

# Introduction: Marxifying IR, IRifying Marxism

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## ABSTRACT

Although the neglect of Marxism has been a pervasive characteristic of IR theory, there has been a marked revival of interest in Marxism. Marx's materialist insights into the general historical development of societies, as well as his critique of capitalism and political economy, have served as alternative starting points for different critical approaches to IR and offers a welcome alternative to neorealism, constructivism, and poststructuralism that have dominated IR for several decades. Marxism provides a redefinition of IR by focusing on changes in material circumstances, historical conditions, and society instead of assuming unchanging and fixed structures of anarchy or the state. Marx's analysis and insights into the dynamics of international relations have become even more important given the ongoing crisis of neoliberal capitalism, the rise of authoritarianism, right-wing nationalist populisms, and the racial and gendered subordinations accompanying them pointing to the importance of Marxifying IR and IRifying Marxism.

**Keywords:** Marxism, Critical Realism, Political Marxism, Uneven and Combined Development, Gramscianism, Ecofeminism

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This special issue should be seen as part of the marked revival of interest in Marxism as a theoretical framework for International Relations (IR) scholarship. It explores different attempts to bring IR into conversation with Marxism. Karl Marx's (1818-1883) materialist insights into the general historical development of societies, as well as his critique of capitalism and political economy, have served as alternative starting points for different critical approaches to IR and, as the contributions here emphasise, offers a welcome alternative to approaches such as neorealism, constructivism, and poststructuralism that have dominated IR for several decades.

The earlier entry of Marxism into the theoretical framework of IR studies was characterised mostly by a denial of its relevance for IR. Berki (1971: 8) argued that "the status

that overt, conventional Marxism affords to war and IR is clearly secondary and derivative”. Martin Wight (1966: 25), about a decade later, asserted that “neither Marx, Lenin, nor Stalin made any systematic contribution to international theory”. Similar interpretations of Marxism were echoed at the end of 1970s by Kenneth Waltz (1979), who categorised Marxism as a reductionist second image” theory concerned with social relations within societies but having little to say about relations between them.

These contestable interpretations of Marxism and consequently its neglect (McLean 1981) have been a pervasive characteristic of IR theory. While Marx might be considered as a pioneer of social science theory and methodology, Cold War social science sought to link Marxism to the ideologies and practices of the then-existing socialist states. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of these “existing socialisms” in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe fuelled the idea that Marxism was unviable and discredited as an intellectual and political project. However, precisely the same developments have, in the longer run, enabled the “ideological liberation of Marxist thought and (potentially) socialist practice” (Anievas 2010:1) breaking it from the constraints imposed by “Cold War geopolitics and doctrinaire party chains” (Teschke 2008: 163). Although Marxist IR started in the mid-1970s with the emergence of dependency theory and World Systems Perspective, later developments incorporated the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, neo-Gramscianism theory, and initially Weberian but subsequently Marxist international historical sociology, unleashing a period where IR had a “necessary encounter” with historical materialism (Halliday 1994: 47-73; Yalvaç 1991) leading to a “renaissance” of Marxism in IR studies (Anievas 2010: 1-10).

## **Marxism and the International**

Marxist thinking has always been international in character, expressed both as a structure in its focus on the dynamics of capital and its tendency to expand and concerning revolutionary class politics going beyond the state, oriented to global solidarity and freedom. Marx and his friend and co-author Engels expected that the workers of the world would overcome their national differences, unite, and lead a socialist revolution against the exploitative and oppressive relations of capitalism. The global expansion of capitalism in precapitalist societies would be the basis of forming an international socialist revolution. As stated in the Communist Manifesto “the working men have no country” (Marx 2002: 241). Marx was interested in international affairs in the context of his views on revolution and the 1850s Crimean War, later writing extensively on the American Civil War, the “Eastern Question,” and India (Gallie 1978; Gilbert 1980). Notably, although he criticized British imperialism for destroying the Indian textile industry, he thought that colonialism would be beneficial for developing capitalism there and forming the basis of an international socialist revolution (Bottomore 1983: 849). His views on nationalism and war, which are key concerns in IR studies, were also assessed considering their contribution to the socialist cause.

As a result, although Marx and Engels did not offer a theoretical analysis of the state in the context of the international system, the horizontal diversity of states is highly relevant to its overall concerns. As Berki (1971: 1) notes, “the very existence of international relations poses a serious, and perhaps intractable, problem for Marxism” because “international relations

presupposes the horizontal division of mankind into nations or states, and Marxian thought postulates the absolute unity of mankind as its ideal, problems relating to horizontal group diversity are much more centrally relevant to the Marxian doctrine than it is usually thought”. However, the journalistic writings of Marx and his rich analysis of empirical events do not have a theoretical counterpart. His cosmopolitan interest in world revolution did not turn into a theoretical concern with the nature of the international; it was a “practice problem rather than a theoretical one” (Dufour 2008). As Teschke (2006: 330–331) notes, “this relative absence of the geopolitical has left a problematic legacy within Marxism”.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that there is no single version of Marxist thought, and Marxist theory has been the source of heated disagreement among Marxists themselves (Teschke 2008). Barry Gills (1987: 265) notes that when we refer to Marxism and IR, “we are not so much discussing a single theory originated by Marx to explain the behavior of states, but rather a particular analytical approach, applicable to such a study”. Thus, as Bottomore (1978: 286) has argued, “we must, in any case, make a distinction between the ‘Marxism’ of Marx and that of the Marxists”. Moreover, a significant issue is to decide the extent to which the body of theoretical work that Marx did develop – relating to his studies of capital and the state’s relationship to the capitalist economy – can be drawn upon for a study of international relations.

It is therefore important to recognise the divide within the Marxist tradition between “Critical Marxism” and “Scientific Marxism” (Teschke 2014:2) a divide also relevant to discussions within IR theory and the contributions to this special issue. This divide represents the historicist, humanist, and critical young Marx, the Marx of the 1844 Manuscripts on the one hand, and the more scientific Marx of Capital, concerned with theoretical generalizations, analyzing capitalism’s inner structure, and revealing its laws of motion (Craven 2015: 8; Teschke 2014; Gouldner 1980: 54). It is a debate resurfacing and ongoing in different forms both in social theory more generally as well as in IR, as reflected in two prominent Marxist perspectives on IR theory today: Political Marxism (PM), which advocates for a historical and contextualized agent-centric explanation of IR, and uneven and combined development (UCD), which offers a transhistorical and structural explanation.

### ***Historical Materialism and Dialectics***

The backbone to the work of Marx is his materialist understanding of historical development, acknowledging the essential role that material circumstances have historically played in shaping human life “both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity” (Marx and Engels 1974: 42) Within this general framework, Marxism can be employed to redefine IR by focusing on changes in material circumstances, historical conditions, and society instead of assuming unchanging and fixed structures of anarchy or the state. Marx had to explain why it is that these factors were taken as natural and inevitable rather than constantly changing by exploring the “hidden laws of motion” of capitalism. According to Marx, these laws, or more correctly described as tendencies, of history are based on the organisation of society based on different modes of production consisting of forces and relations of production.

Production, however, should not only be associated only with the economy. As Cox (1989: 39) notes, production should be understood in a wider sense including the production and reproduction of knowledge, and thus the institutions and social relations that accompany the production of physical goods. In Marxist parlance, therefore, we might refer to these as social relations of production. Marx believed that human history had progressed through several stages in terms of the organisation of different modes of production, from ancient slave society to feudalism to capitalism. At each stage, a dominant class who owns the means of production exploits the labor of the working classes. Marx also envisaged the breakdown of every society due to its internal contradictions and the conflicts it generates between different classes. Nevertheless, he emphasised the emergent and irreducibly social character of these contradictions and conflicts as they play themselves out under specific historical conditions.

This has important implications for what we know as the levels of analysis problem in IR. From a historical materialist perspective, different levels of analysis are articulated through the medium of material conditions and class relations. This provides a different picture of the international than that which is available in conventional IR analysis (Selwyn 2015; Apeldoorn 2004, 2014), namely a holistic perspective that emphasises the unity of the levels, as similar forces and relations are at work across all of them. First, unlike mainstream IR, human beings are not conceptualised as living in an asocial anarchical state of nature but as real living beings trying to survive and reproduce their conditions of living. Second, with respect to the second level of analysis, Marx has a class conception of the state that is quite different from the unitary conception of the state as representative of the national interest as found in mainstream IR theories. As Jessop (2008) argues, the state is not just a unit or distinct entity, but a relationship between different classes and a condensation of class relations. For those placing more emphasis on agency, the state is driven by the interests of the dominant classes (Miliband 1965), which is also reflected in its foreign policy (Apeldoorn 2004: 150). It is not the state, but the state-society complex that becomes the basic unit of IR (Cox 2002: 205). Finally, the world system is not solely a political system or a realist realm of pure power relations, but a space where economic and class dynamics interact in different interconnected ways (Wallerstein 1974; Wood 1981; Rosenberg 1994; Teschke 2003). Anarchy should be understood as a social condition rooted in the operation of capitalist market relations, reflected in the relations between states rather than a problem related to the existence of states as such (Rosenberg 1994) Thus different levels are analysed as a *totality* or as a unity of different determinations “internally related” to each other (Ollman 2003). Consequently, Marxist theory questions any methodological approach separating the internal from the external, the domestic from the international, or the material from the ideational (Anievas 2010: 2). The purpose of this historical and class-based examination of international relations is to denaturalize and transform through practice a system that creates inequality, exploitation, and insecurity. This demonstrates the inescapable relationship between theory and practice in Marxist thought. As Marx (1974: 123) argued, “philosophers have interpreted the world, but the point is to change it”.

These Marxist explanations of the importance of material circumstances have led to accusations of economic reductionism, alleging that Marxism attempts to explain all social

phenomena either by economic dynamics or class interests. This is a source of differing interpretations among Marxist scholars, and there is wide discussion about this issue dating to Marx's day. However, Engels' comments relating to this are illuminating. In a well-known letter he wrote to Joseph Bloch on September 21, 1890, he argues that the idea that the mode of production of material life determines social life has been misunderstood as meaning that everything is determined by economic relations.

“According to the materialistic conception of history, the production and reproduction of real life constitute *in the last instance* the determining factor of history. The economic situation is the basis but the various factors of the superstructure – the political forms of the class struggles and its results...exercise an influence upon the course of historical struggles, and in many cases determine for the most part their *form*” (Engels 1890/1934: 127).

In this way we might understand the dialectical nature of historical development, namely that different parts constitute and shape and in return are shaped by the totality of which they are a part (Ollman 2014: 1). While many interpretations of Marx focus on his theory of historical materialism, equally important is the notion of dialectics and concerns how to think of historical materialism in the context of nature and society. A dialectical approach seeks to understand the underlying material conditions and contradictions that significantly influence historical development. It focuses on interconnectedness, interaction, contradiction, and change between the different parts of a totality (Ollman 2003: 12; 2014: 1-7). As Ollman (2003: 12) writes “dialectics is a way of thinking that brings into focus the full range of changes and interactions that occur in the world”. He defines this as Marx's philosophy of *internal relations*, where each element of a totality is internally related with each other. This is in opposition to “theoretically closed” “positivist and mechanical explanations” dominant in mainstream social science and IR (Teschke and Cemgil 2014: 208; also, Ollman 2003, 2014; Brincat 2010: 679-680; Cudworth and Hobden 2014: 14), where the focus of analysis is more on units and their interactions than on relationality and totality, implying that different parts of a totality are all important, to varying degrees, in conceptualising change.

The dialectical relationship between structure and agency in the context of a social formation is particularly significant because it forms the basis of most discussions aimed at Marxifying IR and constitutes the dividing line between structural and historical Marxism (Joseph, 2010). The debate over structure and agency is a more recent sociological debate, famously brought to IR by Alex Wendt (1987). However, Marx's work contains an implicit understanding of the dialectics of structure and agency, which is famously expressed in his well-known expression that “men make their history, but they do not make it just as they please in circumstances they choose for themselves; rather they make it in present circumstances, given and inherited” (Marx 1996b: 32). This means that the social actors are historically situated within certain social relations which they either reproduce or ideally transform. The dialectical conception of relations between different parts of a totality differs from the base/superstructure conception of change that is traditionally associated with classical Marxism, which holds that change happens naturally as a reflection of material conditions. This is usually depicted as a monilinear and mono-causal process with one lower level determining a higher one.

Today it is widely accepted by Marxists that social structures do not self-reproduce themselves but involve the complex actions of contextualised agents. However, as some of the discussions below argue, a one-sided conception of dialectics can still relapse either into an ahistorical structuralist explanation ignoring agency or an overly agential explanation ignoring structural constraints.

The interplay of structure and agency and its applicability across the interconnected strata of social and material relations takes us to the method of Marx. The Marxist method is based on abstracting from empirical observable phenomena to uncover the underlying and unobservable relations which make such phenomenon possible (Sayer 1979, 1987). The critical realist approach, as utilised in Kolasi's article in this collection, argues that Marx's approach understands reality in terms of its ontological depth (Yalvaç 1991, 2010) and attempts to uncover the underlying relationships that give rise to observable phenomena. Marx referred to this object under investigation as a "concrete totality" achieved through an increasing level of concretization by uncovering deeper conditions that are the condition of possibility for emergent social phenomena.

The most famous account of this is in the "Method of Political Economy" section of the *Grundrisse*.

"The concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence the unity of the diverse. It appears in the process of thinking, therefore, as a process of concentration, as a result, not as a point of departure, even though it is the point of departure in reality and hence also the point of departure for observation [*Anschauung*] and conception" (Marx 1993: 101).

Marx's method of abstraction enables us to see a social phenomenon in all its dimensions, both observable and unobservable. The scientist should therefore move from the concrete to the abstract and hypothesise as to the conditions (antecedent causes) that make emergent phenomena possible (Bhaskar 1979: 36-39). This finds its expression in the well-known phrase of Marx: "All science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and essence of things directly coincided" (Marx 1981: 956). For instance, in Volume I of *Capital*, Marx's focus is to identify the abstract tendencies of capitalism and make apparent the unobservable relations of power and oppression that characterise it. His science aims to reveal the secret essence of capitalism to demonstrate its contradictory relationships and enable a more emancipatory future society.

### **Capitalism**

Marx's primary concern was capitalism and the inequalities and oppression that it creates. Many of the issues surrounding the Marxification of IR have also focused on his analysis of capitalism and its inequalities. This is important because, due to the structural features of capitalism, politics, and economics, state and society appear artificially separated from each other (Wood 1981). The result is an asocial understanding of state behaviour and foreign policy and an alienated conception of IR (Rupert 1993, 2010). This means that international relations are considered to take place in the context of an artificial separation between the economic

and the political, giving politics an alienated character abstracted from social relations. As Rupert (1993: 84) explains, “the very existence of the kind of states portrayed by neo-realist theory presupposes relations of alienation in which ‘politics’ assumes an identity distinct from ‘economics’ and attains its institutional form of expression”.

How does this occur? This is related to the main features of capitalism as a mode of production. Capitalism is characterized by private ownership of the means of production and production for profit. There are two main classes in capitalism: the bourgeoisie who own the means of production and the proletariat or the working classes who are compelled to sell their labour power. The direct producers or workers are not paid for the full value of the commodities they produce, thus generating a surplus value that constitutes the capitalists’ profit who use it for further capital accumulation. However, the essence of the unequal relationship between the capitalist and the worker is veiled as both appear equal in the market; or as Marx put it, as “two very different kinds of commodity owners.” One of Marx’s most significant theoretical achievements was demonstrating the structured inequalities that underlie this apparent equality. Marx envisaged that, due to the internal contradictions such as overproduction, underconsumption, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, and the rising organic composition of capital, capitalism would face a series of ever-worsening crises that would eventually result in the ruling class’s overthrow and the replacement of capitalism by communism. Marx saw this as the essential conclusion of his analysis: “In the place of the old bourgeois society with its classes and its class antagonisms, there will be an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” (Marx and Engels 1996a: 20). Nonetheless, there is an issue here as to whether this will primarily be brought about by the contradictions inherent to capitalism itself, or through the historical struggles of the oppressed groups.

### ***The World Market and the State System***

One of the points of contention is related to Marx’s unfinished work concerning the world market. This is relevant since it is at the root of some of the discussions relating to the relation between the state system and capitalist world economy. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx notes that the “tendency to create the world market is directly given in the concept of capital itself. Every limit is a barrier to be overcome” (Marx 1993: 408). Likewise, In the *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx (1996c: 158) starts by saying “I examine the system of bourgeois economy in the following order: capital, landed property, wage-labor; the State, foreign trade, world market” and then goes on to analyse each of these elements. However, his analysis of the world market remains unfinished and has served as the basis of subsequent developments in Marxist theory, such as the theories of imperialism and for the development of different approaches by scholars such as Immanuel Wallerstein, Claudia von Braunmühl, and Colin Barker that expand on Marx’s insights.

From an IR perspective, the concern with the global market has led to what is known as the issue of the many states dilemma, starting a discussion on the relationship between the twin logics of capital and territoriality by numerous scholars (Rosenberg 1994, 1996; Callinicos 2007; Harvey 2003; Teschke 2003, 2007; Lacher 2002; Lacher and Teschke 2007, among

others). In the mainstream analyses of IR, the relationship between the dynamics of capitalism and the logic of geopolitical competition are viewed as distinct processes with their own dynamics. In the historical materialist explanation, although they appear as two independent spheres, the state system and capitalism are taken as internally related due to the structural features of the capitalist mode of production.

To avoid structuralist and economicist interpretations, geopolitics arguably should not be conceptualized as being driven only by the capital relationship itself, nor should it be too reified to the point of independence, as in neorealism. As Pal (2018: 1) indicates, “Marxism’s achievement in IR has been to stop us from thinking about them separately”. However, there is no point of agreement on their relationship or their degree of independence or determination. Teschke and Lacher (2007) argue further that in addition to the interactive relation between the world market and the state system, another issue to be addressed is the question of *why* capitalism requires a state system. The relation between capitalism and the state system is argued to be conjunctural rather than necessary. The separation between economics and politics is a structural feature of capitalism occurs after the formation of states (Teschke and Lacher 2014), leading to different geopolitical dynamics between different state systems such as between feudalism and capitalism. In other words, states do not always act in the same way under anarchy, but their foreign policy strategies differ depending on the type of social system under which they are acting. The roots of the modern state system also shifted from 1648 to the 19th century, which witnessed a transition from absolutist to capitalist geopolitics (Teschke 2003). This approach is argued to be a way of thinking about geopolitical dynamics in a non-economist and non-structural way. However, as Anievas and Nişancıoğlu (2015: 149) argue, Eurocentrism again creeps into this argument. In their view, the evolution and transformation of capitalism and the state system in Europe was not an issue of European geopolitical dynamics alone but was “overdetermined” by interactions with the extra-European world (Avienas and Nişancıoğlu 2015: 149).

### ***Eurocentrism and Marxism***

Following from the preceding discussion, a further issue is the Eurocentrism of the many attempts that develop a historical and sociological analysis of the world system, Marxist and non-Marxist alike. This has been subject to several recent historical studies of the IR discipline (e.g. Hobson 2012; Acharya and Buzan 2019), although often not of an explicitly Marxist character. According to Anievas and Nişancıoğlu (2016: 72), Eurocentrism is “a specific claim about Europe as the geographical or spatial container of history”. Marxism is frequently criticized for being Eurocentric, owing to its methodological internalist explanations of capitalism’s global expansion and for assuming a linear conception of development (Anievas and Nişancıoğlu 2015: 4-5). This view underscores the importance of developments beyond Europe for understanding not only developments in Europe (such as the transition to capitalism) but for the “international” as a whole (Allinson and Avienas 2010a, 2010b). For instance, Hobson (2004, 2011, 2012) characterizes Marx and much of Marxism as Eurocentric emerging from Marx’s belief that European societies “self-generate through an endogenously determined linear development path according to their exceptional properties” (Hobson 2011: 115). For Hobson (2012: 53), Marx worked within a paternalist Eurocentric-institutionalism, which is supported by passages



such as the much-quoted introduction to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, where Marx (1996c: 160) outlines a stagiest evolutionary schema from “Asiatic” to “modern bourgeois” modes of production, concluding that the latter’s inherent contradictions will lead to its destruction. The example most given is in the preface to the first German edition of *Capital*, where Marx (1963: 8-9) alludes to the “iron laws” of capitalist production, arguing that “the country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future”. Yet not all scholars agree. Marxists, including but not limited to Jairus Banaji, Kevin Anderson, and Anievas and Nişancıoğlu, have in different ways focused on the complex and multi-constitutive origins of capitalism and the role played by Eastern agency in this process. Kevin Anderson (2010: 2) for instance argues that Marx altered his earlier unilinear conception of development and that “his perspective evolved toward one that was more multilinear, leaving the future development of [peripheral] societies as an open question.” Overall, the fundamental objective has been to arrive at explanations that are non-Eurocentric, non-linear, and non-reductionist while also dealing with the totality of the global system.

Contrasting theoretical perspectives such as PM and UCD both claim to have provided a non-Eurocentric alternative framework in developing their respective perspectives. For instance, Rosenberg (2006: 13-31) takes up Trotsky’s conception of UCD and applies it to IR, arguing that the theory of UCD attempts to provide a non-Eurocentric and sociological conception of change by incorporating “an international dimension to sociological thought, and a sociological dimension to international relations”. This aims to “decentre or provincialise Europe as the privileged or sole author of history” (Rosenberg 2006: 180). For scholars of PM, on the other hand, UCD ontologizes the “international” and is based on transhistorical generalisations, making it impossible to understand it as a “social-historical category” (Teschke 2014; 2016). To avoid relapse into a structural mode of explanation, Teschke, benefitting from Robert Brenner and Ellen Wood’s views on capitalism, develops a “radical historicist” understanding based on different strategies of reproduction pursued by class agents. Contextualising agency is thus expected to avoid an economicist understanding and provide a more accurate history of different trajectories of capitalism (Teschke 2016).

## Main Themes and Discussions

The general context for most of the articles in this issue is how best to develop a historical IR that properly engages Marxist scholarship, elaborating some of the issues that are raised in the above discussion, notably the weight to assigned to structure and agency, relations of production, tendencies of the capitalist system, and the role of class struggle, and how to conceptualise social and historical relations. As the issue makes clear, there is no agreed approach, with some authors working with a more structural approach, and others seeing this as the main problem facing historical accounts of international developments.

The contribution from van Plafer and Teschke sets out the broad parameters regarding the lack of interaction between Marxism and historical IR. Indeed, it takes up the starting point that historical IR has been largely impervious to Marxist arguments and opens with the well-known view of John Maclean (1981) that this is “a strange case of mutual neglect.” The result

of this neglect, in the authors' view, is an impoverished historical IR, both methodologically and substantively. They see most historical IR as abstract and un-substantive, while Marxist offerings that attempt to remedy this in fact tend towards the same errors, operating at an abstract level and favouring model-building and grand theory over substantive analysis. UCD comes in for criticism as having a transhistorical theoretical framework. But neo-Gramscian analysis is also criticized for failing to give sufficient weight to supposedly "secondary" phenomena such as state-formation, war and conquest and foreign policy, all of which are collapsed back into antecedent sociological conditions or causes. For the authors, there is little active agency in Gramscian accounts, only a passive acting out of a wider script.

By way of an alternative, they suggest historicist Geopolitical Marxism (GPM) as a way of overcoming this. This is seen to unite the levels of analysis theoretically to provide a framework for non-reductionist and non-economistic accounts of historical international relations. GPM is seen as able to theoretically combine internal class relations with distinct authority relations, and relations between political communities within the wider geopolitical order in which these are embedded. In a dual move, this can both socialise IR and "IRify" socio-economic history and theory and provide an antidote against both methodological nationalism and the opposite fallacy of methodological internationalism.

Comparison may be made with the contribution of Parris and van Rankin who argue that structural Marxism casts a "long shadow" over historical approaches to IR. They seek to redress this in their examination of colonial strategies in the Americas. They note the Marxist influence over international historical sociology in theorising the relationship between Atlantic colonial expansion and the development of relations of production and economic growth, but they argue that such attempts – including dependency theory, World-systems theory and UCD – are premised on a structuralist perspective that homogenizes strategies of European colonialization and over-extends the sphere of capitalist production, dehistoricising these distinct strategies. It is claimed that these structuralist approaches superimpose a fixed logic of praxis that makes it difficult to reconstruct the historical specificities underpinning colonial experiences. Agency becomes pre-determined and routinised. Using PM, the authors reject what they see as structuralism's unitary logic of expansion, contrasting this with a radical historicist methodology to demonstrate that British and Spanish strategies in the Americas (intra-imperial free trade versus mercantilism) were shaped by nationally specific class relations (capitalism versus feudalism or absolutism), to generate unique patterns of settlement. European colonial expansion in the Americas cannot be explained by the logic of capital accumulation but only by studying specific class relations. Note, however, that van Plafer and Teschke argue in their contribution that PM also reads geopolitics in structural-functional terms, deriving geopolitical forms from specific sets of social property relations rather than agentic strategies. Hence three of the articles make the shift from PM to GPM. We might group these pieces together in advancing a form of radical historicism as the best way to develop a Marxist historical IR, in this case, to better recognise the 'making of' of international multiplicity during the period of European colonial expansion.

Edwards' article can be read as having similar objectives to the two above-mentioned pieces. Also initially engaging with PM, it notes the above critique and moves toward GPM to

historicise the geopolitical practices of international relations without reifying the consequences of the development of capitalism. Edwards argues that Marxist IR either ignores the role of international peace settlements in the formation of new global orders or inscribes them into longer-term overarching processes. This ignores the role played by historical agents in the devising of international ordering strategies and downplays the broader efficacy of foreign policymaking in the building of world order (see also van Plafer and Teschke on the Treaty of Utrecht). Again, UCD is regarded unfavourably as subsuming these under universalistic laws of development. PM is adopted to introduce a more radical historicist methodology for analysing peace settlements and other world-historical junctures. This is said to place more significance on contextualised agency than structuralist forms of Marxism like UCD.

However, not all contributions are aimed against structural approaches as a form of explanation. Indeed, other contributions embrace elements of these structural approaches, albeit in a critical way, usually by combining structural analysis with a firmer role for agency, something along the lines of people making history but not under conditions of their own choosing. Baran does this within the framework of UCD, Altay uses neo-Gramscian analysis, and Kolasi utilises a critical realist approach to social structure.

Seeking to address the structure versus agency issue is therefore a primary motivation for Kolasi's adoption of a critical realist approach to social structure and its incorporation into an understanding of the structure of the international system. In particular, he draws on the transformational model of social activity to examine how agents might unconsciously reproduce social structure and sometimes consciously transform it. This is considered a useful way of addressing one of the main problems in international historical sociology (IHS) of modern revolutions, namely, how to interpret bourgeois revolutions. Critical realism is regarded as a means of reconciling both the emphasis on the effects of bourgeois revolutions maintained by "consequentialists" and the focus on class and social property relations advocated by Political Marxists. It should be noted that critical realism itself is not a theory but a philosophical position. Its starting point is that reality is independent of our knowledge of it, but that this reality can be known due to its structured and enduring character. In other words, these are the conditions of possibility for intelligible knowledge of the world, and it is this that allows insights into the structure-agency question, among others. This framework is combined with the historical and empirical insights of historical materialism-inspired IHS to analyse the dynamics, forms, and trajectories of 'classical bourgeois revolutions' – the English and French revolutions – as well as the 'paradigmatic' cases of 'passive revolutions' – the German and Italian revolutions.

Kolasi criticises the approach adopted by Teschke and the "historicist" wing of PM (or GPM) suggesting that this relies on a false dichotomy between structuralism and historicism, leading to a praxis-oriented and overly agential account of things like bourgeois revolutions (see Yalvac 2021). He argues that by discarding structuralism altogether, we remove the very conditions that make agency possible in the first place. A critical realist approach to structure is said to help challenge PM's view of structure as inherently constraining by conceptualising structure as social relations dependent on human activity but not reducible to it (Archer 1998: 202).

The above-mentioned neo-Gramscian approach is presented in Serdar Altay's article on hegemony, world orders and international regimes. This presents a conceptual framework for the analysis of the emergence, evolution, and transformation of international regimes by combining neo-Gramscian and social constructivist approaches to International Relations. Drawing on Robert Cox's analysis of international institutions, the framework views international regimes as integral components of the world order that reflects changing configurations of ideas, power and material capabilities.

The intersubjective approach to international regimes draws on the notion of social purpose. This is founded on the belief that regimes constitute a social, intersubjective context that shapes the legitimate actions of states and other actors. The social purpose of regimes, according to this framework, determines their constitutive rules as well as their normative content. However, the social purpose of regimes is understood here as a reflection of both the intersubjective and the material texture of the world order. The ideational and ethical frameworks that underpin those orders operate as concepts of control for "corporate" or "embedded" liberalism and neoliberalism. Going beyond the "regime analysis" offered by mainstream liberal and neoliberal institutionalist approaches to IR, Altay's contribution offers a broader perspective that links regime transition not only to ideational changes in intersubjectivity but also to the broader ideational and material transitions in world orders. This is illustrated through the examination of multilateral trade regimes.

We have seen how UCD is criticised in the first three articles discussed, these approaches taking issue with what they see as its generality and transhistorical claims. However, a more specific application of UCD can be found in Baran's study of the extraction of mineral and energy resources in sub-Saharan Africa. These resources have been attractive not only during the colonial period, but also to emerging countries' investors during the 21st century. Baran uses UCD to explore the unequal exchange relations this involves with a focus on South Africa as part of the persistent UCD of sub-Saharan Africa with a sub-imperial role, giving it the roles of both exploiter and exploited. This is to employ the argument that UCD explains the configurations of unevenly developing societies (Rosenberg 2021: 147). Against any Eurocentric bias of this theory, Baran emphasises the legacies of apartheid in the politics and economics of South Africa.

This focus on resource extraction is also a feature of Akgemci's article. Here she investigates extractivist strategies in Latin America, this time using the lens of ecofeminism. This is useful in criticising leftist governments who lend support to extractivist strategies while denying their social and environmental impact. A socialist ecofeminist critique of neo-developmentalism puts forward constructs an alternative, post-extractivist, ecologically just, women-centred development perspective. This raises important questions about understanding from a particular point of view and developing strategies of resistance. This requires an understanding of the dynamics of capitalist development in the periphery and how this particularly affects women and discusses how environmental justice movements can shape a post-extractivist transition to a just and sustainable future. It also requires recognition of the intersection of racial, gender, and class inequalities across Latin America.

An intersectional framework of analysis is developed both to understand the intersection of oppressions and outline post-extractivist alternatives that incorporate insights from ecofeminist analysis.

Finally, Azeem contribution critiques New Institutionalism as promoted by international financial institutions like the WTO, IMF, and World Bank. This approach argues that laws and legal reforms for protecting property and contracts are a consensual prerequisite for economic development. Taking a critical legal perspective, the article argues that international law is shaped by both coercive strategies of states and international organisations and the global struggles of marginalised groups. A particular focus is given to labour law and the ILO.

## Conclusion

Marxism has become a key theoretical departure point for understanding and explaining international relations. While IR is increasingly taking Marxism seriously, Marxism has witnessed the internationalisation of its main categories of analysis. Marx's critique of political economy and capitalism provides the structural background to most that is happening in what we call international relations. Different strands of Marxist theory make us aware of the constraints put by the systematic imperatives of capital accumulation on state behaviour and on the political possibilities of transforming those constraints.

This issue focuses only on some of the themes within Marxist theory, and the scope of Marxist analysis is far larger than we could cover here. Marx's analysis and insights into the dynamics of international relations have become even more important given the ongoing crisis of neoliberal capitalism, the rise of authoritarianism, right wing nationalist populisms, and the racial and gendered subordinations accompanying them. Different forms of marginalization, oppression and exploitation all intersect in ways that truly constitute what we mean by international relations today. This increases the importance of further developing critical perspectives for building alternative futures. Marxifying IR and IRifying Marxism is a key step in this direction.

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