

were dismissive of the study of ethics, but they were hardly engaged in the dispassionate analysis of nineteenth-century industrial capitalism (even though they did believe it was possible to develop a science of the laws of capitalist development modelled on the physical sciences). There is no doubt their inquiry into capitalism was normative through and through (Lukes 1985; Brown 1992). Indeed, Marx's own purpose was made clear in the introductory remarks to *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, where he wrote that human beings make their own history but not under conditions of their own choosing (Marx 1977e: 300). His point was that humans make their own history because they possess the power of self-determination which other species either do not have or cannot exercise to the same degree. And yet humans cannot make history as they please because class structures stand over them and greatly constrain their freedom of action. A distinctive political project is already contained within this observation, namely how human beings can come to make more of their history under conditions freely chosen by themselves.

Although Marx rejected Hegel's study of history and politics, he kept faith with one of Hegel's most central themes which is that in the course of their history human beings acquire a deeper appreciation of what it means to be free and a better understanding of why society will have to be changed before freedom can be realized more completely. In line with his belief that history revolves around the labour process, Marx observed that freedom and equality under capitalism mean that bourgeois and proletarian enter into a labour contract as legal equals, but massive social inequalities place workers at the mercy of the bourgeoisie and reduce their freedom and equality. He took the view that proletarian organizations were developing an understanding of how socialism could make good the claims to freedom and equality which were already present in capitalist societies. Marx's passionate condemnation of capitalism has to be seen in this light. It is a critique from inside the capitalist order rather than a challenge from outside which appeals to some notion of a higher morality.

Marx rejected the ethical standpoint, which one finds in Kant's writings, that human beings can agree on universal truths by using reason, but he shared Kant's conviction that all political efforts to realize freedom within the sovereign state were ultimately futile because they could be rapidly destroyed by the sudden shock of external events. For Kant, war was the dominant threat to the creation of the perfect society; hence his belief in the priority of working for perpetual peace. For Marx, global capitalist crisis was the recurrent danger. Consequently, the idea of 'socialism in one country' was irrelevant in his view in the context of capitalist globalization. Human freedom could be achieved only through

universal solidarity and cooperation to remake world society as a whole. This is one reason why Marx had little to say about relations between states, but focused instead on the significance of capitalist globalization for the struggle to realize equality and freedom. Marx and Engels (whose nickname was 'The General', given his keen interest in strategy and war) were aware of the importance of geopolitics in human history; they knew that conquest in which economic motives were usually predominant had led to the development of ever-larger political associations. They were aware that the struggle for power between the European states led to imperial expansion, although they believed that economic motives were the main reason for the development of world trade and a global market. In short, their analysis was far less concerned with what warring states had contributed to the process of globalization than with explaining how the internal dynamics of capitalism led inexorably to this condition. Although states may have contributed to the globalization of social and political life, they did this largely and increasingly, in Marx's view, because of the internal laws of motion of the capitalist system of production.

Some of the most striking passages in Marx and Engels' writings emphasize the logic of expansionism which is peculiar to modern capitalism. The essence of capitalism is to 'strive to tear down every barrier to intercourse', to 'conquer the whole earth for its market' and to annihilate the tyranny of distance by reducing 'to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another' (Marx 1973: 539). In a famous passage in *The Communist Manifesto* (Marx and Engels 1977), which reveals that Marx and Engels were among the first theorists of globalization, they argued that:

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country ... All old-fashioned national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed ... In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of different lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations ... The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian nations, into civilisation. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production ... i.e. to become

bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image. (Marx and Engels 1977: 224–5)

This remarkable statement had clear implications for revolutionary strategy. The sense of ‘nationality’ might already be ‘dead’ among the most enlightened members of the proletariat, but humanity was still divided into nation-states and national bourgeoisies remained in control of state structures which they used to promote allegedly national interests. Marx and Engels believed that each proletariat would first have to settle scores with its own national bourgeoisie, but revolutionary struggle would be national only in form. It would not end with the capture of state power because the proletariat’s political objectives and aspirations were international (1977: 230, 235).

Realists such as Waltz have argued that members of the proletariat concluded during the First World War that they had more in common with their own national bourgeoisie than with the working classes of other countries. The argument was that no-one with a good understanding of nationalism, the state and war should have been even mildly surprised by this turn of events, yet many socialists were dismayed by the actions of the European proletariat. For realists, the failure to anticipate this outcome demonstrates the central flaw in Marxism – its economic reductionism, as manifested in the belief that understanding capitalism would explain the mysteries of the modern world and its unprecedented political opportunities (Waltz 1959: Chapter 5). This is one of the most famous criticisms of Marxism within the study of international relations. There are three points to make about it.

First, although Marx and Engels were clearly aware of the globalization of economic and social life, they believed that class conflict within separate, but not autonomous, societies would trigger the great political revolutions of the time (Giddens 1981). Their assumption was that revolution would quickly spread from the society in which it first erupted to all other leading capitalist societies. According to this view of the world, burgeoning transnational capitalist activity shattered the illusion of apparently separate societies – an illusion created by geographical boundaries separating peoples governed by different political systems. It has been argued that the relatively peaceful nature of the international system in the middle of the nineteenth century encouraged such beliefs; the theory of the state gave way to theories of society and the economy (Gallie 1978). Reflecting one of the dominant tendencies of the age, Marx (1973: 109) argued that relations between states were important but ‘secondary’ or ‘tertiary’ forces in human affairs when compared with modes of production and their laws of development. In a letter to Annenkov, Marx (1966: 159) asked whether ‘the whole organisation of

nations, and all their international relations [is] anything else than the expression of a particular division of labour. And must not these change when the division of labour changes?'. This is a question rather than an answer yet many have argued – Waltz is an example – that Marxism largely ignored geopolitics, nationalism and war. Even the most sympathetic reader of Marx's work has to concede the point. There can be absolutely no doubt that Marx believed that capitalist globalization and class conflict would determine the fate of the modern world.

Second, Marx and Engels were forced to reconsider their ideas about the nation because of the importance of nationalism in the 1848 revolutions and its growing political influence later in the century. They wrote that the Irish and the Poles were the victims of national domination rather than class exploitation, and added that freedom from national dominance was essential if subordinated peoples were to become allies of the international proletariat (Marx and Engels 1971; see also Benner 1995). These remarks indicate that while Marx and Engels were primarily concerned with the class structure of capitalist societies, they were well aware of the persistence of ancient animosities between national groups – but they almost certainly continued to believe that national differences would eventually decline in importance and might even disappear altogether (Halliday 1999: 79). The growing threat of inter-state violence in the last part of the nineteenth century led to other adjustments to their thinking. Engels' writings, which stressed the role of war in human history, envisaged unprecedented levels of violence and suffering in the next major European conflict. He thought that military competition rather than capitalist crisis might be the spark that ignited the proletarian revolution. Interestingly, Engels argued that the increased possibility of major war meant that the socialist movement had to take matters of national security and the defence of the homeland very seriously (Gallie 1978; see also Carr 1953).

Third, as Gallie (1978) has noted, those intriguing comments about nationalism, the state and war did not lead Marx and Engels to rework their early statements about the explanatory power of historical materialism. An unhelpful distinction between the economic base and the legal, political and ideological superstructure of society remained central to most summaries of the perspective. Too often, the state was regarded as an instrument of the ruling class, although it was thought capable of acquiring some degree of autonomy from the ruling class in unusual political circumstances. Marx and Engels' political writings revealed growing subtlety but the main statements of their theoretical position continued to privilege class and production, to regard economic power as dominant form of power and to regard the revolutionary project as fundamentally about promoting the transition from capitalism to socialism (Cummins 1980).

Marx developed an analysis of capitalism which must remain a key reference point for anyone interested in a critical theory of world politics concerned with the promotion of human emancipation. An account of the alienating and exploitative character of industrial capitalism was linked with a political vision which looked forward to the democratization of the labour process (regarded as being as important as democratizing the institutions of the state, and possibly of greater significance). Brilliant though the analysis was of the expansion of capitalism to all sectors of modern societies and to all parts of the globe, it is clear the pre-occupation with class domination and material inequalities obscured other forms of social exclusion and human suffering which must also feature in a comprehensive critical theory of world politics. These include the forms of domination and discrimination anchored in notions of racial and gender superiority as well as in ideas about nation and class.

Marx and Engels created some of the foundations of a critical theory, and it was up to later radical theorists to build on their achievements. Something of this kind is evident in the writings of the Austro-Marxists, who developed a more subtle and complex analysis of capitalist globalization and national fragmentation in a manner that remained true to the spirit but not to the letter of foundational texts. Writing in the early part of the twentieth century, Austro-Marxists such as Karl Renner and Otto Bauer argued that Marx and Engels had underestimated the impact of cultural differences on human history, the continuing strength of national loyalty and the need to satisfy demands for cultural autonomy in the future socialist world (Bottomore and Goode 1978). Whereas, Marx and Engels had been vague about whether or not national differences would survive in the socialist world order, the Austro-Marxists envisaged a future in which increasing cultural diversity would be celebrated while cosmopolitanism, understood as 'friendship towards the whole human race' rather than 'the want of national attachment', would develop. This was to combine a sociology of class and national identity with a broader vision of universal human emancipation.

The Austro-Marxist response to the twin forces of globalization and fragmentation imagined a world in which human beings would enjoy levels of solidarity and cultural diversity which had no parallel in earlier times. These were controversial ideas which clashed with the socialist idea which developed in Soviet Russia under Lenin and Stalin but they indicated one way of building on the Marxian legacy and of reconstructing historical materialism. However, the rise of Soviet Marxism–Leninism meant that what Gouldner (1980) described as the anomalies, contradictions and latent possibilities within the Marxist tradition were suppressed in a closed, quasi-scientific system of supposed truths that destroyed the potential for further growth and development. Numerous

encrustations formed around Marxism in this period, as Anderson (1983) noted, but the Marxist literature on nationalism and imperialism early in the twentieth century did move the discussion of capitalist globalization and national fragmentation forward in intriguing ways.

## **Nationalism and imperialism**

We have seen that Marx and Engels were mainly interested in modes of production, class conflict, social and political revolution and the economic and technological unification of the human race. Their writings raised key questions about the tension between centrifugal and centripetal forces in capitalist societies. They focused on the national ties which bound the members of modern societies together and separated them from the rest of the human race; they analysed what they saw as the weakening of national bonds because of capitalist globalization while recognizing the resilience of national loyalties in many of Europe's nation-states; they discussed what they regarded as the development of new forms of human solidarity and the slow emergence of a global community which would eventually include the whole human race. So, in their account of modern Europe, they analysed how early capitalism brought scattered, local groups together in increasingly homogeneous nation-states. In this period, ruling classes created national bonds which checked the formation of divisive class identities. Later, capitalism burst out of its national bounds. Increased exploitation in the era of capitalist globalization produced internationalist sentiments and alliances amongst the industrial proletariat. Somewhat simplistic assumptions about how capitalist internationalization would be followed by socialist internationalism had to be rethought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because of the revival of nationalism and the increased danger of major war. The theory of capitalist imperialism should be viewed in this context.

Lenin (1968) and Bukharin (1972) developed the theory of imperialism to explain the causes of the First World War. They argued that war was the product of a desperate need for new outlets for the surplus capital accumulated by dominant capitalist states. The theory of capitalist imperialism has been discredited on account of its economic reductionism but, despite its flaws, it was concerned with the central question of how political communities closed in on themselves in the period in question – an inescapable preoccupation given the earlier Marxian assumption that the dominant trend was towards greater cooperation between the proletariat of different nations (Linklater 1990b: Chapter 4). The theory of imperialism developed Marx and Engels' analysis of the relationship

between nationalism and internationalism, and globalization and fragmentation. In so doing, it highlighted the tension between forces promoting the expansion and forces promoting the contraction of the sense of community.

Above else, however, the study of imperialism criticized the liberal proposition that late capitalism was committed to free trade internationalism which would lead to peace between nations; it was a restatement of Marx's claim that capitalism was destined to experience frequent crises. Lenin and Bukharin claimed the dominant tendency of the age was the emergence of new mercantilist states ever more willing to use force to achieve their economic and political objectives. National accumulations of surplus capital were regarded as the chief reason for the demise of a relatively peaceful international system (although Lenin thought the decline of British hegemony and the changing balance of power had contributed in a secondary way to the relaxation of constraints on force in relations between the major capitalist states).

Lenin and Bukharin maintained that nationalist and militarist ideologies had blurred class loyalties and stymied class conflict in this changing international environment. In *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin (1968: 102) claimed that no 'Chinese wall separates the [working class] from the other classes'. Indeed, a labour aristocracy bribed by colonial profits and closely aligned with the bourgeoisie had developed in monopoly capitalist societies. With the outbreak of the First World War, the working classes which had become 'chained to the chariot of ... bourgeois state power' rallied around pleas to defend the homeland (Bukharin 1972: 166). But it was thought that the shift of the 'centre of gravity' from class conflict to inter-state rivalry would not last indefinitely. The horrors of war would show the working classes that their 'share in the imperialist policy [was] nothing compared with the wounds inflicted by the war' (1972: 167). Instead of 'clinging to the narrowness of the national state' and succumbing to the patriotic ideal of 'defending or extending the boundaries of the bourgeois state' the proletariat would return to the main project of 'abolishing state boundaries and merging all the peoples into one Socialist family' (1972: 167).

As noted earlier, Marx and Engels believed that capitalism created the preconditions for extending human loyalty from the nation to the species – and Lenin and Bukharin thought the destruction of national community and the return to cosmopolitanism would resume after a brief detour down the disastrous path of militarism and war. Their idea that the superabundance of finance capital was the reason for the First World War was mistaken, but that does not mean their analysis lacks all merit. Like Marx and Engels before them they were dealing with a fundamentally important theme which has received too little attention in