many in public services now threatened with further privatization. Moreover, in some northern regions of Western Europe (and especially in Germany where governmental crisis management has kept unemployment surprisingly low despite the export-oriented growth model), many remain sympathetic to the argument that G20 leaders can resolve the crisis. Indeed many “protected” workers in unions are shielded from some of the worst economic effects of the crisis (i.e. partly as a result of Keynesian automatic stabilizers such as unemployment insurance), whereas insecurity is increasing for the vast majority of workers worldwide. They tend to support the status quo and suggest the *impasse* over the future will likely continue.

Nevertheless, the idea of an early return to “normalcy” even for these workers would also seem delusional in light of the wider global economic and political situation. The fiscal situation of many countries continues to be far worse than political

leaders dare admit. Moreover, the “normalcy” of the past few decades has meant not only a deep crisis of social reproduction but also, as noted, debt bondage, relentless environmental destruction, ever increasing and obscene levels of inequality, and, not least, global economic stagnation with mass unemployment in much of the world, for example in much of Europe, especially for young people, reminiscent in scale to the 1930s.

Indeed, there are signs of progressive alternatives. In the United States, a majority of young educated Americans, particularly those between the age of 18 and 35 with college degrees, actually seem to support “socialism” – a word that used to be taboo in American political culture. There is a possibility that a democratic socialist like Bernie Sanders – after overcoming his heart attack in 2019 – might even be elected US president in 2020. The question of “normalcy”, therefore, is an intensely contested local, national, regional and global question. We can expect global political conflict to begin to increase as “normalcy” continues; the question is how to channel this for progressive as opposed to regressive ends. So far, however, in Europe, particularly in light of the development in Greece under Syriza, the signs of transnational solidarity amongst left forces have been relatively weak, even in the face of mass youth unemployment, an assault on the European social model, the humanitarian crisis and other morbid symptoms.

Stepping back from the situation I have sketched, I would argue, however, that the central contradiction of world order today is not that between capital and democracy as such – the very concentration of capital ultimately would allow for socialization of some of the means of production and accumulation, or at least their “commanding heights” and might offer more democratic control. The main contradiction we face is deeper and much broader and it is dramatized by a global struggle of power and resistance, and one that is not simply over the terms of fiscal austerity. It concerns the degree to which a continuation of neoliberal globalization will intensify a general crisis of social reproduction and, with it, a restructuring of our basic social institutions for health, care, welfare and livelihood – all issues that have fundamental implications for the question of democracy and the human rights understood not only in the narrow sense of political rights but also in the sense of rights to reasonable food, shelter, amnesty and freedom from threats of material deprivation and violence.

So, what is the role of critical international relations theory in this context? In my view a principal challenge for critical international relations and progressive political forces and political economists in the coming decade is mobilizing forces, organizations and arguments – as well as new policies and governance proposals to help create a radically new “common sense” or rather a form of “good sense” forging new concepts and proposals for collective leadership and international cooperation and mobilization that can address the global organic crisis.

Wider political mobilization concerning the present and future could help to overcome the present political impasse. In that context, the growing trends towards an authoritarian and market-based governance by political elites and Big Data corporations, with the use of artificial intelligence and automated digital online systems to govern debts, welfare, poverty and entitlements to health and education, as well

as to limit civil rights, need to be strongly opposed, regulated, constrained and re-purposed by democratic forms of accountability. These trends, which involve the pursuit of profit as well as governing poverty, need to be brought under social control or even nationalized in the public interest to serve as public goods to the benefit of all equally. Democracy requires binding legal commitments to social justice and human rights, including social and economic rights and the right to privacy, dignity and human development for all. In short: we need democratic, planetary governance for *all* people and a sustainable and healthy biosphere.

Global challenges may seem intractable; however, they reflect a global conjuncture which in many respects – particularly given the development of scientific and technological capabilities and growing worldwide prosperity for many – is much more promising than that which followed the end of the Second World War. That was the most lethal war in history with postwar settlements that required massive reconstruction and development from the ashes of destruction. Moreover, when considering the nature and future trajectory of world order and the forms of power and rule that go with it, we should remember that these are contested, transient and governed by forms of mutability that are not all progressive nor inevitable: we should remember Marx’s maxim that human beings make their own history but not necessarily under conditions of their own choosing. The global organic crisis and its associated political stalemate – over basic conditions of existence and the future of the planet – cannot last indefinitely.

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## 12. Neoliberal authoritarianism in Egypt before and after the uprisings: a critical international political economy perspective

*Roberto Roccu*

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With the partial and precarious exception of Tunisia, the great hopes generated by the Arab uprisings that swept the Middle East and North Africa in 2010 and 2011 are still far from being realised. Often characterised by Egyptians as *umm al-dunya* ('mother of the world'), and undoubtedly at the heart of regional politics, since 2011 Egypt has witnessed some rather dramatic reversals of fortune. Here, on the footsteps of the Tunisian success, the uprisings started with mass demonstrations on 25 January 2011, which eighteen days later led to the overthrow of president Hosni Mubarak, in power for nearly three decades. The following transitional period, filled with popular expectations despite the army's attempt to stifle the efforts of revolutionary forces, culminated in June 2012 in the first democratic presidential elections in Egyptian history, narrowly won by Mohamed Morsi from the Muslim Brotherhood. Only one year later, however, the largest popular demonstration in Egyptian history called for Morsi's resignation, on the back of which the army deposed him a few days later. The election of Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in 2014, and his re-election in 2018, signalled the return to an authoritarian regime led by an army strongman as well as the triumph of counterrevolutionary forces, in turn producing a substantial intensification of repression in Egyptian society. Interestingly enough, amidst this social and political whirlwind, the economic policies pursued by the different governments have been characterised by a remarkable degree of continuity. This is all the more puzzling if one considers that demonstrations against Mubarak had begun with the now iconic slogan of 'bread, freedom, social justice', vividly pointing in both its first and final term towards socio-economic grievances.

A key contention of this chapter is that an approach rooted in critical International Political Economy (IPE) is required to account for this apparent mismatch between political change and economic continuity. More specifically, I argue that the hitherto disappointing outcome of the Egyptian uprisings cannot be adequately grasped without exploring the extent to which the emergence of a neoliberal accumulation regime in Egypt starting in the late 1980s militates against the democratisation of the political regime along gradualist and moderate 'third wave' lines (Huntington 1991; Linz & Stepan 1996). Such an argument speaks to at least three debates in the field of critical international relations (IR). First, it locates the interactions between economic regimes of accumulation and regimes of political rule within the structure–agency

debate, showing the extent to which global pressures, often articulated through international economic organisations (IEOs), main donors as well as transnational corporations (TNCs), shaped the contingency within which Egyptian elites undertook neoliberal reforms, which in turn structurally transformed not only the Egyptian economy through integration in global markets, but also the possibilities for political change through the establishment of what I term *neoliberal authoritarianism*. Second, building on the critical IPE literature analysing first the non-death of neoliberalism (Crouch 2011), and then its intensification accompanied by greater reliance on coercion (Bruff 2014; Oberndorfer 2015), as it turns the concept on its head this chapter also contributes to the literature on ‘authoritarian neoliberalism’ in peripheral social formations (Tansel 2017), examining how the breadth and depth of neoliberal restructuring in Egypt conditions the prospects of democratic transformation of an authoritarian regime. Finally, and following from this, this chapter also adds to critical IR and IPE debates on international regimes (Gale 1998; Muzaka 2011). More specifically, as it analyses the mutual, if asymmetric, constitution of economic and political regimes in specific social formations, while inserting them within a global context where international and supranational regimes are increasingly central, this chapter is a first contribution towards bridging the two hitherto separate bodies of research on international regimes and domestic regimes respectively.

Starting from this very point, the chapter proceeds as follows. The first section outlines three different bodies of literature on regimes, respectively focusing on international regimes in IR, on political regimes in political science and comparative politics, and on accumulation regimes in critical political economy. It then argues that the stark disciplinary demarcations on which these bodies of literature emerged have become untenable in the age of neoliberal globalisation, and that a critical approach to the study of regimes today needs to transcend the international–domestic boundary. This general point is inserted within a clearer theoretical lineage in the second section, which first locates neoliberal globalisation within the structure–agency debate that has shaped much critical IR scholarship, and then presents a critical IPE approach inspired by Gramsci as well as neo-Gramscian scholarship, which is ideally suited for grasping the conditions of ‘situated agency’, as well as their effects on structure. This makes it possible to analyse the forms of agency, domestic and international alike, necessary for structural adjustment to take place in the Global South, as well as the structural transformations that neoliberal policies produced in peripheral social formations, which in turn have had major ramifications for both the hegemony of the domestic political regime and the scope for agency, subaltern and otherwise. Such an approach leads us to an exploration of the conditions of neoliberal authoritarianism. This is carried out in the third section with reference to the case of Egypt, showing: (i) the emergence of neoliberal authoritarianism under Mubarak, and the extent to which this was shaped by the international economic regime promoting integration in the world economy in line with the globally dominant neoliberal accumulation regime; (ii) the threat that the 2011 revolution put to this configuration, and the way in which the power bloc confronted its hegemonic crisis by attempting to transform the ‘active’ revolution into a passive revolution from above; and (iii) the

convergence of the reconfigured power bloc and major international actors towards shoring up neoliberal authoritarianism in the post-revolutionary period. However, insofar as neoliberalism is constitutively, even in its most effective functioning, an enabler and a deepener of inequality, it both increases social polarisation and makes democratisation along consensual lines typical of ‘third wave’ democratic transitions all the less likely. Hence, in its Egyptian instantiation neoliberal authoritarianism cannot succeed neither in restoring hegemony nor in converting subaltern demands for radical change into a passive revolution, that is: a democratisation from above.

## APPROACHING REGIMES IN A GLOBAL AGE: BEYOND THE INTERNATIONAL–DOMESTIC DIVIDE

To understand the relevance and enduring contribution of the vast and influential IR literature on international regimes one must first confront the empirical and theoretical puzzle out of which regime theory emerged. This had to do with the growth and consolidation of international organisations of different kinds as major actors in a field, that of IR, traditionally understood as fundamentally state-centric. As any form of knowledge production, international regime theory was also a product of its time, and thus embodied the tendency characteristic of Cold War IR to starkly demarcate an international realm, characterised by anarchy (Waltz 1979), from a domestic realm with an overarching political authority, although one that can manifest itself in a variety of configurations that can be more or less effective, more or less legitimate, and so on. Such an inside–outside separation was very much at the heart of dominant approaches to the study of politics during the Cold War, with scholars of democracy and authoritarianism focusing on domestic or, at best, comparative politics, and IR scholars chiefly concerned with the conditions of, and scope for, international cooperation under the constraints of anarchy. International regimes, then, defined as ‘principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue area’ (Krasner 1982: 185), provided a helpful prism for exploring the scope for cooperation in an anarchic world, whether in terms of rational cost–benefit calculations (Keohane 1993), or in terms of socialisation around specific norms and principles (Ruggie 1982; Kratochwil & Ruggie 1986). Among the different types of international regimes, this chapter focuses on the *international economic regime*, understood as the set of principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures and practices established by international actors – themselves increasingly a mix of public, private and hybrid organisations – and aiming, with specific reference to the economy, ‘to modify state behavior and to narrow the range of policy options available to national policy makers’ (Maswood 2006: 42).

The inside–outside distinction shaped the division of labour within the field of politics throughout the Cold War, with major repercussions, for instance, on how IR scholars considered the international determinants of domestic political transformations. In this respect, much of the international regimes literature accepts at face value some of the political science arguments about *political regimes*, intended

as a combination of: (i) procedural rules, formal or informal, determining in which way which actors can access which decision-making positions regulated by which rules; and (ii) the acceptance, strategic or normative, of this system by all the major actors involved (Munck 1996: 5–11). Regime change within this tradition was more often than not conceived in terms of transition from authoritarian to democratic rule, leading to the emergence of three main traditions of democratisation theory (Grugel & Bishop 2013). The first was heavily influenced by modernisation theory, and linked industrialisation, and its attendant social and cultural effects, to a greater likelihood of transition towards democracy (Lipset 1959). In its more elaborate formulations, this is conceived as a three-step process, whereby economic opening transforms the structure of a social formation, most notably with the emergence of a strong and autonomous middle class, which in light of cultural transformations brought about by modernisation, and of having benefitted from economic opening, tends to pursue political opening through moderate avenues. The second tradition, often referred to as ‘transitology’ (Schmitter 1995), tries to remedy the excessive structuralism of modernisation theory by shifting the focus towards agency, and more specifically towards political negotiations among elites. Here, great attention is devoted to the dynamics of pact-making between ‘old’ and ‘new’ elites, each of them split into soft-liners and hard-liners. The more the former succeed in marginalising the latter, the higher the chances of democratic transition (O’Donnell & Schmitter 1986). The third tradition, rooted in historical sociology, lends a much greater weight to the social conflicts generated by capitalist development and expansion, and hence focuses on the specific socio-economic transformations enabling democratisation. In its earlier formulation (Moore 1966), much of the attention is devoted to the conditions for an alliance between a rising bourgeoisie and a weakened landed class. In a more recent study including a broader range of democracies (Rueschemeyer et al. 1992), the main finding is instead that organised working classes have historically been the most consistent supporters of democracy, with landed classes most consistently against democratisation, and the middle classes having ‘a more ambiguous role’ (Rueschemeyer et al. 1992: 8).

The influence of the first two approaches, often juxtaposed, is especially visible in the dominant account of the ‘third wave’ of democratic transitions (Huntington 1991), covering the two decades between the mid-1970s and the mid-1990s. Here, integration in global markets through economic liberalisation generates a virtuous circle strengthening the position of the middle class within society and of reformers/soft-liners within the regime. Grateful of the opportunities for enhanced economic wellbeing, and hence broadly in favour of free trade, but concerned with the lack of adequate political representations, the rising middle class finds a natural ally in the moderate wing within the regime, thus ushering the transition from authoritarian to democratic rule (Diamond 2012).

This argument concerning the positive contribution of economic opening to democratisation has in turn become a fundamental theoretical plank of democracy promotion practice. Hence, liberalising economic reforms have been increasingly included in democracy promotion projects run by US and European Union (EU)

agencies, creating ever greater synergies with the reforms promoted by IEOs and more generally the policies favoured by the international economic regime, starting with the (infamous ‘Washington Consensus’ (Williamson 1989). These were focused partly on macroeconomic stabilisation usually following a fiscal, currency or banking crisis of the country under consideration, and partly on so-called structural adjustment through the liberalisation of trade, interest rates, capital account, foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows, the privatisation of state-owned companies, tax reforms aiming at broadening the tax base while lowering the marginal tax rate, and the deregulation of most sectors so as to make them more attractive to investors.

Insofar as they aim to establish specific foundations for economic growth, the sum total of neoliberal reforms can be understood as an *accumulation regime*, drawing on the French regulation school (Aglietta 1979), but going beyond its relative neglect of finance (Stockhammer 2008). Following Jessop (1990: 308), an accumulation regime is defined here as ‘an institutional ensemble and complex of norms which can secure capitalist reproduction *pro tempore* despite the antagonistic character of capitalist social relations’. Crucially, this antagonism means that accumulation regimes themselves, while oriented towards overall capital accumulation, are far from neutral in their distributional implications. The Fordist accumulation regime, for instance, tended to favour industrial over financial capital, while unionised labour reaped some benefits from it, if in heavily gendered forms (McDowell 1991). In distributional terms, the neoliberal accumulation regime is instead concerned with restoring or reconstituting capitalist class power against labour, while rebalancing intra-capitalist relations in favour of financial capital (Harvey 2005: 31–36). One of the consequences of this, increasingly accepted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) itself (Ostry et al. 2014), is that neoliberalism is a key driver of greater inequality within the social formations experiencing it, thus casting serious doubts on the narrative of global convergence (Milanovic 2016; Wade 2017).

Having covered all three forms of regime with which this chapter is concerned, we can now restate our research question as follows: what does the advance of the neoliberal accumulation regime in the Global South, heavily promoted and supported by the international economic regime, mean for authoritarian regimes in the periphery of the world economy? Here, the account provided by modernisation theory and elite-centred approaches appears dramatically inadequate when one looks at the specific social mechanisms supposedly leading to democratisation. The disequalising impact of neoliberal reforms makes it very hard to see the emergence of a strong and autonomous middle class that modernisation theory sees as key to democratic transition. Additionally, the winners of neoliberal globalisation in the Global South are transnationally connected elites that benefit from the phenomenal growth of financial markets, which also provides them with an escape route from taxation. These groups are unlikely to push for wholesale democratisation, and are more concerned with preserving the economic opportunities that neoliberal policies grant them. When it comes to the more general effects of integration in the global economy along neoliberal lines, this process gives external actors, and especially TNCs, a much greater role in determining the developmental trajectory of peripheral social formations.

This also has a negative effect on the prospects for democratic transition, as external economic actors are much less likely to be interested in the flourishing of democratic institutions as long as policies that enable the profitability of their investments are in place (Ayers 2018).

In sum, the global diffusion of neoliberalism towards the periphery of the world economy has entailed a convergence in the modalities of capital accumulation, although retaining some specificities, for instance, regarding the extent to which different social formations are dependent on finance for their growth, as well as the extent of integration in global production networks and the ability to upgrade within them (Milberg & Winkler 2013). Crucially, the international economic regime has been a staunch promoter of neoliberalism, through a variety of mechanisms including structural adjustment programmes, bilateral investment treaties, and the promise of FDI. If we conceive of neoliberalism as an ‘inequality machine’, then one understands that the spread of the neoliberal accumulation regime effectively globalises the conditions that make democratisation along third wave lines harder. Indeed, the weakening of the middle class also in affluent societies suggests that this mechanism might be extended further to investigate whether neoliberalism weakens, or at the very least limits, democracy where it already exists (Ayers & Saad-Filho 2014; Merkel 2014).

## GRAMSCI, NEO-GRAMSCIANS AND NEOLIBERAL GLOBALISATION: A CRITICAL IPE APPROACH

The extent to which neoliberal globalisation has transformed social formations in both the core and the periphery, and the deriving relevance of transnational processes, suggest that the stark demarcation between domestic and international politics has become increasingly untenable. At the same time, once speaking of globalisation it is imperative to dispel the tendency of presenting it as ‘a process without a subject’ (Hay 2002). Hence, this section outlines a critical IPE that serves two tasks. First, by inserting globalisation within the agent–structure debate, it seeks to restore agency to how we study this process. Second, it develops this understanding through reference to Gramsci and neo-Gramscian IPE, extending this literature towards the exploration of the effects of structural economic transformations on regime type as a specific political ‘superstructure’.

The agent–structure *problématique* has been a defining feature of IR theory in the final years of the Cold War and the decade following it. In Wendt’s classic formulation, structuration theory in sociology was mobilised towards developing an account of the international as mutual constitution between structure and agency. This account was presented as ‘inherently “critical” since it requires a critique and penetration of observable forms to the underlying social structures which generate them’ (Wendt 1987: 370). While one needs to look beyond Wendt to see this promise fulfilled (Doty 1997; Wight 1999; Bieler & Morton 2001), one cannot deny that, in light of its aim of being productive analytically and emancipatory politically

(Hoffman 1987), critical IR theory must avoid the traps of determinism on the one hand and voluntarism on the other. From this perspective, recasting structure and agency as an exclusionary dualism between explanation and understanding (Hollis & Smith 1990) only risks replicating the risk of falling into either of the two traps.

When addressing the agent–structure *problématique*, a critical IPE approach inspired by Gramsci cannot but be predicated on his ‘absolute historicism’ (Gramsci 1971: 416–418; see also Morton 2007: 15–38), thus locating these concepts within the historical process. This only entails embracing Suganami’s view that “[e]xplanation” and “understanding” can ... be conceived as two sides of the same narrative coin’ (1999: 372), but also accepting that ‘while all structures are the result of human interaction, parts may have been instantiated by interactions in the past [and] may confront human beings in the present as “givens” by acquiring a “humanly objective” sense due to an acceptance as “universal” subjective definitions’ (Bieler & Morton 2001: 26). Hence, the capitalist mode of production, but also empire and patriarchy, for instance, present themselves to individual agents with the constraining (for most) and enabling (for few) power of structures, even though their very emergence and consolidation occurred through social interactions, and hence agency. Crucially, while to an extent self-sustaining because of these very power effects, structures remain reliant on agents for their own reproduction. This in turn means that agency matters, and can thus be directed not only towards reproducing a structure, but also towards contesting, challenging and transforming it. Not so dissimilarly from critical realism, in this account ‘social interaction is seen as being structurally conditioned but never as structurally determined’ (Archer 1995: 90). More explicitly than within the critical realist canon, however, and in line with the historical materialist tradition, Gramsci’s historicist commitment is reflected in the explicit consideration of the transformations between and within modes of production, and more specifically within capitalism in a given historical period. Given the scope of this chapter, this cannot but take us back to globalisation.

Drawing on the critical IPE tradition (Mittelman 2000), globalisation is understood as a process producing *qualitative* transformations that have an undoubtedly structural dimension, and which defines the current epoch of capitalist development (Roccu & Talani 2019, forthcoming). Such a definition encompasses but goes beyond realist and institutional views that see globalisation as an increase in *quantitative* indicators measuring flows in capital, goods, services and people. In addition to these, a qualitative approach to globalisation also lays an emphasis on two related elements. First, it allows us to see the extent to which *technological transformations* become ‘shapers’ of the environment within which political and economic actors make their choices (Dicken 1999). At the same time, and here is where an historicist approach inspired by Gramsci avoids the perils of structural determinism, one must not lose sight of the fact that these technological transformations are originally policy-enabled, and that agents feed back onto the structural effects produced by these transformations, at times consolidating and reinforcing them, at others undermining and challenging them. In sum, reference to Gramsci enables the development of a relational, if asymmetric, approach to the study of globalisation and its conse-



quences, which sees the structural component as a determination in the first instance (Hall 1996), with a moulding influence on the initial possibilities for agency. While agents tend to face structure as a 'given', they retain agential autonomy in two forms. In a weaker sense, they retain it as their freedom to take any course of action within the boundaries defined by structural determination in the first instance. In a stronger sense, individual and collective actions feed back on the structure itself, and hence might reshape, either expanding or constraining further, the boundaries within which action takes place. To emphasise the centrality of situated agency, within the conditions and scope afforded to it by structure, this piece often presents globalisation as a process of *neoliberal restructuring*, which raises both the issue of who carries out such restructuring and hence of the differential impact of structures on different actors, and of the neoliberal nature of globalisation, which instead highlights the specific terms on which globalisation occurs, ultimately determined by agency. Gramsci (1971: 160) vividly portrays this dialectical relation when presenting *laissez faire* as 'a form of state "regulation", introduced and maintained by legislative and coercive means. It is a deliberate policy, conscious of its own ends, and not the spontaneous, automatic expression of economic facts.' The same applies to neoliberalism, which is enabled via political agency, but then produces structural effects that fundamentally alter the conditions within which situated agency takes place.

The very fact that this situated-ness is differential inevitably leads to the question of power, and more specifically to Gramsci's understanding of hegemony. How do those who are structurally empowered by a specific structure, and the attendant policies that allow its reproduction, manage to obtain and maintain a level of legitimacy that validates their own policies? Gramsci suggests that this might occur by means of coercion or by means of consent. Hegemony then defines 'the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent' (Gramsci 1971: 80). Consent, in turn, can be obtained by providing means of material improvement and advancement for the vast majority of the population, so that a specific accumulation regime might be producing differential benefits in relative terms, but still ensures absolute gains for most if not all of the population. Consent can, however, also be elicited by ideological means, hence persuading the majority of the population that what is in the interest of the 'power bloc' (Poulantzas 1973), understood as the alliance of different fractions of the dominant social forces, is also in the interest of the population at large. The fact that Gramsci conceived of hegemony predominantly within states poses a challenge when one thinks of the effects of truly global processes such as neoliberal restructuring. This leads to the other key feature of a qualitative approach to globalisation, as well as to neo-Gramscian scholarship in IPE.

Second, the technological transformations of the past four decades have produced a hitherto unseen *transnationalisation* of both production and finance, embodied in the rise of, respectively, global production networks and financialisation. Thus, globalisation entails 'not merely the geographical extension of economic activity across national boundaries, but also, more importantly, the functional integration of such internationally dispersed activities' (Dicken 1999: 5). This point is at the heart

of the so-called Amsterdam School of neo-Gramscian IPE, concerned with processes of transnational class formation emerging out of the thick integration of production and finance across borders (Van der Pijl 1998; Van Apeldoorn 2002), and is already present in Gramsci's own writings, if mostly implicitly,<sup>1</sup> with reference, for instance, to the role of cosmopolitan intellectuals on the one hand and foreign powers on the other, first in preventing Italian state formation and then directing it in a specific direction, but also in the attention that Gramsci lends to truly transnational institutions such as the Catholic Church and the Rotary Club (Ives & Short 2013).

If the transnational element is central to studying globalisation from a Gramscian perspective, this need not imply the wealth and power diffusion and the flattening effect heralded by liberal commentators (Friedman 2005). Rather, in line with another body of critical literature on uneven development in both IPE and geography (Harvey 1982; Smith 2008; Callinicos 2009), globalisation is considered here as a process that reconfigures, rather than dismantles, unevenness. Insofar as neoliberalism has 'intensified uneven development' (Kiely 2007: 434), globalisation in its neoliberal form has strong disequalising tendencies. This depends on the one hand on the complementarity and conflict between the different forms that capital can take, as commodity, as money, or as wage in compensation for labour, and on the other hand on how this multiplicity of capital is met by multiple political authorities. As a result, capitalism not only unfolds unevenly, but also produces a constantly changing distribution of unevenness across the globe (Callinicos 2009: 207–208).

Once more, this is consistent with Gramsci's own thinking. Arguably because of the contrast between the rural Sardinia in which he grew up and the industrialised Turin in which he cut his intellectual and political teeth, Gramsci was especially sensitive to the differential spatial dynamics of capitalist development. On the one hand, in line with Trotsky, Gramsci was acutely aware of the peculiarities implicit in late development, especially in the practices rendering underdevelopment of the Italian *Mezzogiorno* (South) functional to the development of the industrial North (Gramsci 1966). On the other hand, unevenness is also significant insofar as it implies an articulation of the unfolding capitalist relations of production on a global scale with pre-existing relations in the social formation under consideration. This permits Gramsci to grasp the social configuration produced by the late and uneven development of capitalism in Italy, which created the need for the emerging bourgeoisie in the North to ally with landowners in the South to complete state formation under the leadership of Piedmont (Gramsci 1971: 104–120). Such an approach to uneven development is thus especially productive to investigate how neoliberal globalisation shapes and constraints political and economic processes in the Global South.

Alliances with parts of the *ancien régime* in peripheral social formations also have obvious implications for legitimation and hegemony. These are well captured by the concept of passive revolution, which identifies a process of externally induced struc-

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, throughout the *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci effectively uses *internazionale* (international) and *mondiale* (global) interchangeably.

tural transformation carried out in a given social formation by the power bloc through extensive reliance on state power in a way that fundamentally consolidates the *status quo* (Roccu 2017). Within this process, state power becomes a surrogate for the absence of a class that is not only dominant, but also ‘leading’ and hence hegemonic. Crucially, passive revolution also presupposes more general political relations of force within the social formation, whereby not only the dominant class fails to be hegemonic, but we also see the mobilisation of subaltern classes. This, however, tends to take the form of a ‘sporadic and incoherent rebelliousness’ (Gramsci 2007: 252), which prefigures a failure to develop a political project that is radical and viable at once. There is thus scope for subaltern agency, if within a context in which the state is likely to resort to considerable degrees of coercion to shield the existing power bloc.

When looking at the Global South in the age of neoliberal globalisation, and even more when looking at the Arab uprisings, it is hard not to see the relevance of Gramsci’s considerations. Structural adjustment, imposed by IEOs, has triggered a broader restructuring of social relations, which incumbent elites have sought to contain in their systemic implications. Insofar as the neoliberalism underpinning structural adjustment is, however, both an enabler and a deepener of greater inequality, it erodes the material bases for hegemony. The resulting ‘organic crisis’, however, does not necessarily prefigure an altogether different politico-economic order, as the power bloc can still resort to a wide range of instruments, political and economic, international and domestic, to reconstitute its dominance. This is what has occurred in Egypt following the 2011 uprisings, and the next section shows how.

## CONTOURS OF NEOLIBERAL AUTHORITARIANISM IN EGYPT: BEYOND THIRD WAVE DEMOCRATISATION?

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, one of the most remarkable elements characterising Egypt’s political economy since 2011 is that economic policy-making has not moved away from the neoliberal trajectory pursued in the last two decades of Mubarak’s rule. This section shows how the critical IPE approach outlined above helps us make sense of this seeming contradiction, by looking more specifically at three historical periods, representing respectively the emergence and consolidation of neoliberal authoritarianism in Egypt, the radical challenge put to it by the 2011 revolution, and the ways in which it was shored up during the counterrevolution. This allows me to advance two substantive claims. First, neoliberal restructuring has been instrumental in the economic, political and social polarisation that makes democratisation along consensual lines prevalent in the third wave of democratic transitions extremely unlikely in contemporary Egypt. This is because neoliberal reforms substantially erode the foundations for both hegemony and the passive revolutionary techniques successfully employed in the past. Second, in addition to the pressures emerging out of the structural transformations engendered by globalisation, the international economic regime has been instrumental first in facilitating the emergence of

neoliberal authoritarianism, and then in aiding its reconstitution once the uprisings threatened its foundations.

### **Neoliberal Restructuring for Authoritarian Rule under Mubarak**

Roughly a decade after Sadat's *infitah* ('opening') reforms of the mid-1970s the Egyptian state was mired in a deep fiscal crisis. As in many other poorer countries following the 1979 Volcker shock, this created a significant imbalance of power in favour of international creditors, which demanded that Egypt entered a stand-by agreement with the IMF, signed in 1987 and signalling the start of the neoliberal transformation of the Egyptian economy. The centrality of the international economic regime in shaping Egypt's integration in the global economy becomes especially visible when compared with the controlled process of opening that occurred in East Asian countries, heralded as the living proof of the benefits of an export-led growth model. While this was undoubtedly the case, the conventional narrative neglected that the East Asian model was predicated on the state continuing to play a central role in economic policy-making, through the selective protection of strategic sectors and the ability to 'pick winners' that would receive incentives to aide their rise towards international competitiveness. The Washington Consensus, instead, appeared geared exactly towards dismantling these state capacities, forcing onto countries like Egypt not only the process of global economic integration, but also the modalities through which this would occur.

Through this combination of structural and agential pressures the neoliberal accumulation regime was introduced in Egypt. In the wake of another stand-by agreement with the IMF, between 1991 and 1992 the Egyptian parliament passed a privatisation law (Law 203 of 1991), a bill effectively relaunching the stock exchange (Law 95 of 1992) and a new tenancy law (Law 96 of 1992). Combined with moves towards capital account and trade liberalisation, and the reduction of public expenditures, these policies addressed most elements of the Washington Consensus's decalogue (Williamson 1989). As a result, by the end of the 1990s Egypt was widely portrayed as a success story of structural adjustment (Economist 1999). Largely affected by exogenous dynamics, and most notably by the ripple effects of the East Asian financial crisis, the impetus for reforms withered around the turn of the century, leading to a confrontation within the Egyptian power bloc between the state capitalist class, led by the army and in favour of a more gradualist approach to reform, and a rising transnational faction, technically representing private capital but in fact coalescing around Mubarak's son Gamal, which called for more sweeping reforms. As the latter faction took control of the ruling party, a new round of neoliberal reforms began in 2003, including a new wave of privatisations now also affecting sectors previously considered off-limits, including cement, oil refineries and banks (Richter 2006); a new central banking law, followed by three World Bank-sponsored financial sector reforms programmes, accelerating the financialisation of the Egyptian economy (Roccu 2013); a regressive reform of the tax code (Soliman 2011); and increasing deregulation of labour markets (Hanieh 2013). Once more, IEOs were especially

appreciative of these efforts, to the point that in four years out of the five in the 2005–09 period Egypt was included among the top reformers in the World Bank's *Doing Business Report*, topping the charts in 2008.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond the undoubtedly welcome support of the international economic regime, what did these reforms mean for the political regime? One can clearly see a reconfiguration of authoritarian state power (De Smet 2016), which allowed not only the neoliberal restructuring of the Egyptian economy, but also the transformation in the economic and political relations of force within the power bloc. Concerning the form of the political regime, IEOs, TNCs and main donors have focused on easier access to the Egyptian market, predictability in terms of its management and supervision, and prospective profitability of their investments and their impact on growth. None of these elements, usually part of the 'good governance' agenda, is incompatible with authoritarianism. For local elites, transnational economic integration, occurring especially along financial channels, provided an escape route for their investments should the economic situation in Egypt deteriorate rapidly. Hence, from their perspective, too, the preservation of the neoliberal accumulation regime was enough, and indeed preferable to full-fledged democratisation, which might have meant greater redistribution because of the inclusion of poorer social groups in the political system.

Challenges to the stability of authoritarian rule were thus more likely to come from two different directions, pointing towards the fault lines that neoliberal reforms produced respectively within the power bloc and in broader society. On the one hand, as mentioned above, the second wave of reforms especially antagonised the traditionally more gradualist state capitalist fraction of the ruling bloc, interested not as much in opposing neoliberal restructuring as in guiding it with a view to accruing a larger share of its spoils (Abul-Magd 2016). On the other hand, Egypt is also victim of the nature of neoliberalism as an enabler and deepener of inequality, which has increased constantly since the early 1990s, and at an accelerated pace since 2004 (Amin 2011), leading a significant share of the working-age population into the informal labour market (Wahba 2009). Such trends contributed to increasing levels of discontent in the broader population, compounded by rising expectations deriving partly from the cultural effects of globalisation and partly from relational comparisons, which showed how neoliberal restructuring was working almost exclusively to the benefit of a tiny section of the Egyptian population, which usually came from within the power bloc, actually finding its embodiment, and a very convenient lightning rod, in the person of Gamal Mubarak.

Hence, throughout the near quarter-century between 1987 and 2011 the interaction between actors stemming from the international economic regime and local elites produced a substantial transformation of the Egyptian economy, successfully establishing a neoliberal accumulation regime. Whereas reforms were handled so as to minimise their potentially disruptive impact, they instead engendered increasing

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<sup>2</sup> See the *Doing Business* website: <http://www.doingbusiness.org/Reforms/> (accessed May 2018).

socio-economic polarisation in Egyptian society, while simultaneously widening the rift within the power bloc. Integration in the global economy along neoliberal lines in Egypt thus embodied the social consequences of ‘intensified uneven development’, further enriching the wealthy and impoverishing middle and lower classes. Additionally, reforms had increasingly externalised the sources of economic growth, especially in the form of international aid and FDI. Despite all international praise, the Mubarak regime was increasingly dependent on outside support to maintain any semblance of hegemonic clout, but authoritarianism was most crucially more fragmented and fragile domestically than it had been the case since decolonisation.

### **The 2011 Revolution as Systemic Challenge**

The shift towards a neoliberal accumulation regime was thus key to creating the socio-economic terrain for the uprisings. It is no coincidence that the two countries that first experienced widespread popular uprisings were exactly those, Tunisia and Egypt, which had most lavishly been praised by key representatives of the international economic regime for their reform efforts (Mossallem 2015). If neoliberal restructuring was an underlying causal force, the shockwaves of the global financial, economic and food crises hitting Egypt from 2007 to 2010, themselves a result of neoliberalism on a larger scale, provided the contingent context triggering popular mobilisation throughout the Middle East.

The demands of the highly variegated revolutionary front in Egypt were very much concerned with the political economy as a whole, rather than confined to democracy as a system of political rule. This is partly because neoliberal restructuring effectively signifies the dismantling of the ‘populist authoritarian’ social pact (Hinnebusch 1985), which for several decades had at least guaranteed a *dimuqratiyyat al-khubz* (‘democracy of bread’), whereby the regime would ensure the provision of basic goods to the population at large in exchange for political subservience (Sadiki 2000). But it is also partly because of the influence, rapidly increasing since Sadat, of Islamic thought and principles, which facilitated the emergence of a holistic discourse fusing economic and political considerations into a moral economy approach (Tripp 2006).

This is not to claim that the revolution was entirely about socio-economic grievances, and in fact calls for democracy, freedom and the rule of law resonated across the squares and streets of Egypt. This is also a reflection of the plurality of voices within the revolutionary front, with its three main components revolving respectively around pro-democracy activism, labour struggles, and citizen-based protests, and each largely grounded in a specific social milieu (Abdelrahman 2014). The key organisation of the pro-democracy movement, *Kefaya* (‘Enough’), was for instance ‘a decidedly middle-class movement with no mass base beyond its narrow support among urban, middle-class professionals, intellectuals and students’ (Abdelrahman 2014: 39). Partly because of this, ‘pro-democracy activists were seen, and saw themselves, as striving solely for political liberties and rights’ (Abdelrahman 2014: 117), leading to an attempt to define a ‘hierarchy of struggles’ that in turn made cooperation across the broader revolutionary front much harder (Abdelrahman 2012).

This fissure within the revolutionary front created the possibility for displacing attention entirely towards the more directly political demands of the revolutionary front, and hence towards tackling corruption and cronyism, ending human rights abuses, and dismantling the Mubarak regime (Abdelrahman 2014). Insofar as this resonated with the liberal template of democracy as polyarchy (Dahl 1989), such a redirection provided a clear focal point around which key actors of the international economic regime could effectively proclaim their support for democratisation in Egypt not as much *against* but *through* the promotion of an even deeper process of neoliberal restructuring. From this perspective ‘the problem resided not in neoliberalism as a model but in a *corrupted implementation* of neoliberalism’ (Joya 2017: 348). This is perhaps nowhere clearer than in the EU’s approach, which shifted from the pursuit of a Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area to that of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (European Commission 2011), which even verbally encapsulates the EU’s aim of deepening and broadening the move towards free trade at the heart of its economic reform promotion activities since the 1990s.

The similar orientation of the World Bank and other main donor agencies contributed to the fragmentation of subaltern forces, and chimed perfectly with the efforts on the part of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), nominally in charge of steering the transition towards democracy, to defuse radical pressures from below. The army aimed to lay the blame for the dire socio-economic situation at the door of the transnationally oriented fraction of Egyptian private capital, while simultaneously compressing the subaltern demands into a process of limited political transformation from above. In sum, the ‘active’ revolution was to be transformed into a passive one. The marginalisation of Gamal Mubarak and his clique needed not entail any significant distancing from neoliberal templates, and fundamental economic policy continuity was one of the conditions on which the political party emerging out of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), could access state power. Indeed, much of the year in which Mohamed Morsi was president was spent towards seeking an accommodation with the institutions of the so-called ‘deep state’ (Teti & Gervasio 2013). Pre-existing mechanisms of divide-and-rule, abundantly used under Mubarak, were now deployed towards fragmenting the revolutionary front further in two directions, in ways that became blatantly apparent in the confrontation between the Muslim Brotherhood and the upper echelons of the army, leading to the 30 June 2013 popular demonstration that provided legitimisation for Morsi’s removal from power three days later. First, the secular–religious and the Sunni Muslim–Coptic Christian divides were mobilised with the aim of isolating the FJP, increasingly perceived, not without reason, as committed to the *Ikhwanisation* (i.e. the Brotherhood-isation) of Egyptian society. Second, and most crucial if one is to understand how the largest demonstration in modern Egyptian history was swiftly followed by mass demobilisation, the army was extremely successful in pitting sections of the middle class chiefly concerned with restoring a modicum of political and social stability after two years of ‘turmoil’ against the more militant wings of the revolutionary movement. The *hizb al-kanaba* (the ‘Couch Party’) was then presented as the Egyptian manifestation of the ‘silent majority’ espousing a common sense that

prioritised stability over the possible disruptions that substantive democratisation demanded (Ketchley 2014). These moves within Egypt were necessary, but perhaps in themselves not sufficient, for counterrevolution to succeed.

### **Counterrevolution and Neoliberal Authoritarianism under New Conditions**

If the domestic conditions for popular demobilisation had been established, the new authoritarian regime was still sorely in need of material and symbolic support to avoid presenting itself as exclusively repressive. The international economic regime, although in this instance dominated by different actors, was crucial to providing both. By the end of 2013 only, the new transitional government had received aid amounting to \$17 billion from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait (Zaazaa 2013). The iron fist of repression, most visible in the Rab'a al 'Adawiya massacre claiming at least 1,000 lives (Human Rights Watch 2014), met very little overt international opposition. The Sharm el-Sheikh development conference in March 2015, attracting the IMF's General Director Christine Lagarde, the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, a host of prime ministers and former prime ministers, and representatives of some of the largest TNCs, demonstrated that the international community, and even more directly the international economic regime, were now actively supporting Sisi's regime (Shenker 2016). However, despite the international economic regime taking on again its position as prop to the regime, a return to the *status quo ante* was not feasible anymore, as conditions had fundamentally changed both within and outside Egypt.

Regarding Egypt's role and position within the global political economy, one cannot but notice that the overall continuity in neoliberal policies has been accompanied by a reorientation towards the Gulf, and more specifically towards Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with the latter effectively brokering a new IMF-sponsored package that ushered in a new wave of austerity measures (Ismail 2016). Hence, while the US and the EU are much less directly involved in Egypt's relations with the international economic regime, neoliberal restructuring continues apace, and on lines that are arguably even more inimical to democratisation than in the past. Hence, one must avoid assuming that transnational forces are not rooted in specific social formations, even if their activities span increasingly large portions of the globe. Roots matter, and especially so when located in those Gulf countries that come closer to the fusion of state and economic power. If transnational capital coming from, say, Canada or Germany is not particularly concerned with democratic rule in recipient countries, then one can imagine that the reorientation towards the Gulf as the main FDI source means that foreign economic pressures towards democratisation are now exceedingly unlikely, as no autocracy supports democracy, especially in a region sharing cultural and linguistic ties and coming from a very recent past of large-scale popular mobilisation.

Conditions have clearly changed also within Egypt. At the elite level, significant sections of large private capital marginalised in the wake of the 2011 uprisings have been gradually reintegrated within the reconstituted power bloc, although in a clearly



subordinate position, re-establishing the Sadat era's subordination of large domestic capital to the army (Ayubi 1995). In society at large, the astounding if temporary success of the 2011 uprisings has emboldened the population, demonstrating that regimes can be overthrown by mass popular action. As a result, much higher levels of repression have proved necessary to consolidate the regime. Even in this regard the international community have supported this rhetoric (Shenker 2016: 448), presenting Sisi as the best guarantee for the political stability needed to bring back foreign investments into Egypt and kickstart its ailing economy. Starting from this discursive continuity, international regimes have thus been key to the perpetuation and deepening of the neoliberal accumulation regime.

But what does this mean for the prospects of political regime change? Here, irrespective of the strand of democratisation theory that one picks, Egypt appears to lack the social forces necessary to undertake a 'pacted transition'. If we follow the modernisation-inspired approach, then the middle class supposed to push for democracy has been weakened by neoliberal restructuring, especially if one considers that the middle class in post-colonial Egypt has very much been a creature of the state (Hinnebusch 1985). If we take the elite-centric 'transitology' approach, then elites in Egypt are either structurally wedded to authoritarian rule or prioritise the accumulation regime above a democracy that might result in greater redistribution. Finally, if one focuses on the democratising role of organised labour, highlighted by the historical sociology tradition, then the Egyptian working class has been crippled by intensified repression, its own organisational limitations and the successful co-optation of some of its leaders by the Sisi regime (Allinson 2015).

Hence, the economic reforms needed for establishing a neoliberal accumulation regime and strongly supported by the international economic regime have fundamentally altered the social fabric of Egyptian society. If one conceives of neoliberalism as an 'inequality machine', it becomes possible to grasp how nearly three decades of neoliberal reforms have effectively resulted in the unravelling of the preconditions not only for hegemony within the Egyptian social formation, but also for a passive revolution from above that formally democratises Egypt without fundamentally challenging the existing prerogatives of the politico-economic power bloc.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has hopefully shown that a critical IPE approach inspired by Gramsci and neo-Gramscian theory not only sheds light on Egypt's current predicament between revolution and counterrevolution, but also holds broader implications. Three of them have emerged from the discussion of the Egyptian case, and further research might want to explore them in different contexts. First, as they promoted the neoliberal restructuring of the economy, various components of the international economic regime have been central to the survival and reconfiguration of authoritarianism in Egypt. This is not only because of their preference, partly dictated by their specific mandate, for a specific type of economic reform over political transformation, but

also because the very reforms promoted have had a damaging impact on Egypt's socio-economic fabric. That this basic finding is either unacknowledged or deliberately ignored is demonstrated by the fact that IEOs, main donors and international investors alike have been asking for more of the same reforms despite Egypt having faced a mass uprising to the chant of 'bread, freedom, social justice'. In linking international economic regime, accumulation regimes and political regimes, this chapter is a first contribution to bridging these areas of scholarly research that have hitherto largely remained *incommunicado*.

Second, if the contemporary Egyptian regime is a form of neoliberal authoritarianism, it is the former element that has provided the underlying continuity throughout the political vagaries that have preceded and especially followed the 2011 revolution. This truly represented an existential threat to authoritarian rule, suggesting that the survival of authoritarianism in Egypt has clearly not taken the form of a linear reconfiguration from above, and is best understood once inserted within the context of the socio-economic consequences of integration in the global economy on neoliberal terms. In this regard, this piece contributes to the literature on authoritarian neoliberalism. If this maintains that in the more powerful countries neoliberalism survives contestation from below by becoming more authoritarian, this chapter shows that the survival of authoritarianism in Egypt has been abetted in the wake of a renewed commitment to neoliberalism.

Third, throwing into relief the role of agency within the structural transformations usually identified with globalisation, this chapter also contributes more generally to further critical IR and IPE in an age that is likely to be global (unlike the Cold War era) and contentious (unlike the age of globalisation until the global financial crisis) at once. In this respect, the different polarities that characterise Gramsci's thought, between structure and agency, transnational and local dynamics, economic and political processes, provides helpful orientation devices to navigate the transformations of the global order as well as of its constituent parts.

Returning to Egypt and its prospects for democratic transition, this chapter has provided a sobering perspective, although one that is also potentially rife with productive developments. Given the local, international, transnational and global transformations brought about by neoliberal globalisation, democratisation in Egypt is much more likely to take a conflictual rather than consensual form, and to be substantive it necessitates a decisive move away from neoliberalism, and possibly even capitalism altogether. If the scale of the endeavour were not enough, the material presented here abundantly shows that the international economic regime will function as a brake against, rather than an enabler of, these transformations. Nevertheless, the ways in which subaltern agency has taken on the traditional power bloc during the 2011 revolution, and the struggle that ensued, have cracked open the contradictions of the neoliberal authoritarian order in Egypt, thereby foreshadowing possible futures that despite the ongoing repression are likely to drive the struggle towards political and social transformation in Egypt.

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### 13. Emancipation in critical security studies: political economy, domination and the everyday

*João Nunes*

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It is now more than twenty years since critique became an important presence in the security studies literature. This occurred against the background of developments in the discipline of international relations, namely the post-positivist turn (Booth, Smith and Zalewski 1996) and the influence of critical theory as developed by the Frankfurt School (Hoffman 1987, Linklater 1990). Critical security studies (CSS) can be defined as a multifaceted aggregate of contributions and debates, which are underpinned by a thorough questioning of the conceptual, theoretical and methodological premises in the study of security. It incorporates meta-theoretical questioning as well, in the form of a reflection about the nature of reality and of knowledge about security. Importantly, CSS approaches the study of security as a normative endeavour, concerned with what things should be and not simply with describing them as they are.

CSS is the corollary of a tendency to see security research as a political phenomenon. Since its inception, CSS sought to go beyond previous ‘broadening’ and ‘deepening’ moves, which had positioned the study of security beyond its post-war statist and militarist focus (Buzan and Hansen 2009). It did so by reconsidering the concepts and methodologies traditionally used (Krause and Williams 1996). This was supplemented by an analysis of the politics behind the construction of security knowledge. Ideas about security were approached as political because the way we conceptualize security cannot be separated from our assumptions about how politics works or should work. Security understandings are not neutral and objective because they derive from interests and are shaped by contestation and struggle. CSS also set out to explore the impact of security understandings upon the political order, seeing knowledge as implicated in the legitimization of practice. In this context, CSS drew attention to how understandings and practices of security have implications upon how societies are organized – most notably, how the definition of what is threatening helps to shape the prioritization of policies and the framing of certain groups as ‘dangerous’. In sum, then, CSS can be described as an effort of ‘politicization’ of security (Fierke 2007).

Overall, CSS led to dramatic changes in the study of security. Its nature and scope has been the subject of many reflections (Krause and Williams 1997, c.a.s.e. collective 2006, Mutimer 2007, Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010, Brincat, Lima and Nunes 2012). These assessments conceive CSS as a ‘broad church’ around which different approaches converge and diverge, in more or less productive ways. Indeed,

various theoretical approaches have flourished under the umbrella of CSS. These include poststructuralism (Hansen 2006), feminism (Wibben 2011), securitization theory (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998), post-colonialism (Barkawi and Laffey 2006) and international political sociology (Bigo 2007).

This chapter deals with a specific approach within CSS, one that has drawn from the Marxist and Frankfurt School traditions to advance a critique of security with explicit emancipatory intentions. It begins by introducing the idea of ‘security as emancipation’ (SAE) and its take on the critique of security, showing how this approach conceives insecurity as the presence of constraints upon life and freedom. It then seeks to develop SAE in three ways. First, the chapter unpacks one of the key assumptions of SAE, the materiality of security, and connects this with political economy and class as important elements in security analysis. Second, the chapter makes the case for a shift towards the everyday political economy of security, with the goal of equipping SAE with tools to better engage with the concrete production of insecurity in day-to-day practice and interactions. Finally, the chapter reconsiders the way in which SAE deals with the question of power, arguing for the need to understand power as domination, or the systematic reproduction of subordination.

## THE IDEA OF ‘SECURITY AS EMANCIPATION’

One of the most distinctive critical takes on security is presented by the approach known as ‘security as emancipation’ (SAE). This approach was initially developed by Ken Booth and Richard Wyn Jones, two authors commonly identified with the ‘Welsh School’ (Smith 2005) or ‘Aberystwyth School’ (Wæver 2004) of security studies. Booth (2007, 110, 112) conceived security as the removal (or at least alleviation) of constraints upon the lives of individuals and groups; he argues that emancipation encompasses ‘lifting people as individuals and groups out of structural and contingent oppressions’ that ‘stop them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do, compatible with the freedom of others’. In his view, threats can range from ‘direct bodily violence from other humans (war), through structural political and economic forms of oppression (slavery), into more existential threats to identity (cultural imperialism)’ (Booth 1999, 49).

SAE approaches the pursuit of security as the process of opening up space in people’s lives so that they can make decisions and act in matters pertaining to their own lives. Individuals who are more secure are generally more able to reflect upon, and influence, the course of their lives – free from constraints like physical aggression, political persecution, poverty or ill health, as well as from the broader structures and relations that make these constraints possible. Security is thus connected with (context-specific) emancipatory politics. Pursuing security means pursuing emancipation, that is, tackling constraints that negatively impact upon life. For SAE, security and emancipation cannot be separated without losing their meaning. On the one hand, security requires emancipation: the achievement of lasting security necessitates the transformation of the structures and relations that are implicated in insecurity.



On the other hand, emancipation only makes sense when coupled with security. Emancipation is the process of achieving and exercising a degree of freedom from the structures and relations that curtail people's ability to shape the course of their lives. This freedom requires security, that is, predictability and control over one's surroundings.

For SAE, the remit of security includes not only actual threats, but also 'upstream' conditions leading to insecurities and 'downstream' capacities for dealing with them. This is similar to Jonathan Wolff's (2009) argument that wellbeing depends not only on present states, but also on the ability to secure future states. SAE is concerned, on the one hand, with the identification of existing vulnerabilities – that is, the propensity of individuals and groups to having their lives determined by constraints. Even though, to a certain degree, vulnerability is an intrinsic part of being human (after all, we are all susceptible to being injured and fall ill, and we will all eventually die), it may be considered a dimension of insecurity when it assumes a systematic character, that is, when certain individuals or groups, as a result of existing arrangements in society, are more prone to being constrained or suffer inordinate constraints (Goodin 1985, Mackenzie, Rogers and Dodds 2014).

SAE is also concerned with the capacity (or lack thereof) of individuals to bounce back and deal with situations of insecurity. This downstream element pertains to the existence of resources that can assist individuals in dealing with the latter. In this context, resilience – the ability of individuals to respond to constraints and readjust their life courses to the occurrence of insecurity – also becomes important.

For SAE, constraints are not simply external but also relate to subjective psychological states. Feeling and being secure requires certainty, that is, a set of stable expectations about what is likely to occur in the future – what some authors would term 'ontological security' (Mitzen 2006). In order to feel secure, individuals and groups rely upon a measure of predictability in their lives – which in turn cannot be separated from suitable conditions in society. Even though unexpected things happen, being able to reasonably expect that a given outcome will follow from certain circumstances is a fundamental condition of security. Being relatively assured about their surroundings allows individuals to make decisions and go about their lives without the constant fear of sudden disruption or even death.

In SAE, unpredictability is linked with lack of control. Chronically insecure individuals and groups normally have little control over their surroundings and little voice in decisions with a potentially harmful impact. They are inordinately affected by chains of events triggered by other actors' actions and choices. Sometimes these decisions are taken at a great spatial and temporal distance. Because their opinions and interests are seldom considered, they are frequently unable to foresee the impact of these decisions. Their powerlessness and lack of control are perpetuated by the uncertain situation in which they find themselves, and which forces them to devote their time, energy and resources to meeting the demands of survival.

SAE also links security with inequality. Inequality relates to a deep-seated discrepancy in the possession or access to different types of resources (economic, for example). It also relates to an imbalance in societal perceptions and self-understand-

ings (ideas of racial superiority, for instance), which may condition access to and use of resources. Whilst inequality relates to a set of relations already in place, disadvantage pertains to the likelihood that certain individuals and groups will find themselves in a position of inequality (the 'upstream' dimension). It also pertains to the possibilities for overcoming a situation of inequality or maintaining a more or less equal playing field (the 'downstream' dimension). Disadvantage very often translates as actual inequality, which in turn breeds further forms of disadvantage. Inequality and disadvantage may be seen as facets of insecurity because they place constraints upon the range of available options and opportunities – for example, by limiting access to material resources or by shaping self-expectations so that people accept unequal treatment as natural or normal. Inequality and disadvantage also leave individuals and groups in a position of greater vulnerability and lack of control over their surroundings.

## SAE AND ITS APPROACH TO CRITIQUE

SAE advances the critique of security by drawing upon three key ideas. The first is the commitment to taking the conditions of existence of 'real people in real places' (Wyn Jones 1996, 214) as a starting point. The ontological core of SAE is intertwined with its normative core, since its ideas about what exists cannot be separated from its ideas about what should be. SAE is simultaneously interested in charting the real conditions of existence and in helping to alleviate the constraints these conditions impose upon the lives of individuals. Even though SAE sees knowledge about security as a social product and process – deriving from political interests, reflecting existing opportunities and constraints, and oriented towards political goals – it nonetheless clings to the idea that there is a reality to be engaged with and in need of transformation.

This points towards a second idea in the SAE framework: it sees itself as a form of praxis committed to political change – specifically, the transformation of arrangements that are implicated in the production of insecurities. Here, SAE draws from Gramsci's view of Marxism as a 'philosophy of praxis' (Haug 2000) to reject the separation between theory and practice, and approach knowledge as directly connected with political struggles. According to SAE author Pinar Bilgin (2001, 280, 274), there is a 'constitutive relationship between theory and practice', insofar as 'all practice is informed by theory and theory itself is a form of practice'. Security understandings are involved in reproducing or, alternatively, transforming political arrangements. This is the standpoint from which the proponents of SAE conceive their own role as theorists and political actors simultaneously. In Booth's (2007: 198) words, security theorists:

whether they recognise it or not, have a direct relationship with the real world conditions of relative insecurity or security; their ideas can contribute to replicating or changing people's conditions of existence in specific situations.

SAE is committed to the transformation of political reality because it sees theory as political practice and places great emphasis on the political role of the theorist. The fundamental purpose of security theory is not just to describe reality. Instead, Booth (2005b, 10, emphasis in the original) has defended an approach to the study of security that ‘goes beyond problem-solving *within* the status quo and instead seeks to help engage with the problem *of* the status quo’. More than an analytical or intellectual endeavour, SAE sees itself as an intervention in the political world. Again in Booth’s (2005a, 268) words:

[c]ritical security theory is both a theoretical commitment and a political orientation. As a theoretical commitment it embraces a set of ideas engaging in a critical and permanent exploration of the ontology, epistemology and praxis of security ... As a political orientation it is informed by the aim of enhancing security through emancipatory politics.

For SAE, the critical effort should impact upon political actors’ perceptions and actions, to pave the way for a reconstruction of security along more open, inclusive and democratic lines. Critique strives to redress immediate insecurities and to work towards the long-term objective of a life less determined by unwanted and unnecessary constraints. This leads to a third key idea in this approach: the reconstructive agenda of emancipatory approaches is supported by a practical strategy for transformation. Booth (2007: 6) has advanced the term ‘emancipatory realism’ to denote the grounding of SAE upon the real condition of insecurity and, simultaneously, the wish to transform it. Emancipatory realism draws on immanent critique as an analytical method and a political strategy. Immanent critique was one of the stepping stones of Frankfurt School Critical Theory (Antonio 1981, Buchwalter 1991). For Max Horkheimer, philosophy should highlight contradictions and unlock potentialities in current arrangements. In his words, ‘philosophy confronts the existent, in its historical context, with the claim of its conceptual principles, in order to criticize the relation between the two and thus transcend them’ (Horkheimer 1972, 182). Immanent critique follows logically from the acknowledgment of the insecurities of individuals and groups, and plays into the normative and political agenda of SAE. This is because the immanent method is at once analytical and connected to political praxis: it ‘engages with the core commitments of particular discourses, ideologies or institutional arrangements on their own terms, in the process locating possibilities for radical change within a particular existing order’ (McDonald 2012, 60). The internal contradictions of predominant security arrangements, made visible by immanent critique, constitute fault-lines where alternative visions of security can be fostered. Immanent critique also entails the identification of transformative possibilities in the form of ideas and actors in particular contexts that have the potential to contribute to change.

Together, these three ideas – insecurity as the starting point, theory as praxis and immanent critique – constitute the approach to critique advanced by SAE. They reveal its take on critique as a double-movement. On the one hand, critique entails the deconstruction of predominant ideas and arrangements, identifying their assumptions

and (often problematic) consequences. By starting from the analysis of concrete insecurities, SAE adds further layers in which the political construction of security can be scrutinized – thus allowing for a better understanding of the meanings attached to security in particular historical and social contexts, and to the actual practice of security and insecurity. On the other hand, and on the basis of the deconstructive move, critique entails the reconstruction of ideas and practices of security, or the identification of existing transformative potential (in the form of ideas or social actors). The envisaged transformation is emancipatory, that is, it seeks to open space for people to reflect and act in matters pertaining to their own lives. In SAE, immanent critique is a stepping-stone to practical transformative politics by allowing for judgements to be made in relation to existing understandings and practices of security, in light of how they respond to the needs of the most vulnerable. Simultaneously, the identification of contradictions and potentialities offers concrete steps for change. SAE upholds an idea of critique as the site where security is questioned but also transformed.

## MATERIALITY AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SECURITY

The preponderance given by SAE to an engagement with the concrete insecurities of ‘real people in real places’ places the question of the body and of materiality at centre-stage. SAE is inspired by Marxism in seeing embodied life as the foundation of analysis. The centrality of embodied life draws from Marx’s critique of idealist philosophy, and his privileging of lived existence as the basis for an understanding of human nature. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx (2000 [1932], 69) spoke of ‘man’ [sic] as a ‘natural, corporeal sensuous objective being’ and a ‘suffering, conditioned and limited creature’. Along similar lines, SAE espouses that individuals should be the ‘primordial’ referent of security theory. Importantly, for SAE the individual is not an abstract entity, but rather material. As Wyn Jones (2005, 227) put it, ‘the starting point for critical theory should not be some abstracted notion of emancipation and human potential but rather the corporeal, material existence and experiences of individual human beings’. The engagement with security/insecurity as material phenomena is key to understanding the position of SAE in relation to other critical approaches to security. It distances SAE from other approaches more focused on discourse, like securitization theory and poststructuralism, whilst bringing it closer to other theories privileging the bodily dimension, like feminism.

For SAE, materiality relates first and foremost to concrete insecurities as they are embodied, that is, experienced ‘in the flesh’ by individuals. Nonetheless, this is not a naïve account of materiality. Experiences are embedded in social structures and relations, since individuals are ‘sensuous beings’ in Marx’s sense and therefore embedded in a particular setting. Moreover, as mentioned above SAE follows the Frankfurt School in conceiving knowledge as a social product and process. Whilst SAE accepts that material forces play an important role in determining security

outcomes, it is not possible to see the materiality of security outside its interconnection with an ideational dimension. Indeed, the centrality of the material in SAE can be understood against the background of Marx's historical materialism. In this context, the work of Eric Herring sits very close to that of Booth. Herring (2010, 154) developed a historical materialist approach to the study of security which sees 'material economic forces as playing a powerful role in the emergence of social ideas and in generating social change'. Herring's historical materialist approach to security accepts that there is a two-way process between materiality and the way in which material factors are framed through social interaction. However, this approach clings to the notion that ideas are ultimately shaped by existing material forces in society – and particularly economic arrangements in the form of class conflicts – and by the configuration of power relations therein.

SAE translates historical materialism into the study of security by emphasizing the importance of the underlying structures that impact upon the production of insecurity. SAE conceives insecurity as much more than a matter of military threats or aggression. As argued above, people are insecure when they are unable to reflect about and influence the course of their own lives because of constraints like poverty, inequality or lack of education. Insecurity also occurs when existing support networks – like sanitation infrastructures, public health systems or other social services – are inadequate or non-existent, thus rendering people unable to cope with and 'bounce back'. Insecurity can even emerge because of existing rules and norms, when these have (intended or unintended) discriminatory or harmful effects. For SAE, then, insecurity is embodied in multiple ways beyond the physical harm (or threat of harm) done to bodies. It pertains to situations of uncertainty, unpredictability, vulnerability and outright harm, both physical and psychological.

As a Marxist approach, SAE traces the configuration of vulnerabilities and forms of harm to existing socio-economic arrangements in society. SAE is concerned with the interconnections between politics and the economy, and the way in which these linkages have a decisive influence upon the life prospects of real people in real places, and hence upon the need for emancipatory politics. Importantly, unpacking these connections must be done at international level, given the cross-border reach of economic forces under global capitalism. Roger Tooze (2005) has been one of the authors engaging with international political economy in the context of an emancipatory approach to security. He sees political economy as a largely missing element in the analysis of the security of individuals and communities – a particularly important omission given the impact of international economic forces upon the world's population. For Tooze, politics and the economy are linked in perverse ways, with detrimental effects for the security and wellbeing of individuals. He speaks of the 'economization of both material and ideational life', by which he means the colonization of all aspects of people's social, political and personal lives by 'the values and language of economy' (Tooze 2005, 143). Tooze's diagnosis echoes the concerns of Frankfurt School authors, namely Max Horkheimer and Jürgen Habermas, who wrote about the encroachment of 'technical rationality' upon an ever-increasing number of dimensions of life (Horkheimer 1974 [1947], Habermas 1987). For these authors,

the rise of technical rationality related to the growth of alienation and unfreedom in capitalist societies. Tooze goes along these lines when he argues that capitalist economic arrangements have restricted self-determination and thus impacted upon the security of communities. For him, 'movement toward a real security based in human emancipation' requires that the relationship between the economy and politics is reconsidered beyond the 'hegemony of economism' (Tooze 2005, 155). For SAE, achieving security entails not just the emancipation of individuals from harmful and vulnerability-producing socio-economic arrangements, but also the reformulation of broader structures and relations in society, so that they privilege human freedom and not the interests of corporate and market forces.

Peter Wilkin (1999) also engaged with the economic dimension of security by focusing on class. For Wilkin, class conflict is an important factor to consider in emancipatory security analysis because it is intrinsically tied with geopolitics. He writes:

inequality of social power between classes manifests itself in the myriad forms of exploitation, subordination, and unequal access to resources that help to generate conflict within and between states and societies (Wilkin 1999, 31).

SAE builds upon this insight to argue that exploitation and inequality are security threats in and of themselves. Going beyond the nation-state as a referent of security, this approach maintains that they should be considered threats not simply because they may lead to societal instability or conflict between states. If we approach individuals as primary referents, as SAE does, unequal class relations can be seen as threats because they present obstacles to the free course of life of individuals. Wilkin (1999, 32) recognizes this by conceiving class broadly as 'an economic and social category of structural position and lived experience'. For him, people's lives and experiences are 'shaped by their differential access to the resources they need' (Wilkin 1999, 35). Class position has a bearing upon the web of vulnerabilities and forms of harm impacting individuals and communities, and upon the availability of support networks to prevent or respond to harm. Class is an important factor in the production of individual insecurity.

Political economy is therefore a crucial dimension for SAE. It is also one of the dimensions of this approach that has been more frequently overlooked, not only by external observers but even by its own proponents. Important aspects of political economy have been left under-theorized, and the result is an insufficient engagement with the material and bodily dimensions of security – and hence with concrete conditions of insecurity demanding emancipatory politics. The next section seeks to provide SAE with theoretical tools to conceive materiality in a more nuanced way.

## EVERYDAY INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY AND ITS EMANCIPATORY POTENTIAL

Despite its reliance upon the materiality of security, SAE has so far provided a somewhat rigid and superficial account of it. Overall, the material is conceived as a layer of reality that, even though it cannot be known in an objective way, nonetheless serves as an empirical reference point for analysis and normative judgement. In other words, the material is ultimately seen as something that exists ‘out there’, regardless of knowledge claims that are made about it, and that as a result justifies the adoption of a critical and emancipatory standpoint towards it. There is scope for supplementing this view with a more sustained engagement with the politics of materiality. The analytical and normative framework of SAE can benefit from seeing the material not as a fixed category, but rather as the result of processes of materialization occurring against the background of socio-economic structures.

This shift assumes a radically-different approach to materiality than the one so far presented by SAE. Authors like Jane Bennett (2010), Judith Butler (1993) and Elaine Scarry (1985) have sought to unpack materiality, arguing that things and bodies need to be understood politically. Butler, for example, maintains that gender is not an essential biological characteristic of the body but rather an organizing principle. In her words, gender ‘does not describe a prior materiality, but produces and regulates the intelligibility of the materiality of bodies’ (Butler 1992, 17). For Butler, bodies are always embedded within culturally and historically specific processes of materialization. Emancipatory accounts in the feminist security literature (Tickner 1995, Lee-Koo 2007, Basu 2011) have shown how these insights can be fruitful when considering insecurity. Starting from the analysis of the gendered practices that place certain individuals and groups in situations of vulnerability, feminist approaches have unpacked situations of insecurity by highlighting some of the social relations, political structures and institutional settings that produce and perpetuate it. Unpacking the materiality of security enables a more nuanced view of the insecurities that justify emancipation, as well as of their underlying socio-economic structures and relations.

SAE also has much to gain from engaging with developments in the field of international political economy that have considered everyday processes of materialization. SAE has so far engaged in an insufficient way with the everyday performance of the material – that is, with the ways in which insecurities are experienced and reproduced through routine and concrete practices, and thus enveloped with meanings that impact upon how the material is formed and perceived. Everyday international political economy (EIPE) can provide relevant insights to the analytical and normative framework of SAE by enabling this approach to engage more thoroughly with the concrete practices through which insecurity is produced. The EIPE literature takes further the feminist insight that the personal is political and international. It has shown how global economic processes rely upon individual consumption patterns and rhythms, as well as the daily activities of traditionally neglected actors such as sweatshop workers, cleaners and sex workers (Langley 2008, Cross 2010,

Elias 2013, Elias and Roberts 2016). Scrutinizing how insecurity emerges entails an examination of everyday experiences at the individual level, but also requires one to consider how experiences are shaped and structured globally. EIKE sees everyday practices as sites where global arrangements are embodied and reproduced. It starts from the multifaceted nature of the global, in particular the mutual implication of the global and the everyday. This opens the way for an investigation of how insecurities are produced in the context of global political and economic arrangements shaped by capitalism. EIKE is a useful resource for the critical analysis of insecurities insofar as it enables concrete experiences to be considered closely at the micro-level, and against the background of macro-level economic and political structures.

The concept of 'the everyday' is important for SAE in that it captures the two-way relation between the global and the local, providing a richer picture of the production of insecurity. It allows us to see how global forces manifest themselves locally in impediments to individual decision and action, and how the global is reproduced, and can be questioned and changed, through concrete emancipatory practice. The everyday dovetails with SAE in that it is also based upon Marxist materialism, which placed working relations and day-to-day human interactions at centre-stage. For Marxists, everyday life is more than just the aggregate of routine or trivial activities pertaining to work, family life and leisure. It reveals in concrete ways the exploitation inherent to capitalism, namely the atomization of relations, commodification, bureaucratization, labour specialization, urbanization and separation of work from leisure. According to Henri Lefebvre ((2002 [1961]), everyday life is not inconsequential because it plays a fundamental role in the reproduction of capitalist relations. Alienation under capitalism permeates society and reaches into its most ordinary aspects. It encompasses the economic, social, political and ideological spheres and thus shapes people's economic opportunities, social networks, relations with family and with authorities, beliefs, habits and compulsions. Lefebvre argues that to understand everyday life one needs to understand how society is structured and organized, because the everyday is a level of social practice within a broader context of structures and relations that are determined by capitalism. At the same time, an understanding of the everyday is essential when coming to terms with capitalism itself. As Lefebvre (2002 [1961], 98, emphasis removed) put it, '[t]here can be no knowledge of society (as a whole) without critical knowledge of everyday life in its position ... at the heart of this society and its history'.

Importantly for SAE, the everyday is not only the terrain of alienation but also the place where human needs can be fulfilled and potentialities realized. By revealing in its 'messiness' the multiple dimensions of human existence, namely the 'poetic, irrational, corporeal, ethical and affective' (Gardiner 2000, 19), the everyday can become a privileged site for transforming the status quo. Given the pervasiveness of alienation in the everyday, critique can potentially have far-reaching effects by allowing for emancipatory efforts to reach individual life. Here, Lefebvre (1991 [1958], 226) provides a corollary to Marx's famous phrase by arguing that the goal of philosophers should be not simply to interpret the world but also 'the transformation of life in its smallest, most everyday detail'. This emancipatory potential is supported



by the possibilities for agency that an everyday approach enables. Instead of passive recipients or victims of power, EIPE conceives actors as full-blown agents, able to reflect about their situation and devise strategies to respond to their surroundings. As John Hobson and Leonard Seabrooke (2008, 18) recognize, ‘by selecting new behavioural conventions that meet with their welfare-enhancing interests (not just economic, but also social well-being)’, everyday actors can help to bring about a change in norms and in the broader (local, national and even global) context. EIPE can thus provide a lens with which to recognize and analyse practices of resistance. These may not only be strategic and purposeful – that is, when actors purposefully set out to challenge the status quo in their everyday lives – but also unconscious and even unintended, when subversion occurs as a by-product or side-effect of everyday life under capitalism.

In sum, EIPE opens the way for a more sophisticated understanding of how insecurities emerge. Moreover, it provides an entry-point to immanent critique, by allowing for a consideration of agency and the potential of everyday practices of resistance. By engaging with issues of agency and resistance, the EIPE lens reveals the production of insecurity as a terrain traversed by complex power relations. It thus invites SAE to revisit its understanding of power.

## INSECURITY AS DOMINATION

Any critical engagement with security deals with power in one way or another – be it the coercive power inherent in many security practices, or the more subtle and insidious forms of power present in discourse. For emancipatory approaches, the question of power is even more important since one is dealing with the ways in which the free course of life is constrained, and with the possibilities for resisting or transforming the status quo. EIPE enjoins SAE to unpack the everyday, concrete power relations through which individuals are made insecure. However, given their concrete and routine character, power relations cannot be approached simply as something emanating in a ‘top-down’ manner from dominant actors. Rather, insecurity is produced also via ‘horizontal’ power relations in society. This calls for an approach to power that is more nuanced than the one currently presented by the SAE literature.

SAE has traditionally conceived power as the shaping of action. Because of the presence of power and the constraints it creates or imposes, people are prevented from doing what they would otherwise wish to do. In this sense, power consists in the quality or property of an actor, which is wielded with the objective of shaping the actions of others by coercion or threat, by the delimitation of the field of acceptable and desirable action, and by foreclosing alternatives. This view of power is present in the work of Steven Lukes (2005), for whom power is not just as an overt intention leading to certain decisions or actions on the part of those affected, but also operates by investing intentions with an aura of necessity or desirability, thus preventing dissent. In his words, power is conceived as ‘the ability to constrain the choices of

others, coercing them or securing their compliance, by impeding them from living as their own nature and judgment dictate' (Lukes 2005, 85).

Lukes's view dovetails with existing accounts of SAE insofar as it is reliant upon the assumption that power works primarily via the imposition of constraints upon people's lives. The picture is, however, more complex than this. Michel Foucault and other authors working with the governmentality approach have advanced the idea of power as a productive force involved in the constitution of subjects (Gordon 1991, Dean 1999). For these scholars, power should not be seen merely as a question of prohibition or repression because it can also denote the fostering of behaviours, tastes and dispositions. Instead of defining subjects as mere recipients or targets of power – that is, as pre-given entities that are constrained in the free course of their lives – this view argues that subjects are also constituted, in their capacities and self-understandings, through power relations. As Foucault (1994 [1976], 36) has put it:

[t]he individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus ... on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects.

According to this view, power does not simply emanate in a 'top-down' manner from the government or other authorities. Instead, power is something that circulates in society and is present in everyday interactions. Hospitals, schools, churches or civil society organizations are nodes in a comprehensive network of power, as health workers, teachers, priests and community leaders wield power in ways that go beyond coercion and constraint. Instead, power seeps through routine, day-to-day activity, helping to shape identities and expectations and thereby determining the limits of what is seen as possible and desirable.

The Foucaultian view of power, by showing that power relations are intermeshed in everyday interaction in a 'biopolitics' (Foucault 2008 [2004]) or politics of life, dovetails with EIPE and its vision of ordinary practices holding a wider political significance. Nonetheless, it is possible to go forward in identifying the underlying socio-economic background against which power relations occur. Considering this background is essential for grasping the hierarchical element that permeates these relations, that is, the ways in which they are often skewed towards certain outcomes and thus result in the reproduction of unequal life conditions and insecurity. The notion of domination is helpful for grasping this context (Miller 1987, Lovett 2010, Young 2011 [1990]). Domination can be defined as the systematic production of the privilege of some groups at the expense of others via the exercise of arbitrary influence, or as a result of existing rules in society. Decisions are made or effects are produced to the benefit of certain groups, without the constraint of effective rules or within a legal and institutional framework that fails to consider and protect the well-being of all affected parties. Dominated groups are thus vulnerable to decisions and outcomes with a high impact upon their lives, and which they cannot control or even

predict. They are placed in a position of subordination and vulnerability – in short, they are rendered insecure. This does not necessarily entail the existence of a binary relationship between a dominated group and a consciously dominating one. As Jonathan Hearn (2008) has noted, strategic control is one possible facet of domination, which can also occur via the sedimentation of advantageous positions, through (unintended) malign influence or by the sheer negligence of privileged groups or of those in positions of responsibility.

Viewing power as domination is not the same as conceiving it as a repressive or coercive force. Rather, the notion of domination incorporates the idea of power as shaping of action (as in Lukes) and the view of power as the constitution of subjects (as in Foucault). Domination sheds light upon the structural conditions that enable certain courses of action whilst constraining others, and that promote certain identities as possible and desirable – in the context of an unequal playing field. This enhances our understanding of the shaping of action by allowing us to consider the ways in which certain groups are made subordinate and thus prevented from deciding and acting in matters pertaining to their own lives.

SAE has the potential to accommodate this multifaceted view of power, combining the determination of action (by coercion or persuasion), the production of identity/subjectivity, and the systematic production of subordination. The use of domination as a lens allows for a detailed investigation of insecurity, one that brings together subjective experiences of insecurity, the social interactions through which these experiences are expressed and mediated, and their underlying material structures. On the one hand, making sense of insecurity requires an analysis of how socio-economic structures, at both global and national level, impact upon everyday experiences of insecurity by functioning as enabling or constraining conditions. On the other hand, the socio-economic structures leading to insecurity are themselves reproduced through the everyday practices and interactions of agents. This means that these structures can be challenged and even transformed by emancipatory struggle.

In sum, domination enables a rich and nuanced account of the emergence of insecurities against the background of the everyday reproduction of subordination. The dominated can be considered insecure because their life-chances are curtailed as they are systematically exposed to vulnerability, rendered unable to predict or exercise enough control over their lives, and placed in positions of disadvantage and inequality. Domination enables SAE to present a clearer picture of what one is to be emancipated from, that is, of what the existing constraints in society are that demand emancipatory struggles. Domination also opens the door for exploring possibilities for overcoming insecurity. It is among dominated groups that one will find transformative potential in the form of ideas and everyday strategies of resistance. Domination is never totalizing and definitive: it is possible to identify contradictions in existing arrangements, fault-lines and weaknesses in the status quo where emancipatory interventions can take place. The concept of power as domination thus helps SAE deliver on its own objectives. Thus equipped, SAE can reconcile the Marxist concern with the material dimension of security in the form of socio-economic struc-

tures, the focus on the everyday reproduction of these structures and the Frankfurt School commitment to their immanent critique.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a reading of SAE, an approach to security that has advanced the critical project by presenting its objectives as simultaneously deconstructive (to question predominant ideas and practices of security) and reconstructive (to identify and nurture potential for transformation along emancipatory lines). SAE sees security as underpinned by socio-economic macro-structures that are reproduced in everyday life. These structures are, in turn, interconnected with power relations traversing society, not just by 'top-down' imposition but also through capillary interactions between several institutions, groups and actors. Together, these structures and relations constitute constraints upon the ability of individuals to reflect, decide and act in decisive ways to fundamentally determine the course of their lives. They constitute impediments to the realization of human potential. Emancipation seeks to alleviate or eliminate these constraints, using immanent critique as its preferred strategy. Immanent critique consists of the identification of gaps, inconsistencies and contradictions in dominant arrangements, as well as of existing transformative resources (namely ideas and actors) that can be fostered and supported to unleash emancipatory change.

The chapter sought to advance SAE in three ways. It did so, first, by clarifying the relationship between this approach and Marxist political economy. SAE sees security as having a material core, in the sense that the ultimate referent of security theory is the embodied individual, one that is subject to economic forces leading to systematic vulnerability, unpredictability and inequality – which can be conceived as constraints upon freedom and the realization of human potential. SAE is Marxist also by subscribing to the idea that class is an important element in security analysis, in that many insecurities can be identified and explained by considering class divisions. Class conflicts are also an important site where emancipatory struggles, aiming for more security, can be identified. Second, the chapter sought to advance SAE by supplementing its political economy outlook with a focus on the everyday. If Marxist political economy is a crucial element for understanding SAE, everyday political economy is the 'missing link' between global socio-economic structures facilitating insecurity and the performance and reproduction of concrete insecurities through the day-to-day micro-practices and interactions of individuals in context. Incorporating everyday political economy into the SAE framework is an important way forward for realizing its Marxist ethos. Finally, the chapter contributed to SAE by providing a reconceptualization of power as domination, that is, the systematic subordination of some individuals and groups and their exposure to inordinate constraints, which threaten survival and prevent them from pursuing their own views of the good life.

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## 14. Slow violence, precarity and the overheating of neoliberal consensus<sup>1</sup>

*Shomik Chakrabarti*

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In his book, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Anthony Giddens (1990, 92) outlines the concept of ontological security and its utility within a progressively modernizing society. Giddens described ontological security as “the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of surrounding social and material environments of action”. Further, ontological security may be summarized as the general senses of trust in one’s experiences as being affirmative and valuable. Giddens probes into the volatile nature of this security with the onset of modern globalization, posing the applicable question of why ontological insecurity is not more widespread given the myriad of potential existential threats that exist and become further exacerbated within a globalized society (1990, 94). These insights into ontological security and insecurity retain a persistent saliency over 25 years later under the ambience of deepening economic and structural inequalities around the world. Ontological insecurity, it would seem, has sustained a level of acceptance within the dogma of globalized neoliberalism—the macrolevel system has been obfuscated to the point where it is rendered invisible. Accepting Giddens’ premise of an increasingly volatile world due to the forces of globalization, we might take the view that these frictions, if followed to their logical conclusion, would eventually boil over into crises due to the “overheating” of this global system.

Reflecting on the recent political climate with milestones such as the Brexit referendum, the election of Donald Trump and burgeoning developments of right-wing populism across Europe, these frameworks serve as useful points of departure in contextualizing such events within the wider strata of a neoliberal global consensus. My interest is to examine these topics under a theoretical lens that observes neoliberal consensus as having “overheated” due to the gradual (over)flow of slow, attritional violence. Specifically, I approach these factors with an eye on how they have altered labor relations that have subsequently resulted in a more precarious, volatile society. This renewed interest in right-wing populist appeals developed in part due to an increasingly untenable society characterized by factors such as the stress caused by financial boom-and-bust cycles, a disaffected working class, and migrant/refugee flows. These, in turn, challenge the assumptions of a linearly progressive modernity that come with the assumptions of neoliberalism.

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this chapter were presented at the 2019 International Studies Association Convention.



## SLOW VIOLENCE AND OVERHEATING

Johan Galtung's (1969) perspectives on violence work within peace studies serves as a foundational viewpoint in problematizing the manner in which violence may be perceived. Due to the inherent complexity in holistically studying "peace", Galtung claims that violence requires a more advanced vocabulary that can attend to its full conceptual capacity. In doing so, violence is better understood as a *condition* that draws a schism between an "actual" and "potential" realization (1969, 168). In perceiving violence not as an act but as an overall factor of *being*, Galtung argues that the "sum of violence is constant" (1969, 180) and that this is manifest in his distinction between personal violence and structural violence. Personal violence may be summarized as a microlevel phenomenon, one that possesses a dynamic and most of all perceptible quality. Personal violence is viewed as intuitively harmful and is recognized accordingly. Comparatively, structural violence is silently embedded within social order—"it is the tranquil waters" (1969, 173). What Galtung's configuration does for violence is offer a tiered perspective but, second, orders violence in a temporal framework as well. It is here where Rob Nixon's (2011) addendum of *slow violence* becomes applicable.

Nixon (2011, 2) describes slow violence as "a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space—an attritional violence that is not typically viewed as violence at all". Slow violence closely overlaps with Galtung's definition of structural violence, expanding the concept of violence towards one of less than perceptible injustices. Nixon extends Galtung's categorization by updating it to be more compatible with our current political milieu that is typified by fast capitalism fueled by a dogmatic neoliberal consensus. Maxims of deregulation, fiscal austerity, and increased financial inequality have consequently emboldened the structural violence first envisioned by Galtung in the late 1960s. Slow violence identifies that the imperceptible nature of the previous structural violence has been heightened at the consequence of advancing technology. Corporate media structures necessitate the reading of violence as something to be perceived as a consequent of the fast politics that have come to underscore precepts of globalization (2011, 10–11).

Recalling Galtung's distinction between conditions of "actual" and "potential" realization, what slow violence offers is an enhanced vernacular in understanding violence. Factors of climate change, resource extraction, and population displacement animate the concern of slow violence to better perceive the firm denial of "potential" realization in our current political context (2011, 23). This segues into the neocolonial reinforcements that drive the logic of neoliberal globalization. Developed states in the Global North can sustain their development off the back of Global South resources and population. Slow violence necessitates and maintains lines that are highly charged with matters of race and class. Such violence is ultimately perceived as justifiable within the bounds of a system; it is, as Galtung (1969) describes, tautological and presumes a level of stability that would not be able to crystallize *as* structure if it did not prove itself as worthwhile.

Complementary to this more complicated reading of violence is Thomas Hylland Eriksen's (2016) conceptual framework of *overheating*. Overheating suggests that the acceleration of time and space by the impetus of a global neoliberal consensus has reached its breaking point. Modernity has been, to this juncture, singularly focused on fast development, hence overheating functions as an intuitive metaphor. Eriksen claims that it functions much like an engine being overworked to the point that it spews black smoke. The concept of accelerated growth overlaps with Giddens' thoughts on ontological (in)security and suggests that in today's hyper-globalized and hyper-modern world, there is simply *more*, that is, more links, activities, and individual needs to fulfill. What follows are more points of failure within the system. Highly advanced telecommunication capacities, in other words, have placed contemporary global society into an entropic state—one that is always dynamic and fluid, smoothed by the free flows of capital. Global neoliberal consensus offered a promise of a fully liberalized society, yet despite the increased interconnection of society, its advertised virtues failed to materialize in any homogeneous fashion (Eriksen, 2016, 471). In borrowing from Manuel Castells' work on globalization as well as Habermasian thought, Eriksen describes this failing of implementation as a difference between a "system world" and a "life world". Neoliberal global consensus, in this case, functions as a technical, managerial implement that can absolve itself of the flaws that come with its uneven results. In terms of overheating the contemporary world has slipped into one that is "ungovernable, volatile and replete with unintended consequences" (2016, 472). In short, the system has reached a breaking point in which its instability has become a trademark.

In situating overheating in relation with slow violence, we can also expose the driving forces and limits of the neoliberal global consensus. Specifically, both conceptual models offer a reading of contemporary global society as being driven by a speed politics which is now reaching a point where its unpredictable nature presents both immediate and delayed consequences. In the following sections, I undertake a further examination of neoliberal global consensus and how the increasingly unstable and volatile nature of modernity questions the aphorisms of liberal progress.

## ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY WITHIN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Within international relations (IR), Brent Steele offers a useful foundation where he contrasts the traditional notion of security with that of Giddens' ontological security by way of the conceptual terrain they inhabit. Traditional security as utilized within most IR configurations is primarily limited to the material aspects of survival such as physical harm. Where ontological security enters is in the abstract space that threatens identity and being. *Fear* can be triangulated alongside a specific threat to security as commonly defined within IR studies. On the other hand, ontological security bears *anxiety* with it—a messier, less rigid type of fear that comes when aspects of being and the self are infringed upon. As Steele argues, the subsequent result of these

concepts is the discursive construction of shame, something that is not necessarily material but is instead co-constituted between actors and which ultimately degrades the establishment of ontological security (Steele 2008, 55). Likewise, Jennifer Mitzen calls attention to this division between these material and abstract layers of security. As the premise of ontological security is to minimize precarity in order to stabilize systems and environments, the routinization of behaviors by actors is core to the formation of their identities. Mitzen considers the strong need for ontological security to be due to the profound attachment actors have to their routines. To be dislodged from these is often a huge disruptor to their established identities. Both Steele and Mitzen suggest this potential agonism of the security of survival as being at odds with the ontological security of the self, where an overriding commitment to a routinized identity may run the risk of compromising security from physical harm.

As alluded to by Giddens, the insulation from ontological insecurity comes from society itself and the stability it may offer. However, Mitzen warns that society is ultimately bound to its constructivist practices and accordingly, any stability is subject to changes in norms (Mitzen, 2006, 348). By contrast, Eli Zaretsky's analysis of ontological security and trauma shifts from the approach of Steele and Mitzen to a conceptualization that errs closer to the propositions of slow violence. Reflecting on the events of the September 11, 2001 attacks, Zaretsky submits that the collective trauma from the attacks developed long after the immediate violence of the event, but rather from realization that the routinized and innocuous identity of New York City street-life had to be re-constructed following the attacks. As the previous society could no longer be reconciled in the wake of these events, the process of rebuilding<sup>2</sup> society and constructing new identities showcased precisely the dangers that Giddens cautioned against in regard to the onset of globalization. The world was now on a singular plane of space and time which required faith in the efficacy of institutions in order for society to find stable ground and thus allow for identities to form. The trauma of September 11 demonstrated how previously taken-for-granted notions of trust were no longer legible and that a more suspicious and reflexive outlook was required to attain both traditional and ontological security (Zaretsky, 2002, 99–101). Ontological insecurity's ability to cause a wholesale displacement of identity and loss of trust manifests the structural nature of slow violence.

## THE NEOLIBERAL PROJECT

At its core, neoliberalism has a prescriptive impetus—if the market does not exist in a particular domain, then it must be created. The state only interferes to lay the foundations for this market discourse to exist and flourish (Harvey, 2006, 145). Looking beyond its strict policy dimensions as a response to the Bretton Woods system and an end to Keynesian-style regulatory practices, neoliberalism's gradual osmosis into

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<sup>2</sup> Zaretsky calls this process “dereification”.

many political conventional wisdoms has bestowed it with an almost divine character. As theorized by Pierre Bordieu (1998, 95), one of neoliberalism's most troubling assets is its having "the means of making itself true, empirically falsifiable", thus possessing a type of malleability that could be suited to a variety of economic, political as well as psycho-social applications (Rustin & Massey, 2014, 118). The shift in this direction is indicative of neoliberalism's vast complexity that came into focus through its application as a generalized and heterogenous political project with a significantly wider reach than its policy origins.

With the financial and political discipline of the 1980s spearheaded by Thatcher and Reagan's unyielding pro-neoliberal approaches and mantras of "there is no alternative", neoliberalism began to develop its supposedly axiomatic characteristics. However, it was not until the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the subsequent transition to a unipolar international system that helped operationalize neoliberalism for unfettered development across the globe. The 1990s would embody the neoliberal capitalist dictums of continuous growth while also marking the epoch during which it gained its status as an atemporal, ahistorical theory that as though through technological iteration, came into existence. Wendy Brown's (2015, 21) analysis on neoliberal rationality summarizes its approach as a paradoxically ubiquitous and yet "disunified" theory that could be embraced by both liberal and conservative interests. As the ideological aim of neoliberalism is the holistic embrace of market doctrines at all levels of society, the fetishization of choice within these markets establishes an ambience in which actors feel as though they possess a degree of agency within a complicated network of interlocking parts. This embrace of a neoliberal order has forged a political society that has resulted in an array of structural inequalities at the behest of marketized discourses that have overtaken conventional notions of progress and modernization. This privatization comes either at the hand of the spectacular violence of military force or through the slow violence of agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or World Bank that pressure the outsourcing of public sector matters to the private sector via mechanisms of debt and structural-adjustment programs (Appadurai 2001, 26). The implications of this perspective help form an understanding of neoliberal globalization in which certain discourses and logics are privileged and assert themselves while maintaining the veil of a technical, modernizing process.

Neoliberal ideology solidifies the nebulous "project" as something that may never reach a conclusion, as its justifications are fundamentally self-perpetuating via the unsatisfiable desire for wealth accumulation. "Neoliberal marketers" utilize messages of social progress, freedom and justice as conduits to extend neoliberal influence (Kalb, 2012). These perspectives become enveloped in a neoliberal global consensus as a "middle-class making project" despite the reality of the marketed prosperity doing little for any proletariat (or precariat) while the owners and gatekeepers of capital thrive (2012, 322–327). Global actors such as multinational corporations and large financial organizations (World Bank, IMF) function as simultaneous initiators and reactive agents in the spread of neoliberalism. The initiatory component is informed by the firm self-evidence of neoliberal dogma as the only way forward,

subsequently; the reactive component is a contextual one that allows neoliberalism to shape-shift to counter any resistance it may face (Bockman, 2012).

As Herbert Marcuse (1964, xliii) wrote, “the containment of social change is perhaps the most singular achievement of advanced industrial society”. This division between the nominally social and the nominally industrial asks what the differentiator between the two are and if such a clean break between categories is possible. The progress of technical feats, Marcuse argues, is easily translated as implements of domination and control. Hence, he points to the token signifiers of industrial society as “comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom” (1964, 3). These thoughts on the new modalities of subordination made possible in the 1960s remain valuable in an analysis of the neoliberal global project within our context of ontological security. A society immersed in neoliberal dogma assumes that a market logic is a panacea to establishing a securitized identity. The negative externalities that result in slow violence are viewed as unfortunate but necessary consequences, contributing to a potential overheating of this society. The presumed technical character of neoliberalism speaks directly to Marcuse’s “containment of social change”.

## THE SELF AND PRECARIOUS SOCIETY

Given the mechanisms of slow violence that sustain an overheated society marked by ontological insecurity, the modifier *self* is of interest in that it signifies how the neoliberal state removes the equation of “risk” and “maintenance” regarding its subjects. As established in the previous sections, systemic fractures that result in inequalities are cast as mere specters due to neoliberal ideology’s feature of plausible deniability. Michel Foucault’s conceptualization of a neoliberal *homo oeconomicus* reasons that the self was now subject to the dominion of market forces—the goal of this self-entrepreneur is the unhindered accumulation of human capital and relentless pursuit of individualistic satisfaction. Within neoliberal *homo oeconomicus*, individuals are in command of their own destinies insofar as they are rational actors operating within a free market society (Foucault, 2010, 226–227). The resultant effect of this process is that the arbiters of neoliberalism are happy to extol and advertise the successful self-entrepreneurs. The refrains of individuals rising out of poverty with pabulum bootstrap mottos ultimately foster a narrative that the state is no longer responsible for ensuring employment of its populace. Public interest and macrolevel concerns are reframed as exclusive to the province of individual capacity (Kamat, 2004). Moreover, the neoliberal success story implicitly labels those who are unsuccessful in their entrepreneurship as undesirable subjects. This existential dream in being able to fulfill that self-entrepreneurship brings us to precarity, a more nuanced elaboration on the ideas of being and self as brought forth by IR scholars on the paradigm of ontological security.

In her book, *Cruel Optimism*, Lauren Berlant (2011, 21) builds on the Foucauldian view of neoliberal self-entrepreneurship and offers a complex definition of precarity:

comprised conditions of possibility ... subjects who have x in their lives might not well endure the loss of their object or scene of desire, even though its presence threatens their well-being, because whatever the content, the attachment, the continuity of the form of it provides something of the continuity of the subject's sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world.

In Berlant's definition, the temporally bound nature of human existence bears with it a natural tension with the continued dismantling of the welfare state and public sector, both materially and ideologically. Accordingly, precarity manifests itself as the everyday uncertainty that represents a key component of the human condition. Individuals must learn to effectively grasp with a myriad of social, political and cultural discursive practices to find certainty amidst uncertainty (Ettlinger, 2007). Scholars such as Robert Castel and Judith Butler have argued that locating precarity exclusively within an economic paradigm ignores the complex merger of economic precariousness with an equally concerning "disassociation" from social, affective bonds and that precarity is the manifestation of the yearning for certainty in a time in which the precariousness and uncertainty of life and economy are institutionally managed.

Precarity fits into the wider discussion of the foreclosures of space, time and possibility that arrives with the "flattening" of social relations at the behest of neoliberal capitalist doctrines. This configuration of capitalism has effectively reframed itself as a post-ideological construct. Unlike a traditionally coercive ideology, post-ideology *suggests*—the subject possesses a level of agency and choice beneath the umbrella of their subordination (Žižek 2009). This factor corresponds with Foucault's articulation of neoliberal *homo oeconomicus* and showcases the vector in which the self-entrepreneurship principle may develop. Within this society, the ruthless pursuit of fulfillment and desire is necessary to attain ontological security. Subjects are no longer conventionally interpellated but instead are encouraged to attain maximum enjoyment. Since the post-ideological subject is urged to pursue maximum individualistic satisfaction, their failure in doing so may be therefore understood as an individual failing despite potential systemic barriers in achieving that fulfillment. Matching this with Berlant's statements, precarity may also be understood as an anxious sensation that the world in all its globalizing speed and fast capitalism may leave one behind.

David Harvey (2000, 90) argues that global neoliberal hegemony inserts itself into a politics of space and time by professing "lures for a peripatetic capital that values the option of mobility very highly. Isn't this place better than that place?" Further, he describes globalization as a runaway world characterized by "a maelstrom of ephemerality" (2000, 86) due to the sheer speed and volatility of globalized society. Similarly, Zygmunt Bauman (2000,8) corroborates this volatile nature of an increasingly global world which calls for a hardened identity that can withstand the liquid character of modernity. In short, the components of an increasingly diminishing welfare society, the neoliberal advertisement of overzealous self-entrepreneurship, and the speed and fluidity of globalization merge to form an environment in which

uncertainty is not only ever present but ostensibly necessary. What we may derive from the sum of these perspectives is a sense of how the neoliberal project thrives in an environment of ontological insecurity. The speed and opacity of capitalism within the precarious, neoliberal society drives the slow violence that is exhibited in the process of alienation.

## VOLATILE LABOR

As the slow violence of precarity continues within neoliberal society, the volatility of labor is a necessity for neoliberalism to flourish while also being emblematic of its overheating process. Societies that govern through security apparatuses ultimately include the requisite *insecurity* into the equation by institutionalizing the fear which comes with it (Puar, 2012). The qualities outlined in precarity have always existed, yet the acceleration and subsequent overheating of a neoliberal global consensus had escorted into being an increasingly common experience. The third-way politics from the hand of the Clinton and Blair administrations in the 1990s helped keep neoliberalism's fuse lit into the twenty-first century until the powder keg exploded in 2008 by way of the global financial crisis.

Intellectuals such as Isabell Lorey, Guy Standing and Michael Hardt articulate how this institutionalized condition of precarity has fomented the development of a *precariat*. Standing (2014, 11) describes the precariat as a supplicant class to modern capitalism that is reduced to "pleading for benefits and access to public services" and is subject to the moralistic decision making of neoliberal bureaucrats. This institutionalized precarity is manifest in the precariat class by way of temporary employment contracts, stagnant wage growth, and a generalized acceptance of flexible time and labor (2014, 10). The scaffolding for these circumstances is clarified in part by fast capitalism's push towards immaterial labor away from material labor. Multilateral free-trade agreements such as NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) have allowed material labor to be cheaply exported to areas of the Global South while Global North economies have moved towards a knowledge economy and immaterial labor pools (Hardt & Negri, 2011). Hardt (1999, 94) defines immaterial labor as the production of intangible commodities such as "a service, knowledge, or communication". He traces the genealogy of immaterial labor around the introduction of the computer into modern society and its subsequent effect in transforming the understanding of labor and organizational frameworks. Computer technology has allowed for a greater focus on efficiency and productivity—tasks previously meant for humans could now be off-loaded to a computer at a fraction of a cost and be performed at an exponentially greater speed. This trend has resulted in a shift in the labor market for developed nations that has forced the precariat class to often have skills and qualifications beyond what is required for their level of employment (Standing, 2014, 10). A secondary component of immaterial labor is that of affective labor, which Hardt describes as the portion of immaterial labor that involves human interaction and culture (Hardt, 1999, 95). Examples of affective labor would be the many

permutations of what constitutes the service industry such as caretaking in healthcare services, tellers at banks, or service-staff at a restaurant. The affective and immaterial combine to form a summary of Hardt's understanding of a global capitalism where "communicative action, human relations and culture have been instrumentalized, reified and 'degraded' to the level of economic interactions" (Hardt, 1999, 96). With the globalized, networked flow of information and knowledge at the hands of advanced computer technology, immaterial labor has thrived as the mainstream type of labor within the Global North.

Marxist critics contend the introduction of computers and a decentralized communicative venue such as the internet offers an alternative to top-down, hierarchical capitalism and an active site for resistance against the bourgeois. On the contrary, the arbiters behind global capitalism have been able to appropriate these new channels and to broaden the precarious conditions of the global economy. Hardt and Negri (2011) offer a tripartite description of this account: first, recognition by capitalism that labor is becoming further hinged on social, affective relationships and an economy of semiotic values. Second is the feminization of the workforce which makes a tangible change in the labor environments towards a more precarious and temporary character. This is representative in a decrease in working hours available and thus an overall greater subordination of the workforce. The feminization descriptor is derived from the idea that the characteristics have always been present for female workers and their marginal positions within the workplace and is only now becoming a gender-neutral phenomenon. Moreover, this uniquely gendered quality being transposed into a labor framework is representative of a diminishing border between life and work. Third, the increasing importance of migratory labor and the need for developed nations needing foreign bodies to maintain their current means of production. The fetishization of foreign, migrant labor has a racial component as well in the implications of the Western, developed producers as possessing the agency and the wherewithal to be agents within a knowledge economy while individuals in the Global South are not given similar access (Mohanty, 1988). This develops an understanding of how bodies are processed in the organization of immaterial labor and offers insight into how bodies are "molded" through the "feminization" process to fit this ideological system. The culmination of these descriptors is an understanding of governmental precarity that begins with employment but extends into all conducts of life thus creating modalities of biopolitical subjectivation. Ostensibly, the desired biopolitical subject is one that has the fortitude to find a stabilized identity in this morass of precarious ontological insecurity as it is indicative of their successful self-entrepreneurship.

The transformation of knowledge into a commodity provides an understanding of immaterial labor as having post-scarcity, one that is ripe for the mining of capitalism and that moves away from materiality in the developed Global North. The latter stresses the element of intangibility and virtuality in our understanding of labor. Here, there is a *subjective* quality to immaterial labor, which raises the question of what determines the value of one's knowledge over another? As a greater number of knowledge laborers attempt to establish their brand of knowledge as indispensable



there is an aspect of diminishing returns in this trend. In a material economy, there was a quantitative element that helps set the order and logic of labor—this logic is no longer valid in the qualitative, and thus more volatile space of the knowledge economy. This adds another wrinkle of precarity in the wider array of uncertainty within this new economic understanding. Neoliberal self-entrepreneurs must continuously justify how their skillset and knowledge expertise fits into a global capitalist economy. This abstracted space is subject to the whims of a potentially temperamental set of collective interests with the choices effectively hinging on a decision on what type of immaterial labor is palatable to a wider neoliberal consensus.

## DEMOCRACY'S RE-ALIGNMENT

Having explored the macrolevel dimensions of neoliberal consensus down to the more granular effect it has on labor relations, it is important realize how the overheated nature in global politics operates. Contingency alongside uncertainty have come to illustrate the modern evolution of capital relations. As power continues to consolidate in ways that increasingly infringe on democratic potentiality, we may start to question how the supposed linear progress offered by neoliberal consensus has been stalled. Jacques Rancière's (2006) *Hatred of Democracy* explores the contradictions that underline the advertised virtues of neoliberal democracy in ways that correspond with several of the insights gained throughout this chapter. The major point of departure here is how democracy in Tocqueville's definition is an ultimate strive for egalitarian representation via "equality of conditions". The major barrier towards realizing this potential is the development of a consumerist society that would ostensibly "depoliticize" the voting public. To this end, Rancière argues that democracy has transitioned into being an oligarchic system, not out of any intrinsic capacity but because *every* state is now based on an oligarchy—"we live in states where the power of oligarchy is limited by a dual recognition of popular sovereignty and individual liberties" (2006, 73). There is, in other words, still a "choice" within elections but one that amounts to simply choosing between which flavor of oligarch was preferable to the voter.

The consumerism first hinted by Marcuse in 1964 returns here in the nature of making political engagement a reflection of individualistic enterprise. In bracketing off the potential for other forms of social organization and political development, elections as a means of expressing personal identity was the necessary development. What Rancière's piece offers is a sustained look at how the liberatory or emancipatory rhetoric that comes to underscore neoliberal global consensus and free flowing capital are largely canards. The lack of true differentiation between candidates and blocking of any discursive or dialectical consideration indicates that the technocratic managerial class that encourages neoliberal policies has very little room for a traditionally egalitarian democracy. This technocratic approach to governance privileges expertise, positivistic or "rational" decision making and a lack of interest in the "messiness" of political debate (Kurki, 2011). Accordingly, these attributes are

a seamless match with the precepts of neoliberal global consensus, which effectively promotes nominal democracy while maintaining a fundamentally aristocratic interest that is reasoned as efficient, rational governance.

The 2008 global financial crisis is perhaps the most recent world event that could be argued as evidence for the overheating of systemic neoliberalism. The rapid growth in profits and subsequent consolidation of corporate power via increasingly privatized political logic greased the wheels of a vehicle towards growing inequality, slow wage growth relative to profit increases, and an overall increase in risky, speculative financial behavior (Kotz, 2009, 307–308). The negative externalities that developed consequently to this atavistic financial behavior were largely outsourced to the marginal class, increasing their exposure to conditional violence. Following the crisis, capital still freely flowed with little resistance while the labor market became increasingly subordinated to the diminishing returns of neoliberal global consensus (León & Overbeek, 2015). The wide-reaching consequences of the global financial crisis should have offered an avenue for a reassessment of the neoliberal global consensus, as its systemic collapse was a precise point in which the attritional violence had exploded in a spectacular, highly visible fashion. However, the entrenchment of this consensus within global networks made such counter developments a difficult task. The slow death of labor power across the globe since the 1970s left any serious traction for alternative developments by the wayside (Kotz, 2009). Moreover, the neoliberal global consensus had the ability to insulate itself from any type of systemic ruptures by virtue of this transformation away from any hierarchical structure but instead towards a horizontally aligned, transnational network that thrives in a dynamic, flowing environment (Heemsker, Fennema & Carroll, 2016). The aristocratic appeal hidden within liberal democracy could continue unabated due to the conditional violence of such a network being relegated from the sensational nature of the 2008 crisis back to its familiarly imperceptible and granular speed.

## OVERHEATED SOCIETY

In identifying the increasingly precarious nature of the contemporary world and the self-fulfilling, undemocratic nature of the neoliberal global consensus, we move ever closer to our current political environment. If we continue with the 2008 global financial crisis as the overheating point for neoliberal consensus, we are then able to chart a genealogy of “ruptures” of this system to the present. Examples of this include but are not limited to the Eurozone Debt Crisis, the Occupy movement, the European migrant crisis, the Yellow Vests movement and the Brexit referendum. Additionally, the rise of strongmen conservative leaders such as Donald Trump, Viktor Orban and Jair Bolsonaro point to a rising interest in right-wing populism as a remedy for ontological insecurity. 2011 proved to be a pivotal year due to the cascade of large, transnational social movements such as Occupy, the Arab Spring and resistance to European austerity. While there are various contingencies within these movements,

the demonstrations were a clear rejection to the entrenched global system and serve as a broad manifestation of a precariat class.

The Occupy movement established itself in New York City outside the heart of the city's financial district and within visible proximity of some of the most powerful brokers of global capital. The simple, yet effective protest slogan of "we are the 99%" (Gamson & Sifry, 2013) showcased a recognition of widespread insecurity and a concretized resistance movement against its bureaucratic intermediaries. Ensuing protests in California, London, Wisconsin, Athens and Rome illustrated the solidification of a large, multivariate coalition that "refused to be governed through insecurity" (Puar, 2012, 165). A key catalyst in the range of these protests was the degree to which they were influenced by one another and able to utilize that energy to their benefit. Protests in Portugal and Italy adopted similar slogans to the Spanish *indignados* to further their demonstrations, which in turn, made their way back to the events in New York City, "protests in more than 80 countries and 900 cities called for global change" (Shihade, Fominaya, & Cox, 2012, 7). The participants of the Occupy movements were largely comprised of highly educated youths (Peterson, Wahlström & Wennerhag, 2015). We may then consider those who came of age in the years following the 2008 financial crisis as a "lost" generation. The speed that characterizes neoliberal global consensus has effectively already left these young individuals behind in their search for ontological security. The word "youth" holds a new salience in an era of widespread precarity as it refers not to age but rather to an overall experience that denies those entry to traditional notions of "adulthood" in capitalism such as secure employment and the ownership of property (Glasius & Pleyers, 2013, 6–7). Comparatively, the anti-austerity protests in Europe, while having similar ideological aims, featured greater participation from members of trade unions responding to the desiccations of the welfare state via cuts in public spending (Peterson et al., 2015). Like Occupy, the anti-austerity protests also generated an international coalition with Spain, Greece, Italy, Ireland and Portugal all mobilizing against not only neoliberal economic adjustments but also as a pro-democracy alliance caught in a political struggle against technocratic bureaucrats (Flesher Fominaya, 2017). Despite their contrasts, both precariat movements showcase a crisis of legitimation within the overheated society and the need to create a counter-hegemonic force in order to reconcile with this reality.

Occupy and the other 2011 protests were symptomatic of the increasingly narrowing gap in experience and livelihoods that the Global North and Global South share. This increasing similarity of work-related insecurity between Global North and South workers acts as a focal point on the multidimensional nature of modern labor precarity. This represents a shift in the precariat which includes a widespread global coalition that extends beyond simplistic class identities, for a global precariat includes an increasingly wider range of labor to account for the rise of knowledge economies (Siegmann & Schiphorst, 2016). Despite neoliberal global capitalism having abetted the conditions for precarity, the Arab Spring and Occupy protests demonstrate the broader opportunity for transnational coalitions to utilize that same global capacity to protest against it. Schierup, Ålund and Likić-Brborić (2015) offer

their thesis built on Karl Polyani's *The Great Transformation*, which explicitly denounces the commodification of labor and urges that society must always maintain the internal will for a countermovement. Counternarratives that stem from resistance movements reframe the precariat as not a vulnerable group in need of paternalistic compensation but a "dangerous class" that possess a nimble agency. The authors include the caveat that this grounding of globalization from a bottom-up perspective is a utopian one but are optimistic in its realization and urge that overly cynical pessimism halt any potential catalyst for a countermovement necessary to combat the "democratic deficit" within neoliberal global consensus.

The events of 2016 would qualify it as the second milestone year. The Brexit referendum in which the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union alongside the defeat of neoliberal consensus candidate Hillary Clinton by the right-wing populist Donald Trump demonstrated arguably the first significant shift away from the neoliberal global consensus. The ethos of technocratic managerialism that had come to characterize the European Union (EU) and the policies of Hillary Clinton were wholly rejected in favor of a populist, revanchist appeal. Much of the media consensus following the Brexit vote openly questioned the nature of globalization and whether it was "over" (Peters, 2018). This coincided with a 2016 research report by the IMF that analyzed the ill effects of neoliberal policy, arguing that any benefits of financial growth are difficult to establish when keeping in mind its cost of increased inequality produced across the spectrum (Ostry, Loungani and Furceri 2016). Emmanuel Macron's neoliberal centrism has been met with low approval ratings, ultimately culminating in the 2018 Yellow Vests movement against his widespread embrace of austerity measures that largely targeted the working class.

This entrenchment of right-wing populism left a vacuum in the body politic that was overlooked by technocratic neoliberalism. These populist appeals function less as a discrete ideology but largely revolve around the identification of a corrupted political elite that has taken advantage of the electorate. Subsequent to this is the understanding of a schism between winners and losers within this framework. Right-wing populism begins with these premises, but locates the winners and beneficiaries of the system as ethnic or racial minorities, immigrants and other foreign "agents" that have eroded on a culturally homogeneous society (Greven, 2016). Due to the lack of a specific ideology, populism functions as a type of structural analysis that may be slotted into either left- or right-leaning parties. Right-wing populism represses the shame of precarity and attempts to galvanize a response to the overheated society by way of an emotional anger against perceived bad actors and freeloaders contributing to economic inequality (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). Due to the complexity and speed of the overheated society, the right-wing populist answer functions primarily as a stabilizer for identity formation and appeals to the precariat class in this fashion. Similar to the pliability of neoliberal dogma, populism can be molded to appeal to a variety of constituencies. However, while the left-wing populist response aims to dismantle economic hierarchies in the name of egalitarianism, the right-wing populist configuration is amenable to existing structures of capitalism. To recall Rancière's views on the limits of today's nominal democracy, the appeal of at least an abstract

consideration of egalitarian social justice is perhaps the only differential progressive neoliberalism has against modern day right-wing politics. The ongoing footholds that far-right parties have been able to gain across Europe have been significant. France's National Front and Germany's AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) party have made gains in prominence over the last decade, heightened by the realities of transnational migration from the Middle East. The sustained conditional violence of the neoliberal global consensus created the favorable conditions for a nativist, racist backlash that zeros-in on immigrants as the catalyzing agent within a precarious society. Similarly, Donald Trump's revanchist appeal of building a wall to keep Mexican immigrants out of the United States characterized the violence of precarity as the cause of profligate "invaders" infringing on the limited resources available.

Nearing the inauguration of Trump's presidency, Nancy Fraser (2017) declared that progressive neoliberalism had met its end. The meeting of progressive egalitarianism with "cognitive" capitalism that resulted in a wide-reaching coalition that embraced identity politics and multiculturalism under the assumption that a market logic would be able to accommodate this big tent had reached a disappointing conclusion. Fraser's thoughts are indicative of a slow violence that resulted in the difference between abstract and material organizations around progressive politics. The progressive neoliberal approach spearheaded by Bill Clinton and Tony Blair in the 1990s, and followed through by Barack Obama and Gordon Brown in the following decade, supports the egalitarian moral appeals of a diverse, multicultural society exclusively within the abstract. The material mechanics for a more equal and less stratified society were counter to the framework of the neoliberal global consensus. Accordingly, the social justice appeals made by the progressive neoliberal advocates were marked by an element of contingency—the full embrace of an egalitarian policy would necessitate a more redistributive, social democratic approach that would seek to mollify the inequalities of the contemporary world. If we keep in mind the overheating paradigm, the progressive neoliberal stance was ostensibly kicking the can down the road under the premise that it would be able to self-correct considering any problems that would arise along the way. This political framework fetishized notions of process and institutions that, in theory, would prevent the election of an individual such as Donald Trump. His election alongside the general rise of right-wing authoritarian sentiments has ostensibly sidestepped notions of process and institutionalism in favor of viscerally racist emotional appeals as an answer to the problems of the contemporary world.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In reflecting the concepts and exemplars highlighted in this chapter, slow violence contributes to an understanding that major societal problems are often hidden in plain sight. The oft-repeated aphorisms of free trade, open markets and fast development bore with them a series of negative externalities that were effectively outsourced to distant corners of the world. However, we do not live in a society of post-scarcity

and, as such, the tightening vice grip that neoliberal global consensus has had since the 1990s may finally be loosened by the forces of right-wing authoritarianism. At this moment it is still difficult to ascertain whether the contemporary political world is finished with the neoliberal global consensus, as some of the scholars mentioned have argued. William Connolly (2002) notes that our reality of fast politics can still be appealing due to its dynamism and the requisite change that it may bring to the system. It remains possible that moments such as Donald Trump's election and the Brexit votes were aberrations of this system and, accordingly, will self-correct if given enough time. Nonetheless, that remains a hopeful perspective—the reality is that the conditions for fascism have not been this potent in decades, which, as argued throughout this chapter, may be attributed to the overheating of the neoliberal global consensus. The answer to these questions must be decoupled from the framework that manifested them in the first place. Therefore, it is important to remain optimistic that an embrace of a materially engaged political framework towards redistribution and egalitarian social justice can foment in these precarious times.

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# PART IV

## GLOBAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND CHALLENGES

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## 15. Critical animal studies, critical international relations theory, and anthropocentrism

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As the other chapters in this volume demonstrate, critical international relations theory (CIRT) has both broadened scholarly understanding of international relations and expanded global justice. Despite these contributions, the CIRT literature often fails to recognize the internal contradiction of its anthropocentrism. In other words, most CIRT scholarship assumes that justice is exclusive to humans. For example, critical international relations pioneer Andrew Linklater (1990, 8) writes in defense of his approach, “the only adequate theory of international relations is one which is committed to the emancipation of the *human species*” (emphasis added). Leading international relations scholar Richard Devetak (2009, 167) states, “Critical theory is committed to extending the rational, just and democratic organization of political life beyond the level of the state to the whole of *humanity*” (emphasis added). Despite their seemingly liberating tone, these sentiments are problematic because they neglect the brutal oppression of nonhuman animals. Not only does the global exploitation of animals harm nonhuman animals, but there is also evidence that it creates negative outcomes for humans. In short, CIRT should reflect on how human exploitation of animals has affected global justice for both humans and nonhumans.

The emerging field of critical animal studies (CAS) can fill this gap in the CIRT literature because it focuses on how humans ruthlessly oppress animals to serve their own material interests. Specifically, CAS extends the animal studies discipline by employing a critical perspective on the exploitation of nonhuman animals. CAS employs a multidisciplinary approach to expose the social effects of the mistreatment of animals, and recently CAS scholars have examined how animal oppression affects key issues in international relations. In fact, the application of CAS in international relations builds on other cutting-edge international relations theories that eschew anthropocentric assumptions, e.g., “posthuman” approaches and “green theory.” However, those theories broadly consider the natural world, whereas CAS concentrates primarily on the oppression of nonhuman animals.

This chapter discusses how CAS can advance CIRT. It opens by demonstrating CIRT’s anthropocentrism. The discussion then turns to explicating cutting-edge international relations theories that depart from an anthropocentric focus, thus providing a basis for applying CAS to CIRT. The next two sections explicate the philosophical views on the status of nonhuman animals, first covering the field of animal studies in general and then elucidating CAS in particular. The final section

clarifies how CAS connects to CIRT through a focus on emotions, and, subsequently, it explores the relationship between CAS and international relations in two key issues – violence and sustainability.

## TOWARDS A LESS ANTHROPOCENTRIC INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

For much of its history, international relations focused exclusively on humans, which is understandable because it is ostensibly a human-centered enterprise. Obviously, animals do not organize themselves into states, which are significant units of analysis in international relations. However, there is arguably less justification for CIRT's anthropocentric bias. Notably, the Frankfurt School – the basis for critical theory – was concerned about the treatment of animals. For example, Horkheimer and Adorno (1994, 245) wrote, "The idea of man in European history is expressed in the way in which he is distinguished from the animal. Animal irrationality is adduced as proof of human dignity ... The antithesis is still accepted today." In other words, critical theorists should understand that the social construction of species is inherent to exploitation in general.

Additionally, it is likely that CIRT's anthropocentrism stems from its revolutionary focus on emancipating oppressed people from domination. For example, Cox's (1981) seminal work on CIRT argues that "social forces shaped by production relations" (141) best explains key phenomena in the international arena. Cox explicates his view of "social forces" through key global developments, such as the expansion of capitalism, industrialization, and imperialism. Although, as demonstrated later in this chapter, human exploitation of animals is central to capitalism, industrialization, and imperialism, Cox's mission is to herald the idea that critical theory matters in international relations. It is thus reasonable, especially in the early 1980s, that Cox did not recognize the relevance of animal exploitation. Furthermore, Andrew Linklater – another CIRT pioneer – focuses extensively on critical theory's Frankfurt School roots (1990, 21–27). He discusses the Frankfurt School's departure from Marxism and its rejection of positivist methodologies. In other words, he stresses the fundamental contributions of the Frankfurt School; consequently, it makes sense that he would neglect the Frankfurt School's tertiary concern with animal exploitation. In short, CIRT's anthropocentrism is understandable, but nevertheless this internal contradiction still exists; therefore, this chapter argues that incorporating CAS would significantly enhance CIRT as both an explanatory and emancipatory tool.

Recently scholars have begun to look beyond humans when developing theories to explain international relations. For example, "green theory" transcends the anthropocentrism that undergirds both traditional international relations theories and CIRT. Green theory rejects the socially constructed binary between humans and nature and seeks to end the neoliberal capitalist system that exploits nature (e.g., Carter 1999; Dobson 2000; Eckersley 2004). Rather than seeking incremental environmental reforms that maintain the capitalist system, green theory endorses "ecologism"

(Dobson 2000), which seeks to protect the environment through radical social and economic change. In the context of international affairs, some green theorists advocate replacing the state, which is central to traditional theories like realism, with a global, anarchistic politics that emphasizes protecting the environment (Carter 1999). However, Eckersley (2004) argues that states are fixed; therefore, her approach aspires to develop “green states” that counter the forces that have created environmental damage. Additionally, green theory notes that because global climate change generates significant harms (e.g., disease, major weather events, tidal flooding, food shortages, and water shortages) it is highly likely to lead to violence and security threats. However, green theorists are careful to avoid couching these security threats in realist, nationalist, or militaristic terms (Dalby 2009; Deudney 1990; Eckersley 2004, 224–228).

Extending beyond the environment, posthumanism also rejects the anthropocentrism of humanistic theories. During the Enlightenment, humanism represented a major progressive leap because it emphasized the primacy of human beings, and it championed an empirical epistemology over religious, superstitious, and authoritarian sources of knowledge. However, humanism suffers from its own internal inconsistency because it relies on a false binary between human and nonhuman, which, in turn, privileges humans over nature – both flora and fauna. Cudworth and Hobden (2011) pioneer a “posthuman approach” to international relations that “draws on elements of critical theories, while also critiquing these positions for their anthropocentrism. (10)”. Specifically, Cudworth and Hobden employ complexity theory in which humans, the natural environment, and nonhuman animals interact as “complex phenomena” that “need to be studied holistically (5).” When developing their view of international relations, Cudworth and Hobden (2011, 20) problematize how “Western secular and humanist political theory has been distinct from and dominant over ‘nature’.” Cudworth and Hobden (2011) use the posthuman framework to analyze traditional aspects of international relations, but more importantly, their posthuman approach sheds new light on emergent global issues such as food insecurity. Western nations and international organizations initially believed that factory farming would provide developing nations with more plentiful food supplies, but Cudworth and Hobden’s (2011, 97–109) closer examination shows that factory farming has generated environmental crises, health problems, and economic inequality.

The posthuman and green theory approaches have moved the field of international relations away from anthropocentrism, and they have alerted scholars and some policy makers to the importance of conserving the ecosystem at large. Nevertheless, these theories consider animals to be merely a constituent in the larger environment, which means that they ultimately regard animals to be as important as plants or the composition of the atmosphere. Humans do certainly exploit the entire ecosystem, but animals feel the pain, fear, and discomfort that this exploitation creates, whereas plants and gasses do not. In fact, animals’ interests might clash with preserving the environment. For example, in the interest of preserving the ecosystem, a green or ecological approach might allow the killing of animals to keep overpopulation in check, despite the obvious negative effects on these animals (Donaldson and

Kymlicka 2011, 12). In other words, despite significant overlap, there is a distinction between posthuman theories and animal-oriented theories. This chapter emphasizes the animal-oriented theories that concentrate exclusively on the interests of nonhuman animals. Because international relations scholars are unlikely to be familiar with these animal-oriented theories in general and CAS in particular, the next two sections explain these positions in more detail.

## NONHUMAN ANIMALS AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Throughout Western civilization, philosophers have pondered the status of nonhuman animals. For much of this history, thinkers believed that nonhuman animals are inferior to humans because they lack the capacity for language and reason; therefore, humans are free to use animals for their own purposes, regardless of the suffering that animals experience. By the nineteenth century, but especially since the late twentieth century, philosophers began to recognize the inherent interests of nonhuman animals.

### Premodern Views of Animals

Prior to the Enlightenment, most Western political theorists rationalized exploiting animals in order to benefit humans, despite the fact that mistreating animals causes tremendous suffering. Ancient Greek thinkers argue that animals are inferior to humans because they cannot speak or think. Accordingly, principles of justice do not extend to animals, and animals exist solely for humans to use. For example, Aristotle writes:

It is evident ... that plants are created for the sake of animals, and animals for the sake of men ... the tame for our use and provision; the wild, at least the greater part, for our provisions also, or for some other advantageous purpose, as furnishing us with clothes and the like. (Aristotle, *Politics*, excerpted in Clarke and Linzey 1990, 58)

Ancient Roman natural law philosophers, such as Cicero and Seneca, also exclude animals from moral consideration because their inability to reason and use language means that they are inferior beings. However, some dissenting ancient thinkers contend that humane treatment of animals is an important aspect of justice. For example, Porphyry suggests that humans and animals share sentience, i.e., the ability to feel pain, fear, and discomfort. Accordingly, it is unethical for humans to harm animals, including killing them for food (Clark 2011; Cochrane 2010, 10–16).

Medieval Christian philosophy also justifies the mistreatment of animals. The *Bible*, specifically the “Book of Genesis,” encourages humans to exert authority over animals. Notable Christian thinkers, e.g., Augustine and Aquinas, argue that humans are free to mistreat animals because they lack the ability to think or talk. Aquinas writes, “[animals] have no fellowship with man in rational life. Therefore, charity does not extend to irrational creatures” (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, excerpted

in Clarke and Linzey 1990, 104). Similar to the Ancient World, there were notable exceptions to this dominant view of animals. Francis of Assisi – the Catholic patron saint of animals and the environment – advocates for humane treatment of animals as an inherent part of Christian compassion (Cochrane 2010, 16–20).

### **Animals in the Renaissance and Enlightenment**

Most observers credit the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods for their tremendous scientific and social progress, but this progress did not extend to nonhuman animals. René Descartes is an initiator of Enlightenment thought, especially because of his emphasis on rationality, mathematics, and science, but his views on animals are distasteful even for his time. Like others, Descartes bases his perspective on the notion that animals lack the capacity for thought and language, but Descartes maintains that animals' inferiority also means that they lack the ability to feel pain. He essentially likens animals to machines; consequently, he justifies conducting brutal scientific research on live animals, regardless of the obvious appearance of animal suffering. Enlightenment liberal thinkers, e.g., John Locke, view animals as property and thus prioritize human liberty to use their "property" for their own purposes, even if doing so causes suffering. Locke cautions against wanton cruelty to animals; however, he is concerned mainly about the effect of cruelty on human morality, not the effect on animal welfare (Clarke and Linzey 1990, 7–25, 56–71, 99–105, 119–121; Cochrane 2010, 20–23).

Despite this dominant disregard of animals, dissenting Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers believe that humans have a duty to treat animals humanely. During this period, some philosophers more extensively highlight the issue of animal welfare. French scholar Michael de Montaigne and English theologian Humphrey Primatt articulate the numerous similarities between humans and nonhuman animals, especially in their capacity to exhibit friendship and experience pain. Therefore, the difference in intellectual capacity between humans and nonhuman animals does not justify harming animals. Scottish philosopher Francis Hutcheson endorses a custodial approach to animal welfare – people have a responsibility to protect animals from mistreatment, similar to their duty to protect children (Clarke and Linzey 1990, 64–65, 105–112, 124–127; Cochrane 24; Garrett 2011).

### **Animal-Oriented Political Theory**

Western political thought did not seriously consider the well-being of animals until the nineteenth century when Jeremy Bentham stresses animals' interest. As a utilitarian, Bentham eschews notions of rights and instead focuses on the extent that an action or a policy's benefits outweigh its costs. Bentham is unique, even among utilitarians, because he calculates animal welfare in his cost–benefit analysis. Specifically, Bentham argues that the pain and suffering that animals experience must be counted in any utilitarian calculus, regardless of the animal's capacity for rational thought. Bentham famously states, "The question is not, can they [animals]

reason? Nor can they talk? But can they suffer?" (Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, excerpted in Clarke and Linzey 1990, 136). However, because Bentham is concerned with maximizing human pleasure, he permits killing animals for food and using them in medical experiments because humans benefit from these actions – although he insists on minimizing animal suffering in these enterprises. Nevertheless, Bentham is the first Western philosopher to consider animals' basic interests (Cochrane 2010, 24–25; Frey 2011; Singer 2002/1975, 210–211).

In the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, English thinker Henry Salt expands on Bentham's concern for animal welfare by arguing that, as sentient beings, animals have the right to their own autonomy. Consequently, Salt is not satisfied with humane treatment of animals; instead, he maintains that humans should completely avoid using animals for their own purposes, e.g., food, clothing, and entertainment. Furthermore, Salt goes beyond merely theorizing about animals; he also engaged in activism by promoting vegetarianism and advocating for laws to protect animals. Additionally, Salt connects the oppression of animals to the oppression of racial minorities, colonized people, and women. In this regard, Salt even influenced Gandhi (Clarke and Linzey 1990, 141–148). However, after Salt, and for most of the twentieth century, political and social thought devoted minimal energy to the status of animals.

In 1975, Peter Singer revived the debate over the treatment of animals when he published *Animal Liberation* (Singer 2002/1975). Similar to Bentham, Singer is a utilitarian; therefore, he does not endorse the philosophical notion of rights and postulates that when weighing the costs and benefits of a policy or action, one must count the suffering of animals. However, Singer (2002/1975, 202–212) criticizes Bentham and his nineteenth-century contemporaries because their "excuses" permit animal suffering as long as humans derive some benefit. In fact, Singer (2002/1975, 18–23) argues that the suffering of animals is absolutely no different than the suffering of humans, and he employs the term "speciesism" to criticize the idea that human suffering should be privileged over animal suffering merely because of a difference in species. As with Salt, Singer (2002/1975, 1–6) aligns the animal liberation movement's attempt to overcome speciesism with the civil rights and women's liberation movements' attempts to overcome racism and sexism. Singer's book also exerted a significant impact because his vivid accounts of animal suffering in research facilities and on factory farms helped to spawn the modern animal advocacy movement (Tauber 2015, 54).

Although Singer revolutionized how political philosophy views animals and inspired thousands of animal advocates, critics argue that his approach falls short because utilitarianism does not sufficiently address animals' interests. Liberal philosopher Tom Regan offers a significant alternative to Singer by advocating specifically for animal rights. Whereas prior liberal thinkers, such as Locke, stress rationality as a prerequisite for rights, Regan (1983) notes that infants and people with severe disabilities lack rationality, yet we still recognize their rights. Therefore, instead of rationality, Regan focuses on the idea that living creatures are the "subject-of-life,"

which means they have their own emotions and ability to understand how the external environment affects their happiness. Therefore, all creatures have “inherent value” and they possess the right to be completely free from humans killing or harming them (physically or emotionally) for their own use. Regan contends that under Bentham and Singer’s utilitarian philosophy, humans could harm animals when doing so serves the greater good of humanity, which jeopardizes animals’ “inherent value.” In short, Regan believes that utilitarianism can lead to unethical outcomes because it does not promote animal rights.

The debate between Singer and Regan has continued among scholars interested in the plight of nonhuman animals. In the tradition of Singer, the “welfarist” camp seeks to limit the mistreatment of animals, but it does not advocate for animal rights. Specifically, welfarists argue that it is unlikely our political culture and legal system will ever accept the idea that animals have rights; therefore, it is senseless for activists to pursue animal rights. Instead, scholars and activists should seek incremental measures that improve the treatment of animals; i.e., lessen overall suffering. For example, welfarists do not aspire to end factory farming; rather, they advocate for better treatment of farm animals (see Francione and Garner 2010, 103–174; Garner 2002; Lovvorn 2006; Tannenbaum 1995). Garner (2002) vigorously opposes the idea of animal rights because he believes that the property status of animals actually improves their welfare when animal rescue organizations and wildlife preservation groups purchase animals to save them from death.

Moving away from the welfarists, Favre (2000, 2004, 2005) chooses to focus on animal “interests” instead of rights or welfare. Specifically, animals’ interests include the preservation of their lives, freedom from pain and suffering, and living in an environment that closely approximates their natural habitat. Therefore, recognizing these key interests precludes the need to pursue the unattainable goal of securing animal rights. Favre (2005) centers on tort law as a remedy against the mistreatment of animals. He (2000, 2004) also contends that the concept of animal “self-ownership” allows the law to consider animals as property, but in doing so, humans can protect nonhuman animals through a “trustee” or “guardian” relationship. Under Favre’s framework, humans have a legal responsibility to ensure animals’ well-being, even if animals lack rights.

The animal rights perspective follows Regan’s liberal political philosophy by emphasizing that animals possess the right to be free from human interference (Francione 2000, 1996, 1995; Nussbaum 2006, 325–407; Rowlands 1997; Wise 2000). Many welfarists do not oppose humans consuming animals, as long as the animals are treated humanely during their lives and are slaughtered in a relatively painless fashion. Conversely, animal rights theorists contend that because animals possess the right to their own autonomy, humans should not use them for food, clothing, entertainment, and scientific research. In fact, humans should not be able to own animals.

Some animal rights theorists stretch liberal social contract theory to include animals in the social contract. Even progressive liberals such as John Rawls do not consider animals to be important ends of justice because they lack the ability to engage in the



contract (Nussbaum 2006, 325–407; Rowlands 1997, 236–238). However, Rowlands (1997) rejects the idea that rational thought is necessary to benefit from contractarian justice. Rather, he concentrates on “the individuals protected by the principles of morality embodied in the contract,” and concludes, “If a contractarian position is consistently applied, then the recipients of the protection offered by the contract *must* include not only rational, but also non-rational agents” (emphasis in the original). Moreover, Nussbaum (2006, 325–407) promotes a “capabilities approach,” which, unlike Rawls’ emphasis on procedure, focuses on outcomes that matter for animals, including “life,” “bodily health and integrity,” “emotions,” “play,” and “control over one’s health and environment.”

By embracing positive liberty for animals, Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011) also stretch liberalism, which tends to highlight negative liberty. In other words, animal rights theory should not consider whether humans interfere with animals; rather, the main thrust of animal rights theory should address how humans can improve animals’ well-being. Their conception of animal rights relies on the different categories that reflect the relationship between humans and animals. Companion animals, who live among humans as family members, should be “citizens.” Liminal animals, such as pigeons and squirrels, regularly interact with humans but do not live with them; therefore, they should be treated as “denizens,” or migrants into human communities. Finally, humans need to grant wild animals “sovereignty.” In fact, Donaldson and Kymlicka analogize human relations with “sovereign” wild animals to relations among sovereign nations interacting in the international sphere.

Legal scholars have also adopted liberal animal rights theory (Francione 1995, 1996, 2000; Wise 2000). Francione (1995, 1996, 2000) focuses specifically on ending animals’ status as property. By rejecting speciesism, Francione contends that humans owning animals for their own benefit is as morally objectionable as humans owning humans (i.e., slavery). He criticizes humans for “moral schizophrenia” in their treatment of animals. On the one hand, people are disgusted when they hear about the torture of dogs and cats, but they simultaneously abide the torture of other animals, such as pigs, cows, chickens, and mice, that occurs in scientific research and agriculture. Therefore, Francione argues that humans should no longer treat animals as property, and he advocates abolishing the use of animals for food, entertainment, clothing, and scientific research. Similarly, Wise (2000) promotes “legal personhood” for animals, which means that the law must provide animals with the liberty to be free from imprisonment. He bases his conception of “legal personhood” on longstanding Common Law principles. Moreover, Wise has blended his scholarship with activism by forming the Nonhuman Rights Project, which has developed an active litigation campaign to convince a judge to grant “legal personhood” to high functioning mammals so that humans could no longer keep them in captivity (Nonhuman Rights Project 2018).

In sum, since the 1970s there has been extensive scholarship and activism concerning the status of animals. The welfarist approach focuses on incremental reforms, whereas the rights approach emphasizes giving nonhuman animals basic freedoms. Despite these differences, both perspectives share an adherence to traditional phi-

losophies. Even the seemingly radical animal rights position rests on conventional liberal theory. Unlike the philosophies discussed in this section, CAS employs the emancipatory tools of critical theory to advocate for revolutionary change on behalf of animal liberation. The next section elucidates the CAS philosophy.

## CRITICAL ANIMAL STUDIES

Animal welfare and animal rights theorists have undoubtedly advanced our intellectual understanding of nonhuman animals, and they have inspired activists to engage politically on behalf of animals. As expressed previously, Donaldson and Kymlicka's (2011) conception of wild animal sovereignty even contributes to the study of international relations. However, many scholars and activists contend that because of its liberal philosophical orientation, mainstream animal rights theory does not sufficiently protect animals. Instead, advocates of the more radical CAS approach argue that critical theory is the best method for truly liberating animals from human exploitation.

### The Establishment of Critical Animal Studies

Although critical theory has existed since the early twentieth century, its application to animals is mainly a twenty-first-century phenomenon. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, Frankfurt School pioneers recognize animal exploitation by critiquing how humans have oppressed animals in the name of progress, particularly with vivisection (Horkheimer and Adorno 1994, 245–255; see also Maurizi 2012; Sanbonmatsu 2011 15–18). Gerhardt (2011) argues that early Frankfurt School critical theorists, especially Horkheimer and Adorno, highlighted animals far more than most scholars have recognized. Despite this early reference of animals and notwithstanding Gerhardt's (2011) essay, critical theory essentially ignored nonhuman animals until the 2001 creation of the Center on Animal Liberation Affairs, which in 2007 changed its name to the Institute for Critical Animal Studies (ICAS) (Institute for Critical Animal Studies 2018; Taylor and Twine 2014, 1). ICAS also publishes the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, which produces articles that use a critical theory framework to address the plight of animals (Institute for Critical Animal Studies 2018). The Critical Animal Studies founders (Best 2009, 24–26; Best et. al. 2007) identify the field according to ten principles, which are a “critical, radical, and transformative” alternative to traditional animal studies:

1. “Pursues an interdisciplinary collaborative writing and research in a rich and comprehensive manner ... that includes political economy and a critique of capitalism.”
2. “Rejects pseudo-scientific academic analysis by explicitly clarifying its normative values and political commitments ...”

3. “Eschews narrow academic viewpoints and the debilitating theory for theory’s sake ... in order to link theory to practice.”
4. “Advances a holistic understanding of the commonality of oppressions ... viewed as parts of a larger interlocking global system of domination.”
5. “Rejects apolitical ... positions in order to advance an anti-capitalist, and, more generally, a radical anti-hierarchical politics ...”
6. “Rejects reformist, single-issue, nation-based, legislative, simply animal interest politics in favor of alliance politics and solidarity with other struggles against oppression and hierarchy.”
7. “Champions a politics of total liberation which grasps the need for, and the inseparability of, human, nonhuman animal, and Earth liberation ...”
8. “Deconstructs and reconstructs the socially constructed binary opposition between humans and nonhuman animals ...”
9. “Openly engages controversial radical politics and militant strategies used in all kinds of social movements, such as those that involve economic sabotage and high-pressure direct action tactics.” (Best et al. 2007, 2 slightly rewords this tenet.)
10. “Seeks to create openings for critical dialogue on issues relevant to Critical Animal Studies across a wide range of academic groups; citizens and grassroots activists; ... policy and social service organizations; and ... private, public, and non-profit sectors ...”

### **CAS Scholarship**

The aforementioned ten principles define CAS as a philosophy and a social movement, but there has also been considerable CAS scholarship that unearths the implications of oppressing animals. There are some key differences within CAS research, and some studies even predate the creation of ICAS. Nevertheless, CAS scholarship coheres around a core of radical animal liberation.

As with the Frankfurt School, CAS draws heavily on Marxism. For animal issues, the Marxist approach maintains that animal exploitation is central to the capitalist domination over society (Benton 2011, 1993; Boggs 2011; Clark 2014; Cochrane 2010, 93–114; Kowalczyk 2014; Llorente 2011; Perlo 2002; Sanbonmatsu 2011; Torres 2007). Large animal exploitation corporations – mainly agriculture and research facilities, as well as their distribution networks – torture and kill animals in order to produce cheaper products and increase earnings. These corporations simultaneously condition consumers to be unaware of the source of their food and clothing. CAS theorists identify the “animal industrial complex,” which refers to the global system (including transnational corporations, governments, and social/cultural institutions) that exploits animals to maximize profit. (Cudworth 2015; Fitzgerald and Taylor 2014; Noske 1997; Twine 2012). This “animal industrial complex” also exploits human labor. For example, factory farms employ undocumented workers for substandard wages and maintain unsafe working conditions

(Schlosser 2001, 169–190). In proposing a solution to this exploitation, Torres (2007) advocates “social anarchism,” which opposes the state – the source of “legitimate” violence against animals – and prefers a collectivist society that is free of hierarchy and oppression against humans and nonhumans. He argues that the most plausible methods for realizing this goal are to promote veganism, engage in peaceful activism that exposes the horrors of animal exploitation, and build a broad, democratic social movement.

Feminist theory is another important aspect of CAS research (Adams 1990, 2011; Cochrane 2010, 115–135; Donovan 2011; Donovan and Adams 2007; McCance 2013, 87–103). Carol Adams’ publication of *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990) reveals the connection between feminism and animal liberation. Adams notes that throughout human history the ability to secure meat became crucial to a society’s well-being. Because men were largely responsible for producing meat, mostly through hunting, they became the dominant force in carnivorous cultures. Consequently, societies currently equate meat consumption and killing animals with exhibiting masculine characteristics, and contemporary languages and cultures often degrade women by referring to them in animal-related terms (see also Adams 2011). Donovan (2011) and Donovan and Adams (2007) promote a *feminist care ethic* approach to the treatment of animals. Unlike the patriarchal emphasis on reason, rights, and utility (e.g., Singer and Regan), the *feminist care ethic* stresses how emotion, sympathy, empathy, and compassion are essential to improving the well-being of nonhuman animals. As discussed later, this emphasis on emotions helps to connect CAS with CIRT.

Extending beyond Marxism and feminism, CAS scholarship often critiques the contemporary animal rights movement. On a philosophical level, CAS expresses concern that the animal rights framework is too willing to work within established liberal states and capitalist systems. At best, the animal rights movement will engender inconsequential animal protection reforms (Best 2009; Best et. al 2007; Nocella et al. 2014). CAS scholars also critique mainstream animal rights thought for failing to appreciate that the struggle against animal exploitation intersects with struggles against oppression based on race, gender, sexuality, nationality, class, and ability. Recall that traditional animal advocacy thinkers Henry Salt and Peter Singer liken animal emancipation to other civil rights concerns, but CAS argues that this mere recognition of these similarities is insufficient. Instead CAS “advances a holistic understanding of the commonality of oppressions, such that speciesism, sexism, racism, ableism, statism, classism, militarism and other hierarchical ideologies and institutions are viewed as parts of a larger, interlocking, global system of domination” (Best 2009, 12; Best et. al. 2007, 2).

CAS contends that mainstream animal rights often alienates other emancipatory struggles, whereas it should “build bridges” with these other movements (Best 2009; Best et. al 2007; Nocella et al. 2014; Torres 2007). For example, Torres (2007, 112–113) chastises vegans for ignoring the class struggle that often accompanies their ethical food choices. Vegans tend to be white and financially stable, and their food is often prohibitively expensive. In fact, vegan culture frequently celebrates expensive, bourgeois practices. Furthermore, vegan food and clothing often emanate

from economic activities that exploit labor and harm the environment. Another illustrative example concerns CAS's critique of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). PETA is a quintessential animal rights group that vigorously promotes pure veganism, i.e., thoroughly ending the use of animals for food, clothing, entertainment, and research (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals 2018). Although one might expect a close alliance between CAS and PETA, CAS scholars have lambasted PETA for ignoring other forms of oppression. Specifically, Adams (2011, 228) and Torres (2007, 92) disparage PETA's media campaign featuring nude female models stating that they "would rather go naked than wear fur" because the ads are sexist and commodify women.

Given its radical approach, CAS scholars actively seek to overturn the capitalist, patriarchal, speciesist hierarchy that oppresses animals (Best 2009; Best et. al. 2007; Nocella, et al. 2014). In other words, similar to other critical approaches, CAS blends theory and praxis. Therefore, merely theorizing about the extent that justice covers the treatment of animals is insufficient and reflective of the conservative forces of academia. Rather, CAS stridently encourages its followers to engage in direct action to emancipate animals (Best 2009; Best and Nocella 2004; Best et. al 2007; Grubbs and Loadenthal 2014; Nocella et al. 2014; White and Cudworth 2014). Given this overt support of animal liberation activism, CAS defends the controversial tactics of organizations, such as the Animal Liberation Front, that violate the law by breaking into research facilities, freeing captive animals, engaging in economic sabotage, and harassing people who profit from animal exploitation (Best and Nocella 2004; Grubbs and Loadenthal 2014).

In fact, some CAS theorists will even attack fellow radical animal advocates and adherents to CAS for not being sufficiently extreme. Best (2009, 12) lambasts animal rights philosopher and vegan activist Gary Francione for his "pacifist" views and he condemns Bob Torres' Marxist analysis of animal oppression for "its uncritical embrace of fundamentalist pacifist views." Best (2009) complains that even within the CAS framework, too many scholars "fetishize" theory at the expense of activism, which is required to liberate animals. He writes (2009, 32):

The reactionary effect of animal studies theorists such as [English Professor Susan] McHugh is apparent: as one struggles through their writing, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Levinas, Kristeva, Deluze and Guattari, and Derrida are rumbling in our ears, but the concrete realities of animal suffering, violence, and exploitation, economic crisis and social power, and the rapidly worsening planetary ecological catastrophe are entirely muted and virtually barred from the hermetically-sealed chambers of theory-babble.

Similarly, Nocella et al (2014, xxv–xxvi) attack McCance's (2013) book on CAS because it is too philosophical and eschews the activism needed to emancipate animals. They write (xxv–xxvi) that McCance's book:

is a direct example of the fears early ICAS founders held: that CAS, once part of the academic industrial complex, would have the radicalism and praxis written out of it, that it would become another pathway from which one can simply obtain tenure, all the while,

nonhumans are tortured and slaughtered by the billions. Abstruse rhetoric will not expose grave injustices; in fact, it may only succeed in further hiding it.

Finally, CAS also critiques critical theory in general and other left-wing philosophies for neglecting to consider animals' interests and failing to recognize the interconnectedness of animal oppression and human oppression (Best 2009, 16; Sanbonmatsu 2011, 22–26). For example, the philosophy of Marx and Engels was conspicuously human-centered, and Marx and Engels were personally hostile to nineteenth-century animal welfare movements because they viewed them as bourgeois (Sanbonmatsu 2011, 23–26). Indeed, scholars who base their animal liberation views on Marxism (e.g., Benton 1993, 2011; Clark 2014; Kowalczyk 2014; Llorente 2011; Perlo 2002; Torres 2007) need to “reconstruct” Marx in order to account for animals' interests. In a powerful essay on the left's animosity to animal emancipation, Sorenson (2011, 193–203) refutes contemporary radical leftists who erroneously condemn the animal advocacy movement as racist and classist because many animal advocates are white and upper-middle class. He reminds these critics that CAS explicitly recognizes the intersectionality of different forms of exploitation. Furthermore, Sorenson contends that anthropocentrism causes many critical theorists and radical leftists to complain that animal liberation diverts attention and resources from struggles to end discrimination against humans. Sorenson (2011, 199) debunks this perspective, noting that “Those on the left who dismiss veganism and concern for animals not only trivialize compassion but overlook the radical potential for these concerns for creating consciousness about other issues.”

CAS has undoubtedly revolutionized intellectual discourse by calling for radical, systemic change to emancipate animals from oppression. Similar to other critical theories, CAS eschews positivism, critiques liberalism and capitalism, endorses direct action, views oppression as intersectional, and rejects binary distinctions. With this general understanding of CAS, the next section examines how CAS contributes to international relations in general and CIRT in particular.

## CRITICAL ANIMAL STUDIES AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

As discussed earlier, CAS embodies an anti-statist view of animal liberation, and it is unquestionably a global philosophy. Still, CAS can contribute more directly to CIRT. This section first discusses how emotions link CAS and CIRT. It then elucidates more fully how CAS influences the study of international relations in two key issue areas – international violence and sustainability.

### **Emotions as a Link between CAS and CIRT**

Although mainstream international relations theories, such as realism and liberalism, assume that nations act rationally, critical scholars have emphasized how interna-

tional actions stem from emotions, ranging from fear and anger to compassion and sympathy. Moreover, although emotions undoubtedly have a micro-level biological component, a critical, constructivist view of emotions highlights how society constructs emotions, including those that influence international politics (e.g., Crawford 2000; Koschut 2014, 2017; Ross 2006; Solomon 2012). Feminist international relations theories in particular emphasize the importance of emotions in international relations. Unlike rationalist, rights-oriented theories – e.g., Kant – that emphasize logic and universal ethics when analyzing international relations issues, feminist scholarship relies on the concept of *ethics of care*, which inherently embodies emotions. Feminist scholar Virginia Held describes the *ethics of care* as:

the compelling moral salience of attending to and meeting the needs of the particular others for whom we take responsibility ... the ethics of care values emotions rather than rejects it ... in contrast to the rationalist approaches, such emotions as sympathy, empathy, sensitivity, and responsiveness are seen as the kind of moral emotions that need to be cultivated ... Even anger may be a component of the moral indignation that should be felt when people are treated unjustly or inhumanely ... (Held 2006, 10–11)

Feminist international relations scholars have used the emotions associated with the *ethics of care* to address human security problems in international relations, including violence (especially against women), health disparities, environmental degradation, and economic inequality. Employing emotions like sympathy and compassion allows one to understand more fully the plight of people throughout the world who are victimized by the injustices of violence, colonialism, and imperialism (Held 2004, 2006; Höglund 2003; Porter 2006; Robinson 1997, 1999, 2011).

Using emotions as a tool to problematize injustice is not exclusive to human victims; emotions also play a key role in CAS. Rationalist philosophers, such as Kant, rejected relying on emotions; therefore, they discounted the emotional bonds between humans and animals and accordingly devalued animals. However, by the 1980s, scholars (e.g., Kheel 1985; Shapiro 1990) have refuted the distinction between rationality and emotion and have demonstrated that humans are able to empathize with nonhuman animals. Expanding on this view, feminist theorists (Donovan 2011; Donovan and Adams 2007) use emotion, especially through the *feminist care ethic*, to criticize utilitarian and rights theories that advocate for animals (e.g., Singer and Regan) because they rely on logic and not feelings of sympathy and compassion for animals. Logic-based theories are rooted in a capitalistic, colonialist, patriarchy that excludes the “other,” even nonhuman animals. Alternatively, feminist theories have emphasized emotions, such as sympathy, empathy, and caring, as a way for people to connect with and advocate for animals. This caring allows humans and animals to bond emotionally so that animals become part of the same community as humans (Donovan 2011; Donovan and Adams 2007; Gillespie 2016; Taylor 2010). In short, both CAS and CIRT teach us that emotions are a valuable tool to highlight injustice. Given the novelty of the connection between CAS and CIRT, future scholarship should explore in more detail how emotions, such as sympathy, empathy, and compassion, can emancipate the oppressed – both human and nonhuman.

## **CAS, Colonization, and International Violence**

CAS also contributes to our understanding of international relations because it reveals a connection between violence against nonhuman animals and violence against humans. As expressed above, Horkheimer and Adorno (1994, 245–255) uncover this connection between animal exploitation and global oppression against humans. Best (2009, 18) succinctly updates this view, stating, “The domination of humans over nonhuman animals is intimately linked to the domination of humans over one another.” The basic notion that violence against animals leads to violence against humans is, in fact, neither novel nor controversial. Criminologists and psychologists have demonstrated that childhood cruelty towards animals is a pathway to anti-social behavior as an adult (e.g., Ascione 2005; Kellert and Felthous 1985; MacDonald 1963; Merz-Perez and Heide 2004; Unti 2010; Wright and Hensley 2003). For CAS, however, the connection between violence against animals and violence against people extends far beyond criminology and psychology. First, CAS is not concerned with individual humans’ propensity towards violence; rather, it stresses aggregate human behavior. As a related point, the aforementioned literature addresses individual acts of wanton cruelty that fall under statutory anti-cruelty provisions, e.g., torturing a family dog or cat. However, CAS is concerned with legal and subsidized systematic brutalization of animals throughout our economy and culture. CAS scholars (Cudworth 2015; Nibert 2013, 2002; Torres 2007) envision this violence as an aggregated and institutionalized mechanism that global capitalists employ to dominate and exploit nonhuman animals. As Cudworth (2015, 14) notes, “violence towards domesticated animals is routinized, systemic, and legitimized. It is embedded in structures of society, such as the nation state, and in formations of social domination.” Most importantly, as the ensuing discussion shows, this systemic violence against animals is inexorably linked to violence against humans.

Even prior to the creation of CAS, Mason (1993) demonstrates how the process of civilization created this connection between violence against animals and violence against humans. Before civilization and the development of agriculture, humans regarded animals as part of their living world. However, once humans developed agriculture about 10,000 years ago, they separated from other animals and constructed themselves as superior beings. Mason argues that once humans detached from and felt superior to nature, they lost their sense of connection to other life forms, which depleted their empathy. Ultimately, this lack of empathy for other species generated the conditions that allowed other forms of oppression and violence to occur.

Since Mason (1993), CAS scholars have explicated ways in which the exploitation of animals is deeply interconnected with one of the most egregious forms of international violence – colonization and genocide (Colling, Parson, and Arrigoni 2011; Cudworth 2015; Johnson 2011; Nibert 2013; Nocella, Salter, and Bentley 2013; Patterson 2002). Nibert (2013) unlocks the hidden connection between the expansion of animal exploitation, which he calls “domesecration,” and the subjugation of indigenous people in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. In fact, expanding animal agriculture was a primary economic driver of these colonial exploits. Moreover, he maintains



that neoliberal capitalism currently promotes animal exploitation, especially with factory farming, which continues to damage health and deplete resources among oppressed people. As a matter of international relations, Nibert (2013) warns that superpowers will need to contend with the eventual security crises that domesecration will cause (see also Cudworth 2015).

One particularly controversial tenet of CAS links the mistreatment of animals with the Nazi Holocaust – one of the most infamous examples of violence and genocide in global history (Johnson 2011; Patterson 2002). Patterson (2002) carefully demonstrates the close connection between modern exploitation of animals and the Holocaust by tying the rise of white imperialism to the domination of wild animals. He uncovers links between Nazi feelings of superiority and humans' feelings of superiority over animals. Patterson reveals that the Nazis likened the Jews to animals when denigrating them, and he weaves the voices of Holocaust survivors and animal activists to reiterate this connection between human domination over animals and the Holocaust. In fact, he borrows his book title *Eternal Treblinka* from Jewish author, Nazi escapee, and vegetarian activist Isaac Bashevis Singer, who compared animal exploitation to the Holocaust. Patterson (2002, 51, 53) even attributes a quote to Theodor Adorno, "Auschwitz begins whenever someone looks at a slaughterhouse and thinks: they are only animals." However, Maurizi (2012, 68) suggests that this quote is apocryphal. Additionally, Johnson (2011) argues that Nazis were able to equate Jews to animals because people already had an image of animals as lower and worthy of slavery and extermination. Extending this brutalization to other humans was not a significant leap.

There is considerable debate over comparing the exploitation of animals to the Holocaust, and this debate became extremely salient when PETA launched its "Holocaust on Your Plate" campaign in 2003. Based on Patterson's (2002) work and Isaac Bashevis Singer's statements, PETA tied factory farming and the fur industry to the mindset that allowed for the Holocaust. Although many Jews supported this idea, most Jews (and non-Jews), as well as Jewish organizations, sharply criticized the campaign as offensive (Teather 2003).

In addition to problematizing how animal exploitation affects genocide and global violence, Colling, Parson, and Arrigoni (2011) employ a decolonization approach to liberating oppressed humans and nonhumans. Just as human-based decolonization seeks to emancipate people oppressed by neoliberal global capitalism, animal liberation needs to decolonize animals from the neoliberal global forces that oppress them. To frame their view of decolonization, Colling, Parson, and Arrigoni (2011) rely on Franz Fanon's classic book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968). First, Fanon argues that colonized people need to undergo a personal awakening that their condition results from their colonization. Of course, applying this idea to nonhumans initially seems odd because nonhuman animals lack the cognitive ability to process the concept of colonization. However, Colling, Parson and Arrigoni (2011) contend that colonized people should undergo a personal awakening that they are in "solidarity" with oppressed animals. For example, they show that when Europeans first engaged in colonization, they pushed animal heavy diets on their indigenous victims, and

these dietary changes have created negative health outcomes that continue through the present (2011, 58). Furthermore, Colling, Parson, and Arrigoni (2011) borrow from Fanon's endorsement of direct revolutionary action to combat decolonization and liberate animals.

Another strain of CAS scholarship uncovers the connection between animal exploitation and militarism – a key contributor to international violence. Salter (2013) combines Dwight Eisenhower's identification of the "military industrial complex" and CAS's notion of the "animal industrial complex" to develop the concept of the "military–animal industrial complex," which concentrates on animal exploitation in the military. Throughout civilization, humans have used animals in war; in fact, the cavalry was based on humans using horses in battle. Additionally, humans have used elephants, dogs, camels, and birds in their military conflicts, and, of course, these animals have been wounded and killed, just like human soldiers (Morrón 2013; Ramanathapillai 2013; Sorenson 2013). The military has also tortured and killed animals for the purposes of training and conducting medical research (Goodman, Gala, and Smith 2013). Governments have even memorialized nonhuman animals for their military service as a way to foment militaristic and nationalistic attitudes (Johnston 2012; Sorenson 2013, 40–42). Andrzejewski (2013) extends this line of inquiry by carefully exposing how war causes environmental damage that still harms numerous species even after the cessation of conflict.

Finally, there is quantitative, empirical evidence that substantiates the connection between the mistreatment of animals and international violence. Tauber (2017) tests the relationship between how well nations treat animals and their score on the Global Peace Index, which measures the extent of domestic and international violence in most countries (Estes 2014; Institute for Economics and Peace 2018). This study finds that even after controlling for traditional variables that influence violence (economic freedom, political freedom, development, and corruption), the extent that a nation mistreats animals influences its levels of violence.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Tauber (2019) demonstrates quantitatively that, after controlling for traditional factors that

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<sup>1</sup> It bears noting that one might question the appropriateness of citing a quantitative study in a book on critical theory, given that critical theory in general and CAS in particular (Best et al. 2007; Best 2009; Twine 2012, 26) reject positivist empirical research. However, there is an emerging literature that endorses quantitative analyses to examine the social justice questions that critical theory generates, especially in the area of feminist critical international relations (Apodaca 2009; Caprioli 2004, 2009; Parisi 2009) and critical race theory (Covarrubias 2011; Covarrubias et al. 2018; López, et al. 2018; St. John 2007; Stage 2007; Teranishi 2007). Moreover, as CAS scholar/activists Glasser and Roy note (2014, 103), "That is not to say that there are no quantitative scientists and researchers who engage with CAS, but CAS does not privilege certain methodologies over others, advocating instead a pluralist approach that values the method(s) that can best answer a research question in a non-exploitive manner." Furthermore, one might question the idea of using state-based analysis. CIRT (e.g., Devetek 2009) and CAS (Best et al. 2007; Best 2009; Cudworth 2015) seek to move beyond the nation state. However, some feminist (e.g., Caprioli 2004) and green theorists (e.g., Eckersely 2004) note that the state will continue to be a relevant force in international politics; therefore, it cannot be ignored. In short, although they are uncommon in critical theory, country-based,

affect violent conflict deaths, the extent a nation exploits animals influences its rate of conflict deaths. In short, there is growing evidence of the connection between mistreating animals and human violence.

### **CAS and Sustainable Human Development**

Sustainability is another key area of international relations that intersects with CAS. Before proceeding to the discussion of CAS and sustainability, it is first necessary to explicate the concept of sustainability, which extends beyond environmental protection. As the earlier discussion of green theory (Carter 1999; Dobson 2000 Eckersley 2004) shows, even the definition of “environmentalism” is contested. Dobson (2000, 2) distinguishes between *environmentalism*, which advocates a “managerial approach to environmental problems ... that ... can be solved without fundamental changes in present values and patterns of production and consumption,” and *ecologism*, which “holds that a sustainable and fulfilling existence presupposes radical changes in our relationship with the nonhuman natural world, and in our mode of political and social life.” Critical theorists stress “ecologism” because of its more revolutionary approach that seeks to dismantle the systems that damage the environment.

Furthermore, the field of global politics closely associates sustainability with international development. Traditional international development studies (e.g., Rostow 1959, 1990/1960) concentrate solely on income and technological advancement, but Sen (1999, 1985, 1984) and Haq (1995) revolutionized the understanding of development by including other concepts, such as political freedoms, health, educational attainment, economic equality, and gender equality. Sen in particular focuses on “capabilities,” which he (1999, 18) defines as the power of “persons to lead the kinds of lives they value – and have reason to value.” In short, scholars and practitioners think of development as “Human Development.” Haq (1995, 76–92) combines this notion of “Human Development” with ecological concerns to promote the idea of “Sustainable Human Development,” which, according to Haq (1995, 78), “puts people at the centre of the environmental debate.” In short, despite Haq’s anthropocentric statement, the concept of “Sustainable Human Development” (SHD) provides a comprehensive perspective of sustainability that includes environmental quality, health, equality, and political freedom.<sup>2</sup>

A number of scholars (Boggs 2011; Mason 1993; Fitzgerald and Pellow 2014; Nibert 2013) reveal the connection between CAS and SHD. Recall Mason’s (1993) argument that once civilized humans dominated nature (including nonhuman

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statistical analyses can demonstrate a relationship between the treatment of animals and human violence, which complements both the fields of CAS and CIRT.

<sup>2</sup> Although critical theorists contend that sustainable development programs, especially the ones sponsored by international organizations, do not benefit the working class (Deutz 2014) or poor nations (Doyle 1998), scholars and policy makers in the field of international relations still regard SHD as an important goal. Therefore, SHD is a useful concept to explain how animal exploitation damages sustainability.

animals) they lost their empathy with the natural world. He also explains how this lack of empathy with nature has led to significant environmental degradation. Additionally, Boggs (2011) and Nibert (2013) show that global, neoliberal capitalism's commodification of animals has not only brutalized animals, but it has also degraded the environment by causing pollution and climate change and damaging human health by spreading disease and foisting unhealthy diets. Finally, Fitzgerald and Pellow (2014) uncover the intersections among the treatment of animals, feminism, and the environment.

Even without adopting a CAS framework, there is substantial scientific evidence that mistreatment of animals affects SHD. For example, although one might expect that treating animals humanely increases costs and hinders economic growth, evidence demonstrates that inhumane animal agricultural practices are actually economically inefficient. Meat production is highly uneconomical because it wastes water and other resources (Hoekstra and Chapagain 2006; Marlow et al. 2009; Ranganathan et al. 2016). It also increases food shortages because the amount of grain required to sustain animal agriculture could be used to feed more humans directly (Humane Society International 2008; Leitzmann 2003). In short, factory farming diminishes economic security and, because economic security is central to SHD, the exploitation of animals in agriculture unquestionably diminishes SHD. Furthermore, there is an increasing economic demand for products that do not harm animals (Keeling 2005; Lusk 2011; Napolitano, Girolami, and Braghieri 2010), and there is evidence that wildlife protection efforts, such as well-managed eco-tourism and animal-tourism, can increase some nations' economic development (Biggs et al. 2011; Gurung and Seeland 2011; Job and Paesler 2013; Rinzin, Vermeulen, and Glasbergen 2007; Spenceley 2008).

Additionally, there is considerable scientific evidence connecting large-scale animal agriculture, which severely harms animals, to significant environmental damage – another major component of SHD. Factory farming, which creates tremendous waste and requires extensive fossil fuel, generates pollution and contributes to global climate change (Carlsson-Kanyama and Gonzaláz 2009; Eshel and Martin 2006; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 2006; Marks 2001; Ranganathan et al. 2016). In fact, Eshel and Martin (2006) conclude that the difference between a plant-based diet and a meat-based diet has the same effect on greenhouse gas production as the difference between driving a sports utility vehicle and driving an average sedan.

Animal mistreatment affects human health, which is also essential for SHD. Key aspects of industrialized animal agriculture, including antibiotic overuse and animals living in close quarters, cause disease in humans (Anomaly 2015). Moreover, animal agriculture overuses water resources, which causes water shortages that negatively affect human health (Hoekstra and Chapagain 2006). As a corollary, overwhelming evidence suggests that humans can tremendously improve health benefits and extend lifespans by adopting a vegetarian or vegan diet – or at least drastically reducing meat intake (Craig 2009, 2010; Leitzmann 2003; Rajaram and Sabaté 2000). Radnitz, Beezhold, and DiMatteo (2015) discover that people who adopt a vegan diet for

ethical reasons will stay vegan significantly longer than people who adopt a vegan diet for health reasons. In other words, avoiding animal consumption out of concern for the treatment of animals more reliably improves health than avoiding animal consumption because of health reasons. Furthermore, animal control policies and enforcement also influence human health, as inhumane and irresponsible treatment of dogs and the lack of institutionalized animal control lead to human public health problems (Beck, Loring, and Lockwood 1975; Berzon 1978).

Finally, Tauber (2018, 2019) discovers a statistical relationship between the extent that a nation mistreats animals and its overall level of SHD. Specifically, this work demonstrates that the extent a nation consumes meat, produces meat, and violates international animal protection agreements influences that nation's overall level of SHD, which is measured through the Human Sustainable Development Index (HSDI). The HSDI rates each nation according to a combination of income, life expectancy, education, and carbon emission per capita (Bravo 2014; Togtokh and Gaffney 2010). This relationship exists even after controlling for traditional factors that influence SHD, including urbanization, corruption, political freedom, savings rate, and health expenditures. These studies also control for a reciprocal relationship; that is, the extent that SHD influences the treatment of animals. In short, in addition to studies that reveal a relationship between animal exploitation and isolated aspects of SHD, there is also convincing evidence of a relationship between animal mistreatment and SHD as a whole.

## CONCLUSION

Critical theory has encouraged scholars to push boundaries and question their assumptions in order to recognize internal contradictions and understand oppression based on race, gender, sexuality, ability, nationality, and class. CIRT in particular examines how hierarchal power leads to oppression of colonized and subjugated people throughout the world. Although critical theorists have long ignored species, CAS has uncovered internal anthropocentric contradictions that even the most mindful and progressive critical theorists have overlooked. The exploitation of animals has led to brutalization and misery of nonhuman animals, just like the exploitation of humans based on race, gender, class, and national origin has brutalized people. In fact, the oppression of animals intersects with these other forms of oppression.

The field of international relations has certainly been guilty of this speciesist anthropocentrism, despite recent advances in posthuman international relations and green theory. Leading CAS scholars have shown how animal exploitation leads to violence, colonization and domination (e.g., Colling, Parson, and Arrigoni 2011; Cudworth 2015; Johnson 2011; Nibert 2013; Nocella, Salter, and Bentley 2013; Patterson 2002; Tauber 2017, 2019) and diminishes SHD (e.g., Boggs 2011; Mason 1993; Fitzgerald and Pellow 2014; Nibert 2013; Tauber 2018, 2019). Consequently, the field of international relations would certainly benefit from understanding more fully the intersection between animal exploitation and other forms of oppression.

In closing, this chapter suggests that CIRT scholars should conduct research that uncovers how the mistreatment of animals affects various outcomes in international relations. Additionally, scholars should examine in more detail how emotions connect the treatment of animals with outcomes for humans in a variety of global issues. This novel research agenda promises to yield exciting new appreciations of how the oppression of animals not only harms animals but also creates negative outcomes for humans.

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## 16. The politics of emotions in contemporary wars

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The literature on war and emotions addresses at least two different questions. The first pertains to how social actors manipulate the emotions of others in time of war. This is the case, for instance, when a given state targets civilian populations in order to generate emotions such as terror or fear, with the aim of producing some interesting military or political effect. Although this war tactic is probably as old as war itself, it was theorized in the 1920s by Giulio Douhet. This Italian military officer prophesized that ‘By bombing the most vital civilian centers [an aggressor] could spread terror through the nation and quickly break down its material and moral resistance’ (Douhet 1921, 1942 [1932], p. 37). Nowadays, the ‘strategic’ bombings and part of the so-called ‘psy-ops’ (psychological operations) conducted by Western military organizations are based on the same logic. Some non-state actors like Al Qaeda or the so-called ‘Islamic State’ also resort to this war tactic regularly.

The second research question does not approach emotions as ‘objects’ but, rather, as ‘subjects’ of war practices. The focus is on how emotions may ‘move’ – as per the etymology of the word emotion<sup>1</sup> – the soldiers’ bodies towards violence (or the refusal to perpetrate violence). For instance, an important thread in the literature has documented how ‘negative’ emotions such as hatred, anger or resentment fostered, on all sides, the ‘culture of violence’ that characterized both world wars (Bartov 1998; Dower 1986). In parallel to this, several authors have demonstrated that a consent to violence does not only take root in ‘negative’ emotions but, also, in the neutralization of ‘positive’ ones, particularly compassion. This is, typically, the case when the other is envisaged as an unimportant entity in bureaucratic thinking (Arendt 1963) or as a remote ‘thing’ one hardly sees, hears or experiences (Neitzel & Welzer 2013).

Both questions are equally interesting. However, since they are mostly unrelated, it seems difficult to address them both in the same text. In this chapter, I have chosen to mainly focus on the second question, namely that of the role of emotions in the naturalization or regulation of war violence.

As in the other chapters of this book, I will approach this question using a critical perspective. Critical theory (Roach 2007; Brincat, Lima and Nunes 2012) is based on the assumption that reality – in this case war and emotions – is ‘socially constructed’, meaning that nothing is ‘taken for granted, natural or inevitable’ (Basham, Belkin,

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<sup>1</sup> The word emotion is based on French verb ‘émouvoir’ (excite), which stems from Latin verb ‘emovere’. The latter has the same root as ‘movere’ (to move).

& Gifkins 2015, p. 2). Not only is this assumption a claim about the ontology of the social world, but it also meets the critical view that one needs to de-essentialize reality to pave the way for emancipation from power structures (Cox 1986 [1981]). The second characteristic of the critical approach is a consequence of this stance. Critical scholars posit that one cannot study a given practice by using the very *episteme* (assumptions, conceptual categories, etc.) that contributes to its naturalization. In other words, one has to exercise ‘epistemological vigilance’ (Bachelard 1938) vis-à-vis the mainstream discourse, either by approaching this discourse as an object of investigation (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, & Passeron 1983) or by opening oneself to all voices, including that of those who have no access to discourse (Spivak 1988).

When applied to the question of the politics of emotions in contemporary wars, this critical approach suggests taking some distance from a profane discourse that has become loud, in the West, since the attacks of September 11, 2001: the discourse on the ‘war on terror’. This discourse opposes two ideal-typical characters: the hateful ‘terrorists’ and the compassionate modern fighters. As pointed out by Chamayou, this mirror-game takes an extreme form when the authors of the ‘war on terror’ narrative oppose the suicide bombers who (allegedly) hate all lives (including their own) and the drone operators who (allegedly) kill without hatred and suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) after accomplishing their lethal missions (Chamayou 2013, p. 154). Like Chamayou, most critical scholars do not view this discourse as an analytical one. Rather, they interpret it as a discursive practice that contributes, along with all discursive practices, to constructing reality.

I will present the literature on the politics of emotions in contemporary wars in four steps. The first section examines more closely the deconstructivist ontology of emotions found in the critical literature. I will argue that Judith Butler’s concept of ‘frame of war’ helps to conceptualize this ontology (Butler 2010). The three following sections will present the main theories on the politics of emotions in contemporary wars. The second section will elaborate on the most intuitive account of the emotion/violence nexus: the paradigm of ‘racist’ violence. This states, in line with conventional wisdom, that ‘negative’ emotions such as hatred, anger or resentment are a driving force of violence. Although it has mainly been used in order to characterize the ‘culture of violence’ of past wars, this approach does have some heuristic power in present-day wars as well. In the third section, I will talk about a slightly less intuitive set of theories that is sometimes called the paradigm of ‘bureaucratic violence’. This constellation of works builds on the assumption that violence does not only take root in negative emotions but, also, in the neutralization of ‘positive’ ones (love, compassion, sympathy, etc.). In the last section, I will present a set of theories that has emerged more recently: the paradigm of ‘humanitarian violence’. The proponents of this approach try to understand how one can be violent whilst displaying some sympathy for the victims. The general argument is that this can occur when one conceives of one’s violent actions as a necessary means in order to avoid a ‘greater evil’ (Weizman 2012).

## IDENTIFYING THE 'FRAMES' THAT MEDIATE THE ACTORS' EMOTIONAL RELATION TO VIOLENCE

I mentioned in the introduction that critical scholars tend to conceive of reality as a social construct. This idea is not entirely intuitive when applied to emotions. Indeed, one may spontaneously assume that emotions are 'natural', 'biological' phenomena that transcend all cultures and all times. Critical students of emotions challenge this view by emphasizing the importance of historical and social contexts. They argue, furthermore, that most emotions are mediated by discursive structures (narratives, images, frames of interpretation) that are political through and through. This holds true, in particular, when talking about war emotions.

One can approach the political dimension of emotions by reflecting on how compassion is unequally distributed in wartime (Butler 2004, 2009, 2010). Butler takes the example of how most people in the West related to the attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11) and the ensuing 'war on terror'. Although the bombings and invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq killed far more innocent people than the attacks of 9/11, few Westerners can claim that they reacted with the same degree of compassion to the news that Afghan and Iraqi innocents had been killed as they did towards the victims of New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. Butler interprets this as the sign that one should distance oneself from the view that emotions are triggered by the mere receipt of news or experience of violence. 'Moral horror in the face of violence', she argues, is underpinned by implicit schemes of interpretation: as long as one ignores the existence of these schemes, one remains unable 'to give an account of why the affect of horror is differentially experienced' (Butler 2010, p. 49).

At first sight, these schemes of interpretation seem to be based on the classical realist opposition between the domestic and the international sphere. According to this line of thought, one sympathizes with the people of one's national community and shows little concern for the lives of those who do not belong to the community. Reality, however, is more complex. To start with, not all members of the national community receive the same amount of public attention and compassion. In all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, for instance, sexist domestic violence kills far more women than the so-called 'terrorist' violence. However, only the latter is framed as an existential threat that calls for the mobilization of all security agencies. Besides and symmetrically, compassion sometimes extends beyond national borders (Fassin 2005). This is the case, typically, when a country intervenes militarily for 'humanitarian' reasons (Butler 2010, p. 37). In order to deal with this complexity Butler proposes to call 'frames of war' those elements of 'discourse' – in Foucault's sense<sup>2</sup> – which mediate the social agents'

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<sup>2</sup> The Foucauldian notion of 'discourse' has led to many misinterpretations. Foucault does not use the term 'discourse' in a literal way, in the way that one terms a social actor's speech or writings 'discourse'. Foucault uses the notion of 'discourse' in a metaphorical way. The metaphor opposes 'language' – the medium that allows us to make an infinite number of statements – to 'discourse', the finite number of statements that are actually made. This leads him



emotional relation towards violence in a given war context. This notion helps to grasp at least two characteristics of the discursive structures that underpin war emotions.

First, the concept of frame of war is useful for revealing the selective and arbitrary nature of war emotions. In this regard, Butler notes that ‘frames of war’ are like photographic frames. They do not represent the whole reality. Rather, they are ‘always throwing something away, always keeping something out, always de-realizing and de-legitimizing alternative versions of reality, discarded negatives of the official version’ (Butler 2010, p. xi). Butler argues that the arbitrary and selective nature of ‘frames of war’ is perceivable in the fact that they divide populations into two categories: the ‘grievable’ and the ‘ungrievable’ lives. She defines the latter as follows: ‘Ungrievable lives are those that cannot be lost, and cannot be destroyed, because they already inhabit a lost and destroyed zone; they are, ontologically, and from the start, already lost and destroyed, which means that when they are destroyed in war, nothing is destroyed’ (Butler 2010 p. xix).

She illustrates this by taking the example of how the Israeli mainstream media presented the war in Gaza in 2008–2009. Each of the 13 Israeli deaths (combatants and non-combatants) were reported in the media in an obituary-like narrative. The 1400 Palestinian victims, however, received no such attention. Men were presented as combatants, women victims as ‘collateral damage’, and the children as ‘human shields’. Butler notes that this last expression undermines all chances of identification: ‘We are asked to believe that those children are not really children, are not really alive, that they have already been turned to metal, to steel, that they belong to the machinery of bombardment, at which point the body of the child is conceived as nothing more than a militarized metal that protects the attacker against attack’ (Butler 2010, p. xxvii).

Second, the concept of ‘frame’ appears useful in conceptualizing the fact that the discursive structures that mediate the agents’ emotional relation to violence are like the interpretive ‘frames’ studied by Goffman: they are vulnerable. In this respect, Goffman discusses the possibility of ‘frame breaking’ (Goffman 1974, p. 345). According to Butler, situations of frame breaking occur ‘if soldiers fail to be interpellated by the visual and narrative accounts of the wars they fight’. When this happens, Butler argues, ‘they start to lose faith in what they do, claim to be ill, go AWOL [absent without leave], request a transfer, stop working, or simply leave’ (Butler 2010, p. xv).

One may fairly object that soldiers rarely behave like the ideal-typical ‘citizens in uniform’ that the Bundeswehr – today’s federal defense force of Germany – officially presents as its trademark (Leonhard 2019). Indeed, they rarely ‘go AWOL, request a transfer, stop working, or simply leave’ when they are at war. This has

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to observe that the reality we live in – i.e. all that seems natural to us (our beliefs, the things we say or do, the instruments we use, etc.) – are made up of ‘statements’, i.e. words or things which carry social meaning. Methodologically, this entails identifying and interpreting the semiotic elements entailed in both ‘discursive’ (words, sentences, etc.) and ‘non-discursive’ practices (technologies, human artefacts, routinized actions, etc.). See Foucault (1969, p. 41).

led MacLeish to assert that ‘soldiers are caught in the middle of some of the most restrictive, over-determining, and glaringly vulgar power structures that it is possible to conceive of’ (MacLeish 2013, p. 14).

However, soldiers are not the only agents of war. Civilians also play a role and their relation to war is, presumably, more subject to change. Besides, it is important to acknowledge the possibility of ‘frame breaking’ from the (critical) perspective of the critique of violence. One can illustrate this by taking the example of the ‘enhanced interrogation methods’ used by the Bush administration in the context of the ‘war on terror’. In 2002, the Bush administration justified the use of violence against prisoners by putting forward a utilitarian argument: it would contribute to collect intelligence that would help to prevent future attacks. The Pentagon explained, in addition, that these ‘enhanced interrogations’ would be conducted in a ‘humane’, if not a fully legal way (Richter-Montpetit 2014).<sup>3</sup>

This frame of war was partly broken in 2006 when the US online magazine *Salon.com* published 1325 photographs and 93 videos that showed another aspect of the ‘enhanced interrogation methods’. The images showed detainees being abused and forced to perform sexual acts that conservative morality condemns: oral sex between men, sodomy, sex with animals, etc. The frame was further challenged when some detainees of Guantanamo managed to write and circulate poems on their own experience of those ‘enhanced interrogation methods’ (Falkoff 2007). Far from presenting these interrogations as a means of collecting information that would help to stop (terrorist) violence, the poems of Guantanamo reversed the perspective on who a perpetrator is and who a victim of violence is (Butler 2010, pp. 55–62).

Butler’s concept of ‘frame of war’ is useful for understanding all these aspects of war emotions. However, it says nothing about their ‘color’. Do ‘frames of war’ generate and/or minimize ‘negative’ emotions such as hatred, anger, revengeful feelings, etc.? Or do they, rather, impact ‘positive’ emotions such as love, compassion, empathy, etc.? I shall discuss these questions in the next three sections.

## WHEN PERPETRATORS ARE DRIVEN BY ‘NEGATIVE EMOTIONS’: THE PARADIGM OF ‘RACIST’ VIOLENCE

Scholars disagree when assessing what particular emotions play a central role at war and how they operate in present-day wars. The first approach emphasizes the importance of negative emotions such as hatred, anger, and revengeful feelings. The general idea is that this kind of emotion contributes to ‘moving’ – as per the etymology of the word ‘emotion’ – the soldiers’ bodies towards violence. At the level of representations, the key mechanism lies in the logic of ‘othering’. The latter can be

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<sup>3</sup> This narrative has been popularized by the Hollywood movie *Zero Dark Thirsty*. More generally speaking, it is a central element of the ‘Military-Industrial Media-Entertainment Network’ (Der Derian, 2009).

defined as ‘the act by which difference is constituted as an inferior other’ (Guillaume 2011, p. 3). The logic of othering is pervasive in most war propaganda discourses that demonize the enemy.

This approach has also been used in order to shed some light on those contemporary wars that have a strong ethno-nationalist basis. This paradigm fuels, for instance, the mainstream explanation for the genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda. The narrative states that the Hutu and Tutsi identities, constructed during the colonial period, were exacerbated in the early 1990s when the ‘Hutu power’ government launched an intense propaganda campaign that portrayed the Tutsi as ‘under men’ and animals, notably ‘cockroaches’. According to Jean-Pierre Chrétien and Marcel Kabanba, this propaganda campaign formed the discursive underpinning of the genocide that took place between April and July 1994 (Chrétien & Kabanba 2013). These authors further point out that the propaganda campaign drew upon an imaginary – the ‘Hamitic ideology’ – which reproduced the old European racist opposition between ‘Aryans’ and ‘Semites’ in the Rwandan context.

The logic of ‘othering’ does not always draw upon such racialist schemes. It can also be based on the notion that some groups are culturally inferior to others. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein have coined the notion of ‘cultural racism’ or ‘neo-racism’ to account for those world visions which hierarchize populations by positing that some cultures are superior to others (Balibar & Wallerstein 1991, p. 21). A typical example is the (neo)colonial view that Europe is more developed, culturally, than most other parts of the world, and that it is her ‘burden’ – or the White man’s – to correct this inequality by exporting civilization overseas (Hobson 2012).

Now, several post-colonial theorists have highlighted that the present-day wars waged by the US and its allies often result from this logic of othering where ‘scientific racism has receded (though not disappeared) with cultural racism forming the mainstay of Eurocentrism’ (Hobson 2007, p. 105). This is the case, typically, when the Western war rhetoric presents the Western soldiers as ‘white men saving brown women from brown men’. This Orientalist (Said 1979) trope was not only central during the British colonization of India (Spivak 1988) but also contributed to justifying the US-led war in Afghanistan in 2001 (Ayotte & Husain 2005). More generally, as noted by Barkawi and Stanski, ‘the public discourses of the War on Terror are suffused with orientalism. Law abiding, Christian and Western civilization is threatened by “mad mullahs” who hail from an East ever-resistant to modernity and who use violence in ways that violate the most fundamental ethical protocols of armed conflict’ (Barkawi & Stanski 2013, p. 1). This neocolonial logic of othering generates a neocolonial politics of emotions, ‘a combination of cruelty and compassion that sophisticated social institutions enable and encourage’ (Asad 2007, p. 3).

The aforementioned studies posit war rhetoric as an important vector of the current politics of negative emotions. These studies have been criticized, but also complemented, by those authors who have called for a more sociological and pragmatic approach to the emotion/war nexus. Their general argument is that emotions are not only constructed by civilian powers before the decision to go to war, but are also ‘generic to wartime’ (Barkawi 2004, p. 135).

This idea is central, for instance, in a component of René Girard's theory of 'mimetic violence' built in a series of his books, among which are *Violence and the Sacred* and *The Scapegoat* (Girard 1979, 1989). Girard's point of departure is that many conflicts take the form of 'vicious circles of violence'. He explains this common pattern by pointing to a general mechanism: most conflicts are violent interactions in which it is difficult to determine who 'cast the first stone', and in which most parties tend to interpret the enemy's violence as primary and unjustifiable. As a result, one tends to represent the enemy as a cruel person and, consequently, develop resentment, anger or even hatred. According to Girard, this symmetrical pattern quickly leads to a vicious circle. Furthermore, he posits that this vicious circle has no reason to stop unless violence is directed towards a scapegoat or appeased through rituals of justice or reconciliation.

In an article published in the French newspaper *Le Monde* in November 2001 (Girard 2001), Girard pointed out that this cognitive mechanism is at play in what is called, in the West, the 'war on terror'. It is this mechanism that explains the 9/11 attacks. Indeed, from the perspective of their perpetrators, these attacks aimed at responding to the US military presence in the Middle East and the violent operations conducted in the Muslim world, such as the bombing of the Al Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Sudan in 1998. However, the US government did not interpret it that way. Rather, it framed the violence of the 9/11 attacks as 'primary' and non-sensical and decided, consequently, to take revenge by invading Afghanistan.

Girard did not believe that, in the case of the crisis that followed the 9/11 attacks, violence could be contained through a scapegoat mechanism or some legal action. On the contrary, he anticipated that a vicious circle of violence would ensue. So far, he has not been proven wrong. Indeed, the US and some of its allies have continued the 'war on terror' in Iraq. In response to the military actions of the US-led coalition, two attacks were subsequently carried out in Madrid and London in 2004 and 2005. Thus, the frequency of 'terrorist' attacks has increased (Braithwaite 2015) and new counter-terrorist wars have been launched in Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, and other countries. Today, no end to this vicious circle of violence is in sight (Bertrand & Delori 2015). As Souillac pointed out, following Girard, mimesis has reached the point where 'the cycle of defense, attack, and counterattack allows the conflict to take on a separate life, and even value, of its own, beyond the original cause of the conflict' (Souillac 2014, p. 346).

## WHEN ACTORS CANNOT POSITIVELY IDENTIFY WITH THE VICTIMS: THE PARADIGM OF 'BUREAUCRATIC VIOLENCE'

In the previous section I presented the studies that assume that 'negative' emotions such as hatred, anger or resentment are the driving force of violence in wartime. These approaches have been challenged by authors who argue that one does not need to hate the other to feel able to kill the latter. This ability can occur through

cold-dehumanization or, to put it differently, through the neutralization of the ‘positive’ emotions (empathy, sympathy, compassion ...) that one experiences when one ‘recognizes’ the other as an *Alter-Ego* (another Self).

This alternative account of the emotion/violence nexus emerged in the 1960s when some European thinkers tried to understand the process that led to the Holocaust. These scholars wanted to gain a more precise understanding of what seemed specific to this genocide, namely, its organized, planned, industrial and bureaucratic nature. Arendt made an important contribution to this debate in her famous essay *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (Arendt 1963, p. 276). The famous subtitle of the book – *A Report on the Banality of Evil* – stems from the notion that Eichmann was neither particularly sadistic nor racist. Rather, he was, according to her, a typical bureaucrat who obeyed orders and had no reflective thought on the moral consequences of his actions: ‘The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal.’

Arendt’s book led to important debates within academia and, also, in the mainstream media. Some historians and intellectuals thought that her argument concerning Eichmann himself was not absolutely accurate. According to Jacob Robinson, for instance, Arendt committed a moral and epistemological error by presenting Eichmann as a mere bureaucrat who obeyed orders. Indeed, this was Eichmann’s very line of defense during his trial. Yet there might well be a gap between justifications and motivations, especially when the former is made in a court of justice. In reality, Robinson argued, Eichmann was far more anti-Semitic and sadistic than what he said to his judges (Robinson 1965).

Arendt did not entirely discard this critique but argued that her study helped to understand a more general mechanism, namely the fact that human beings often participate in violent operations because they simply lose sight of the moral consequences of their actions. She argued, moreover, that modern bureaucracies contributed to this logic: ‘The greater the bureaucratization of public life, the greater will be the attraction of violence. In a fully developed bureaucracy there is nobody left with whom one could argue, to whom one could present grievances, on whom the pressures of power could be exerted’ (Arendt 1969, p. 18). In this debate, Arendt found an ally in the person of Stanley Milgram. From 1960 to 1963 Milgram conducted experiments on how people reacted when someone in charge asked them to inflict suffering on a defenseless person. Milgram’s findings validated Arendt’s argument: only few rebel when they are told to be violent against others, even when the justifications do not make any sense (Milgram 1974).

Arendt and Milgram’s paradigm of ‘bureaucratic violence’ was further developed by thinkers from the Frankfurter school of sociology (Roach 2007) such as Axel Honneth (Honneth 2007), postmodernists like Zygmunt Bauman and, more generally, by ‘recognition theorists’ (Levinas 2001; Ricoeur 2005). These authors have

revisited the Marxist notion of 'reification'<sup>4</sup> and argue that the latter does not only affect the Self, who becomes unable to act as a creative agent but, also, how individuals relate to each other. Following this line of thought, reification is the discursive process through which a person becomes framed as a 'thing', i.e. as something that one neither hates nor empathizes with. French philosopher Levinas made an imaginative contribution to this approach by putting forward the metaphor of the face. By erasing faces, modernity contributes to undermining the ethical obligation to consider the Other as another Self (Levinas 2001).

Now, several critical scholars have relied on this framework and emphasized that the recognition of Alter as an Alter-Ego has become unlikely in contemporary wars. Many of them have done so by uncovering how language can contribute to preventing the non-violent and ethical encounter conceptualized by Levinas. For instance, Cohn has conducted an ethnographic study among the civilian 'defense intellectuals' who developed the American nuclear deterrence theories at the end of the Cold War. At the time, the US and the Soviet Union possessed more than 10,000 nuclear warheads which were, on average, 100 times as destructive as the Hiroshima bomb. Consequently, Cohn takes a critical perspective on these nuclear theories and asks the following question: in which world does one have to live in order to believe, as nuclear deterrence theorists do, that 'it is safe to have weapons of a kind and number it is not safe to use' (Cohn 1987, p. 687). Her main finding is that nuclear deterrence theories make sense within a particular sociolect, the 'techno-strategic language', whose main characteristic is its high degree of abstraction. She points out, for instance, that defense intellectuals talk about nuclear explosions by using periphrases such as "first strikes", "counterforce exchange", "limited nuclear war", etc. (Cohn 1987, p. 688). She argues that this language is the antonym of poetic language. It euphemizes violence and says nothing about the potential human and emotional consequences of a nuclear explosion (Cohn 1987, p. 689). She notes, reflexively, that this language impacted her own framing of nuclear warfare: 'The more conversations I participated in using this language, the less frightened I was of nuclear war' (Cohn 1987, p. 704).

Hugh Gusterson's study on 'nuclear rites' provides additional insight into another vector of the reifying trends at play in nuclear weaponry, namely technological fetishism (Gusterson 1998). Gusterson conducted an ethnographic study among the scientists and engineers of the Livermore laboratory (California), i.e. the institute where most US nuclear weapons are produced. Like Cohn, Gusterson observes that these agents of the nuclear weaponry system believe in nuclear deterrence: 'The laboratory is organized ideologically around a central axiom, accepted by liberal and conservative weapon scientists alike, that nuclear weapons are weapons so terrible that their

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<sup>4</sup> In Marx's work, reification refers to a historical process whereby individuals lose their subjectivity and expressive power. So defined, the notion of 'reification' appeared as a by-word for 'alienation'. It is best exemplified by the shift from handicraft to industrial production and from the craftsman to the worker. Whereas the craftsman can see the result of his/her work, the worker's expressive power gets lost into the division of labor.

only function is to deter wars, not to fight them, and that it is therefore ethical to work on them' (Gusterson 1998, p. 220). Gusterson addresses the question raised by Cohn a decade earlier: he investigates the social construction of the representation of nuclear weapons as 'deterrent' and, therefore, 'peace' weapons. He observes, in line with Cohn's seminal study, that language plays a central role in this respect: 'The discourse makes it hard for scientists to identify with the vulnerability of the human body in the nuclear age because this discourse, eschewing references to pain and suffering, euphemistically figures damaged bodies as numbers or in the imaginary of a broken machinery, while encouraging a romantic identification with the fetishized power of high technology machines' (Gusterson 1998, p. 220). Yet Gusterson brings an original and additional contribution in his analysis of what he calls the 'nuclear rites' of scientists and engineers. He defines 'rites' as sociologists of religions would do, namely as repetitive behaviors through which believers 'embody' their beliefs. Gusterson shows that the scientists and engineers who work at Livermore laboratory perform ritual practices on various occasions: when they join the laboratory, when they get their security clearance, when they attend their first nuclear test, etc. During each rite, the faces of the potential victims of nuclear explosions are, literally, absent. Indeed, the nuclear rites work like religious rites. Their function is not to represent the reality they refer to but, rather, to delineate the borders of the community of those who believe in the moral character of the bombs.

Starting from similar premises, Christophe Wasinski has shown that reification is not specific to nuclear deterrence theory but a key feature of 'strategic thinking' in general. More precisely, Wasinski has studied the key texts of 'Euro-Atlantic' strategic thinking since the seventeenth century, particularly those which addressed the issue of the 'art of war'. He observes that this literature shows a high degree of homogeneity and that it 'borrows much from the Renaissance "geometrism"' (Wasinski 2010, p. 84). Far from being neutral, this framing of war 'generates the social conviction that the use of military force is not only technically possible but, also, potentially useful' (Wasinski 2010, p. 11). Like Cohn before him, Wasinski proceeds by observing that this distortion becomes noticeable when one thinks of what the frame does not show, namely violence and, more precisely, its consequences on human beings: 'the social belief in the utility of the use of force may not only stem from the accumulation of factual evidence (the fact that some given military operations "worked") but also from a particular way of talking about military violence, which proves to also be a way of keeping silent about suffering' (Wasinski 2010, p. 12).

This approach, which consists in uncovering the reifying power at play in modern fighting, has met with new success in the context of the so-called 'revolution in military affairs'. This expression refers to the fact that Western warfare has undergone some changes since the introduction in the 1990s of new technologies such as remote-control systems and guided munitions, which make it possible to wage war and kill from a distance. Although armed drones provide an ideal-typical illustration of this tendency, it is important to note that several other technologies make it possible to wage war and kill from a distance. For instance, fighter-bomber jets were and have been used extensively by countries like the US, the UK and France

in Yugoslavia (1995), Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan (since 2001), Iraq (since 2003), Libya (since 2011), Mali and Sahel (since 2013) and Syria (since 2014–15). During each of these wars, the US, UK and French air forces have dropped bombs from altitudes such that they made it almost impossible for their enemies to inflict any damage on them. This has resulted in a highly asymmetrical distribution of violence. Whereas they have dropped hundreds of thousands of bombs and probably killed as many people, not a single American, British or French airman has been killed during any of these operations. Consequently, it is possible to talk about a ‘new Western way of war’ (Shaw 2006) whereby air power in general (not only drone warfare) has become the main instrument.

Hence, several critical scholars have tried to understand how drone operators and air force pilots make sense of the violence they perpetrate (Allinson 2015; Chamayou 2013; Gregory 2015; Hippler 2014; Holmqvist 2013). Part of this literature has addressed the question of de-humanization and reification. Most of these studies converge in assessing that the aforementioned new war technologies add another dimension to the reifying dynamics encapsulated in the ‘old’ way of war. Thus, Frédéric Gros has highlighted that these new technologies shape an economic framing of war where ‘death is no longer exchanged. Rather, it is distributed, sowed, calculated’ (Gros 2006, p. 223). Parallel to this, Der Derian and Kaplan have argued that these new technologies contribute to erasing the boundary between reality and fiction (Der Derian 2009; Kaplan 2015). A similar argument is found in the literature on the ‘play-station’ mentality of drone operators. Thus, a plethora of books and articles point out that the victim of drone strikes is ‘reduced to an anonymous simulacrum that flickers across the screen’ (Pugliese 2011, p. 943) or that drone operators are ‘morally disengaged from [their] destructive and lethal actions’ (Royakkers & van Est 2010, p. 289).

## SHOWING A DEGREE OF COMPASSION TO EVERYONE: THE PARADIGM OF ‘HUMANITARIAN VIOLENCE’

The previous sections presented the most classical approaches to the dialectic of war and emotions dialectics. To a certain extent, one could say that the figure of Eichmann haunts this critical scholarship. Like Eichmann (the ideal-typical character portrayed by Arendt or the real person) the agents of war are said to be unable to see the ‘human face’ of the people they kill, either because they hate them (the second section above) or because they reify them in a colder way (the third section above). In the following paragraphs I will present an approach that has emerged more recently: the paradigm of ‘humanitarian violence’ (Weizman 2012).

Agents of ‘humanitarian violence’ do not hate the people they kill. Nor are they entirely indifferent to their fate. They know that they perform an evil act when they kill innocent people, but they consider that it is sometimes necessary to do so in order to prevent a greater evil from occurring. The reason why they can (logically) think in that way lies in the fact that they have an economic approach to morality and vio-



lence. They reject the Manichean view that actions are either good or evil and adopt, instead, the principle of the lesser evil. Weizman defines this rationale as follows: ‘The principle of the lesser evil is often presented as a dilemma between two or more bad choices in situations where available options are – or seem to be – limited. The choice made justifies harmful actions that would otherwise be unacceptable, since it allegedly averts even greater suffering’ (Weizman 2012, p. 6).

Weizman shows that this rationale works at all levels of present-day Western wars. In terms of war rhetoric, the most obvious illustration is the discourse on the ‘humanitarian wars’. Indeed, the notion of ‘humanitarian war’ implies that it is morally justified to wage war against a given state if this violence helps to prevent or stop greater violence framed as human rights violation. Although this rhetoric is hardly new, a more modern and powerful formulation emerged in the 1980s when some French doctors and other humanitarian activists coined the notions of ‘right to intervene’ and, then, ‘duty to intervene’. In the 1990s, this rationale was used to justify the US/NATO wars in Somalia (1994), Yugoslavia (1995), and Kosovo (1999). It was given a legal basis in 2005 when the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the principle of ‘responsibility to protect’. It was further used when NATO intervened in Libya in 2011, France in Mali in 2013, and the US, France and the UK in Syria in 2014.

The humanitarian principle of the lesser evil is also central in the justification of some war practices. For instance, Mélanie Richter-Montpetit has analyzed how the Bush administration developed a legal basis for the policy of torture implemented from 2002 to 2008 in the context of the ‘war on terror’ (Richter-Montpetit 2014). The legal framework relied, first, on the characterization of the detainees as ‘unlawful combatant’. As stated in the Pentagon directive of February 7, 2002, this implied that ‘none of the provisions of Geneva apply to our conflict with Al Qaeda in Afghanistan or elsewhere throughout the world’ (Richter-Montpetit 2014, p. 49). On August 1, 2002, another Pentagon document specified what US soldiers and CIA officers were authorized to do (or not) when interrogating a prisoner. The key idea was that the amount of suffering and humiliation inflicted was to be proportional to the objective. If the information that the soldiers hoped to collect had little value, they were to use the minimum amount of violence. If it had ‘high value’, they might go as far as inflicting ‘the pain accompanying serious injury, such as organ failure, impairment of body function, or even death’ (Richter-Montpetit 2014, p. 49).

Weizman takes a critical stance vis-à-vis the humanitarian principle of the lesser evil. In line with Arendt (Arendt 1994 [1954]), he notes that, ‘politically, the weakness of the argument has always been that those who choose the lesser evil forget very quickly that they chose evil’ (Weizman 2012, p. 27). Whatever one may think, philosophically or politically, about the rationale of the lesser evil, it is important to note that it does not only operate at the level of discursive practices but also as part of some concrete apparatuses (‘dispositifs’ in Foucault’s sense) that contribute to naturalizing the notion that it is morally justified to cause evil in order to avoid greater evil.

The notion that concrete apparatuses may convey meaning lies at the core of modern science and technology studies (STS). Indeed, specialists of STS build on the observation that technologies are not neutral. As social artefacts, they carry the meaning(s) that their inventors put into them. Besides, they have some impact on how their users make sense of the world. Finally, their users may attribute all sorts of qualities to them, including moral ones. The reason for this lies in the fact that the terms ‘technology’ or ‘technical’ are misleading. Some users do not conceive of the objects that they manipulate as technical because ‘the term applies to a regime of enunciation, or, to put it another way, to a mode of existence, a particular form of the exploration of being – in the midst of many others’ (Latour & Venn 2002, 248). The notion of ‘moral technology’ (Ophir 2002) is useful in order to grasp how some social agents may project moral values onto the instruments they manipulate.

One ‘moral technology’ plays a central role in contemporary Western wars: the so-called ‘rules of engagement’ (ROE) (Delori 2014, 2019). These rules take the form of (written) texts which state the circumstances under which the soldiers, airmen, and drone operators are authorized to open fire. Belief in the ‘moral’ value of these technologies stems from the fact that their users perceive them as invitations to ‘control’ or ‘moderate’ violence. This framing stems from the fact that the ROE translate the key principles of International Humanitarian Law into concrete military procedures. For instance, they provide a concrete and operational translation of the ‘proportionality’ principle by stating how many ‘non-combatants’ the Western military are authorized to kill – or put at risk – in order to destroy a given military target. In this regard, the so-called ‘non-combatant casualty cut-off value’, or NCCV, is a central value in contemporary Western war. A NCCV = 0 means that that the soldiers, airmen, and drone operators should put no ‘non-combatant’ at risk. A NCCV = 10 means that they are allowed to open fire if they estimate that they will not kill more than ten civilians.

NCCV depends, notably, on two factors. It depends, first, on the subjective assessment of the ‘value’ of civilians. In this respect, the most important variable is geographical or/and racial. When a ‘terrorist’ attack occurs on the territory of a Western state, the NCCV used by police and military forces is close to zero, meaning that they do not want to put at risk any Western civilian. When they operate in the non-Western world, however, the NCCV rises significantly. This is why Western forces use different instruments depending on whether they operate in a Western country or in other parts of the world: elite commandos on the ground in the former case, armed drones and fighter-bomber jets in the latter.<sup>5</sup>

Second, the NCCV depends on the subjective assessment of the value of the military target. During the US war in Iraq, for instance, the ROE allowed for an NCCV of 29 for each ‘high-value military target’. This meant, in practice, that pilots were

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<sup>5</sup> It is important to stress, in this respect, that the choice between these two security instruments does not result from technical considerations. As the assassination of Bin Laden illustrates, Western governments do not hesitate to send elite troops on the ground when they deem this necessary.

allowed to kill up to 30 civilians in order to eliminate a high-ranking member of 'Al Qaida' or a senior official of Saddam Hussein's regime. When the target is just a rank-and-file jihadist, the NCCV falls significantly. This means, in practice, that the value of non-Western human lives is a function of the target's value. The framing of a person as a 'high-value military target' means that more people situated nearby can be killed or, at least, put at risk.

Of course, it is impossible to calculate precisely the number of non-combatant casualties that a bomb will result in. There are too many uncertainties: Is this the right target? Will the bomb really hit it? Is this moving figure a child or a dog? etc. However, these uncertainties disappear when the 'moral technologies' associated with ROE come to the fore. Since the air war in Kosovo in 1999, most NATO aircraft have been equipped with a software program called 'FAST-CD' (Fast Assessment Strike Tool-Collateral Damage). The software helps to estimate the 'collateral damage' and checks whether it is above the NCCV stated in the ROE. As Pomarède explained, it does so by representing the targeted area through concentric circles centered on the impact point. A number is assigned to each concentric circle. This indicates the probability for each person located within a circle's radius of being killed when the bomb explodes. At the impact point, the probability is generally 100 percent. Along the outermost circle, the probability drops to a few percentage points (Pomarède 2014). This kind of new technology helps to transform incalculable uncertainty into calculated risk. Weizman notes, in this respect, that the agents of 'humanitarian violence' are 'like the finance specialists who acknowledge the impossibility of prediction but do little else than calculate'. They are 'incessantly weighing their options and hedging their risks under the assumption of unpredictability and uncertainty' (Weizman 2012, p. 12).

This results in an ambivalent and paradoxical relation to mathematics. On the one hand, and as explained above, agents of humanitarian violence run tons of mathematical calculations. On the other hand, and paradoxically, the actual number of deaths and injuries hardly counts in the assessment of what is moral and what is not. For instance, the fact that the 'moral technologies' used by the Western military kill far more civilians than the indiscriminate violence perpetrated by 'terrorists' does not lead to any 'frame breaking' in Goffman's sense (Goffman 1974).

Two implicit schemes or 'frames' explain this paradoxical relation to mathematics and numbers. According to the first, the 'way' in which violence is perpetrated matters more than the actual level of violence. As Weizman puts it, 'it is the very act of calculation – the very fact that calculation took place – that justifies action' (Weizman 2012, p. 12). This logic is pervasive in the following excerpt from an interview with a pilot whose bomb just killed civilians. The civilians' death was not accidental. The pilot knew that his bomb would kill civilians. He decided to drop it because the number of civilians was inferior to the NCCV. Hence, the pilot explained: 'I didn't try to kill civilians. I focused on military targets and tried my very best every day to minimize civilian casualties' (Weizman 2012, p. 134). According to Weizman, this testimony is typical of 'the way the economy of violence structures the humanitarian present' (Weizman 2012, p. 134).

The second implicit assumption is at once humanitarian and un-democratic. It posits that although all lives matter in principle, some lives count more than others in practice. A micro-illustration of this rationale can be found in Delori's analysis (2014, 2019) of how French air force pilots recount their 'air support' missions, i.e. missions in which pilots drop bombs to save comrades-in-arms who are caught under enemy fire. These missions may involve killing more 'innocent people' than the actual number of Western combatants caught under enemy fire. However, this does not throw into question the pilots' self-representation as moral agents because the characters in their narratives, i.e. their 'comrades-in-arms' on the one hand and the 'collateral victims', on the other, are positioned at the opposite ends of 'economy of pity'.<sup>6</sup> They are all deemed 'human' in an abstract way but are not 'equally human'. Whereas 'comrades-in-arms' must be defended at all cost, the killing of (non-Western) 'collateral victims' can be framed as a tolerable sin through which greater evil can be prevented. As Asad pointed out, this is a reminder that the frame of 'humanitarian violence' is like any other frame of war. It is distorted by heavy power structures: 'The perception that human life has differential exchange value in the marketplace of death when it comes to 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' people is not only quite common in liberal democratic countries, it is necessary to a hierarchical global order' (Asad 2007, p. 94).

## CONCLUSION

From the above, it emerges that the politics of emotions in contemporary wars take, at least, three different forms. I have proposed to conceptualize them in terms of 'racist', 'bureaucratic' and 'humanitarian' violence. Each logic draws upon a specific representation/emotion nexus. Thus, the logic of 'racist' violence leads perpetrators to frame victims as inferior others and, therefore, as objects of negative emotions such as hatred, anger or resentment. The logic of 'bureaucratic' violence dehumanizes the victims in a colder way by undermining the positive emotions that one experiences when confronted with the suffering of an Alter-Ego (compassion, pity, empathy ...). Finally, the frame of 'humanitarian violence' draws upon a less Manichean politics of emotions whereby perpetrators show some compassion to everybody whilst identifying more with some people than others.

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<sup>6</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville coined the notion of 'economy of pity' in order to account for the fact that human beings experience compassion in a selective way. Tocqueville believed the democratic movement would lead to a democratization of compassion. Therefore, he associated selective compassion to the old regime. In *Democracy, Revolution and Society*, Tocqueville takes the example of Madame de Sévigné, a person that Tocqueville presents as the archetype of the gentle aristocrat of the old regime. Tocqueville argues that Madame de Sévigné does not hate anybody. However, Tocqueville argues, Madame de Sévigné is unable to feel compassion for anyone who is not an aristocrat (Tocqueville, 1980 [1835], p. 105).

One may alternatively describe the differences between these three frames of war in mathematical terms by observing that agents of ‘racist’ violence attribute negative value to the people they kill, that agents of ‘bureaucratic’ violence grant no value to their victims, and that agents of ‘humanitarian’ violence draw upon a more complex weighing of the value of human lives. Contrary to racists and bureaucrats, agents of ‘humanitarian violence’ grant some positive value to all lives. However, they consider that some lives count more than others. They infer from the above that it is rational, and even moral, to ‘kill’ or ‘let die’ the former in order to ‘enable’ the latter to live (Foucault 1997 [1976], p. 214). As shown above, the notion of ‘non-combatant casualty cut-off value’ encapsulates this positive but un-democratic framing in the ‘liberal way of war’ (Dillon & Reid 2009).

It is tempting, at first sight, to hypothesize that these logics operate in different cultures, spaces or times. Indeed, a well constituted narrative states that Westerners used to demonize or reify their victims in the past but that they have stopped doing so in the last few decades. If one was to follow this line of thought, one would consider that racist and bureaucratic violence characterize the old Western way of war and the current non-Western war practices, and that the frame of ‘humanitarian violence’ is typical of the ‘new’ Western way of war (Shaw 2006). Such a conclusion would be misleading. Indeed, it emerges from what precedes that most war practices show a certain degree of racist, bureaucratic and humanitarian logics. To quote only one example, each logic is present in the present-day Western wars, although they do not operate at the same level or with the same strength. Therefore, it seems more accurate to conceive of the three aforementioned framings as ideal-types in Max Weber’s sense, i.e. as abstractions that help us to shed some light on the different politics of emotions at war.

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## 17. Critical international relations feminism: the case of American Shia women

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Critical international relations (IR) feminists write about reflexivity by showing how their own research is politically and critically motivated. But, in many cases, this fails to capture the transformation of social relations. Indeed, as Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguascha explain, while critical IR theory focuses on resistance occurring, it falls short in locating the dynamics of agency and resistance at the grassroots or family level. Critical feminist scholars see all knowledge claims, whether made by academics or activists, situated within the system of power (Eschle and Maiguascha 2007). Postcolonial feminists, for instance, question the Western liberal norms that have helped structure the international order and universal recognition of women's rights and needs, such as the United Nations, and related treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Postcolonial feminists in this sense remain critical of the cultural production of knowledge, arguing that international institutions reinforce a neocolonial secular order and a Western-dominated, world economic system (Abu-Lughod 1991, 2013; Ahmed 1992; Badran 2009; Kardam 2004; Mir-Hosseini 1999; Mohanty 1988, 2003; Mohanty & Alexander 1996; Mohanty et al. 1991; Lorde 1983, 1984; Spivak 1988). For them, such institutions subordinate and marginalize the experience of women in developing countries by treating them as victimized, poor, ignorant, and needing to be "saved" (Abu-Lughod 1991). The aim of postcolonial feminist research is therefore about tying gender issues to spheres of influence within society and exposing the layers of oppression and avenues of empowerment that exist within non-Western societies (Salem 2013).

A Western (secular) view of gender in Islamic society tends to overlook these layers by treating religion as static, monolithic, and oppressive. Yet, by not considering the diverse interpretations of religion, in particular Islam, one tends to downplay how Islamic feminists advocate for gender justice by reinterpreting sacred texts in terms of their social circumstances and challenging the validity of patriarchal norms. As Abdolkarim Soroush argues, Islamic knowledge is based on interpretations of the *Quran* by fallible humans (male) who can be considered as "time and context-bound" (cited in Razavi 2006, p.1227). With more than 1 billion Muslims living around the world today, it is little wonder that there is no single code that applies to all Muslims. Islamic laws are perceived and practiced differently in Muslim communities across the globe due to significant theological and legal differences between various *mazhabs* or the main Muslim schools of thought (*Hanafi-Sunni*, *Maliki-Sunni*, *Shafii-Sunni*, *Hanabali-Sunni*, *Jaafari-Shia*). Within each of these *mazhabs*, there

are differing interpretations of the divine revelations. For example, polygamy and also *muta* or *sigha* (temporary marriages) are practiced differently across the *Ummah* (global Muslim community). From this angle, Islamic knowledge and its various schools of thought can be debated and reasoned in a variety of ways. Together, though, they represent a discursive space for understanding the diversity of opinions and pluralism within religious thought.

In this chapter, I will briefly discuss the configurations of this space by engaging postcolonial feminism and its critique of liberal feminism. I then examine the lived experiences of Muslim American Shia women, showing how they occupy a discursive space between Islamic gender complementarity (balance between the genders) and liberal gender equality norms. I argue that by living in the West these women are exposed to a variety of gender norms that they are consciously contesting and reasoning. They are also choosing from a “basket” of different and conflicting norms that reflect how their identities are shaped by their social environment (Hjarpe 1997; Roald 2003). Shia mosques in the US, in other words, provide an example that tests our ideas and theories about how norms are being transformed through critical dialogue at the mosque where new meanings are exchanged amongst practicing Muslims. These religious institutions in the West, I contend, provide new structures to study the power dynamics of justice based on Islamic gender norms.

## POSTCOLONIAL FEMINISM’S CRITIQUE OF LIBERAL FEMINISM

Postcolonial theories are primarily concerned with newly independent countries reclaiming their identity, culture and history from pre-colonial times in the pursuit of nationalism and forming modern states. By focusing on the agency of the colonized, postcolonial theorists have shown how colonized cultures continue to be subjugated to Western knowledge. But their efforts have largely centered around Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978, 1980), which has paid little attention to female agency and its contribution to nationalist movements. Women, in fact, have often been “used” in nationalistic struggles and revolutions to fight for independence, and then asked to go back to the private spheres of their homes. Uniting under the banner of nationalism has thus meant creating a female model or idol of motherhood, a gendered idea of citizenship (Kandiyoti 1991). In the Algerian war, for example, nationalism signified, among other things, the demand for more women’s rights (Lazreg 1994).

Postcolonial feminist scholars, therefore, have sought to inscribe their lived experiences in the struggle for equal justice, primarily by exposing the patriarchal biases embedded in political structures (Abu-Lughod 1991, 2013; Ahmed 1992; Badran 1999; Kardam 2004; Mohanty 1988, 2003; Mohanty & Alexander 1996; Mohanty et al. 1991; Spivak 1988). For them, women have experienced the effects of colonialism differently than their brothers. The “women question”, they claim, has often been used to justify colonial rule as a way of “protecting women” from practices such as

the wearing of the *hijab* (veiling), child marriage, and *sati* (immolating oneself after one's husband's death) (Abu-Lughod 1991; Ahmed 1992).

Many postcolonial feminist scholars became critical of Western liberal feminist thought in the 1960s. They took issue with the focus on white women, in particular with Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (Friedan 1963), which studied the experiences of white suburban housewives. Here, little, if any, attention was paid to the conditions encountered by women of color, or from non-Western cultures. Early white feminists tended to ignore the needs of colonized women, or the racial, cultural, socio-economic, religious and historical circumstances of women in the former colonies. In doing so, they reinforced a simplistic view of the postcolonial woman as ignorant, poor, uneducated, traditional, submissive and oppressed, in comparison to the Western woman as sophisticated, educated, and in control of her sexuality (Mohanty et al. 1991). In effect, they assumed that women across the globe possessed the same interests and desires. By not considering the range of voices of women of color (Spivak 1988), then, liberal feminists presumed that non-white women were not in a position to decide what was best for themselves (Mohanty et al. 1991). In other words, they applied the same standards used to combat their oppression to all women around the world, ignoring how racism and patriarchy were interrelated.

Postcolonial feminists have come to interpret this standardization as a subtle form of oppression. They have argued that women's lives differ according to social, economic, political and cultural relations and that, in order to promote the diverse representation of women's needs, the history of imperialism, colonialism and shifting structures of power need to be studied contextually (Abu-Lughod 1991, 2002, 2013). During the 1970s, critical feminists forged strong ties to socialists, Marxist radicals and blacks, who saw early liberal feminism as essentialist and focused only on the experiences of white bourgeois women. This resulted in a new wave of feminists, which included lesbians, African Americans, and other global women, many of whom were from developing countries.

In her essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Gayatri Spivak (1988) critically examines the ethical challenges of investigating a different culture through Western, "universal" concepts. In her view, Western feminist scholars have failed to show how Western knowledge could function as a form of cultural imperialism. Western feminist research is a product of this failure to the extent that it remains colonial and hegemonic in nature, or represents women from the developing world as "the barbarian 'Other'" versus the civilized European, and uses the narrative of "white men sav(ing) brown women from brown men" (Spivak 1988, 43).

Accordingly, early Western feminist scholars, including leftists and liberal feminists, produced, as Spivak argues, essentialist ideas that constructed one monolithic identity of Third World women as victims with no agency. Such Western bias, it could be said, justified the need for neocolonial regimes to maintain economic influence and power in the developing regions. For Spivak, this raises the question of how the subaltern, or those in the "Third World," could be studied in the absence of a Euro-centric bias. Similarly, Chandra Mohanty (1988) claims that Western liberal feminists offer a false and ethnocentric standard of gender progress by universalizing

the needs of women and ignoring their socio-historical contexts. Assuming that “Third World” women possess identical interests, goals and lived experiences, liberal feminism, she contends, ignores the social structures that contextualize their varied identities. By applying an overarching standard of patriarchy, they limit their research to a binary Western view of men as oppressor vs. women as victim with no historical or political agency. Patriarchy thus becomes a monolithic form of gender suppression. Furthermore, such “production” of the image of the “Third World woman” as oppressed helps maintain the illusion of liberal women or “First World” women’s autonomy and power: namely, that they are “secular, liberated, and have control over their own lives”, and that this is what all women want (Mohanty 1988, 74).

In order to work beyond these limits of Western liberal feminism, Saba Mahmood reinterprets the concepts of female agency, resistance, and meanings of liberation in terms of women’s lived experience (in the developing world). Mahmood describes alternative ways of thinking about women’s agency and disrupting the patriarchal system through conscious feminist resistance. For a woman to be truly free, as Mahmood writes, “her actions must be the consequence of her ‘own will’ rather than of custom, tradition, or social coercion” (Mahmood 2004, p. 11). Western feminism is thus misinformed when it assumes that there is a universal desire to be free from male structures of domination. Indeed, as Mahmood puts it, it “offers both a diagnosis of women’s status across cultures and a prescription for changing the situation of women who are understood to be marginalized, subordinated, or oppressed” (2004, p. 10). In this way, true freedom is about choosing one’s own desire. For example, Mahmood describes how in the 1970s white feminists advocated for breaking up the nuclear family, while African American feminists found justice in creating families as a way of distancing themselves from the legacy of slavery and genocide (Mahmood 2004; Lorde 1984). Self-fulfillment, then, varies across cultures, conveying the diverse lived experiences of women at the local and global levels. Indeed, as Ziba Mir-Hosseini writes, “gender roles and relations, and women’s rights, are not fixed, not given, not absolute. They are negotiated and changing cultural constructs, produced in response to lived realities, through debates that are going on all over” (1999, p. 6). The self is always being reconstructed, as people navigate the world and learn to distinguish themselves from “Others,” and within a web of power relations informed by gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, culture, religions, and all systems of difference (Abu-Lughod 1991). In short, the meaning of emancipation is relative, which is to say that gender cannot be reduced to any one overarching standard of patriarchy. Expanding debates on gender require locating women’s agency in non-Western societies.

It is important to note, then, that although I refer to Western liberal feminism as white feminism, and sometimes Western feminism, there is an awareness that the discourse is not singular, monolithic nor homogeneous. As Chandra Mohanty (1988) maintains, postcolonial feminists should also be aware not to lump together all Western feminisms as one and instead acknowledge that there are differences. The tendency to universalize terms such as “feminism,” “women’s rights,” “oppression,” “agency,” “equality,” and “justice” assumes that all people interpret these

terms through a common lens of human experience. But this needs to be seen as a Westernized assumption, that is, as a lens that registers only Western knowledge of others' experience. As such, it needs to be critically scrutinized through the historical, cultural, and local specificity of multiple feminisms, and the tensions that this signifies in relation to status-quo power structures.

In the next section, therefore, I shall seek to contextualize this overlooked discursive space of women's lived experience by building on Saba Mahmood's claim that "women's active support for socio-religious movements that sustains principles of female subordination poses a dilemma for feminist analysis" (Mahmood 2004, p. 5). As we have seen, Western liberal feminists tend to downplay the contingency of religion in the everyday lives of women; they only see women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Muslim communities through a pre-given or fixed lens of religion (Salem 2013). Instead of treating women in such societies as victims, feminist scholars need to focus on how women are active agents in Muslim societies and communities (Abu-Lughod 2013). Otherwise, they miss configuring the complex agency of women, that is, their particular social and cultural experiences, including how Islamic feminists and Shia women, in this case, draw on their religious practices to resist Western norms to reinterpret the *Quran* and *Hadiths* (words, habits, and actions of the Prophet Muhammad), and to challenge cultural patriarchy. In this sense, the CEDAW, which embeds the norm of gender freedom from harm, cannot always inscribe women's experiences, nor offer a critical venue for challenging the Euro-centric bias of liberal feminism. This is why we need to further contextualize the discursive dimensions of women's experience. Let us therefore turn to the case of the Shia women living in the United States.

## THE CASE STUDY: SHIA WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES

According to the 2011 US Mosque Study, there are approximately 7 million Muslims living in the United States with around 2,106 mosques, of which 7 percent of these mosques are Shia (around 147) (Bagby 2012, pp. 4–17). Being part of the greater Muslim *Ummah* and having exposure to both Western and Eastern values allows members of the Shia community to occupy a unique position in society. Yet as Muslims living in the United States, it is important to consider the political and social insecurity that these communities confront, and that makes the practice of their religion a risk to their lives. Choosing to attend mosque, for instance, is in itself an act of agency and even resistance to the growing Islamophobic sentiments in America. My aim here is to draw on multiple interview responses of Shia women to explain and understand this agency, especially as these women negotiate between their Islamic, American and other indigenous identities, all of which influence and give meaning to their norms. As we shall see, feminism, equality, discrimination, empowerment, etc., can mean something different to Shia women living in the United States versus their Muslim and non-Muslim counterparts in other parts of the world. I claim that these Shia women are consciously researching, debating, negotiating and choosing to

follow justice-based Islamic practices. To illustrate this, the following sections will elaborate on two themes: Islamic gender justice and cultural patriarchy versus Islam. The women interviewed in this study were all active members of a Shia mosque/ Islamic Educational Center located in Florida, which, as Arzoo Osanloo (2009) states, constitute “dialogical sites” where people are interpreting and developing their rights.

## GENDER JUSTICE VS. GENDER EQUALITY

Liberal feminism, as we have seen, seeks to “save” Muslim women by promoting gender equality as the only path to the liberation of women. This, however, only serves to marginalize the values and experiences of Muslim women. And it raises an important question: Is gender equality what all women in the world desire? If, as Saba Mahmood puts it, “the desire for freedom from, or subversion of, norms is not an innate desire that motivates all beings at all times, but is also profoundly mediated by cultural and historical conditions, then the question arises of how do we analyze operations of power that construct different kinds of bodies, knowledges, and subjectivities” that do not align with liberal politics (2004, p. 14). This idea can seem illiberal to those in the West; yet it calls attention to how freedom can function contingently, that is, how it can take root in societies and communities’ constructed identities and politics (Mahmood 2004, p. 15). Within the Shia community, the most common phrase in the interviews I conducted with individual Shia women was “Islam is about justice, not equality,” followed by “women are actually (given a) higher status in (the) *Quran*, so why be equal?” (Participant 25, 28 April 2017). Generally, when asked if they see differences between gender norms in Western versus Islamic societies, the response was that gender equality was a minimum standard and that Islam provides more rights for women.

Some of the women seemed annoyed with the notion of gender equality and the idea that feminism was mainly about sexuality. As Participant 14 expresses, “the only major difference would be that liberal feminism thinks that women are ‘freer’ when they are less modest in their dress and overtly sexual in their behavior. Islam sees a woman who guards against being sexually objectified as someone who has more freedom since they are not being used basically by our male dominated society” (7 April 2017). For these reasons, these Muslim women choose to dress modestly and some wear *hijab*, which as one interviewee describes:

is deemed social responsibility. Men notice more about women’s physical features ... equality pretty much goes out the door here ... they do have a tendency to pay attention to our bodily features before they recognize the intelligence in our brains. Especially if we enhance the physical elements. Anything anyone can do to keep work atmosphere “workable” is better. I feel Muslim women should pay heed to the *ayaahs* (verses) of the *Quran*. It helps to keep the opposite gender focused at work. Women liberation supporters could thus wear long pants and ties and loose coats and not knee-high skirts and tight blazers with low cut blouses. Let them dress like the men if they believe they are equal in all regards. I feel

a modest dress code is really important for all women not just Muslim women. (Participant 28, 5 May 2017)

In this way, Muslim women seem to avert the “male gaze,” which “prevents men or others from objectifying a woman and in a way that is right because it lets women determine who looks at us” (Participant 30, 19 May 2017; Mulvey, 1975). *Hijab* is a way that Muslim women desexualize themselves; it represents the religion and the chastity of the woman. When asked about what proper dress is for Muslim women, another participant explains that it is “something to respect herself. I am not a candy everybody can lick me. I need to respect myself to gain respect” (Participant 11, 31 March 2017).

These sentiments echo those of postcolonial feminists insofar as they reflect the deep interest in finding the connection between the promotion of gender equality and the neoliberal economic need for women to be in the workforce. Such deep interest is also expressed by Participant 27, who states:

Men and women are two totally different species so they are not equal except in piety. One is not better than the other ... the West talks about equality of women by bringing them to the work force and the military. The only reason they did this was to fill the gap due to missing males. There is no equality in the West. They won't even let mothers stay at home more than six weeks and won't even pay them whilst they raise their children. (5 May 2017)

On the other hand, if a Muslim woman works outside of the home, her money is her own. Her husband, in other words, has no rights to money and cannot ask what she does with her money. Her husband has to provide all the financial needs of the household in the manner that the woman is accustomed to. If she was raised upper-middle class with a maid, then her husband is obligated to provide this same life style. If she is not married, her father or eldest male in the family (if her father is dead) is “responsible” for providing for her. If a Muslim couple has a child, and the woman decides to breastfeed her child, she has the right to ask her husband for financial compensation. Her role as a mother is so important that it is treated as a worthy job. She is not even obligated to do any “house work,” as that is considered an occupation and she is not responsible for it (Participant 5, 24 March 2017). As Participant 14 further describes the positionality of gender in Islamic society:

Women are encouraged to become educated and productive members of society; yet they are still respected and held to high esteem for fulfilling natural roles such as mother and wife even though Western society looks down on women who are dedicated to fulfilling these kinds of roles. Islam also affords women property rights, rights of money and wealth, and rights as mothers ... The fact that Islam also places the responsibility of providing for the wellbeing of children (child support) squarely on the father without any responsibility being on the mother is also indirectly a woman's right. (7 April 2017)

This may seem very traditional to some; however, such behavior is dependent on the socio-economic status of the family in general, and how their practices can vary cross-culturally in the *Ummah*. At the most basic level, this constitutes an important

Islamic rule: namely, that a man is responsible for the wellbeing and financial support of his family.

On a similar note, the women who were interviewed considered other layers of issues that liberal feminists often ignore, as Participant 22 explains:

the way to strengthen the moral fiber of society is to support women in their role of motherhood and raising a family, which seems to have been tossed to the wayside in liberal feminism. I believe that women if they choose to become mothers can contribute greatly to society by raising individuals with good character – and unless they are given the support and recognition they deserve for this extremely difficult task then it is near impossible to be successful and it may leave feelings of regret, emptiness or un-fulfillment. Society has to truly respect and value the role of mothers and not treat it as an inconvenience to productivity. We don't just need equal pay, we need true women's rights to become anything we choose including mothers and not lose our jobs in the process. There should be an emphasis on keeping families together so there are fewer single mothers who are forced to work and leave their children in the care of others or be on welfare. And there should be more emphasis on extended family relationships and other relationships to provide support for women. (21 April 2017)

This woman is pinpointing key issues that women in America confront on a daily basis. These Muslim women can easily sympathize with their Afro-American, Latina-American, American-Indian immigrants and their life struggles. Their balancing act of motherhood and economic need therefore informs the everyday lives of women who live in America without social and political support.

Nonetheless, some women do not believe they should be judged by a male standard. Indeed as Participant 5 points out: “I am different than a man and I carry important things ... I think differently, because if we all looked at a problem the same way, we would never solve anything. There is a female way of looking at things and a male way. We might solve things differently because of our other attributes” (24 March 2017). As such, the belief in the uniqueness of gender roles and what individual qualities each person brings to the table suggest the need for more interrogation of gender justice and gender equality. It's an idea captured by Participant 12: “In Islam they say there is a difference between men and women and this does not mean it is a bad thing, it accepts that they are not equal. It does not mean you treat one worse than the other, treat them in the way that they are different. Sometimes you have to treat women even better” (31 March 2017).

In sum, Islam seems to provide Shia women with deep appreciation (even sensibility) of their rights. Through the above interviews, I was able to determine that these women are consciously analyzing both the Islamic and liberal power structures in which they live, while exposing the dynamic issues of reconciling them in their everyday experiences. The next section will describe how these women are distinguishing between cultural patriarchy and Islam.



## CULTURE PATRIARCHY VS. ISLAM

Many of the Shia women I interviewed believed that there is a major problem with discrimination against women around the world, including in Muslim societies. They attributed this to patriarchal cultural practices, not Islam. They often referred to “true Islam,” or what the *Quran* and *Ahlul-Bayt* (family and descendants of the Prophet) have taught, which does not allow for any discrimination or injustice towards women. They invoke patriarchal bias, corrupt rulers, and pre-Islamic cultural practices to explain the oppression of Muslim women. As Participant 29 explains, “women’s rights have been interpreted by men according to their cultural needs, not by Islamic teachings” (12 May 2017). This sentiment is also echoed in another woman’s feelings about the gender bias of society, in which she asserts that “since religious interpretations are mainly done by men, they don’t always favor women, and (I) think this is a cultural issue and not religious. A woman that is empowered is a threat to man” (Participant 32, 19 May 2017). Consequently, in such societies, the system is rigged to favor men over women, “the way Islam is propagated by most scholars, both Sunni and Shia . . . whether they realize or not, is simply to keep men in a more privileged position than women” (Participant 19, 14 April 2017). This is why the Western “public has this general impression that Muslim women are oppressed” (Participant 20, 14 April 2017).

Yet, as a result of being part of a multicultural Islamic center with various cultures represented, individuals have been allowed to reflect on their family upbringing and to distinguish between what is cultural and what is Islam. Here, I observed that women were constantly asking critical questions after sermons, reviewing books at the mosque library, joining women’s circles, asking their fellow members, and actively researching and debating Islamic knowledge. They constantly questioned cultural norms and searched eagerly for answers to such questions as: Should my daughter wear *hijab* to school? At what age? Living in the United States: is this safe? If she does not feel safe, does she have to observe *hijab*? What does that *hijab* need to look like? What is Islamically recommended? They were in search of the roots of every religious practice. Such questions speak to the very nuanced role of culture in which, as Participant 22 puts it, “There is so much old culture that seeps into our religious teachings that it is hard to find an unbiased interpretation of women’s rights and roles in society. But in modern-day society, there are religious figures who still interpret religion in ways that prohibit women from doing these things”.

In sum, these Shia women seem to be slowly transforming cultural patriarchal norms and creating new Islamic gender practices based on their conscious self-reflection and active involvement in the mosque and related associations.

## WOMEN’S CIRCLES

Much of this takes place in women’s circles outside the regular mosque events, or in terms of the opportunity to mingle and ask about other women’s personal religious

questions. Such women meet at each other's homes once a week and read a chapter of the *Quran*, and then discuss and ask questions. Following these Islamic studies, they eat and socialize and enjoy their time. In effect, their eagerness to study the *Quran* on their own is empowering and a major step towards gaining more power over their religion.

In fact, many of the women interviewed acknowledged that a woman or girl going out late at night was not forbidden by religion but frowned upon by the cultural norms and the dangerous environment. Girls and women from good families would not allow such a thing to protect their reputation. Culturally, for Iranians and many other Middle Eastern, North African, and South Asian cultures, a girl's reputation is everything. It predisposes her for the family she will marry into and also has an impact on her siblings and their prospects. This, however, changes when living in America, where reputation is not held up as a high priority and work and life can go on until the late hours in the evening. Some families can accept this, others cannot.

Still, gender norms appear to be changing. And these Shia women seem to be at the forefront of transforming these norms. As new generations of Shia Muslims are born within this community in the United States, they are forming new identities. Not only are they being educated in the West but they are also being exposed to Islamic teachings by attending this mosque and extended women's circles. Their questions are changing as their environment and new issues emerge, and their "basket" of norms is expanding (Hjarpe 1997; Roald 2003). In their search for answers, they are finding that some cultural practices and social guidelines, such as early marriage, proper *hijab*, interactions between the sexes, etc., have nothing to do with Islam and everything to do with the customs of their countries of origin.

The next generation of Shia women in this community are growing up and entering the workforce and society with more opportunities than their parents and grandparents. Some women are changing the traditional gender norms and flipping them. Many women are breaking boundaries and using their education to empower themselves and at the same time taking on new responsibilities, such as taking care of their parents, extended family, and the children on their own. This has allowed Muslims to assimilate to new environments and to supersede Islamic laws. This self-reflexive assimilation process also allows Muslims to reflect and reevaluate their cultural and religious practices, particularly when confronted with new problems and issues in new countries, such as the United States. Women in this community, it can be concluded, are encouraged to be active members of both their Muslim and American communities and to wear both hats in their everyday practices.

By reproducing their own cultural norms, women's ability to distinguish between what is cultural and Islam as an important source of contesting liberal norms. Through their self-reflection, interpretation, and analysis of religious practices, they are creating new ways of approaching Islamic gender norms and reinforcing the different ways that Islam can be practiced. The mosque is thus a unique setting in which women are leading the way in identifying cultural patriarchy and confronting it through dialogue and practice. By seeking religious knowledge and participating in this mosque, these Muslim women are learning more and more about their Islamic

rights and how to critically analyze their cultural and religious practices as they search for a truth that helps them in their everyday experiences in the United States. In short, they are breaking away from both normative hegemonic boundaries: neither are they following solely traditional cultural Islamic practices, nor Western liberal gender equality. Instead, they appear to be creating new paths for themselves and demanding to be seen and heard as Muslim Americans.

## CONCLUSION

There has been a longstanding tension between secular liberal feminism and religious agency, in particular, Muslim women who do not share the same commitment to liberal values. As we saw, the agency of Muslim women tends to be ignored by liberal feminists who either consciously or unconsciously fail to engage the experiences of Muslim women. Postcolonial feminists, in their critique of liberal feminism, have helped create an open-ended discursive space to analyze these tensions and contradictions in gender studies. Increasingly, inter- and intra-disciplinary dialogue amongst feminist and critical scholars across the globe have helped us understand substantive change in the situation of women. Still, Western media promotes a narrative of Muslim women as being “bound by the unbreakable chains of religious and patriarchal oppression” (Mahmood 2004, p. 7). Until these powerful institutions bring the voice of Muslim women into popular media and literature, their conventional power over (or reification of) knowledge and vocabulary about Muslim women will not change. Scholars and feminist activists should work towards giving a voice and platform to those who have not had a chance to speak and stand up for themselves in the pursuit of justice for all women around the globe based on their own meanings of gender justice.

The Shia American women, as I showed, continue to assert their agency beyond the structures of tradition, culture, custom, and politics. By living in America, they are in a unique position, I concluded, to dissect these variables that have influenced their gender practices. Through a critical postcolonial feminist lens, the voices of these Shia women show how their communities are transforming gender norms. When Muslim women take an active role in their society, they can, it seems, open doors for others to gain knowledge about Islam and dispel stereotypes.

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### **Personal Interviews**

- Participant 5. 24 March 2017.
- Participant 11. 31 March 2017.
- Participant 12. 31 March 2017.
- Participant 13. 7 April 2017.
- Participant 14. 7 April 2017.
- Participant 19. 14 April 2017.
- Participant 20. 14 April 2017.
- Participant 22. 21 April 2017.
- Participant 25. 28 April 2017.
- Participant 27. 5 May 2017.
- Participant 28. 5 May 2017.
- Participant 29. 12 May 2017.
- Participant 30. 19 May 2017.
- Participant 32. 19 May 2017.

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## 18. The responsibility to protect: the rise of liberal authoritarianism

*Philip Cunliffe*

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The doctrine of the responsibility to protect is still widely hailed as a progressive if perhaps frustratingly slow and haphazard attempt to humanise and improve international order, offering the hope that international protection regimes will substitute for the malfeasance or incompetence of the state in providing human security. Alex J. Bellamy sees the doctrine as a pillar of a new, successful ‘International Human Protection Regime’ (Bellamy, 2016). For those who lament the inconsistency and selectivity of the doctrine, it is possible to view it as embodying incremental progress on different fronts (e.g. Wyatt, 2019). This is the teleological vantage point afforded by the political philosophy of Immanuel Kant, founding father of liberal internationalism (Hurrell, 1990). Despite the setbacks, reversals, retreats, compromises, it is still possible to view the slow, incremental progress of human rights and the doctrine as a slow instantiation of global cosmopolitan law, one in which the rights of individuals are slowly levered up over the rights of states, thereby embodying the classical, asymptotic view of progress in which improvement consists in approaching the ideal but never actually instantiating it (Kant, 2003).

I argue in this chapter that this sentiment of progress in human rights through the responsibility to protect is in fact a mirage, an optical illusion only visible from the vantage point of surveying the international order. I propose that this perspective looks different from within the state – which is where, after all, the responsibility to protect is supposed to apply. The offer of supplementary protection from the outside seems innocuous enough and perhaps even positive and progressive, but how does it affect existing structures of power and political authority within the state? Instead of the teleological vantage point of international relations (IR), I analyse the responsibility to protect from the vantage point of domestic political order. Thus, I treat the responsibility to protect not as a theory of intervention but as a model of state power and authority – which is to treat it, in other words, as a political theory.

The responsibility to protect, it should be stressed, emerged in the wake of the interventions of the 1990s, as both theorists and practitioners of IR assessed the aftermath of various interventions such as those in Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo, and sought to draw out the implications of this new era for the state and international order. This culminated in a major international report published in 2001. Organised under the auspices of the Canadian government of the day and produced by a commission of international luminaries, the *Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* ushered in the era of the doctrine, which would gradually percolate through the United Nations system,

being incorporated into various resolutions of the United Nations (UN) Security Council and debates within the General Assembly, even extending the mandates of ‘human protection’ given to UN peacekeepers (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001).

According to the basic premise of the doctrine, it is only in certain extreme circumstances of terrible crimes and human suffering that state authority may be legally and legitimately limited by outside powers, who may then intervene within that state in the interests of defending humanity (United Nations, 2005). What I argue here is that the responsibility to protect represents a paternalistic model of state power and political authority – one in which political representation is substituted by security, embodying the most conservative understanding of political responsibility – responsibility for rather than responsibility to people (Cunliffe, 2006).

To be sure, liberal theory has always been about justifying state power by reference to protection from disorder. Yet, as we shall see below, the responsibility to protect exceeds even the most severe justifications for Leviathan, subverting the reciprocity and representation embedded in contractarian thinking in favour of a circular theory of power in which state power is ultimately justified by reference only to itself. The idea of steering a society towards a particular goal or collective self-transformation through the exercise of political agency fades away in favour of a vision of protection from the most extreme violence. It is a resolutely exceptionalist justification of political power, i.e. one in which power is justified by reference to the extreme – in this case, protection from genocide, crimes against humanity, etc. (Cunliffe, 2017). Thus far, too much analysis of the doctrine of the responsibility to protect has effectively been scriptural – that is to say, focused on the specific words in UN Security Council resolutions, reports of the Secretary-General and so on – interpreting shifts in emphasis, divining the intent behind specific phrases, tracking the evolution of terms. The approach offered below is more conceptual, analysing the basis of political authority in the doctrine.

## THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF DOMESTIC POLITICS

The responsibility to protect doctrine is usually seen as an artefact of international affairs: its political domain is international councils not national parliaments; its concerns are conflicts and crises of global import – mass atrocities, refugee flows, environmental crises. Its agents and institutions are at the international level: foreign ministers, UN agencies, the Security Council, advisers to the Secretary-General, international peacekeepers, even NATO forces. Its key documents and texts are UN resolutions, publications and reports by international, not national, organisations and commissions. Its scholars and students are IR theorists, analysts and international lawyers. All this begs the question: why treat the doctrine as a theory of state, why shift the focus from the international to the national level?

Part of the answer is, of course, that the national, domestic focus is already there in the doctrine. The doctrine concerns how states behave with respect to people under their authority and on their territory and how this links into international responsibilities and oversight. Indeed, the most succinct way to define the theory is that it is about conceptualising that moment at which domestic authority gives way to international authority: the whole premise of the doctrine is about the transition between these two contiguous political realms. Yet the theory of the responsibility to protect has not been properly adapted by scholars to fit its object: state power and responsibility. It remains too focused at the level of inter-state relations and international protrusions into states, such as international criminal court proceedings or peacebuilding operations.

What happens, however, when we consider political structures *within* states rather than merely political relations *between* states? How does our view of the doctrine change as a result? Specifically: how does the responsibility to protect re-articulate the legitimisation of state power as such? Part of the new consensus around the responsibility to protect rests on the agreement that it is states that bear the duty to protect people on their territories from mass atrocity, conceived in the sense of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2018). On the face of it, this proposition would seem to be one of those commonplaces that is so banal that it barely merits comment. In the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty report, for instance, mentioned above, the insistence on states as bearers of the duty to protect was clearly offered as a means of quelling fears of human rights imperialism among developing countries (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001: 44–45). Evidently seeking to avoid anything as controversial as questioning the legitimacy of internal political arrangements, the framers of the doctrine have settled on a formula acceptable to any state. The idea that states are required to maintain certain pillars of social and political order and security is after all a basic tenet of modern government as such. To the extent that the doctrine clearly privileges extant authorities and incumbent states in any particular territory (assuming that they are functioning to some degree), it is a conservative prescription for international stability, whose appeal to incumbent states and regimes is evident.

However, it would be a mistake to classify these ideas as merely empty phrases or merely pious diplomatic rhetoric. The conception of state legitimacy in the doctrine is based on the ability of states *effectively* to provide a particular set of *internationally sanctioned* security requirements. The emphasis that the doctrine places on security can be seen in the fact that states are viewed as dispensable providers of security, which can be substituted by the international community should an incumbent state fail in its role. Indeed, while the ICISS report refers to states as the primary providers of the ‘responsibility to protect’, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan went as far as to claim that the ‘primary *raison d’être* and duty’ of every state is to protect its population (United Nations, 2005: §135).

If the legitimacy of statehood is to be based on the provision of certain internationally sanctioned types of security, this can only have the effect of relativising states



as institutionalised expressions of collective political will. In this vision, the rights of state sovereignty flow not from the will of the people, but downwards from the international community. This is the only way in which we can logically interpret the claim that states could at once be primary duty bearers, *and* how it could be legitimate for their rights to be rescinded by the international community. Therefore, it is not merely that the doctrine does not distinguish between authoritarian and democratic states, but that it rewrites the very idea of representative government in such a way that favours state power over people power across *all* states. More than revamping international norms governing the use of force, the responsibility to protect recasts the rationale for sovereignty. The norms governing the use of force change as a secondary effect of this prior restructuring of sovereign responsibilities – intervention is no longer seen as intervention, but simply as the fulfilment of pre-ordained international duties (cf. Pattison, 2008).

Judging by the UN General Assembly debates over the responsibility to protect, the majority of states are keen to avoid issuing licences for external intervention in states' internal affairs, while the great powers are keen to avoid the responsibility to protect limiting their freedom of manoeuvre in the midst of crisis (e.g. United Nations, 2005). Perhaps some developing countries even see the responsibility to protect as fostering a discourse that they could instrumentalise in order to secure resources that might help strengthen their institutional machinery and security apparatus, the better to help maintain their domestic 'responsibility to protect'. Such states will squabble with the West over where the boundaries can be set. But it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that what underlies this consensus of overlapping interests is a 'paternalist legitimisation of state power through the inflation of security into the supreme objective of politics' (Zuckerman, 2006: 539). If the state can be held accountable by external powers for the duties it owes its people, then the only logical interpretation of this position is that the state has responsibility for its people rather than to its people.

## THE NEW POLITICS OF PROTECTION

If the doctrine of the responsibility to protect is frequently seen as applying primarily to relations between states, it was the work of Ann Orford that militated for a crucial shift in terms of the debate on the responsibility to protect (Orford, 2011). Her work helped to shift the discussion of, for example, when intervention is appropriate, or about the degree of consensus over the doctrine at the international level, or the degree to which the tenets of the doctrine have evolved, to treat the doctrine instead as a theory of state power. This was a logical move given that the whole rationale for the responsibility to protect was to shift the focus onto the practice and behaviour of states towards their populations, and to get away from state-to-state interaction.

Yet despite this shift, no one had taken the state-centric focus of the responsibility to protect seriously – in the standard terms of political justification, authorisation and power. Orford not only did this but moreover drew attention to the authoritarian

implications of the politics of protection, noting the possibility that it could displace principles of representation. She also rooted the discussion of protection in those thinkers whose understanding of state authority is most clearly allied to the focus on security and protection – Thomas Hobbes and Carl Schmitt. Orford also usefully traces the evolution of the politics and law of international administration and executive authority, noting in particular how the UN had had to innovate forms of *de facto* rule in the wake of decolonisation, such as the UN mission to the newly independent Congo in the early 1960s. In this way, Orford identified in concrete detail and specificity the development of genuinely transnational forms of authority and rule that were not straightforwardly reducible to international interaction between states, nor were these new legal and political structures simply scaled up from the state level as neo-colonial efforts or great power machinations. She thus gave due regard to the genuinely novel developments of transnational authority embodied in the new discourse and institutions of international governance.

Orford is also critical of the doctrine of the responsibility to protect – she recognises that the doctrine fails to resolve international versus state-level conflicts in authority. That is to say, the doctrine still fails to provide clarity as to whether the UN or states are entitled to determine when a breach of the doctrine has occurred, and it is unclear who is entitled to rectify that breach. She also bemoans the fact that the doctrine bears the functionalist imprint and bogus neutrality of apolitical and administrative law, as indicated in the suppressed contradictions over how to reconcile jurisdictional and competing claims of protection between different authorities in the doctrine (Orford, 2011: 186–187). Nonetheless, all told, Orford welcomes the responsibility to protect as an end to the crusading dimension of human rights. The shift back to concrete institutions, devolved and plural political authorities embedded in states gets away from the rarefied development of human rights at the international level.

There are a number of problems with this view, however, particularly in how Orford sees these various issues as intersecting. For a start, the devolution of human rights protection to states under the terms of the responsibility to protect is more ambivalent than Orford makes out. Jean Cohen sees the result of this process as a world in which states are effectively rendered as ‘administrative units in a decentralized, “multileveled” global governance structure that accords “autonomy” provisionally ...’ (Cohen, 2006: 489) Orford sees these issues as intersecting. Orford invokes the politics of protection in Schmitt and Hobbes and links it to the era of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld by common reference to the revolutionary periods which framed these theories, namely, the English revolution and European wars of religion in the case of Hobbes, the German revolution and Twenty Years’ Crisis in the case of Schmitt, and the Third World global revolution in the case of Hammarskjöld.

Yet how can this comparison stretch to cover the era of the responsibility to protect, in the decidedly non-revolutionary era of the early twenty-first century? If political authority is contested today, it is not down to the deep divisions or civil wars at the core of the international system, nor the strength and fervour of oppositional, revolutionary challenges to metropolitan states. Whatever motivates the shift to the

paternalist vision of order embodied in the responsibility to protect, it is not the result of a revolutionary challenge either in the West or the Third World.

Moreover, focused on distinctively international conceptions of authority, Orford does not venture far enough in considering the internal ramifications of the politics of protection embodied in the responsibility to protect. As we shall see below, tilting the balance back to the state and away from international structures risks crushing those who live within the state. The reframing of sovereign authority in the doctrine intertwines domestic and international conceptions in intricate ways that require careful untangling.

Thus, Orford's thesis is indecisive. On the one hand, while Orford is alert to the authoritarian implications of the new international politics of protection, in other respects she deems the responsibility to protect a welcome development. Rooting the responsibility to protect in transnational administrative and executive law pioneered by the likes of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld makes Orford receptive to the devolution of power and authority in the responsibility to protect doctrine to the state level: she welcomes this as a recapture by the state of unrooted transnational law. She thus sees the responsibility to protect as belonging in the long tradition of dissolving trans- and supranational, imperialistic structures of political authority, such as the Holy Roman Empire and the medieval Papacy (Orford, 2011: *passim*).

Orford especially welcomes the focus on the effectiveness of state protection, as she sees this as militating for a pluralistic state system. Yet, the politics of emergency embodied in the responsibility to protect frames legitimacy around questions of efficacious action rather than legitimate representation. Exceptionalism invokes a politics of fear that collapses the dialectic of mediated representation into one where the efficiency of power and protection is privileged over all else. Thus we see that sovereignty cannot be decentred without loosening the bonds of *internal* political representation that restrain state power. The significance of this shift should not be underestimated, as it goes beyond even the most Hobbesian understanding of the legitimization of state power. Let us consider the comparison between Hobbesian and 'responsible' paradigms of protection more closely.

## PATERNALIST STATES AND RESPONSIBLE SOVEREIGNS

In Hobbes' framework, questions of both the origin and form of state authority are immaterial (Hobbes, 1985). That is to say, whether the authority of the sovereign originates in conquest or consent is irrelevant – the historical process through which sovereign authority is constituted is not important from the viewpoint of the current, existing authority (Orford, 2011: 114). Likewise, the specific form of government – whether monarchical or republican – had no bearing on the legitimacy of sovereign authority. In this the responsibility to protect is close to the Hobbesian conception: the origins of existing states, whether revolutionary, counter-imperial, and so on, is irrelevant. Whether the government be organised as a single-party state, a liberal democracy, a totalitarian state or a competitive authoritarian system, etc., is also

irrelevant. In these two paradigms of sovereignty, the rationale is the same: disputes over originary legitimacy and disputes over the legitimacy of the internal configuration of government are licences for conflict, turmoil and instability. Hence Hobbes' relentless focus on security: the only criterion for legitimate sovereignty in general terms is the effectiveness of the sovereign's provision of security.

Effective security is likewise the overriding focus of the responsibility to protect, too – the doctrine dismisses as unimportant whether the sovereign is incapable or unwilling to provide such security or the Leviathan itself is rapacious – in both cases if it fails to provide security it loses its title to sovereignty. Thus there is remarkable balance between the two doctrines of sovereignty, Hobbesian and responsible. Protection is cast as the highest end of the state, and all other possible ends – say representation of constituents, effective implementation of collective decision-making, the rapid transmission of political will from the populace – are relegated, either seen as irrelevant or expendable at best. We could even go as far as to say that the responsibility to protect is Hobbesian in its overriding emphasis on politics and state authority being grounded in the provision of security. In the doctrine, all politics is the politics of security, and security is the foundation of everything else. In both cases, the emphasis on security is justified by reference to the depiction of a state of nature prior to sovereign security: a quasi-fictional inference in Hobbes, a heavily-stylised, allusive invocation of genocide and war underpinning the theory of the responsibility to protect (the Holocaust, Rwanda, Srebrenica, and so on).

Where the two doctrines diverge is in claims that can be made against the sovereign and by whom. To be sure, there is no right of resistance or rebellion in either doctrine: Hobbes notoriously ruled out the possibility of democratic overthrow of the sovereign (Hobbes, 1985: ch 25). The absence of any right of resistance means of course that there is no conception of the possibility of subjects holding sovereignty to account. That said, Hobbes does outline circumstances in which the compact of sovereignty dissolves: 'The Obligation of Subjects to the Sovereign, is understood to last as long, and no longer than the power lasteth, by which he is able to protect them' (Hobbes, 1985: 272). At and beyond that point, the subject has no obligation to the sovereign. The responsibility to protect goes further still, however, in limiting the rights of its subjects. Although the doctrine of the responsibility to protect at least implicitly countenances the possibility of revolt against an incumbent state in the fact that it recognises human rights abuses as a trigger for outside intervention, it would be wrong to see this as any kind of a 'right' for subjects. Revolt, civil war, insurgency are only important under the terms of the responsibility to protection so much as they are evidence of the insufficiency or failure of the state to provide security; the rights and wrongs of any particular rebellion or insurrection are irrelevant to the judgement of sovereign failure. Rebellion is thus cast as a failure to provide security, not the consummation of a popular and legitimate insurrection or a popular riposte to oppression and injustice. The only relevant facts are the presence or absence of state protection. In neither doctrine, then, does the potential for force enter the scales of political accountability. Yet whereas Hobbes justifies political obedience in return for the protection extended by the sovereign, no such expectation of political obedi-

ence is built into the structure of the responsibility to protect. This absence of both an expectation of obedience and a right to resistance is crucial, as we shall shortly see.

Where the responsibility to protect and Hobbes also depart from each other is the rights accorded to the subjects under the sovereign. While Hobbes' subjects renounce natural rights upon entry into society under the authority of the sovereign, conserving some shrunken right of self-preservation, the subjects of the responsible sovereign retain their human rights. Yet if the subjects of the responsible sovereign retain their human rights, they cannot enforce them because they have no rights of revolt or resistance. To be sure, a popular rebellion and civil war may signal the inability of a sovereign to provide effective protection. At most, though, this could be seen as a way of drawing the attention of the international community to the problem. The consummation of such action would not be revolution, however (in the sense of the domestic overthrow of an oppressive regime), but the *restoration* of effective protection by another sovereign or alliance of sovereigns. Therefore the only accountability provided for in the doctrine is that of a horizontal accountability between states at the international level, not a vertical accountability between sovereigns and peoples within the domestic sphere. The structure of political obligation in the responsibility to protect is all piled up on one side – all obligations are held by states, and not even political obedience by subjects is expected in the doctrine.

If this seems appealing in as much as the human rights subject is now emancipated from political burdens of self-help, and protection duties are now overseen by the great powers, it also comes with costs. Consider what happens in the case of sovereign failure. As we have already seen above, in such circumstances, for Hobbes, obligations of obedience and political loyalty dissolve. The individual is freed of any obedience to the sovereign. It is different with humanitarian subjects. Not only are they free of obligation at all times, they also in principle benefit from a dense, overlapping set of security structures, with a diffuse structure of international duties of protection and international law overlapping with those of the incumbent state and diffusing across various international bodies and agencies, stretching right up to the UN Security Council. Under the terms of the responsibility to protect, the failure of the sovereign to provide security nullifies territorial exclusivity, nullifies the right to non-intervention, and protection obligations by default shift to the international community, i.e. to other sovereigns. The subjects of the sovereign are not abandoned or returned to a state of nature, but rather shifted to the protection of another. Unbundling the ties that bind subjects to the sovereign may appear emancipatory, as it makes individuals less dependent on a single source of protection.

In fact this diffusion of security eviscerates the promise of security, as the responsibility of the protector is ultimately discretionary (after all, no outside state is obliged to exercise the responsibility to protect (Hehir, 2013: 137–159)). So not only do the claims of the humanitarian subjects on their incumbent sovereign diminish, but these are not compensated for by any other stronger claims against external authorities – thereby making all such promises enunciated at the UN ultimately chimerical. The only political self-assertion left to subjects in this paradigm of 'responsible sovereignty' is that of theatrical revolt: subjects can act out violence that will

draw the attention of other sovereigns who may then assert their control over that of the incumbent state. With a panoply of protections but no countervailing obligations, the humanitarian subjects have no agency, for their consent is not required for any sovereign decision. Humanitarian subjects freed of obligations to the sovereign are also freed of political agency. Nor do humanitarian subjects have any formal rights or say over which state or external agency may intervene in their favour to protect them against the incumbent state authority. Without any agency or political creativity or contractual structure of reciprocal expectation, there is no integration between subjects and sovereign. In his theory, Hobbes tightly bound subjects to the sovereign, and this binding provided the logical basis for further, progressive political development – that is to say, the social contract laid the conceptual basis for accountability and ultimately democracy. The responsibility to protect dissolves these ties, consigning its subjects to security and powerlessness.

The purpose of this comparison is to show that even by the standards of the most centralising, authoritarian and unyielding of the supposedly contractarian political theorists, the supposedly progressive responsibility to protect can be found wanting. As a political vision for social order, it is in many ways as gloomy if not indeed gloomier than that of Hobbes. Rooted in the grim prospect of recurrent mass murder and human rights abuses, there is no potential to enact a political transformation that would propel society onto a higher plane, as is the intent of Hobbes' social contract. With protections offered that may or may not fail, the only solution under the terms of the responsibility to protect is to shunt the hapless victims of human rights abuses from the oversight of one state to another. Each protection regime is substitutable for the other, there being no other criterion of political loyalty – such as authentic or effective representation, accountability or transparency. Sovereigns only hold each other to account for their effective maintenance of order.

The disorder and insecurity envisioned in the responsibility to protect is not exactly a state of nature, however, for it is not presocial nor pre-state; it is not a war of all against all. Indeed, the state is always implicated in the security threat, whether by omission or commission. This lack of a fundamental distinction between a state of nature and society is important in the implications of the theory. We saw above that the responsibility to protect can be seen as an attempt to justify power by reference to the extreme, thereby building the extreme into the ordinary functioning of sovereign order. Now we can see the results of that for domestic political order – logically speaking, this can only result in the displacement of other political concerns: incorporation of the responsibility to protect warps every premise of sovereignty as contractual and thus ultimately as responsible. As a non-contractarian theory of sovereignty, the status of the sovereign's subjects are inevitably reduced to that of being charges of the state.

It could be objected that it is ultimately an unfair exercise to compare diplomatic pronouncements or Secretary-Generals' reports and UN resolutions to the detailed and systematic schemes of the likes of Hobbes. But this would be a mistake. Not only have many important political thinkers been intimately involved in shaping the new paradigms of sovereignty as well as shaping the parameters of debate, but it would

also be to imagine that the thinkers of the past were not responding to the immediate and practical problems of their own day. As Orford has indicated, in the European context at least, the context for previous disputes over the meaning and content of sovereignty included the great wars of religion, the clash over secular versus religious sources of authority, the prospect of order and control versus revolution, and attempts to extend claims of authority. Seeing the doctrine in this way helps us to contextualise the responsibility to protect in a historic, centuries-long process of debates about the needs and ends of political authority in changing circumstances and contexts (e.g. Glanville, 2013).

## CONCLUSION

The precondition for Kant's renowned pacific federation was sovereign autonomy, as he predicted that the growing destructiveness and costs of war would compel reason – in constitutional states at least – to move to restrain conflict in the interests of all. By the standard of assessment offered in this chapter, this Kantian world is eclipsed by the model of sovereignty as responsibility. This is because this latter model involves the dissolution of sovereignty as representative political power, as state authorities retreat into reified transnational structures, withdrawing from contact and entanglement with their domestic populations, who are reduced to the status of protected wards. In such a world, reason could not function to affect the conflict transformation envisaged by Kant because states would no longer be representative, only protective. As a theory of state power, the doctrine of the responsibility to protect has thus regressed beneath the Kantian vision, substituting paternalist for representative state power. The illusion of Kantian progress on the international plane – the litany of treaties, UN Security Council resolutions and mandates promulgating the responsibility to protect, new posts in the bureaucratic hierarchy of the UN dedicated to propagating new norms of human protection – disguises developments that are far more sinister. Kant's vision built on that of Hobbes, and autonomous sovereignty was the precondition for both. The responsibility to protect regresses beneath even Hobbes' theory of sovereignty in its overwhelming and transnational focus on the provision of protection. The hope for global progress and individual empowerment necessitates turning away from the new paternalism embodied in the responsibility to protect.

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## 19. Afterword

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Today, critical international relations (IR) theorists face a series of global crises that threaten the liberal world order. As Stephen Gill argued in his chapter, the intensity of the power of capital has come to represent an “organic crisis” in world politics, in which “the old order is in decay but the new is yet to emerge.” An organic crisis in this sense involves more than simply fundamental threats to security. It constitutes a threat to the very survival of our planet. Within critical IR itself, the crisis of inclusivity, or the exclusion of non-Western discourses, underscores what we might call the decaying Western order. Critical IR theorizing, in other words, may be experiencing its own quasi-organic crisis in light of the growing need and intensity to interrogate the Western boundaries of knowledge and the tacit epistemological constraints imposed on the developing world. As many of the chapters in this handbook have shown, critical IR theory is still struggling to convert these Western constraints into the conditions of possibility of freedom. Indeed, critical IR still needs to fully embrace an open-endedness or set of new discursive mechanisms to facilitate the development and inclusion of non-Western values and ideas. The idea, then, is that critical IR must in the end confront and engage the systemic bias toward Western thought that continues to plague the development of non-Western knowledge and cultural values within the IR discipline.

This becomes especially important for rethinking and reengaging today’s increasingly complex problems. Indeed, in a post-truth society, where political uncertainty serves the interests of those in power, the effort to reclaim the politics of truth cannot simply be about confronting racist sentiment or the effects of instrumentalizing political uncertainty. Nor is it about just exposing these effects as violent and exclusionary. Rather, it is to encircle this tendency through a creative commitment to global justice and reconstructing the institutions of justice. Thus, for example, to counteract the existential threat of global populism and its racist, dehumanizing rhetoric towards the liberal global order, critical IR needs to be more creative in its approach to the intersectionality of cultures by overcoming the limited or blunted normative constraints against harming victims, migrants, and other marginalized peoples. In effect, today’s global challenges expose the rigid limits of a moral progression that distances us from the past. How can we confront and engage the racist effects of global populism when our belief in moral progression detaches us from the sentimentalized context of this authoritarian movement?

In her recent book *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* Amy Allen (2016) offers an interesting answer. She argues that the Frankfurt School’s interpretation of progressive history should be rejected in favor of Adorno’s progressive reading of politics as necessity. Critical theorists, in her

view, need to contest the preconceived notion of progress by engaging the historical experience of the developing world. In critical IR, this challenge entails, as Pinar Bilgin wrote in her chapter, excavating the sources of non-Western IR theory. In other words, inclusion must be interrogated for what it reproduces, or in terms of how the Western structure of knowledge continues to marginalize the otherness it seeks to inscribe. The challenge in this sense concerns the mutual internalization of values or the ways in which one becomes conscious of affecting and being affected in society.

This is one way of analyzing the new contradictions of Western and non-Western knowledge and the challenge they represent for scaling and applying dialectics to today's world (as Shannon Brincat and Susan de Groot Heupner argued in their chapter). It is also how we learn to occupy the political uncertainty caused by our actions, rather than simply controlling for it by excluding other cultures. As Brian Massumi (2015) claims, occupying political uncertainty is about turning the constraints of fear and hatred into the conditions of possibility of freedom and open-ended interaction in global politics. It means that working towards a greater self-realization of the good is fraught with struggle and conflict, as well as the build-up of political pressures involving the high political stakes of fighting global warming, protecting nonhuman animals, and countering the effects of neoliberalism, as Shomik Chakrabarti and Roberto Roccu analyzed in their respective chapters. Like the overstretched rubber band, therefore, the build-up of tension/pressure forces the flexible band of custom and convention to violently snap back against the hand that holds it. The outstretched assumptions of these conventions project a notion of progression that can violently break from its own tension. The result is a deep-seated crisis of not just order, but the political imagination and its failure to challenge the orthodoxy of its own assumptions and the need for channeling and reshaping the forces of its own political energies. In the end, we always need to locate the new conditions of extending and reconciling our ideas about a just and inclusive society.

## THE ANTHROPOCENTRIC CHALLENGE

Animal rights promotion constitutes one of these conditions. As we saw with Steven Tauber's chapter on critical animal studies, critical IR theory has failed to grapple effectively with this global issue. And yet, when we think about extending or promoting animal rights to critical international theory, we also confront the intractable role of emotions, or why emotion, in this case, matters as a conscious mode through which to direct actions. Emotion it could be argued compels us to address the fundamental disconnection between critical IR theory and that of non-human animals' consciousness. It also raises an important question: Can animals express the compassion and empathy that show their autonomous capacity to avoid and prevent suffering of others? Indeed, the idea that animals cannot experience the same high degree of pleasure may play to old assumptions or existing boundaries of knowledge. David Singer's negativist utilitarianism, for instance, suggests that the immorality of human pleasure has become increasingly interconnected with the pain

and suffering caused by humans to animals. The detachment from animal suffering becomes a way of devaluing the emotions of animals. It also underscores the need to reflect more seriously about the human content of emotion, especially given the trend toward revaluing and more fully extending emotion to nonhuman animals. As Simon Koschut theorized in his chapter, to speak of critical emotion is to realize the many ways that it is constructed through social and cultural encounters.

Thus, however rudimentary animal consciousness may be, it now more than ever challenges us to rethink the limits and perils of championing human reason and rationalist thought. Adorno and Horkheimer, for example, claimed that the Enlightenment's championing of material reason (or materialism) was ultimately about dominating nature and securing the tendency to isolate the political consciousness from one's spontaneous energies given by nature. In short, the domination of nature elevates the instrumentality of scientific or technical reason, as Matthew Fluck argued in his chapter, and, in so doing, eclipses the need for societal or critical reason to contest the oppressive effects of pre-planning and industrialization. As Horkheimer and Adorno (1994) argued in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, repressing the spontaneity, creativity, and vitality of nature meant confining the political imagination, that is, displacing the very beauty of nature that anchors the sensibility of all living things. The aesthetic goal of revitalizing the imagination needs to be reclaimed if we are to promote an alternative, lived experience to oppose the detritus of our thinking. In *Enlivenment*, Andreas Weber (2019: 28) refers to this alternative to Enlightenment thinking as enlivenment in order to critique the Anthropocene.

But aliveness is that which desires its own way of transformation before any conscious choice, before any goal is set. It cannot be treated only from the outside because it is "inside" – as the desire for participation and connection. Therefore, not only human life but also the existence of other beings suffers from the "context of delusion" (Adorno) of universal feasibility. These other beings desire to live as we do. They have no choice but to trust the rightness of their needs. Their feelings answer our own forgotten aliveness through existential gestures. We can make observations of this kind even on the most casual nature walk. Other beings show us a way to the enlightenment of the Enlightenment, which is enlivenment.

To resist the delusion of humans' mastery of nature, we have to reconnect with the nonhuman animals in ways that pull us, and not them, into a new holistic consciousness about nature.

Still, one could argue that the formal planning driving a post-industrial society is not like that of Adorno's time (the mid-twentieth century): that the holism now, unlike that in Adorno's time, has begun to be filled by the creative, cross-fertilization of ideas of disciplinary thinking, and that, through the synergism of scientific tools, it is possible to evidence the effects of this domination, as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has done. In effect, such critical mass of shared scientific knowledge seems to invert the source of domination, that is, the instrumental value placed on industrial planning, or the mechanical forces suppressing the spontaneity, energy, and vitality essential to human experience. In other words,

the interactive quality of today's scientific planning has managed to capture the very effects of human domination. Rather than suppressing environmental consciousness and creativity, it has encouraged many to rethink their (holistic) connection to nature and their place in promoting and maintaining biodiversity and the survival of all species. The global environmental movement thus expresses the holistic, reasoned engagement that Horkheimer and Adorno suggested could shed light on the blunted forces of technical efficiency and consumerism. And yet, in spite of this inversion, it is difficult to rid society of what Walter Benjamin suggested was the retrogressive tendency of mechanical thinking, one that seemed to define so much of human moral progression, which now finds its greatest expression in the willful ignorance underlying the political skepticism towards science.

In effect, political uncertainty can turn into a regressive tool to disrupt and attack scientific facts and the truth itself. This, however, has outstripped the creative synthesis of moral and scientific thinking. Neuroscience, for instance, now furnishes us with the correlations between human emotions and brain activity, which, for some, evidence the moral source of emotions (Harris, 2010). Whether or not neuroscience is the answer, there remains the critical task of understanding the contradictory social forces shaping society and the contentious politics of identity.

## POLITICAL UNCONSCIOUSNESS AND IDENTITY POLITICS

This task brings us to some of the cutting-edge research on mind consciousness, which has continued to influence our ability to imagine and probe the social implications of science for holistic thinking in the social science. Alexander Wendt's quantum mind approach to IR, for example, seems a novel way of working beyond the materialist problems of social inquiry, such as the mind-body duality/problem (Roach, 2010). The approach, which is based on conjectural propositions that seek to unify quantum theory and social ontology, focuses on how wave particles can suddenly take a different form (or what is called quantum leap) and new identity, and how the quantum human consciousness – or correlations between subatomic particles and brain waves – can take the form of a super-organism derived from David Bohm's notion of proprioception (self-perception that leads to creative perception orders). It is hard not to be intrigued by the implications of this research for IR, including mapping the imaginary contours of a global human consciousness.

But Wendt's approach is not without its problems. Most notable is the correlation of measured wave collapse with a determinate, fixed identity. The proposition remains unconvincing, since quantum theory is really about measuring the unpredictable behavior of particles or particles will turn into waves. Probably the safest proposition to make here is to say that the instruments we use to theorize/measure such phenomena are the only functionally independent tools of understanding and not the social phenomena that is being observed. This would at least explain why as social scientists we have long tended to conflate functionality with the fixity and/

or independent existence of things and, in the process, ignore the immanent tension between an entity's becoming and its being. It is also another way of saying that we are always striving to be scientists first and political thinkers second (if at all).

Nonetheless, it is this very notion of striving that also exposes the marginalizing forces of any so-called natural order or the tendency to stultify so much of creative rethinking about the social phenomena we observe. Indeed, such a tendency is what seems to haunt Wendt's attempts to unify quantum theory with social ontology, thus raising the question of how to get inside or beneath the judgments and thoughts that inform action in IR. As Koschut argues, emotions provide a critical research angle "through performative expression and non-verbal, visual imagery" of gestures, desires, and beliefs that constitute the norms and habits of society. Emotions, in other words, can help us to critically theorize about the divisive and positive qualities of identity politics (or the politics of difference) by unmasking the powerful effects of prejudice and bias in IR. When reasoned restraint thus fails to control these effects, or when political polarization disengages us from others' biases, we need to see emotions as an independent feature of human judgment and interaction.

In recent years, the idea of a pre-given, independent source of judgment has become increasingly important. Indeed, there has been growing discussion of bias free mechanisms or tools that function independently of human bias and emotions. Algorithms, for instance, seem a promising tool for liberating us from the effects of biased selection, such as confirmation bias, in which we tend to draw on a pre-given set of theories, ideas, and claims about the world to justify or confirm our values and beliefs. But even the smartest algorithms cannot escape the effects of such bias and the emotions that they provoke. If anything, social media websites such as Facebook have helped reinforce such bias and hostility via automatic news feeds. There is now more than ever a tendency to disengage from others who do not share our own beliefs. The result has been the creation of human silos of thinking and understanding that reinforce the need for "enemy" or hostile emotions, such as anger, to defend these values from perceived attacks. Indeed, it is precisely this tendency of working in silos that supports the orthodox and conventional thinking that can suppress alternative views.

Thus, for instance, in the ethical debate about autonomous war weapons, some have proposed working beyond the legal status of autonomous robots (with sophisticated sensors and artificial intelligence) by justifying the radical idea of equipping robots with rights. As David Gunkel (2018) argues, justifying such rights requires us to separate the "is" and the "ought" or to contest the given views that robots will never possess the judgment nor emotion to ever be considered rights bearers. Thinking beyond conventional facts in this sense allows us to engage the moral possibility of new actors in twenty-first-century warfare.

But what happens when this need for alternative thinking assumes its own political reality via the dismissal of the moral and factual basis of conventional reality, as suggested earlier? When politicians can use alternative facts to twist, mock, or reject scientific facts, do their actions reflect an alternative political reality; and does this pose an existential threat to the reason and basic moral values of society? Indeed,

it seems that Trumpism (or disrupting the liberal rules-based international order) represents this very threat to political transformation by absorbing all contradictions into its alternative, self-consuming reality. Here, false confrontation dictates the false engagement with others or involves the political attacks rooted in the hostile disengagement from the needs and values of others. In effect, we end up isolating ourselves from the moral forces that have long shaped the opportunities for improving society and achieving equal representation. It is a process in which cruelty and violence serve as a self-destructive end justifying the means. Trumpism, one could therefore argue, poses an important challenge for critical theorists: namely, how to resist an alternative reality that threatens to undermine the transformational logic of political resistance. The question critical theorists need to ask, then, is how they can recover the vital elements of dialectical thinking. The answer, it seems, will invariably lie in reinventing the critical ideas of this transformational logic and preventing alternative facts from becoming the accepted tools of a new, inherently destructive, one-dimensional society.

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