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Excerpt
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Introduction

1 A Necessarily Historical Materialist Moment

The global political economy is currently undergoing unparalleled change. Emerging economies around Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (the BRICS) challenge the assumed historically dominant and advanced position of Western capitalist states. Especially China, it seems, is potentially on course to ‘catch up’ developmentally and overtake even the United States. China was the world’s leading exporter in 2014, exporting goods valued at a total of \$2,342.31 billion USD.¹ In second place, the United States exported only 69 per cent of this amount, followed by Germany in third place with 64 per cent of Chinese exports. Chinese ascendancy is also reflected in impressive economic growth rates. Double-digit GDP growth rates during the mid-1990s and then again in the mid-2000s culminated in an increase of 14.2 per cent in 2007. The figures have declined since, due to the global economic crisis, but are still comparatively high at around 7 per cent today. GDP growth in the United States, by comparison, was between 4.1 per cent (at its highest increase) and –2.8 per cent (at its lowest) across the period of 2000 to 2015. Indian growth rates of around 8 per cent since 2000 come closest to China among the BRICS, while the performances of Brazil, Russia and South Africa are more varied and clearly at a lower level.²

Will it be feasible to integrate these states harmoniously into the global political economy, or are we likely to witness further interstate and global conditions of war between hegemonic rivals such as the United States and key contender states such as China? In many respects, we are already in a period of sustained war with the global ‘war on terror’ engulfing ever more countries stretching from Afghanistan and Iraq, ranging via Libya to encompass and destabilise the whole region around Syria. Of course, the global ‘war on terror’ does not simply unfold in ‘peripheral’ spaces but is

¹ World Atlas, ‘Exports by country – 20 largest exporting countries’ (14 June 2016), www.worldatlas.com/articles/exports-by-country-20-largest-exporting-countries.html; accessed 7 September 2016.

² World Development Indicators, www.databank.worldbank.org/data/; accessed 6 September 2016.

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again and again also waged in the heartland of global capitalism with terror attacks in Paris in November 2015 and Brussels in March 2016 being just two recent horrendous moments. The consequences of the Iraq War, in 2003, have been brought again to the forefront by the *Report of the Iraq Inquiry*, or ‘Chilcot Report’, published in the United Kingdom on 6 July 2016, which arguably demonstrates the horrors of these ongoing struggles more than any other incident. As early as 2001, as the Chilcot Report indicates, the Middle East Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) recommended a new approach to reassess the United Kingdom’s ‘fundamental interests’ in Iraq, a key component of which was to ensure a ‘level playing field’ for UK companies in relation to any containment of Iraq (Iraq Inquiry, 2016: Vol. 9:457). ‘Since the U.S.-led, UK-backed invasion of Iraq in 2003, estimates of the lives lost to violence vary from a quarter of a million to 600,000. The number of injured will surely be several times that, and the number of men, women and children displaced from their homes is put at between 3.5 and 5 million, somewhere between one in 10 and one in six of the population.’³ The United Kingdom’s decision to participate in the U.S.-led invasion was made without having exhausted all potential peaceful options, a deliberate exaggeration of the threat posed by Saddam Hussein and no clear understanding of the post-war challenges and the necessary plans to meet them.⁴

The upheavals of developmental ‘catch up’ and interstate rivalry shaped by global capitalism as well as the causes and consequences of global war, finally, are of a piece with the global economic crisis since 2007–8, regarded as the Great Recession akin in its severity to the Great Depression of the 1930s, which in particular has pushed several states in the Eurozone to the brink of bankruptcy. Greece alone had to be bailed out three times, with the latest ‘rescue package’ implemented – some would argue imposed – on 13 July 2015, just over a week after a majority of 61 per cent of voters had rejected further austerity in exchange for another bailout agreement on 5 July 2015. It included the transfer of €50bn (£35bn) worth of Greek assets to an independent fund for privatisation, further pension cuts, increases in VAT and other taxes and a liberalisation of the economy, including

³ *The Guardian*, ‘The Guardian view on the Chilcot report: a country ruined, trust shattered, a reputation trashed’ (6 July 2016), www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jul/06/the-guardian-view-on-the-chilcot-report-a-country-ruined-trust-shattered-a-reputation-trashed; accessed 7 September 2016.

⁴ BBC News, ‘Chilcot report: findings at-a-glance’ (6 July 2016), www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36721645; accessed 7 September 2016; *The Guardian*, ‘Chilcot report: key points from the Iraq inquiry’ (6 July 2016); www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jul/06/iraq-inquiry-key-points-from-the-chilcot-report; accessed 7 September 2016.

labour markets.⁵ Ireland, Portugal and Cyprus too had to accept conditionality programmes in exchange for bailout packages. The social and economic consequences are dramatic. Youth unemployment, unemployed people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four as a percentage of the total labour force in this age group, reached 52.4 per cent in Greece, 34.8 per cent in Portugal and 26.9 per cent in Ireland in 2014. Other countries struggling in the Eurozone include Italy and Spain, registering youth unemployment of 42.7 per cent and 53.2 per cent respectively in 2014 (OECD Employment Outlook, 2016: 221). Greece's situation is probably the most dramatic. National debt has reached 180 per cent of GDP, general unemployment is high – at around 25 per cent, the highest in Europe – and 'consumption and exports had also fallen, by 6.4% and 7.2%, in the second quarter' of 2016.⁶ Against the background of the continuing recession, a humanitarian crisis is unfolding especially in healthcare.⁷ Unsurprisingly, these dynamics of Global Capitalism (the rise of the BRICS), Global War (the war in Iraq), Global Crisis (the Eurozone crisis) are interlinked. In Brazil, against the background of economic recession, the centre-left President Dilma Rousseff has been removed from power without a popular vote. The insistence is that her successor revives the economy through further austerity measures.⁸ Equally, the developmental 'catch up', or equalisation of growth in China has resulted in highly uneven development or differentiation elsewhere. Drastic increases in Chinese output of steel have strongly contributed to the collapse of the steel sector in the United Kingdom.⁹ Finally, the rise of China as such may have hastened the decision-making of key geopoliticians within U.S. statecraft in relation to the invasion of Iraq, with a view to securing control over the global oil supply to maintain a dominant geopolitical position.

⁵ *The Guardian*, 'Greece bailout agreement: key points' (13 July 2015), www.theguardian.com/business/2015/jul/13/greece-bailout-agreement-key-points-grexit; accessed 7 September 2016.

⁶ *The Guardian*, 'A year after the crisis was declared over, Greece is still spiralling down' (13 August 2016), www.theguardian.com/business/2016/aug/13/greek-economy-still-spiralling-down-year-after-crisis-declared-over; accessed 7 September 2016.

⁷ *The Guardian*, 'Greek debt crisis: "Of all the damage, healthcare has been hit the worst"' (9 July 2015), www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/09/greek-debt-crisis-damage-healthcare-hospital-austerity; accessed 7 September 2016.

⁸ *The Guardian*, 'Brazil's Dilma Rousseff impeached by senate in crushing defeat' (1 September 2016), www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/31/dilma-rousseff-impeached-president-brazilian-senate-michel-temer; accessed 7 September 2016.

⁹ *The Guardian*, 'China steel giant to raise output by 20% in grim outlook for UK industry' (31 March 2016), www.theguardian.com/business/2016/mar/31/china-steel-giant-to-raise-output-by-20-in-grim-outlook-for-tata; accessed 7 September 2016.

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Global Capitalism, Global War, Global Crisis – this book offers a fresh analysis of these themes by arguing that the conditions of Global Capitalism, Global War, Global Crisis have to be understood in terms of their internality. In order to do so, our argument is that the inner connections between Global Capitalism, Global War, Global Crisis are best realised through a relational method that captures capital's internalisation through the states system of uneven and combined development, geopolitics and the global crisis conditions facing humanity that are themselves embedded within world ecology. We argue therefore that the conditions of Global Capitalism, Global War, Global Crisis can be uniquely analysed from a historical materialist perspective in a way that transcends the shortcomings of competing studies on 'the international'. Our argument is that the extant literature on global politics and global political economy across international relations (IR) and international political economy (IPE) continuously separates out, in different ways, both the material *content* and/or the ideational *form* of 'the international' as well as agency and/or the structure of 'the international'. Thus, material content and ideational form, agency and structure within international studies are treated ontologically as dualisms, often as discrete or at best as interacting separate elements. A dialectical understanding of material conditions and ideational form, of agency and structure, in contrast, can begin to grasp the internality of Global Capitalism, Global War, Global Crisis. This book is a contribution to the critique of ontological dualisms shaping understandings of 'the international' and an assertion of the necessity of historical materialism in furthering a dialectical analysis of the inner connections of Global Capitalism, Global War, Global Crisis.

The dominant dualist framing of history across international studies involves positing distinct spheres (such as the realms of 'agents' and 'structures', the 'ideal' and the 'material', 'politics' and 'economics' or 'states' and 'markets') as separate spheres or variables that, at best, are held in an externally *interacting* relationship that fails to grasp their *inner* actions. The presupposition of always-already treating social ontologies as separate and then interacting realms is therefore reliant on a relationship of *ontological exteriority* (Morton, 2013). With Eric Wolf (1982/1997: 3):

[T]he world of humankind constitutes a manifold, a totality of interconnected processes, and inquiries that disassemble this totality into bits and then fail to reassemble it falsify reality. Concepts like 'nation', 'society', and 'culture' name bits and threaten to turn names into things. Only by understanding these names as bundles of relationships, and by placing them back into the field from which they

were abstracted, can we hope to avoid misleading inferences and increase our share of understanding.

By positing a world that is made up of logically independent things – an atomistic approach to ontology – the elements may only, again at best, then come to relate as interdependent. But, most significantly, the inner connections that are constitutive of social relations are rent asunder by this commitment to ontological exteriority. Four brief examples will suffice for the purposes of our argument in this introduction.

Witness, first, a canonical statement in *The Political Economy of International Relations* by Robert Gilpin on how states and markets presumably interact in wealth creation.

The historical relationship of state and market is a matter of intense scholarly controversy. Whether each developed autonomously, the market gave rise to the state, or the state to the market, are important historical issues whose resolution is not really relevant to the argument of this book. State and market, whatever their respective origins, have independent existences, have logics on their own, and interact with each other. (Gilpin, 1987: 10)

By clearly separating state and market from the very beginning of his enquiry, Gilpin does not even attempt to investigate their internal relations. This dualist framing or view of states and markets, however, pervades wider reflections on ‘the international’, not least the theory of history posited by neorealists. The second prominent example of the dualisms at the core of mainstream accounts of ‘the international’ is, of course, Kenneth Waltz’s ‘systemic’ explanation of international politics that claimed to avoid the ‘distraction’ of detail and the vagaries associated with domestic politics. Instead, the focus became the structure of the international system that was based on self-help or anarchic principles within which functionally undifferentiated units (states) operated, albeit with a varying distribution of capabilities (Waltz, 1979: 111–14). Based on an adherence to principles of parsimony – to be very sparse and logically tight, to omit certain things, to develop elegant definitions – the purpose of theory here is to identify regularities and repetitions by isolating one domain from the wider social context. As a consequence, a neorealist approach to ‘the international’ establishes the autonomy of international politics consisting of fully formed states-as-actors in the effort to develop ‘a necessarily slender explanatory construct’ (Waltz, 1990: 31–2). Hence ‘definitions of structure must leave aside, or abstract from, the characteristics of units, their behaviour, and their interactions’ (Waltz, 1979: 79). Yet the international states system is here abstracted from history, leading to a failure to account for the social bases of state power or the historically specific ideologies and material practices that

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have constituted and sustained state identities across different orders. Having assumed the nature of state identities and the states system, 'history becomes for neo-realists a quarry providing raw materials with which to illustrate variations on always recurrent themes' (Cox, 1981: 133). 'One person's elegance', in terms of an adherence to principles of parsimony, 'is another's oversimplification' (Cox, 1985/1996: 53).

Within political economy, Susan Strange, our third example, challenges state-centric analysis. Nevertheless, by establishing four separate *distinguishable* structures of power (security, production, finance, knowledge) that are then externally related to each other as *interacting* sources in the world economy, she equally ends up fetishising such concepts by abstracting them from the social relations of capitalism (Strange, 1988: 26; see Germain, 2016 for a contemporary reinterpretation). Finally, the dualist framing or external separation of material content and ideational form equally bedevils more recent sophisticated accounts of world politics. Observe, as our fourth indicative illustration, John Hobson's attempt to reveal the making of modern world politics through 'Eastern agency' and how he abstracts out ideas, institutions and technologies as different elements of 'resource portfolios'. The constituent parts of these resource portfolios are regarded as separate, connected only in exterior relation to each other, to account for the making of modern world politics. Emblematic is his statement that 'materialist causes must be factored in alongside the role of identity if we are to craft a satisfactory explanation of the rise of the West' (Hobson, 2004: 25–6). But note that the relation of the 'material' and the 'ideational' is held through their a priori ontological exteriority. Our purpose in this book, though, is not to rehash a critique of mainstream accounts of 'the international'. Instead, our argument is that the necessarily historical materialist moment of dialectics still awaits thinking about 'the international' in order to grasp the internal relations of Global Capitalism, Global War, Global Crisis in shaping contemporary world order.¹⁰

Our assertion of the necessarily historical materialist moment of dialectics in rethinking 'the international' is attached to a *philosophy of internal relations* that has been deeply overlooked to date.¹¹ The philosophy of

¹⁰ Some noteworthy exceptions that attempt to grasp the import of dialectics for rethinking political economy and world order would include Alker (1996), Alker and Biersteker (1984), Brincat (2010) and Heine and Teschke (1996).

¹¹ Bertell Ollman comments that relational categories permeate the considerations of Marx as much as inter alia G. W. F. Hegel, Baruch Spinoza, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Georg Lukács, Herbert Marcuse, Jean-Paul Sartre or Henri Lefebvre (Ollman, 1976: 276, 2015: 13). Debates on the uneven and combined development of 'the international' have noted that the use of internal relations as a theoretical presupposition is 'hardly common' and that the internal relations perspective has an 'insignificant presence' in

internal relations implies that the character of capital is considered as a social relation in such a way that the internal ties between the relations of production, state-civil society and conditions of class struggle can be realised. As the hallmark of historical materialism this philosophy of internal relations makes explicit a conception of capital through which connections are maintained and contained as aspects of a self-forming whole. As Karl Marx (1858/1973: 408) put it in the *Grundrisse*, ‘the tendency to create the *world market* is directly given in the concept of capital itself.’ Through this philosophy of internal relations, the dialectical method of historical materialism therefore focuses on internally related causes and conditions, rather than positing logically independent factors existing side by side. As Bertell Ollman (1976: 48), a key exponent of the philosophy of internal relations, establishes:

With the philosophy of internal relations, the problem is never how to relate separate entities but how to disentangle a relation or group of relations from the total and necessary configuration in which they exist.

The first section of this introductory chapter to this book will thus assert the radical social ontology of the philosophy of internal relations (see also Rupert, 1995) in order to analyse Global Capitalism, Global War, Global Crisis. Our aim is to stress, in accord with Derek Sayer (1987: 25, emphasis added), that ‘the connection between people’s productive relations with nature, or labour process, and their productive relations between themselves, or social relations of production, is *internal* and *necessary*, not *external* and *contingent*.’¹² This foray into the philosophy of internal relations is an essential backstop to the rest of this book. Hence the first section of this introductory chapter is crucial to establish our radical social ontology, or a conception of categories as internally related to one another, which is regarded as an indispensable and defining part of a materialist philosophy of history shaping our argument. These are the

reconsiderations of ‘the international’ (Cooper, 2013: 586–7). This intervention is remiss, though, in its neglectful engagement with anterior developments of precisely the internal relations perspective on such questions (Bieler and Morton, 2008; Rupert, 1995). Elsewhere, critical Realism – particularly in the work of Roy Bhaskar – can equally lay claim to formulating similar concerns in the vocabulary of dialectics, albeit with established shortcomings (see Bhaskar, 1993 and Ollman, 2003 and, on the wider contribution of critical Realism to international studies, see Joseph, 2007; Joseph and Wight, 2002; Kurki, 2008; Wight, 2006, 2007). There is also the reinvigoration of dialectics in the special issue of *Globalizations* entitled ‘Dialectics and World Politics’ edited by Brincat (2014) with significant contributions by Ollman (2014) and Teschke and Cemgil (2014).

¹² The world ecology perspective on the double internality of capitalism-in-nature and nature-in-capitalism is a recent extension of the philosophy of internal relations approach to capitalism; see Moore (2015).

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analytic foundations of historical materialism that will become the analytic foundations of this book. The philosophy of internal relations is a revolt against the *violence of abstraction* through which concepts all too commonly become fetishised, or treated as things, so that such material features come to replace specific social relations (Sayer, 1987). Yet, despite the richness of this literature, the common charge against historical materialism is still a caricatured accusation of economic determinism. The task in this first section of this chapter is therefore also to address how the philosophy of internal relations as the hallmark of historical materialism vitiates the taboo term of ‘economism’. The taboo of ‘economism’ is often levelled against a straw Marxism as a disciplinary discourse or boundary in order to prevent engagement with the separation of the political and the economic (Ashley, 1983). Our argument is that a historical materialist philosophy of internal relations offers a novel series of vantage points from which to consider the constitution of productive activity in relation to the institutional and social forms of capitalism, allowing a comprehension of the historical specificity of capitalism. Charges of the taboo term of ‘economism’ against historical materialism will therefore be revealed as nothing more than a furtherance of criticism in the form of parody (Fine and Saad-Filho, 2004: 171).

Once capital is established as a social relation in our reasoning we are then directed to its *buried history* in treating the political economy of state formation, class struggle and relations of production within a substantive historical sociology (Sayer, 1987: 135). The second section therefore delves into some of the rich debates within historical materialism on the internality of the modern capitalist state to conditions of class struggle shaped by relations of production. Our interest at this juncture of this chapter is grabbed by Henri Lefebvre’s (1975/2009: 114) comment that we need to focus on ‘the revolt of the “lived” against abstractions, of the everyday against economism, of the social and civil society against the “high rate of growth”, whose demands are upheld by the State’. The revolt against the violence of abstraction is therefore mobilised in the second section of this chapter through a focus on the internal ties between the relations of production, state-civil society and conditions of class struggle, which will provide a series of threads that will be woven into the remainder of the chapters that constitute this book. Historical materialism does not relegate the ‘economic’ and the ‘political’ to *spatially separate spheres* but conceives of the social constitution of the economy so that relations of production are embodied in juridical-political and ideological forms (Wood, 1995). In making this argument the central focus of the second section of this chapter, and by realising the inner tie of relations of production, state-civil society and class struggle, we therefore

aim to establish the panoramic historical sociology of this book (Sayer, 1985: 221). This entails returning full circle to the philosophy of internal relations and its method of studying history backward to ask: *what had to have happened in the past for capitalism as a mode of production to emerge and consolidate?* (Ollman, 2003: 119, 2015: 18).

It should then become clear that the first section of the present chapter on the radical social ontology and philosophy of internal relations relates subsequently to Part I of this book on Conceptual Reflections linking the relationality of agency–structure (Chapter 2) and the material structure of ideology (Chapter 3). Meanwhile, the second section of this introductory chapter – focusing on the buried history of the internal ties between the relations of production, state-civil society and conditions of class struggle – links to Part II of this book on Thematic Considerations containing a relational conception of capitalist expansion and uneven and combined development (Chapter 4), the geopolitics of capitalist accumulation (Chapter 5) and conditions of exploitation and resistance through class struggle (Chapter 6). This is the scaffolding around which this book is constructed that then establishes a series of vantage points in Part III on Empirical Interventions from which a relational conception of the inner tie of Global Capitalism (Chapter 7), Global War (Chapter 8), Global Crisis (Chapter 9) can be advanced and is finally realised.

A Radical Social Ontology and the Taboo of ‘Economism’

Asserting the importance of the philosophy of internal relations and its relevance to rethinking Global Capitalism, Global War, Global Crisis puts us on guard against posing such processes as a series of external relations of opposition. Our caution here is cast against the violence of abstractions and recourse to raw facts as key principles. It was E. P. Thompson (1968: 224–5) who stated, in *The Making of the English Working Class*, that:

When we encounter some sonorous phrase such as ‘the strong ebb and flow of the trade cycle’ we must be put on our guard. For behind this trade cycle there is a structure of social relations, fostering some sorts of expropriation (rent, interest, and profit) and outlawing others (theft, feudal dues), legitimising some types of conflict (competition, armed warfare) and inhibiting others (trade unionism, bread riots, popular political organisation) – a structure which may appear, in the eyes of the future, to be both barbarous and ephemeral.¹³

¹³ This extract also shapes the renewal of historical materialism in the work of Ellen Wood (1995: 89).