

Capitalist Competition and the Liberal International Order

Kyriakos Mikelis¹

Abstract

The article addresses the relation between economic competition and international relations, more specifically the relation between the capitalist economic system and the interstate system. In this regard, the respective literature, which has evolved around issues such as uneven and combined development or the necessity of multiple nation-states for capitalism, is appraised. Attention is also given to the rising powers predicament and to how, in the era of globalization, a challenge is posed by them to the existing governance order. Overall, important questions had already been asked since the beginnings of the previous century during times of dramatic global change. Ever since, both economic and political orders/systems have undergone some sort of evolution or transformation. Yet, in the global trajectory, the notion of competition or antagonism retains its relevance.

Keywords: International relations, capital(ism), competition, international order

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of International European Studies, University of Macedonia

1. Introduction

The present article addresses the relation between economic competition and international relations/politics, in particular between the capitalist economic system and the interstate system. The broader issue is subject to interdisciplinary analysis, including the fields/disciplines of Political Economy, Sociology, History, Political Science and International Relations (IR). Especially in the context of IR, it has been principally tackled within the sub-fields of IR theory, International Politics, International Political Sociology and lastly, but certainly not least, International Political Economy. This is usually done by means of a historical-sociological perspective in a fairly diverse manner, though mostly with historical materialist or Marxist versions. The latter have generally paid noticeable emphasis to the characteristics and dynamics of capitalist competition.

In this regard, crucial questions have been put forward. Is the capitalist mode of production in need (or not) of multiple nation-states and their corresponding system? In other words, is the latter historically contingent or is it a structural component of capitalism? Simply put, is there a necessary relation between capitalism and the interstate system or between their corresponding logics? Moreover, what is the relevance of the concept of uneven and combined development?

The broader context, in which these questions are posed, relates to the fact that the liberal international order and the Westphalian order (i.e. the one stemming out of a presumably anarchic system of sovereign states) may overlap but are not identical. The Westphalian order is characterized, in principle, by authority over territory. In all its variety, the liberal international order includes facets such as the free circulation of goods and capital, liberal democracy, equality in terms of freedom, rule of law or human rights, multilateralism and collective security. Both orders share certain principles such as self-determination, peaceful resolution of disputes, and non-interference. Most importantly, they share a discrepancy between principles and actual practice (Lake et al., 2021: 227-233). This article deals with the

aforementioned questions with an interdisciplinary mentality but, at the same time, with a focus on the IR literature, which, in any case, intersects with other fields such as Political Economy. The respective work is appraised, while attention is eventually given to the rising powers predicament and to how, in the era of globalization, a challenge is posed to the existing governance order.

Concerning the article's structure, it firstly proceeds, in the following two sections, by outlining a series of arguments that have tackled the link between a competitive economic –indeed capitalist– system and a competitive interstate system, one which, at times, has been dubbed imperialist. Those arguments have been raised within either the economic literature, the IR scholarship or their intersection. Then, the article discusses how this link is nowadays reflected in the emerging role and margin for rising powers.

Overall, it is argued that important questions had already been asked since the beginnings of the previous century during times of dramatic global change. Ever since, both economic and political orders/systems have undergone some sort of evolution or transformation. Respectively, the transition to fordism and to post-fordism, along with the transition from multipolar international system to a bipolar superpower system and its successor, i.e. the post-Cold War system. Yet, in the global trajectory, the notion of competition or antagonism retains its relevance.

2. Capitalist competition and international politics I: Whither (ultra)imperialism?

Addressing the particular issue of the relation between capitalist competition and the current international order initially entails its understanding as a facet of a broader *problématique* on the relation between capitalism and states. Probably one of the most renowned and crucial arguments, within Social Science as a whole, is the one offered by I. Wallerstein. His intellectual project (Wallerstein, 1974: esp. 346-357, 1980) aimed at identifying the total and largely self-contained social systems, in which a variety of entities, such as tribes or communities and eventually nation-

states, have emerged and operated. In this respect, world-systems stood out. Compared to the small but highly autonomous subsistence economies, they were characterized not only by a larger size but also by an extensive division of labor and by the multiplicity of involved cultures. They comprised two variants. Firstly, world-empires, whereby some degree of effective control existed within a single political system. Secondly, world-economies, whereby such a single political system is absent. The modern era of nearly five centuries marks a rupture with the past. This is so in the sense that a world-economy has survived, without disintegrating into empires, as was the case before. That peculiarity of the modern world-system is perceived as the political side of capitalism. The latter's development was based on a world-economy within which a multiplicity of political systems existed. It constituted an economic mode which was based on the operation of economic factors in larger spaces beyond the total control of any political entity. Thus, capitalists had a structurally based room for maneuver, while being the beneficiaries of the distribution of rewards of the world-system's continuing expansion. Unlike a world-empire, whereby culture is principally linked with occupation, world-economy basically entails the linkage of culture with special location. Cultural homogenization is consequently seen as serving the interests of key groups, especially the so called core-states, i.e. the world-economy's advantaged areas. In this rationale, national integration enables the protection and the ideological justification of disparities (i.e. economic and social gaps among multiple areas), within the world-system. In fact, power or strength inequality among political entities is imperative for a world-system retaining the world-economy variant instead of the world-empire variant. Power equality of states would mean their ability of impeding the effective function of transnational economic and consequently the global division of labor. A pattern of relative strength of state structures in core areas and of relative weakness in the periphery is a foundational feature of the world-economy.

That argument evidently highlights the foundational role of commercial expansion in the emergence of strong territorial states in Europe, ever since the 16th century, on the ground that the constitution of a modern world-system and states with varied power were enabled by the concentration of capital. In this respect, it has

been criticized for missing how successful accumulation strategies on behalf of merchants relied less on territorial expansion and more on the defense of privileges, along with how the expansion of capitalist social relations followed the transformation of a series of sovereign dynasties into a series of states (Teschke, 2003; Gerstenberger, 2011: 69-76). In any case, it may well serve as a distinct illustration of the aforementioned *problématique*, nevertheless without exhausting it. On a general note regarding the capital-state nexus, state role in capital accumulation comprises a variety of facets, namely market creation, market correction, market direction, and external representation (Van Apeldoorn et al. 2012: 473-6). While the familiarity of a typical IR student with the work of Wallerstein may well be expected, his influence has probably been more in the IR scholarship's margins and outside it, presumably due to its interdisciplinary nature, attracting indisputable interest also within the fields of Political Economy, Sociology and History. Overall, Wallerstein tells us how capitalism –as the modern mode of production– led to the modern state as we know it, no matter its multiple forms. Present-day emphasis, constituting a relevant debate, is explicitly placed on whether modern state and the states system are a necessary requirement for the continuation of capitalism and on how this translates to state competition.

This debate is characterized by the great interest which has been given to the Marxist theory of imperialism and particularly to what is dubbed as the Lenin-Bukharin version (Lenin, 1916, Bukharin, 1929). According to the latter, the concentration and centralization of capital, along with the fusion of the state and private capital, had led to geopolitical rivalries among great powers. In specific, the economic and territorial competition of state capitalist trusts, that had a dominant role in those states, culminated to the Great World War, deeming explanation of what kind of phase had been reached in early 20th century, regarding the development of capitalism. This constitutes an account in opposition with Kautsky's notion of ultra-imperialism, i.e. a phase marked by the transfer of trust methods to international politics, and the postulation that, from an economic standpoint, war would be rendered irrational. This was thus due to the transnational integration of capital as

well as to the process of organization unfolding beyond the national level (Kautsky, 1914. See Callinicos 1991, 2007: 535). It goes without saying that analysis in terms of imperialism had been paved by J. Hobson's seminal book on the matter, even though not with a Marxist perspective (Hobson, 1902). In fact, the book's structure in two parts, i.e. 'the economics of imperialism' and 'the politics of imperialism' undisputedly illustrates a link between politics and economics. This may also be considered the case with quite a few dozen references to the notion of 'competition'.

The controversy of Lenin or Bukharin juxtaposed to Kautsky has left a mark on current debates. After all, the former authors were adamant in expressing the great difference between their postulations and Kautsky's argument (indicatively: Lenin, 1916: ch. VII-X; Bukharin, 1929: ch. 12). Present-day literature's thoughtful positions on the controversy and its stakes, raised by the juxtaposition of the Lenin-Bukharin and Kautsky theses, has been eloquently presented by a (non-exhaustive) tripartite taxonomy on behalf of A. Callinicos (2007: 535-536). The first perspective is fairly close to Kautsky, analyzing the economic and political organization of capitalism along transnational lines and the obsolescence of geopolitical conflicts among the leading states. Although the inter-state system has provided the structural context for geopolitical rivalry, the former isn't deemed inherently necessary with regards to the optimal functioning of capitalist relations of production (cited examples include Hardt and Negri 2000; Robinson 2004). A second perspective involves the affirmation of the obsolescence of geopolitical competition but through another line of reasoning. While capitalism is still in need of the state system, it is complemented by the effective subordination of other capitalist states to American hegemony due to the creation of an informal empire created since World War II and still enduring in the post-Cold War (cited examples include Panitch and Gindin, 2005). A third perspective comprises the so called 'theorists of the new imperialism', including a series of premises. The era of economic crisis, in which global capitalism entered in the mid-Cold War, is still going on. It is also characterized by the division of capitalism among competing centers of economic and political power. No matter the power asymmetries between the US and other states, geopolitical struggle is far from

obsolete due to the continuation of crucial conflicts of interest among states (cited examples include Harvey 2003, Callinicos, 2005).

As Callinicos notes, along the lines of the above mentioned third perspective, capitalist imperialism might well be conceived as the intersection of economic and geopolitical competition. While state system and geopolitical competition may be deemed necessary facets of the capitalist mode of production, the difference of those forms of competition regarding structure and the involvement of multiple actors' interests in their support mean that that their interrelation is historically variable. The first half of the previous century was characterized by the mutual reinforcement of economic and geopolitical antagonism, while its second half was characterized by their partial dissociation. The current century marks the US attempts of perpetuating hegemony, by means of a transnational space under the country's leading role. Yet, those attempts do not negate the complexity and contradictoriness of the general pattern of relations among leading capitalist states (Callinicos, 2007: 545-547). Given the fact that the capitalist process of competitive accumulation includes the inherent tendency to uneven and combined development, the centrifugal pulls that the latter generates have led to the perpetuation of the plural character of the system (ibid. 540-545). The subsumption of the state system within the capitalist mode has taken the historical form of modern imperialism, in terms of the intersection of economic and geopolitical competition, thus bearing important change in the patterns of interstate competition. Nevertheless, this doesn't mean the mere indistinguishability between the state system and capitalism. The former remains one dimension of the capitalist mode of production that is one of the latter's many determinations (Callinicos, 2009: 103).

Those postulations have been met with criticism, especially on behalf of B. Teschke and H. Lacher. Those scholars' argument is that, taking the historically different origins of both capitalism and the system of multiple states into consideration, the two systems are neither co-emergent nor co-constitutive. Since the former emerged within the latter, no single logic (either that of capital or that of anarchy) is a structural determinant of their interrelation. In this respect, variations in

capitalist international orders come up through diverse projects of territorialization by historically situated capitalist classes and states. Thus, an evolutionary long-term logic of globalization or global state-formation and a recurring logic of inter-imperial rivalry are viable options, but just two out of many plausible ones (Teschke and Lacher, 2007: esp. 565).

On the other hand, N. Davidson sees the existing states system as the unavoidable outcome of competitive accumulation based on wage labor. Two defining aspects of the system, namely competition between capitals and the exploitation of labor by capital, substantiate the endurance of the states system. Firstly, capitals need to be territorially aggregated in order to better serve competition. Secondly, the corresponding territory requires an ideological basis for binding the working class to the state and subsequently to the capital. In this respect, the states system is not historically contingent. Nor is it the fusion of distinct logics. The totality of capitalism entails external geopolitical patterns of relations as well as internal nationalist politics as its aspects (Davidson, 2012: esp. 26). Put in blunt terms: “[t]here will be many capitalist nation-states so long as there are many capitals, and so long as there are many capitalist nation-states they will behave as capitals. The trajectory of geoeconomic competition ultimately ends in geopolitical rivalry” (ibid.: 43).

On their part, J. Hirsch and J. Kannankulam assert that no specific logic or historical law helps determine future developments. It is with crises that capitalism develops as a result of social struggles and the corresponding strategies of the relevant actors. Similarly, an end to the neoliberal and globalized or post-Fordist phase capitalism may be plausible. However, proclamations of the end of the nation state, in light of an emerging and democratic global governance, seem less plausible. Thus, the political organization of capitalism into states and the related structures of rule will remain a constant, no matter the internal transformation of states or change in the power relations among each other (Hirsch and Kannankulam, 2011: esp. 32-33).

3. Capitalist competition and international politics I: Uneven and Combined Development

Notably, present-day literature, that centrally concerns itself with the necessity of states system for capitalism, is 'haunted' not only by the Lenin-Bukharin vs Kautsky debate, but also by the concept of uneven and combined development, particularly as it was discussed by L. Trotsky (Trotsky, 1930: ch. 1). In a nutshell, the world constitutes a social totality, however an inherently differentiated and unevenly developed one. A dual use of this concept has been asserted. Firstly, an explanation is provided for the continuation of geopolitical competition between advanced capitalist states and its impact for the construction of international order. Secondly, an explanation is also offered for the unevenness and inequality of global capital accumulation. The concept's actual utility in those two facets is an issue of judgment. For example, R. Kiely sees a much greater utility in the latter case rather than in the former, i.e. when accounting for the nature of the capitalist order rather than for the nature of the international system (Kiely, 2012: esp. 231-232). In any case, it is deemed important for a Marxist approach, when postulating the primacy of cooperation among advanced capitalist states, to provide a thorough critique of a liberal or imperialist international order (ibid: 244-5).

On the same subject, I. Bruff's taxonomy on the concept's use concentrates firstly on demonstrating intersocietal co-existence in terms of a universal dimension of socio-historical development, while, secondly, on discussing the coexistence of (non-territorial) global capitalism and the (territorial) global states-system from a social-property relations perspective (Bruff, 2010: 619-620. Cited examples include respectively Rosenberg, 2007 (see esp. 451-459) and Teschke and Lacher (2007). Bruff's own take on the matter lies on the importance of common sense, particularly making sense of the material basis for people's existence, for the articulation between the national and the international (Bruff, 2010: esp. 615: 615-617). Furthermore, it is noted that "[w]hile the uneven and combined nature of historical development represents a truly transhistorical phenomenon, its distinct causal

determinations, articulated and expressed through inter-societal competition, are only fully activated under the specific socio-historical conditions of generalized commodity production.” (Allinson and Anievas, 2009: 47).

Uneven and combined development has proven to be a point of encounter of Marxism with an unlikely friend, in particularly structural realism or at least a version of it. The latter emphasizes intra-societal stratification resulting from unequal access to productive forces and the corresponding wealth, along with inter-societal/state stratification coming from the unevenness of the productive forces, that is the connection of modes of both production and inter-state competition, without absencing the international from the general theory of societal evolution (Glenn, 2012: 93). This is certainly not the consensus in the relevant literature. The plausibility of a nation-centric approach is heavily criticized within a conceptual framework that emphasizes the transition into a new phase of the so called totalitarian capitalism, meaning a capitalist economy characterized by rapidly globalizing and tightly integrating processes. This phase involves the relative decline of inter-imperialist contradictions with the simultaneous capital-labour confrontation being more direct and greatly intensified (Liodakis, 2012: 5, 13). Furthermore, it is worth noting that, very recently, a burgeoning literature has emerged concerning the concept's analytical relevance in a range of sectors or issues like climate change, ecology, technology and policy analysis, among others. This indicates that the respective analysis, explicitly in terms of combined and uneven development, goes beyond the scale of a mid-range theory. The result is an opening of ontological horizons which refer to a multilinear and interactive social reality (Rosenberg, 2021: esp.158-159).

Finally, it has been recommended to put emphasis on the influence of transnational elites in global governance. Tackling the tensions between globalizing dynamics and territorially defined conflict has taken the form of regulation of global movements. Class and intra-elite struggles are reproduced in the framework of the aforementioned governance: “[t]hese institutional relations fundamentally transform the international competitive ‘system’, and consolidate both supranationally and transnationally the capitalist form of national states against systematic subaltern and

elite resistance.” At the same time, organization at an international level relates to the institutional context of class struggles (Tsolakis, 2010: 402).

4. Capitalist competition and the rising powers

In view of the evolving post-Cold War international order, after the dissolution of the Cold War’s international system within the context of globalization, new impetus has been given by the prospects and dynamics of the so called emerging or rising powers, which may indeed be part of the non-Western world, i.e. the Global South. Their potential and increased capacity were usually reflected in the economic sector. To be sure, IR scholars always keep in mind how this would spill over to other sectors, such as the political and the military.

Within IR literature, considerable attention has been given to the emergence of those powers as regional ones, indicatively conceptualized in terms of ‘new regional powers’ or of the BRICS and similar groups. This is less a negation of the global predicament or a postulation of some sort of isolation and more an acknowledgment that international and security order involves both global and regional levels. The variation concerning international order (e.g. hegemony, collective security, concert etc) deems a multiple analysis. This is also the case with the role pursued by those powers (namely: leadership, custodianship and protection) and their foreign policy orientation in respect to *status quo*, cooperation and long-term design, i.e. respectively the degree of satisfaction with the current order, margin for multilateralism and choices over time horizon and assertiveness (Frazier and Stewart-Ingersoll, 2010).

Variation also characterizes their pursued strategy like empire, hegemony and leadership, referring accordingly to the use or the threat of military intervention, the establishment of a hegemonic order and the fulfillment of common aims. From the IR vantage point, hegemony is intriguing, taking into consideration its multiple forms, ranging from coercion (threats and sanctions) to material benefits (rewards of military and economic nature) and persuasion (socialization and deliberation). The state presents itself as a cooperative one, but the degree of correspondence of this

image with reality is not a given (Destradi, 2010: 926-927). In any case, regional or rising powers may well have a global focus, emphasizing global redistribution i.e. the taming of power and wealth difference, along with the recognition of developing countries as equal. Although they don't necessarily seek to become superpowers, their willingness to integrate into international order is combined with the attempt of its redefinition and reconstitution (Nel et al., 2012: 279).

In this respect, B. Van Apeldoorn et al. underscore the 'statist' catch-up with the West, often involving mercantilist and protectionist strategies but anyways characterized by an opening up to the world economy, with the rising powers' aim of gaining "a prominent place within it, by and large playing along with the (neo-)liberal rules of the game". This doesn't entail a convergence of the corresponding elites with the Western transnational capitalist elites. This new catch-up strategy is (neo-)liberal in respect to its outer form, yet crucially entailing care about state sovereignty (Van Apeldoorn et al. 2012: esp. 483). As they sharply put it:

"although the contradictions of capital accumulation in the twenty-first century take on a very different form and shape in the world outside the so-called Lockean heartland, it is still an open question whether in the final instance the rise of rival centers of accumulation constitutes a challenge to the foundations of the neoliberal global order. The jury is still out on the extent to which a more fundamental reformulation of the state– capital nexus will be generated by the multilayered crisis that global capitalism is facing... so far a reconfiguration of state power within capital accumulation— or for that matter a demise of Western dominance—does not necessarily obstruct or contradict a deepening and widening process of global commodification and marketization"(ibid.).

Tackling the same issue, i.e. the challenge posed by those countries to the institutional framework and dynamics of present-day global governance, a fairly complex predicament rises. Their integration into global capitalism's historical structure has presumably resulted in the reduction of great power conflict as well as in their dependence on the institutional framework established by the West. But it is exactly their rather statist and less market-driven forms of state, as mentioned just above, along with their failure regarding integration into transnational capitalist

structures, that is leading to “a heartland–contender cleavage to the politics of global governance”. In this case, the point of contestation is less the global governance order *per se* rather than its distinctively liberal characteristics. Thus, “in contrast to realist pessimism and liberal optimism, the rise of new powers is leading to a hybrid governance order that is both transnationally integrated and less liberal” (Steven, 2014: 912). In this regard, it is interesting that efforts, on behalf of the aforementioned group (BRICS), have been made for a decisive reformulation of global governance with mixed results. This is so, in light of opposition by Western Powers but also of internal contradictions within the group itself in respect to interests and visions, as illustrated in the case of proposed reforms of the United Nations Security Council (Petroni, 2021).

In fact, an intriguing argument has recently been postulated about the bias of IR and of the *problématique* over international order towards the most powerful actors, which often misses the latter’s limits to influence outcomes, despite a substantial possession of resources. According to this argument, the co-constitution and the co-evolution of the liberal international order and the Westphalian system, which were in effect after the end of World War II, were characterized by an important –yet rather neglected– role in the formulation of norms on behalf of less powerful states, such as those of Latin America. A reminder is subsequently posed about paying attention to multiple contestations of norms and to peripheral contributions to norm (trans)formation and appropriation (Tourinho, 2021: esp. 277-278).

Further specialized arguments have been put forth. A case in point relates to the plausibility of a hegemonic transition towards a group of states whereby the US retains a key role, with other groups –such as BRICS– still not being able to be viable contenders. In this rationale, the stability of growing capital accumulation is still in need of coordination as well as regulation provided by states and their system. The viability of capitalism will reflect success or failure of the aforementioned groups. In any case, the emergence of a post-capitalist order depends on tackling the US’ informal empire project within globalization (Vanaik 2013: esp. 194).

At the same time, it cannot be missed that among powerful states, some of them –granted, not necessarily all of them– have opted for developing power projection capabilities and investing in them, with the aim of effectively facing a competitive geopolitical environment. This means that there may be a change from the current situation where the world has essentially been economically multipolar, while militarily unipolar. This is particularly so if the interests of specific powers remain incompatible (Markowitz and Fariss, 2018: esp. 78).

Having emphasized rising powers, it is crucial to note that a competitive mode of behavior is not reduced to classes or states. It might also characterize the functioning of civil or world society. According to current research, the lack of dedicated incentives as well as a vastly increasing number of stakeholders are important factors which often lead to competitive logics and practices that may characterize relations among and within International Non-Governmental Organizations. On the whole, an array of strategies is available to them, like competition, formal coercive coordination and informal trust-based cooperation (Egger, 2017: 395-7).

Finally, it may come as no surprise that the rising powers predicament was included in the special issue, with the central theme of the liberal international order, of the seminal IR journal *International Organization* celebrating its 75 years of publication but only as just one of its major concerns. As postulated in the introductory article of the aforementioned issue, rising powers indeed pose a challenge to the liberal international order, as is also the case, though, with the core members of this order and non-state actors and moreover broader phenomena such as climate change and pandemics. The central problem, in this regard, is that this order involves not only a set of rules and institutions but also a set of recognition logics which brings up discontents irrespectively of absolute gains (Lake et al., 2021: 251-252).

5. Conclusion

The article addressed the relation between economic competition and international political competition, principally drawing from the IR literature, specifically at its intersection with Political Economy. It is noteworthy that the respective debates have particularly included major arguments put forward in the beginnings of the previous century, concerning (ultra)imperialism as well as uneven and combined development. The special focus of those debates was ultimately given to the necessity of multiple nation-states and their system for capitalism. According to one viewpoint, the interstate system has come up as a structural component of capitalism. Alternatively, it is considered to be historically contingent. This difference is important for the stance taken on whether geopolitical competition/antagonism constitutes a necessary feature of capitalism or not. The issue is further complicated by the emergence of rising powers which attempt to tackle the global diffusion of capitalism in light of the dissolution of the Cold War's international system. Even if outright rivalries have yet to consolidate, it seems that the notion of competition or antagonism can hardly be declared obsolete, especially when taking into account rising inequality.

In fact, from the standpoint of IR theory, it is compelling to take note of a dialogue of unusual suspects, namely a marxist-realist dialogue within IR with a common interest in uneven and combined development, whose converging point is a relentless critique against neo-liberal governance. But such a dialogue is heavily impeded by substantial differences in perceiving the notion of the 'international', with realists stressing anarchy as a feature that precedes political multiplicity, whereas Marxists stress the trajectory of social and/or social multiplicity (Glenn, 2012: esp. 87-90, 93). At the same time there are rationalist arguments of IR theory, concerning international politics, which postulate that international anarchy may, at times, favor cooperation instead of competition. Anarchy is thus mitigated by a variety of motives and variables (Glaser, 2010). No matter the chosen perspective, the broader questions are valid and crucial. Succinctly put:

“the persistence of the state system is more than an academic issue; it is central to a realistic assessment of what we can expect from the capitalist system in terms of its destructive capabilities, which we should not complacently assume will only be directed toward the Global South. Nor should we succumb to the illusion that the very national identities brought into being by capital can somehow be turned against it” (Davidson, 2012: 43-44).

Overall, the analysis of the politics of capitalism involves a series of features. These are the investigation of various historical processes regarding the constitution of capitalist states, the clarification of the specificities of political forms of capitalism and lastly an understanding of the enduring plurality of states and imperialist relations (Gerstenberger, 2011: 60-61, 76-81). IR has taken notice of them and it seems implausible that, without them, there could be a firm grasp of the evolution of international systems in respect to both causes and consequences.

Acknowledgments

The article draws from a paper, bearing the same title, presented at the 7th International Conference on Applied Economics ‘Competition: Analysis and Policy’ (University of Thessaly/Department of Economics, Volos, 20-21 May 2021). The author expresses his gratitude for remarks made in the paper’s presentation.

References

- Allinson, J., and A. Anievas, (2009) The Uses and Misuses of Uneven and Combined Development: An Anatomy of a Concept, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 22(1), 47-67.
- Bruff, I. (2010) European Varieties of Capitalism and the International. *European Journal of International Relations*, 16(4), 615-638.
- Bukharin, N. (1929) *Imperialism and World Economy*. International Publishers. Retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/bukharin/works/1917/imperial/>.
- Callinicos, A. (2009) How to Solve the Many-State Problem: A Reply to the Debate.

- Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 22(1), 89-105.
- Callinicos, A. (2007) Does Capitalism Need the State System?. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 20(4), 533-549.
- Callinicos, A. (2005) Imperialism and Global Political Economy. *International Socialism*, 108, 109-127.
- Callinicos, A. (1991) Marxism and Imperialism Today. *International Socialism*, 2(50), 4-48.
- Davidson, N. (2012) The Necessity of Multiple Nation-States for Capital, Rethinking Marxism, 24(1), 26-46,
- Destradi, S. (2010) Regional Powers and their Strategies: Empire, Hegemony, and Leadership. *Review of International Studies*, 36(4), 903-930.
- Egger, C. (2017) Just Part-Time Lovers? Competition, Coercive Coordination, and Friendship Among International INGOs. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 30(4), 394-414.
- Frazier, D., and R. Stewart-Ingersoll (2010) Regional Powers and Security: A Framework for Understanding Order Within Regional Security Complexes. *European Journal of International Relations*, 16(4), 731-753.
- Gerstenberger, H. (2011) The Historical Constitution of the Political Forms of Capitalism. *Antipode*, 43(1), 60-86.
- Glaser, C. (2010) *Rational Theory of International Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Glenn, J. (2012) Uneven and Combined Development: A Fusion of Marxism and Structural Realism. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 25(1), 75-95.
- Hardt, M., and A. Negri (2000) *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Harvey, D. (2003) *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hirsch, J., and J. Kannankulam (2011) The Spaces of Capital: The Political Form of Capitalism and the Internationalization of the State. *Antipode*, 43(1), 12-37.
- Hobson, J. (1902) *Imperialism: A Study*. New York: J. Pott and Company.
- Kautsky, K. (1914) Imperialism and the War. *International Socialist Review*, 15. Retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1914/09/war.htm>.
- Kiely, R. (2012) Spatial Hierarchy and/or Contemporary Geopolitics: What Can and Can't Uneven and Combined Development Explain?. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 25(2), 231-248.
- Lake, D., L. Martin, and T. Risse (2021) Challenges to the Liberal Order: Reflections on

- International Organization. *International Organization*, 75(SI 2), 225-257.
- Lenin, V. (1917) Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. Petrograd (In Russian). Retrieved (in English) from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/>.
- Liodakis, G. (2012) Crisis, the Emerging New Stage of Capitalism, and the Need of a Transnational Class Strategy for Social Emancipation. *International Critical Thought*, 2(1), 7-22.
- Markowitz, J., and C. Fariss (2018) Power, Proximity, and Democracy: Geopolitical Competition in the International System. *Journal of Peace Research*, 55(1), 78-93.
- Nel, P., D. Nabers, and M. Hanif (2012) Introduction: Regional Powers and Global Redistribution. *Global Society*, 26(3), 279-287.
- Panitch, L., and S. Gindin (2005) Superintending Global Capital. *New Left Review*, 35, 101-123.
- Petrone, F. (2021) BRICS and Global Governance: Will the Grouping be able to Reform the United Nations Security Council? *International Studies*, 58(3), 363-379.
- Robinson, W. (2004) *A Theory of Global Capitalism. Production, Class, and State in a Transnational World*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Rosenberg, J. (2021) Results and Prospects: An introduction to the CRIA Special Issue on UCD. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 34(2): 146-163.
- Rosenberg J. (2007) International Relations — The 'Higher Bullshit': A Reply to the Globalization Theory Debate. *International Politics*, 44(4): 450-482.
- Stephen, M. (2014) Rising Powers, Global Capitalism and Liberal Global Governance: A Historical Materialist Account of the BRICs Challenge. *European Journal of International Relations*, 20(4), 912-938.
- Teschke, B. (2003) *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics and the Making of Modern International Relations*. London: Verso.
- Teschke, B., and H. Lacher (2007) The Changing 'Logics' of Capitalist Competition. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 20(4), 565-580.
- Tourinho, M. (2021) The Co-Constitution of Order. *International Organization*, 75(IS 2), 258-281.
- Trotsky, L. (193) *History of the Russian Revolution* (In Russian). Retrieved (in English) from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/hrr/>,
- Tsolakis, A. (2010) Opening Up Open Marxist Theories of the State: A Historical Materialist

- Critique. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 12(3), 387-407.
- Van Apeldoorn, B., N. De Graaff, and H. Overbeek (2012) The Reconfiguration of the Global State–Capital Nexus. *Globalizations*, 9(4), 471-486.
- Vanaik, A. (2013) Capitalist Globalisation and the Problem of Stability: Enter the New Quintet and Other Emerging Powers. *Third World Quarterly*, 34(2), 194-213.
- Wallerstein, I. (1980) *The Modern World System II. Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy. 1600-1750*. Academic Press.
- Wallerstein, I. (1974) *The Modern World System. Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*. Academic Press.