

Historicising the International: Modes of Foreign Relations and Political Economy

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Abstract

This paper is based on the Isaac and Tamara Deutscher Memorial-Prize Lecture given at SOAS in London, on 27 November 2009. It claims that Marxism remains built around a critique of political economy ('economics') but lacks a parallel critique of international relations (IR). IR naturalises the organisation of inter-state relations along lines comparable to the naturalisation of the capitalist economy by economics. The paper argues that the disciplinary organisation of Western academia is part of the class-discipline in society at large. It was triggered by the abstraction of economics from the field of the broader social sciences. IR, in turn, was codified in the slipstream of Woodrow Wilson's response to the Russian Revolution that followed on from the US-intervention in World-War I. The discipline was built around a founding myth of global liberalism and national self-determination. It served, among other things, to disqualify the claims of the theory of imperialism on disciplinary grounds, and its initial connections with Western hegemony, capital, and the national-security state remain in place today. Distinguishing modes of foreign relations, and specifying the occupation of space, protection, and exchange for tribal and empire/nomad foreign relations, as well as sovereign equality and global governance, on the other hand make it possible to understand the rise and continuing hegemony of the West in its own right, rather than as a superstructure of the transnationalisation of capital.

Keywords

Modes of foreign relations, academic disciplines, economics, international relations

The project, of which *Nomads, Empires, States*¹ comprises the first volume, aims to develop a critique of the academic discipline of international relations (IR), complementing Marx's critique of political economy. I see the lack of

1. Text based on the Isaac and Tamara Deutscher Memorial-Prize Lecture held at SOAS in London, 27 November 2009. I thank the jury and those attending for their encouragement. In writing this text, I have profited from discussions with Alex Colás, Samuel Knafo, Ben Selwyn and Benno Teschke. Alex Anievas and Gonzalo Pozo-Martin as editors of *Historical Materialism* helped me with detailed critical comments.

such a critique as a huge and debilitating gap in the historical-materialist legacy. It fatally compromised the ability of the Russian Revolution to realise a multi-national democracy and move beyond an embattled state-socialism, and it continues to undermine the hegemonic potential of socialist thought.

The critique of political economy was intended to de-naturalise the capitalist economy, present it as an historical form, and demonstrate how its naturalisation as ‘economics’ had come about. However, just as people in the reproduction of their own lives involuntarily enter into a definite pattern of relations of production,² they also enter into *foreign relations* – relations between communities occupying separate spaces and considering each other as outsiders. Modern IR does not acknowledge the prenational and transnational forms of foreign relations that run through inter-state relations, and, instead, naturalises the relations among nation-states (which, in practically all cases, are, of course, not ‘national’ to begin with) in terms of a security-dilemma. In parallel, and in apparent contradiction to it, there is a discourse referring to an ‘international community’, which goes back to the very origins of the discipline.

The starting point of any critique of social practices must be that they arise in the exploitation and transformation, or *socialisation*, of the human relationship to nature. The common foundation of every aspect of social relations resides in that metabolism, just as all historical activity, in its infinite complexity, is internally connected because of it. This is not a matter of economic causation, not even ‘in the final instance’. Humanity engages in the process of socialisation as distinct communities, the groups in which it emerges from nature. The transition from animal species to historical humanity relies on a myth of descent from another time; a cosmogony that is universal, even if each community has a separate story of how it got here from eternity.³

Alienation, then, is inherent in the ‘involuntary’ way in which humans enter into social relations – both in the productive sphere and in relations of ethno-cultural difference. Through the lens of alienation, different communities are perceived as foreign, a condition lifted out of history and naturalised. Once modern states assume the sole right of handling foreign relations on the basis of their territorial sovereignty, ‘international relations’, understood as relations among states that are nominally equal, come to be viewed as the normal state of affairs. The academic discipline of IR is built around this presumed

2. Marx and Engels 1956–71a, pp. 8–9.

3. The role of magic and ritual, myth and religion in foreign relations is the topic of the second volume of the *Modes of Foreign Relations* project, *The Foreign Encounter in Myth and Religion* (Van der Pijl 2010).

normality, just as economics takes the operation of a capitalist economy as its sole reference.

I will first give an overview of how IR was established as part of a broader academic division of labour, before outlining the central claims of a historical-materialist critique of the discipline. Why IR has all along rested on a premise of the universality of Western values will concern us in the final section.

The academic division of labour against historical materialism

The academic division of labour itself has proved a crucial mutation in Western intellectual life. By setting the parameters of legitimate speculation about society for the cadre trained in higher education, it is a key transmission-belt by which the dominant order of society is being reproduced.⁴ Obeying the strictures of the disciplinary division of labour is a precondition for the hegemony of the liberal order; to be a ‘Marxist’ *within the confines* of one of the squares of the disciplinary grid means little if the broader context is left unaddressed.

The emergence of the ‘disciplines’ through which a more comprehensive, class-discipline is maintained (ever more so as the middle-class cadre, whose allegiance to Western pre-eminence and the capitalist economy is primary ideological, grows in number) was itself a response to the rise of the labour-movement, Marxism, and the spectre of socialist revolution. The founding of a separate economics represents the first and crucial rupture with the philosophically-grounded Western intellectual tradition. Yet the classical political economists devoting their attention to this area still ‘were polymaths who wrote on economics, politics, civil society, language, morals and philosophy’, and their theoretical endeavours were ‘*pre-disciplinary*’.⁵

By the mid-nineteenth century, the growth of accumulated knowledge made it increasingly impossible for a single person to master it in its totality within the space of a single lifetime. This coincided with the emergence, in response to class-struggles in the centres of capitalist production, of an approach to political economy that was apologetic, justifying capitalist market-discipline and private property against the growing resistance to its dislocations and degradations. John Stuart Mill was an important figure in this movement. Marx called the strand of thought represented by Mill, ‘vulgar economy, which deals with appearances only’.⁶

4. Van der Pijl 1998, Chapter 5.

5. Jessop and Sum 2001, p. 90.

6. Quoted in Dobb 1972, p. 44 (footnote).

Even the classical political economy of Smith and Ricardo had, by then, become suspect. It had, after all, been their quest to discover the inner workings of the economy that allowed Marx to develop his critique of capitalism. Declaring this investigative focus out-of-bounds was at the heart of what became the marginalist revolution of the 1870s. It built on Mill's idea that a capitalist is not a functionary of capital, in an exploitative social relation with labour, but a *rational subject* who simply puts his assets (which happen to be capital in the sense of investment-funds) to the best possible use, just as a worker would with labour-power. Changes in the class-structure of late nineteenth-century capitalist society, notably the growth of a class of inactive, 'rentier' savers-investors branching off from the classical owner-manager capitalist, contributed to creating the support-base for this theoretical repositioning.

The solution to the dilemma's of scholarly limitations thus was found in a disciplinary turn which happened to satisfy the concerns of those whose wealth and well-being was dependent upon capital; more specifically, the rentier-element in the bourgeoisie. The marginal-productivity theory of income-distribution replacing the original labour-theory of value (which articulated the bourgeois case for wealth as the product of work, as against feudal inheritance), assuaged the sensibilities of this class. It simultaneously gave the academic practitioners a more detached, 'scientific', and 'expert' social profile.⁷ Indeed, from the marginalist perspective, given that everybody is rewarded in direct proportion to what they contribute, 'there was no possibility of exploitation and no economic grounds for conflict'.⁸

The political nature of this reformulation, which remains in operation to the present day as neoclassical micro-economics, was never in doubt. Echoing earlier concerns expressed by Mill, Stanley Jevons warned in the 1870s that 'erroneous and practically mischievous' ideas about political economy were gaining ground and 'becoming popular among the lower orders'. Hence, in his view, the term 'political economy' should be replaced by 'economics'.⁹ By removing the adjective 'political', the idea that economic processes could be subject to social preferences and state intervention was thus sidelined. Classical value-theory, claimed Jevons's American colleague Frank Fetter, had come 'under pressure of radical propaganda'.¹⁰ According to Eugen Böhm-Bawerk, author of *Karl Marx and the Close of his System* of 1896, Adam Smith had still

7. Bukharin 1972.

8. Perry 2009, p. 95.

9. Quoted in Meek 1972, pp. 88 (footnote), 90 (footnote).

10. Quoted in Ross 1991, p. 177.

treated political economy in a spirit of neutrality, but his followers had failed to insulate themselves from class-conflict.¹¹

When actual class-conflict mounted in the 1880s, many scholars who had previously adopted historical or institutionalist, even Marxist positions, converted to marginalist economics. In this way, they turned into organic intellectuals of ascendant rentier-capital. John Bates Clark, who had earlier signalled an interest in socialism, was prominent in this shift in the United States. ‘The desire to legitimate the capitalist market in the face of radical challenge was the major element in Clark’s thinking’, writes Dorothy Ross.¹² Clark’s concern to declare the world of the new economics a natural rather than a historical (let alone, political) phenomenon, is evident from his 1891 claim that ‘[w]hat a social class gets is, *under natural law*, what it contributes to the general output of industry.’¹³

Thus, economists, united in their assumptions about the subjective valuations of ‘economic man’, by a large majority moved into the role of apologists for the order that maintained them. Within academia, from which the remaining Marxists were removed in due course, only institutionalists in the tradition that runs from Thorstein Veblen to Karl Polanyi, maintained a measure of distance, by relying on anthropological insights to analyse the economy.¹⁴

Recasting political economy as economics triggered a general movement towards the disciplinary re-organisation of Western academia. The immediate counterpart of the separation of a distinct, axiomatic economics (the axiom being that every subject is a self-interested, utility-maximising participant in the great game of the market-economy), was sociology. If economics crystallised as an organic perspective of the rentier-class, shaping its response to working-class demands and socialism, sociology evolved to serve the needs of the managerial cadre.

For obvious reasons, the managers had less use for fixed conceptions such as the self-interested individual, so congenial to the rentier world-view. Their concern was for the empirical working class which was, or might yet pass, under the influence of Marxism. To try and control their labour-forces and the proletariat at large, managers both in the factories and in city-councils and governments rejected deductive axiomatics and adopted an empirical attitude to the working class. Thus sociology (positivist or hermeneutic) became what Göran Therborn calls ‘an investigative instead of a dogmatic guardian of the

11. Quoted in Dobb 1972, p. 44 (footnote).

12. Ross 1991, p. 118.

13. Quoted in Hunt and Schwartz 1972, p. 16, emphasis added.

14. See Van der Pijl 2009, Chapter 5.

ideological community' on which social cohesion is premised.¹⁵ This was no less directed against socialist ideas. 'The common polemical target of the thinkers of the Classical period was Marxism. . . . Classical Sociology was the great achievement of the middle class of Western Europe . . . when in general, the middle class was increasingly threatened by the rise of Marxist Socialism'.¹⁶

In the same conjuncture, anthropology mutated from a concern of gentleman-amateurs into an academic training ground for colonial administrators; psychology emerged to deal with the mental mutations occurring as a result of the downscaling of family-size in an urbanising mass-society. Political science branched off to control that mass-society through electoral engineering and party-organisation, whilst IR, as we shall see below, emerged as the specialisation concerned with maintaining Western liberal pre-eminence against revolutionary aspirations, be they social or national.

In all cases, disciplinary segregation was instrumental in neutralising dissent or resistance encountered in each separate domain, and with it, socialism and historical materialism. Training the future-managerial cadre into so many 'disciplinary' languages, each with their own provincial hierarchies of authority, does not merely serve to narrow their understanding of the world in its fundamental unity. It equally eclipses any awareness of their own role and replaces it by the facile arrogance of technocracy.

Yet, as Peter Bratsis points out, '[a] social compulsion must be understood in its totality, as a product of a totality of practices not limited by the typical academic boundaries and departmental subfields'. The organisation into separate academic disciplines accordingly has

much less to do with the requisites of intellectual production than . . . with Taylorizing academic labour and standardising curricula so as to increase the 'efficiency' of higher education and decrease the power of faculty by making them much more interchangeable.¹⁷

This phenomenon is not confined to the social sciences either. James Lovelock, author of the Gaia-hypothesis in geophysics, argues that the late discovery of global warming was the result of the fact that 'science . . . was handicapped in the last two centuries by its division into many different disciplines, each

15. Therborn 1976, pp. 224–5.

16. A. Gouldner, quoted in Seidman 1983, p. ix.

17. Bratsis 2006, p. 113 and footnote.

limited to seeing only a tiny facet of the planet, and there was no coherent vision of the Earth'.¹⁸

The emergence of the IR-discipline

The connection between international relations as a separate, Anglo-American academic discipline and the rise of the United States to the position of primacy within the English-speaking liberal heartland in the global-political economy, must be traced to Woodrow Wilson's intervention in World-War I. Dedicated IR-courses had been introduced at Columbia and a few other US-universities from 1914. But, at the time, the understanding of the relationships between the world-market and world-politics, between colonialism and war, was entirely dominated by the phenomenon of imperialism. Dramatised by the World-War and the Russian Revolution in its closing stages, imperialism was the dominant frame of reference in which these epoch-making events made sense, to academics and the lay public alike. In the understanding of world-affairs, global political economy came as naturally as biology to the study of plants and animals; IR would change precisely that.

Wilson was a lone scholar among US-politicians, and early on adopted the positivist idea that politics must be based on scientific insight. Certainly, he gave it an American, pragmatist inflection that was even more resistant to any axiomatic, fixed rules or conceptions. 'Will you never learn from this fact,' Wilson asked in a lecture just before his first presidential election victory in 1912, 'that you do not make governments by theories? You accommodate theories to the circumstances. Theories are generalizations from the facts. The facts do not spring out of theories ... but the facts break in and ignore theories.'¹⁹

This would not have earned him in a place in the annals of philosophy, but it did certainly inspire a flexible response to the Russian Revolution. This in turn stamped the new discipline of IR with the enduring imprint of its initial association with Western intelligence and policy-planning. Let me briefly recapitulate how this connection came about.

Wilson's self-imposed task when he travelled to the Versailles peace-conference was to neutralise the spread of Bolshevism.²⁰ To this end, mobilising national sentiments against Russia and the other dissolving empires extending across Central Europe appeared the most pressing task – given that all currents

18. Lovelock 2007, p. 6.

19. Quoted in Sklar 1970, p. 52.

20. Mayer 1967.

of the revolutionary movement had developed their own theses on national self-determination. Were the Bolsheviks able to enlist national aspirations for the socialist cause, the route to Germany – via Hungary and Austria – lay open. Revolutionary ferment was rife in all of these countries, and nationality-issues were at the heart of it. Dealing with the threat of revolution involved insight into the possibilities and limits of the territorial re-organisation of Europe (although the more mundane distribution of American food-aid was equally important, and often decisive).

The Congress of Vienna that had settled European affairs after the fall of Napoleon, provided a blue-print for Versailles. From the Vienna-negotiations onwards, Britain had taken the lead, intuitively rather than intellectually, in instrumentalising aspirations for national independence to suit its interests. When Latin America broke away from Spain, this policy had already matured to the point where the British foreign secretary, Canning, made his famous comment that ‘Spanish America is free, and if we do not mismanage our affairs sadly, she is English’.²¹ At Versailles, however, Britain had to allow the United States to guide the process in the wider interests of the liberal West. In addition, the emerging insight that social cohesion is premised on some sort of ideological community shaped the Wilsonian response to socialism.

The Congress of Vienna had reshuffled territories by simply counting heads, and thus arrived at solutions acceptable to the various European rulers. But, with entire peoples in open revolt, and national self-determination a key demand, counting heads was no longer an option at Versailles. ‘A Statistical Committee of the sort that had rendered such useful services at the Congress of Vienna could not instantly have provided the political intelligence required for lasting decisions.’²² Wilson therefore relied on a qualitatively different sort of committee, nicknamed the ‘Inquiry’, an intelligence-cum-academic operation which had been assembled from American universities and other institutions to serve as a think-tank backing up the president’s political proposals.²³ Its creation had been suggested by Felix Frankfurter, one of the bright young assistants of Secretary of War Newton Baker and a future Supreme-Court Justice. Colonel House, Wilson’s chief of staff, appointed his own brother-in-law as head of the eventual 126 academics assembled to provide the president with information on the secret treaties, war-goals, and ethno-political issues a peace-arrangement would have to address. Wilson himself then proposed another young assistant of Secretary Baker’s, Walter

21. Quoted in Gallagher and Robinson 1967, p. 241.

22. Mayer 1967, p. 372.

23. Smith 2004, Part II. Benno Teschke pointed me to this important book when I was finishing this paper.

Lippmann, to be added as secretary. Other important members were the director of the American Geographical Society, Isaiah Bowman, and Columbia University historian James T. Shotwell.²⁴

When the Bolsheviks, having seized power in Russia, sent out a series of appeals to the rest of the world to rise up in revolution in early December 1917, House summoned Lippmann 'to get the Inquiry busy on preparing a policy proposal for the president'.²⁵ Working closely with US-intelligence, the Inquiry also relied on information provided by the National Geographic Society, the Carnegie Institution and Endowment for International Peace, as well as the General Rubber Company, Standard Oil of New York and the American Tobacco Company. This sums up the field of forces within which the discipline of IR took shape and still continues to operate.

Through Carnegie, the connection was made with Atlantic capital-circuits linking Britain to the United States. J.P. Morgan had reorganised Andrew Carnegie's iron- and steel-assets into US Steel, the biggest industrial corporation of its day. With half a billion dollars paid to him by Morgan, a fortune by any standard, Carnegie, who had emigrated to the US as a boy, created the philanthropic empire that is still active today. It was officially dedicated to world-peace but, more specifically, to 'the propagation and dissemination of knowledge and understanding among the peoples of the United States and the British Dominions and colonies'.²⁶ The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace connected the Inquiry with the budding discipline of IR. In addition, via Lippmann, a channel of communication was created between the internationalists in Wilson's entourage and the Rhodes-Milner group, the forward-looking fraction in the British imperial ruling class, and trustees of Cecil Rhodes who, like Carnegie, believed in the civilising mission of the English-speaking peoples.²⁷

On the margins of the Versailles-negotiations, Shotwell, Lippmann, and Thomas Lamont, a banker of the J.P. Morgan firm, worked out the project for an Institute of International Affairs with Lionel Curtis, secretary of the Round Table, one of the fronts for the Rhodes-Milner Group, and Alfred Zimmern, one of its members. The Institute failed to materialise in its original, transatlantic format when the mood in the United States turned away from Wilson's universalism; a Council on Foreign Relations in the US and Royal Institute for International Affairs (Chatham House) in Britain were established

24. O'Toole 1991, pp. 301–3; Hofstadter 1955, p. 155.

25. O'Toole 1991, p. 306.

26. Quoted in Nielsen 1985, p. 136.

27. Quigley 1981.

separately in the end.²⁸ Zimmern in 1919 became the first chair of IR in Britain, created at the University of Wales at Aberystwyth.

Complementing the separation of economics from the broader political economy and polymathic social science, the newly-established IR-discipline worked to sideline the problematic of imperialism. Not by refuting it, as Joseph Schumpeter had still attempted in 1919,²⁹ but by declaring it out of bounds – as it confounds the disciplinary boundaries of ‘Economics’ on the one hand and ‘International Politics’ on the other. Here, the inner connection between Wilson’s intervention, the crystallisation of a new academic discipline with a narrow focus, and the discipline of the ruling class of the English-speaking West, is pertinent. This connection imprinted on the new discipline what Klaus-Gerd Giesen calls, a ‘moralistic founding myth’, a particular ethics that ascribes to all peoples of the world the innate right to the ‘pursuit of happiness’ as formulated in the American Declaration of Independence.³⁰ The liberalism that animated the Anglophone heartland, in this myth found its expression as far as IR is concerned. The doctrine of its universal validity, the observance of which is today entrusted to a supposed ‘international community’, has its origin here.

As I will argue below, the antinomy with a supposed realism, which denies that such a thing as the international community can exist, surfaced soon after. But mainstream-IR retains the birthmark stamped on it by the Wilson-intervention. The selective promotion of the right to national statehood (these days eclipsed by ‘human rights’, understood primarily as individual rights against the state), and the playing-off of separate ‘national’ claimants for power against each other under the theorem of the balance of power (both critical elements in the panoply of Western hegemony) became the pillars of the discipline. The intelligence-aspect, the role of the large foundations spun off from the top corporations, and the imbrication with ruling-class circles of the Anglophone heartland, all remain in place.

As to the foundations, in addition to the Carnegie-network, the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations emerged as key sponsors of ‘International Studies’. This comprised both IR proper and ‘Comparative Politics’, the sister-discipline investigating other societies by the standards of the liberal ideal realised in the English-speaking West. As with sociology, discovering the optimum-format of the ideological community for these societies began by investigating the working class. The Ford Foundation in 1952 launched a mammoth research-project, entitled ‘Labor Problems in Economic Development’, to back up US

28. Shoup and Minter 1977, p. 16.

29. Schumpeter 1951.

30. Giesen 1992, p. 14.

foreign policy in the nation-building domain. The Universities of Chicago and Princeton were selected as the chief centres for the research, and internationally-oriented political scientists such as Walter Galenson, Reinhard Bendix, Bert Hoselitz, and Seymour Martin Lipset made their names through this programme.³¹

The intelligence-connection of IR was reproduced after World-War II as well. When the CIA was created in 1947 out of the wartime Office of Strategic Services, centralising the flow of information from the IR-discipline was one of its major tasks. In 1965, the President of the International Studies Association, John Gange, recalled that the OSS ‘was like a big university faculty in many respects – sometimes, staff meetings were just like faculty meetings’.³² Prominent figures within IR, such as Max Millikan, Klaus Knorr, Robert Bowie, Philip E. Mosely (then director of studies of the Council on Foreign Relations), Hamilton Fish Armstrong (editor of its quarterly, *Foreign Affairs*), along with various historians and Soviet specialists, worked through the 1950s and 60s for the then-head of the CIA, Allen Dulles. Nation-building expert and Asia-specialist Lucian W. Pye of MIT joined this élite-body, known as the ‘Princeton Consultants’, later in the 1960s. The director of the Carnegie Institution, Caryl P. Haskins, and Harold F. Linder, assistant secretary of state and chair of the Export-Import Bank, completed what was almost a remake of the Inquiry of Wilson’s days.³³

The Vietnam-War was the high-tide of IR’s involvement in US-imperialism, and to a considerable extent worked to streamline it as a ‘behavioural’ science.³⁴ In 1966, Admiral William Raborn, director of the CIA, prided himself on the intense traffic between academe and the agency, whilst the State Department (which runs its own intelligence-agency, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research) had connections with universities that were even more extensive. Deputy Under Secretary of State William J. Crockett in that year boasted of having on file more than 5,000 current IR research-projects being conducted at US-universities, and of receiving some 200 unpublished scholarly papers each month.³⁵ In 1967, it became public that the executive director and the treasurer of the American Political Science Association, Evron M. Kirkpatrick and Max Kampelman, were also president and vice-president, respectively, of a CIA-funded organisation called Operations and Policy Research, Inc.³⁶

31. Carew 1987, p. 196; Van der Pijl 1996, pp. 309–11.

32. Quoted in Windmiller 1968, p. 120.

33. Cavanagh 1980, p. 2.

34. Chomsky 1969.

35. Quoted in Windmiller 1968, p. 121.

36. Windmiller 1968, p. 122.

Certainly, the link between the national-security state and the American IR- and comparative-politics professions seemed to meet its nemesis in 1976, when the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence chaired by Senator Frank Church reported that academics collaborating with the CIA 'are located in over 100 American colleges, universities and related institutes'.³⁷ At this point, the US seemed to veer back towards a Wilsonian, forward-looking perspective, of which the Carter-administration and its human-rights policy would be the epitome. The debacle of the Vietnam-adventure also discredited the 'behaviourists' who had served as expert-advisers, and the IR-discipline shifted its focus to themes like 'liberal internationalism' and 'interdependence'.

The Wilsonian turn of the Carter-years was prepared to a considerable extent in the Trilateral Commission, another contemporary remake of the Inquiry. The IR-discipline (like economics) was embedded in it along with the major foundations, big business, and (less prominently) the national-security state. As Stephen Gill points out, left- or (far) right-wing thinkers were not part of the Trilateral Commission network. They are what the Trilateral Commission qualifies as 'value-oriented' intellectuals, whose views are largely irrelevant to the 'Commission's major discourses, which are liberal and functionalist'.³⁸ The Trilateral Commission-type of intellectual is policy-oriented, well-connected to the key centres of national policy-planning, and associated with élite-universities. The late Samuel Huntington, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henry Kissinger, Joseph Nye, Henry Owen, Richard Gardner, C. Fred Bergsten, Graham Allison and Karl Kaiser have been among the IR-scholars typically active in the Trilateral Commission.

These theorists consistently emphasise the necessity of international coordination of policy, under conditions of concentric circles of participation, with the United States at the core, and other Trilateral and developing countries involved in decision-making according to functional criteria.³⁹

The link with the national-security state was never suspended. When President Carter commissioned an outside review of the CIA in 1979 to set things right, one of the three consultants was IR-scholar Klaus Knorr, himself also a CIA-consultant.⁴⁰ Carter's CIA-Director, Admiral Stansfield Turner, appointed Robert Bowie of Harvard to head a Foreign Assessment Centre, and Turner's successor in the Reagan-administration, William Casey, further stepped up

37. Ege 1984, p. 4.

38. Gill 1990, p. 159.

39. Gill 1990, p. 161; for the list of Trilateral-Commission reports, see Gill 1990, Appendix 4, pp. 238–9.

40. Cavanagh 1980, p. 7.

the collaboration with universities. Two hundred and fifty universities and colleges had Pentagon-contracts in 1980–1, with MIT and Johns Hopkins accounting for half of them.⁴¹

In November 1984, the *New York Times* reported that Rutgers University IR-scholars Richard Mansbach and Harvey Lee Waterman had been admonished by their school-officials for not observing the rule that students' papers should not be fed into a CIA-funded research-project without their knowledge.⁴² Mansbach and his team at the time worked on the European Non-State Actors Project (ENSAP) and, in that capacity, solicited European colleagues to identify finished work or work-in-progress dealing with forces affecting attitudes towards the Atlantic alliance – this being the period of widespread protest against the 1979 NATO missile-decision and the new Cold War launched by the Reagan administration.⁴³ I met Mansbach at a conference on interdependence and conflict in the Netherlands in 1986, in which he commented with mild disapproval on the conservative turn to IR-neorealism in the Reagan-years.⁴⁴ But this, of course, only added to the readiness of his European interlocutors to engage.

Clearly, the limits of a discipline which in the 1980s reaffirmed its focus on interstate-diplomacy and US-unilateralism, are bound to surface as the nation-building exercise draws the United States and Britain deeper into involvement with premodern societies. As they find themselves ill-prepared to deal with the challenges facing them in societies where tribal and clan-, religious and other prenational practices of dealing with foreign presence persist, the power-apparatus mobilising academics for the enterprise, must necessarily step over disciplinary boundaries. In 2004, the CIA launched a \$4 million pilot-project to place trainees in UK anthropology-departments under the Pat Roberts Intelligence Scholars' Programme (PRISP), funding students on the condition that they sign up for intelligence-work after their degree and take military-intelligence summer-courses.⁴⁵ In Iraq and Afghanistan, the US Army operates Human Terrain Systems (HTS), a programme operational for a number of years and expanded in 2007. Subcontracted to BAE Systems, the HTS programme relies on anthropologists embedded with troops at the brigade- and division-levels to assist in interpreting popular responses to military actions.⁴⁶

41. Hulnick 1987, p. 44.

42. Quoted in Ege 1984, p. 6.

43. Ege 1984, p. 2.

44. Mansbach 1989, pp. 220–39.

45. Baty 2005.

46. Beeman 2008.

The need to transcend disciplinary limits obviously cannot solely be a concern of the CIA and the US Army. This takes me to the modes of foreign-relations project.

Modes of foreign relations – points of departure in Marx

The historical-materialist legacy, as noted already, is incomplete in many respects, including the domain claimed by IR. More particularly, it suffers from an ‘economistic’ distortion. Economism, or economic reductionism, is a bourgeois way of looking at society. It is a perspective that arose in the context of the formation of the modern bourgeoisie, which owes its existence to the market-economy and entrepreneurialism. Hence, the assumption that all social forms – and all progress – depend on the economy, came naturally to it. The modernising state-classes outside the English-speaking heartland of bourgeois class-formation, in their attempt to emulate the path taken by the North-Atlantic pioneers, in effect took the same view. In Russia, Gramsci wrote, ‘Marx’s *Capital* was more the book of the bourgeoisie than of the proletariat. It stood as the critical demonstration of how events should follow a predetermined course: how in Russia a bourgeoisie had to develop, and a capitalist era had to open, with the setting up of a Western-type civilization.’⁴⁷

Certainly, one can debate to what extent the use of the term ‘superstructure’ by Marx did not invite the idea of a space of reflective diffraction arising from an economic basis which alone accounts for substantive change; just as the materialistic, economistic reduction of the concept of production to (manual) ‘work’ as the determining aspect of the metabolism with nature may have been influenced by the association with the labour-movement. But Marx’s transcendence of materialism, and the historicising *critique* of political economy, are what define his method.⁴⁸ It is on this basis that analysing patterned social relations, as coming about involuntarily in every aspect of human existence, can be developed. The result is an evolving, multi-dimensional process in which each set of relations becomes a structural constraint through which others develop in turn. It is perhaps best pictured as a double-helix, in which the impulse for change emerges from a particular set of practices and wraps itself around the others as they progress in combination. The ideological aspect of each merges into a comprehensive cultural sphere in the process, in the way the commodity-fetishism that turns a Nike-shoe into

47. Gramsci 1977, p. 34.

48. Pannekoek 1938, p. 25.

an object of desire whilst occluding the conditions of its production is compounded by the foreignness of the actual producers at the East-Asian end of the product-chain.⁴⁹

The Althusserian imagery of levels, with the economy determining which level determines the others, by contrast leads to a proliferation of disciplinary departures, losing the common anchorage in the exploitation of nature that energises each aspect of historical-human existence.⁵⁰ But the powers a community acquires in the process of exploiting nature (in the classic nomenclature, the ‘productive forces’), enable it not only to reduce the time necessary to reproduce its social existence, thus determining the speed of social change in production. They also allow it to extend itself in space, shaping the modalities of the encounter with others, including exogamy, conquest and integration, and thus modifying, through foreign relations, the space occupied under one particular mode of existence. The concept of ‘modes’ then allows us to recognise the structural constraint generated in the process in which a new level of exploitation and socialisation of nature is attained. As André Drainville writes, ‘thinking from modes will encourage us to reflect on what is being born of present circumstances that may later set limits to political possibilities’.⁵¹

That the Marxist legacy can be developed beyond the notion of modes of production so as to account for foreign relations (other than as a superstructure of the economic basis) has certainly been recognised. Giovanni Arrighi concludes from the correspondence between Marx and Engels that had the latter found the time, ‘he might have been able to demonstrate the rightness of his and Marx’s views concerning the connection between the productive forces and social relations, but *only if he redefined the productive forces to include the production of protection*.’⁵² There are indeed important openings in Engels. In the *Anti-Dühring*, he argues that ‘Power is determined by the economic condition, which provides [a community] with *the means* to equip and maintain its instruments’. Characteristically, however, he traces these means to

49. Merk 2004.

50. Althusser 1977.

51. Drainville 2004, p. 12. At the Deutscher-Lecture, I was asked if my modes of foreign relations would not open up an endless number of other modes too. The answer is yes, because the number of aspects of human existence that systematically congeal into patterns at a given level of exploitation of nature is indeed endless. However, the aspect of, say, gender-relations, does not determine production and foreign relations to the same extent that these determine gender-relations. What I challenge is not determination as such, but a reductionist determination by the economy.

52. Arrighi 2007, p. 265, emphasis added.

‘the appropriation of alien products of labour and alien labour power’.⁵³ On the other hand, in a separate fragment on ‘power-theory’, Engels writes that men mobilised for war, as human material, *change* along with other productive forces.⁵⁴ This was later taken up by Bukharin in his *Economics of the Transition Period* when he writes that states wage war by

disposing of the live force of peoples on the battlefield just as they utilise it in the factories and mines. . . . In production relations men are arranged according to a specific hierarchical scale, corresponding to class groupings; in the same way this social hierarchy is apparent in the state apparatus itself and particularly, in the army.⁵⁵

For the elements of an analysis of foreign relations, however, we may also turn to the sketches for *Capital* (the *Grundrisse*) and the *Ethnographic Notebooks* in which Marx summarised his readings of Lewis Morgan and others (and which, in turn, formed the basis of Engels’s *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*). Andrew Linklater was among the first to recognise that there is a potential in the Marxist legacy for beginning to analyse foreign relations in historical-materialist terms, but that one would then also have to move *beyond* the existing corpus of Marxist writing.⁵⁶

As noted above, the exploitation and socialisation of nature necessarily have their origin in separate communities. There is no way in which we can imagine that historical self-consciousness (which initially is entirely mythical, shrouded in cosmogonic concepts that gave humans the ability to become aware of themselves as collective subjects)⁵⁷ can be a species-characteristic. On the contrary, what is left behind in the transition from instinct-governed species to historical humanity is precisely this – it is the distinct kin-community which discovers itself as a unit. In the encounter with other units, it further develops this initial awareness. In Marx’s words, ‘The only barrier which the community can encounter in relating to the natural conditions of production – the earth – is *another community*, which already claims it as its own inorganic body.’⁵⁸ Hence the community must occupy, however fleetingly and precariously, a space which it claims for itself and which the other community/-ies must acknowledge. This act is ‘the great communal labour which is required . . . to occupy the objective conditions of being there

53. Marx and Engels 1956–71b, pp. 586, 588, emphasis added.

54. Marx and Engels 1956–71b, p. 155.

55. Bukharin 1976, p. 63; cf. Kaldor 1982, p. 268.

56. Linklater 1990.

57. Van Binsbergen 2005.

58. Marx 1973, p. 491.

alive'.⁵⁹ Note that 'being there alive' is the common denominator of both productive organisation, and the occupation of space (with its implication of encountering others).

This is a point of departure that cannot be considered a mere preliminary to the later theories of imperialism. These have often, mistakenly, been understood as adding the chapter on the world-market to the unfinished project of *Capital*, in the sense in which Hilferding's *Finance Capital* was praised by Kautsky as adding the 'fourth volume' to Marx's three. The classical-Marxist theories, however, are all, without exception, examples of the economistic turn after Marx. As John Milios and Dimitris Sotiropoulos explain, these theories, each in their own way, tend to 'reduc[e] imperialism to "rule of monopolies", downgrad[ing] imperialist policy to a simple reflection of the economic base.'⁶⁰ Trotsky's theory of combined and uneven development, which has recently been revived to deal with the phenomenon of 'the international', likewise remains anchored in an economic reductionism. The very notion of 'backwardness' is only acceptable and meaningful as an economic category, and once the component of permanent revolution (which, for Trotsky, provided the foundational rationale) is removed, what remains is a de-subjectified sociology of catch-up industrialisation for which we do not need Marxism.⁶¹

The idea of occupying space in itself is not new. It has been theorised by Henri Lefebvre as the *production* of space. However, by reducing it again to modes of production, this results in a view from which the idea of a community encountering others has entirely disappeared and a succession of curiously empty spaces remains.⁶² David Harvey, warning against a notion of space as 'a mere reflection of the processes of accumulation and class reproduction', instead proposes to look at it in terms of 'the production of spatial configurations [which] can then be treated as an "active moment" within the overall temporal dynamic of accumulation and social reproduction'.⁶³ But reducing the foreign encounter to an aspect of the capitalist mode of production also reduces the potential of understanding the comprehensive process of social change. Its 'active moment' has a logic of its own which contributes to the culture of communities, societies, and the emerging global society in its own right. Changing conceptions of difference and foreignness relate to production only

59. Marx 1973, p. 474.

60. Milios and Sotiropoulos 2009, p. 31.

61. See Löwy 1981; Rosenberg 2006; Şenalp 2008.

62. Lefebvre 1978, pp. 283–90.

63. Harvey 2006, p. 374.

by their common anchorage in the exploitation of nature, and by the accumulated control of the mental and material environment thus achieved.

The particular relations among communities occupying separate spaces and considering each other as outsiders arises in the process of the emergence of historical humanity itself. The intuitive appreciation that such a separate dimension of social existence was operative, inspired a long line of Marxist writing on national self-determination. But the mainly tactical political arguments that Marx and Engels developed on this issue, elaborated in various directions by Otto Bauer, Lenin and Stalin, never remotely reach the theoretical sophistication of the critique of political economy, and in no way can be related to Marx's initial notes cited above.

To fall back on geopolitics, another route enjoying a certain revival today, can never be a way forward for Marxism either. It is a reactionary approach, the antecedents of which go back to mediaeval concepts of the value of the soil as the key political-economic asset, and it was at the heart of Nazi-thinking on foreign relations.⁶⁴ To develop Marx's analysis of the role of occupying space, Russian and Soviet ethnography (we should properly refer to it as anthropology, as it was much more comprehensive and ambitious than the mere recording of habits, but, in Soviet times, the term was contentious) offers a more promising route, albeit with its own limitations.⁶⁵

Russian ethnography

The precursor of the Russian ethnographic tradition, S.M. Shirokogorov, was considered an émigré in the USSR because he chose to stay in Manchuria after the Bolshevik Revolution. (Whether he encountered other scholars active on the Inner-Asian Frontier in the same period, such as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Aurel Stein or Owen Lattimore, remains to be investigated.) It is to Shirokogorov that later work by Yulian Bromley, Lev Gumilev (son of the murdered poet Gumilev and Anna Akhmatova) and other Soviet ethnographers must be traced.

Community-formation on the fault-line between nature and history, *ethnogenesis*, is, from this perspective, the result of the adaptation to and socialisation of the natural environment. Occupying a space for 'being there alive' does not usually mean demarcating a territory – communities originally were migratory, and occupying space could, for instance, consist of exploiting

64. Teschke 2003, pp. 65–7; Teschke 2001; Van der Pijl 1996, pp. 154–62.

65. The Indian Marxist and long-time editor of the Calcutta-published *The Marxist Review*, Ajit Roy, pointed me to this strand of literature. See also Shanin 1986 and Kuznetsov 2006.

a river-estuary for trade. Such choices, in turn, determine the course of a community's development, shaping its outlook including its mythology and the language in which it is expressed. But the geographical conditions in which a community finds itself is only one of the determinants of its profile as an *ethnos*, which Soviet ethnographers typically define as 'an aggregate of people which recognises itself as such, distinguishing itself from other similar communities'.⁶⁶

Shirokogorov already distinguished between three determining conditions shaping the process of ethnogenesis:

Conditions beyond the control of man, which may be called *primary milieu*; conditions created by man, which are essentially a product of culture, or *secondary milieu*; and conditions which are formed by other ethnical units in the midst of which the unit is living, called here *tertiary*, or *interethnic, milieu*.⁶⁷

Hence, foreign relations are constituted from the outset by communities encountering each other in the process of their adaptation to their environment, and, in doing so, they enter into complex relationships with their surroundings, including a particular cultural infrastructure arising from those relationships, and with each other – all at once. There is no biology involved here, except that once kin-groups have established stable networks for procuring spouses from others (and, in doing so, established the exogamous clan/endogamous tribal structure), they tend to intermarry within their (larger) communities. As a rule of thumb, this occurs at a rate of around 90 per cent and to that extent, 'the boundaries of endogamy form a sort of genetic barrier for the *ethnos* concerned'.⁶⁸ By then, *ethno-transformation*, another concept in the Soviet-ethnography-tradition, has begun to make ethno-cultural difference more complex and diffuse. Traits inherited from natural adaptation and early ethnogenesis become subject to social synthesis, just as ethnogenetic mythology is transformed into epic mythology and religion. Thus, in the Greek myth of Jason, the fact that the Argonauts accompanying him on his Black-Sea expedition supposedly included Heracles and other heroes not from Thessaly, with Orpheus signing for the music on board, was meant to weave together various local myths into a pan-Hellenic epic.⁶⁹

Once a community has taken shape in the process of ethnogenesis, Shirokogorov writes, it 'transmits its experience of adaptation to the local

66. Bromley et al. 1982, pp. 9–10.

67. Shirokogorov 1970, p. 15.

68. Bromley 1974, p. 65.

69. Van der Pijl 2010, p. 112.

conditions through tradition, and its physical adaptation through the complex mechanism of inheritance; accumulating, in this way, the work of previous generations'.⁷⁰ At no point can we assume that a community or society can be understood as having developed in isolation from either the natural context or from others – these are constitutive of every ethno-political entity and are reproduced by its manifold social relations, including foreign relations. 'Ethno-cultural differences, which lie at the basis of interethnic relations ... are the result of asynchronous adaptation of various groups to the natural, anthropogenic, technogenic, and civilisational conditions of mankind's development in time-space'.⁷¹

Certainly, there are strong economistic accents to be found in the work of both the Soviet writers and, for instance, Ber Borochov, the Marxist Zionist, who was thinking along comparable lines.⁷² Gumilev even makes a point of emphasising his economism in order to defend himself against the accusation of geographical determinism when he writes that 'the historical fate of a people [*ethnos*], being the result of their economic activity, is not determined by, but is linked with, the dynamic condition of the landscape they occupy'.⁷³ After the demise of the USSR, Gumilev even drifted off into the realm of 'Eurasian', Russian-nationalist discourse.⁷⁴

We may, however, retain that the relations into which communities and societies enter involuntarily, and which crystallise into definite modes, begin with ethnogenesis, in which the productive forces are generated by which both relations of production and foreign relations are then made possible. Again, as Marx puts it in the *Grundrisse* (retaining the reference to the mode of production),

The original unity between a particular form of community (clan) and the corresponding property in nature, or relation to the objective conditions of production as a natural being, as an objective being of the individual mediated by the commune ... has its living reality in a specific mode of production itself, a mode which appears both as a relation between the individuals, and as their specific active relation to inorganic nature, a specific mode of working (which is always family labour, often communal labour). *The community itself appears as the first great force of production.*⁷⁵

70. Shirokogorov 1970, p. 12.

71. Masanov 2002, p. 9.

72. Borochov 1972, p. 137.

73. Gumilev 1987, p. 26.

74. Evrazia 2006.

75. Marx 1973, p. 495, emphasis added.

‘Being there alive’ is the condition of which the community now becomes conscious; its subjectivity then is put to the set of tasks implied by the precariousness of that condition. This is what ethnogenesis refers to – the mobilisation of a community by itself through socialising its own and surrounding nature, into a source of power placed at its own disposal. Those leading this mobilisation, acting as mediators with the world outside of the community including the spiritual world, take up their positions in this process.⁷⁶ Relations of ethno-cultural difference are then mythically accounted for by pseudo-speciation, the denial of other communities’ humanity.⁷⁷ The designation of foreigners as subhuman, as dogs or apes, bereft of divine protection, or even as demons themselves (‘evil’), is a phenomenon that is still with us. But it can be traced to the earliest mythologies dealing with foreign relations. The strange sound and unintelligibility of a foreign language (‘Barbarian’, ‘Tartar’, ‘Hottentot’), or the destiny of strangers to be enslaved (‘Slav’, ‘Serb’, or Indian *dasa*), all have left the traces of early pseudo-speciation in contemporary terms.

The contradiction between community and humanity

The ubiquity of pseudo-speciation in foreign relations should not be read as pointing to a ‘state of nature’ characterised by perennial animosity and war, as assumed in the realist tradition of international studies that goes back to Hobbes and was revamped in the 1930s. Like relations of production, foreign relations develop within a contradiction. Just as humanity develops by the quest to overcome the limitations imposed by its natural state, and, in so doing, mobilises the productive forces within a set of relations that serve it for a definite period before they become fetters on further development, foreign relations develop within the contradiction between the separate community/society and the unity of the humanity.

Contradiction here should be properly understood as mediated by consciousness. As Samuel Knafo writes, contradictions ‘do not exist in the world but only in the way subjects invest the world with meaning’.⁷⁸ Pseudo-speciation, in that sense, was an early (and persistent) way out of the perception of human groups which were ethno-culturally different but yet were obviously human – the readiness to mate being the surest sign of this side of mutual perception. Even today, when many habits are becoming universal, their

76. Al-Khafaji 2004, pp. 145–6.

77. Tiger 1970, p. 213.

78. Knafo 2002, p. 153.

‘meaning’ in most cases remains culturally specific. The common humanity that arises from the natural substratum of the species, but which is contradicted, through the lenses of those occupying separate spaces and considering others as outsiders, remains operative too. The eagerness for exchange, mixed with uncertainty about the other’s intentions, can be traced back to the original group lacking sufficient mates and other means of reproduction.

That such a thing as a contradiction (or at least, an antinomy) between common humanity and separate community exists, has been recognised widely. The debates on ‘communitarianism’ versus ‘cosmopolitanism’⁷⁹ are testimony to it, and, from Herbert Spencer onward, the idea that society in its historical development moves from war to trade has been a recurrent theme in historical sociology. From the historical-materialist perspective, however, contradiction refers to the specific structure of a given level of socialisation of internal and external nature and a range of modes of social relations. This structure is dynamic, because from its perception as contradictory, follows human action to overcome it; this action, in turn, brings out the limits of the possible inherent in the prevailing social relations.

We can now appreciate that Marx, in the *Grundrisse*, identifies the two contradictory aspects of the occupation of space. One, *protection*: the community’s effort ‘to protect and perpetuate the occupation’;⁸⁰ and, second, *exchange*. Although Marx does not introduce the concept in this connection, exchange is equally vital to ‘being there alive’ – it primarily concerns, for the primitive group, the procurement of spouses for which the group itself is too small, and which will allow it to expand. Exchange appears first ‘in the connection of the different communities with one another, not in the relations between the different members of a single community’,⁸¹ because, *within* the community, the forms of appropriation that are implied in the notion of exchange, cannot develop towards equal exchange, with its attendant notions and practices of compensation and obligation, beginning with dowry and bride-price. Here we may also think of Lévi-Strauss’s theory that what distinguishes historical humanity from the animal world is the regulation of incest.⁸²

The contradiction between separate community and common humanity that governs foreign relations, and which defines a community’s tasks in the field of protection whilst simultaneously requiring it to regulate the exchanges with others, thus sets the limits within which these relations develop. Given a

79. Manokha 2008, pp. 43–6.

80. Marx 1973, p. 474.

81. Marx 1973, p. 103.

82. Lévi-Strauss 1962.

certain level of development of the socialisation of nature, definite modes crystallise, combining particular forms of occupying space, protection and exchange. These modes arise, as do the modes of production which account for the temporal aspect of community-development and in a certain simultaneity with them, in a historical sequence, but they are not discrete stages. Each progressively more-developed mode (that is, resting on a more advanced level of socialisation of nature) envelopes, ‘over-determines’, prior ones without entirely obliterating them; just as the spatial reach of a given society also brings different modes of production into a single grid. The idea of a culture as the repository in which the successive instances of occupying space and organising production, are sedimented then allows us to understand their persistence in the collective subconscious and the possibility of incomplete mutation or actual regression.

Let me briefly sum up, at the risk of over-schematising, the modes I have distinguished in *Nomads, Empires, States*. In the tribal mode, space is occupied on account of totemic ancestry, which alone authorises legitimate presence. From body-paint in New Guinea to the festive colours of contemporary football-fans, this is how, in the tribal pattern, mutual foreignness is manifested and recognised. Protection is likewise, in the first instance, ritual, whilst exchange, as noted, primarily concerns exogamy. Rules of intermarriage are at the heart of how communities deal with each other in the tribal mode, hence the highly emotional issue of attitudes to women that characterise it.

With the emergence of land-empires based on agriculture, the sedentary societies created by conquest or otherwise migration of a new ruling group inevitably face tribal groups on their frontiers. Whilst the empire considers its sovereign occupation of space to be boundless, the nomadic communities on its perimeter have a mobile concept of occupying space, which also is typically non-territorial. In Marx’s phrase, ‘Among nomadic pastoral tribes . . . the earth appears like other natural conditions, in its elemental limitlessness, e.g. in the Asiatic steppes and the high plateau’.⁸³ Sea-nomads too have been an important historical force in this connection. Toynebee observes that there is no difference in terms of motive forces

between those explosive movements of population which impel Norsemen or Minoans or Crusaders to take to their ships and to break like tidal waves upon the coasts of Europe or the Levant, and those other movements which impel Imoshagh or Arabs or Scyths or Turks or Mongols to swing out of their annual

83. Marx 1973, p. 491.

orbit on the steppe and to break, with equal violence and equal suddenness, upon the settled lands of Egypt or Iraq or Russia or India or China.⁸⁴

Foreign communities granted legitimate presence in the empire, often as members of a commercial diaspora resident in its urban centres, typically have enjoyed the particular hospitality that is imperial incorporation. The Ottoman *millet*-system would be a late example of it. Both cities hosting incorporated foreign communities, and the external frontier, are zones of exchange (exchange being usually dressed-up as tribute to the empire, but reversible, in that powerful nomadic formations may require the empire paying tribute to them).

The frontier is also a zone of intense interaction because, in the empire/nomad-mode of foreign relations, protection is typically organised by recruiting nomadic auxiliaries in the service of the empire. That these auxiliaries, upon receiving the keys of the empire, have often used them to take over the empire altogether, can be illustrated with regard to all the great land-empires – from China to Rome, Persia to Russia. I give examples in *Nomads, Empires, States* on the basis of the classic writers on this theme such as Lattimore.⁸⁵

Imperial universalism versus sovereign equality

Let me turn now to the supposed antinomy within IR between an idealism built around the ‘moralistic founding myth’ of an international community observing conformity of all states with its basis-rules, and realism.

The ‘West’, in terms of modes of foreign relations, emerged as a specific synthesis between imperial aspirations inherited from the Roman past (and Church), and the dynamic impulse instilled by Norman warriors. These were Viking marauders assigned their own frontier-sectors on the perimeter of the empire of Western Christianity. England was at the centre of the intersecting influences, both Viking raids and settlement, and the 1066 Norman conquest. In the encounter between the new Norman king and earlier settlers, equally of Nordic-Germanic origin, a unique compromise was reached in that the monarch had to acknowledge the rights of the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants, ‘English birthright’. The king’s limited rule was embodied in the institution of the Anglo-Saxon Lord Chancellor, the ‘Keeper of the King’s Conscience’, who acted as his confessor.

84. Toynbee 1935, pp. 7–8.

85. See also Turchin 2009. I owe this reference to Alex Anievas.

When the Tudor king Henry VIII broke with Rome in 1534, he also invested himself with imperial (religious and worldly) supremacy, symbolised in the closed crown.⁸⁶ In doing so, he overstepped the boundary laid down in the 1066 compromise, and his Roman-Catholic Lord-Chancellor, Thomas More, ended up on the scaffold. As Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy has argued, Anglophone history henceforth has been the history of the restoration of 'English birthright' against the encroaching monarchy or state.⁸⁷ The 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, for which Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* provide the justification, in that sense was a *restoration* of liberty. In the same way, the American secession from the British Empire resulted from a reassertion of birthright against the overstepping of the bounds of legitimate authority by the king. It was not, by any means, a 'national' event, but a liberal revolt set in the wider, transatlantic Anglophone society.⁸⁸

The basis in birthright of one's membership in a community in the English-speaking West never fully became attached to the single state as in postrevolutionary France. It expressed itself in an allegiance to the wider, transnational space in which this right was recognised.⁸⁹ When Wilson recognised (no doubt selectively, with an eye to isolating the Bolshevik Revolution) the right to national self-determination in Central and Eastern Europe, it was part of a projection of an international community in which such rights can be universally upheld against illegitimate authority – in this case, the empires holding the nations captive. The 'nations', in turn, were ideological communities in which, ideally, governing classes sharing the liberalism of the West held power.

The rise of the West, then, from this perspective is not a matter of capitalist expansion. The capitalist mode of production only came of age in the context of a pre-existing, transnational, 'Lockean' heartland. Capital only in this context obtained the free space required for its circulation, a space elsewhere confiscated by sovereign states not (yet) subject to the constitutional compromise the English conquerors had to grant the Anglo-Saxon and Danish locals in 1066 and which was reproduced as modern liberalism in the Glorious Revolution and the American secession. It was this juridical separation of a self-regulating sphere from the prerogatives of the monarchy that allowed (through successive struggles enforcing it) the establishment of an 'offshore', transnational space distinct from the territorial jurisdictions of the separate states. This separation, in turn, made it possible for the English-speaking West,

86. Armitage 2000, p. 34.

87. Rosenstock-Huussy 1993, p. 267 and *passim*.

88. Kaufmann 1999, p. 443.

89. Stewart 1995, p. 66.

first led by Britain and then, by the mid-twentieth century, by the United States, to become the pivot of global capitalist development.⁹⁰

When the British Isles were engulfed in the civil war that would ultimately end with the crucial Glorious Revolution, the Treaties of Westphalia instead consolidated the exclusive sovereignties emerging from the wars of religion on the continent.⁹¹ These sovereign entities henceforth have sought to uphold their territorial jurisdiction against the universalistic aspirations of the Anglophone West. The states of the Lockean heartland, in turn, have sought to impose their preferred world-order by propagating what we now call the international community, or ‘global governance’.

Each of the two principles involved here, Westphalian sovereign equality and the global governance espoused by the liberal West, can be understood as referring to a particular mode of foreign relations. So, in addition to the tribal and empire/nomad-modes, the sovereign-equality and global-governance modes should be recognised as historically-specific combinations of a level of development of the socialisation of nature, and a pattern of foreign relations – a particular way of occupying space and organising protection and exchange. However, it is a reminder of the status of such modes that, in historical practice, they are operative only in combination, and hence present the confusing array of ‘an entire series of phenomena of fractioning of classes, dissolution of classes, fusion of classes... specific categories, etc.’⁹²

Thus the imperialism of the turn of the twentieth century, and the hegemony of the financier, overseas-adventurer and military, against the backdrop of chauvinism and racism, can be broken down in terms of different modes. Empire/nomad-relations with the subjected peoples, sovereign equality between rival European formations, but also, the quasi-imperial global governance in the relations between the English-speaking West and the rest of the world. The initial understanding of these modes in terms of the ways of occupying space, as well as organising protection and exchange, then allows us to reconstruct the real complexity of imperialism on these different axes. Complemented by an analysis of the equally-complex combination of modes of production, which rest on a common basis in terms of the development of the productive forces, this gives us a more comprehensive understanding of imperialism than seeing it as the mere superstructure of a particular stage in capitalist development, ‘the highest’, ‘the last’, or otherwise.

In the historical confrontations between of the English-speaking West and the strongest states rising from the world of sovereign equality laid down by

90. Palan 2003.

91. Teschke 2003.

92. Poulantzas 1971, p. 72.

the Westphalian Treaties, and which I call *contender-states*, the two IR-perspectives associated with each, also confronted each other – idealism and realism. Wilson’s idea of ‘Making the World Safe for Democracy’ and the work of the Inquiry which laid the foundations for the transatlantic integration of this idealist perspective, left little doubt about the priority of the universalistic point of departure. However, the prospect of a new round of contender-state challenges taking shape in the aftermath of Versailles, led a number of academics in the IR-discipline as it crystallised in that period, to proclaim themselves as critics of the explicit liberal universalism espoused by the American president.

When these realist critics had to seek refuge in the United States from the anti-Semitic and anti-Marxist politics of the Nazis, IR-icons like Hans Morgenthau, Arnold Wolfers and others brought with them a tradition of anti-liberal thought that can be traced to Friedrich Nietzsche, Max Weber, and Carl Schmitt, Hitler’s crown-jurist. The idea that *reality is irrational*, which, in various ways, runs through the thinking of these authors, resonated in the theses of the IR-realists. In 1929, in his doctoral dissertation on international justice, Morgenthau already expounded upon the ‘irrational tension’ among states, which resulted from the gap between the prevailing juridical situation and the real relations of force.⁹³ Here, we see how realism articulates the singular, individualising way out of the contradiction between community and common humanity, reproducing it by emphasising inter-national foreignness.

Ultimately, the work of the intellectual refugees from Nazi-Europe was incorporated into the Anglo-American academic infrastructure with its particular funding-structures, linked to the national-security state and transnational capital. Realism became an option that could be rolled out when the needs of the West required it – as in the Reagan-years, when, as we saw above, (neo-)realism resurfaced again. Equally, it served to explain the behaviour of contenders resisting the West, and the mechanism of the balance of power by which they could be played off against each other.

However, the idea of an antinomy between idealism and realism at the core of the IR-discipline (never mind the labels by which it has been reproduced to account for contemporary forms of each), is profoundly ideological. Not unlike the mystifications of micro-economics which have been exposed in the capital-controversy by Joan Robinson and others,⁹⁴ IR rests on a central ideological fiction. In the case of IR, this can be traced to the contradiction

93. Quoted in Giesen 1992, p. 56.

94. Robinson 1972.

between separate community and common humanity, which, in the epoch in which the discipline was established, was in the process of being transcended by a quasi-imperial global governance projected by Wilson. Through this process (which no doubt was itself subject to a conjuncture of favourable and unfavourable phases), the West lays down the rules for a world-order modelled on its own liberal constitution, refusing to recognise any legitimate sovereign equality that would contest this order. Hence, as Rob Walker writes, '[i]f it is necessary to identify a tradition of international relations theory,'

[t]hen the most appropriate candidate is not 'realism' but 'idealism'. For what is systematically obscured by the reifying claims about political realism as a tradition is that realism has been constituted historically through the negation and displacement of a prior understanding of political life understood in the context of universalist aspirations. ... The tradition of political realism as we have come to know it is unthinkable without the priority ascribed to universalist claims within political theory.⁹⁵

Marxists have analysed the rise of the West primarily in terms of the transnationalisation of capital. But the hegemony of the transnational ruling class and the Western way of life, which have their basis in the English-speaking heartland, also rests on the projection of its particular political forms as a precondition of membership of the 'international community'. The nation-state, paradoxically, has been key among these preconditions. The critique of the IR-discipline in its naturalising of this complex of foreign relations is the task which I have set myself in the project the Deutscher-Prize jury has judged so generously.

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95. Walker 1993, p. 42.

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