

# Globalising common sense: a Marxian-Gramscian (re-)vision of the politics of governance/resistance

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The impoverishment of mainstream International Relations (IR) scholarship, especially as it is practised in the bastions of academic power and respectability in the United States, can be registered in terms of its wilful and continuing conceptual blindness to mutually constitutive relations of governance/resistance at work in the production of global politics. This has been underscored in recent years by the rise of powerful transnational social movements seeking to reform or transform global capitalism, a coalition of coalitions recently reincarnated in the form of a global peace movement opposing the blatantly neo-imperial turn in US foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> As the essays in this Special Issue attest, critical scholars of world politics have developed conceptual vocabularies with which to (re-)construct, from various analytical-political perspectives, aspects of these governance/resistance relations. My task in this article is to argue that – under historical circumstances of capitalist modernity – a dialectical understanding of class-based powers is necessary, if by no means sufficient, for understanding social powers more generally, and issues of global governance and resistance which implicate those powers. Although it is not without its tensions and limitations, I have found re-envisionings of Marxian political theory inspired by Western Marxism – and in particular by interpretations of Antonio Gramsci – to be enabling for such a project. Marxian theory provides critical leverage for understanding the structures and dynamics of capitalism, its integral if complex relationship to the modern form of state, the class-based powers it enables and the resistances these engender; and Gramsci's rich if eternally inchoate legacy suggests a conceptual vocabulary for a transformative politics in which a variety of anti-capitalist movements might coalesce in order to produce any number of future possible worlds whose very possibility is occluded by capitalism. In the present context of globalising capitalism and neo-imperialism, such resistance has taken the form of a transnational confluence of movements for global justice and peace.

<sup>1</sup> The literature on the global justice movement has grown too vast to attempt encapsulation here. Extensive references may be found in my own work on this transnational movement: M. Rupert, *Ideologies of Globalisation* (London: Routledge, 2000); 'Class Powers and the Politics of Global Governance', chapter prepared for *Power and Global Governance*, edited by Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming); 'Anti-Capitalist Convergence? Anarchism, Socialism, and the Global Justice Movement', in Manfred Steger (ed.), *Rethinking Globalism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, forthcoming); 'The Global Justice Movement in a Neo-Imperial Moment', chapter prepared for *Critical Theories, World Politics, and the 'Anti-Globalisation Movement'*, edited by Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

**Marx: social power and class relations**

One of the enduring insights of Marxian theory is that the seemingly apolitical economic spaces generated by capitalism – within and across juridical states – are permeated by structured relations of social power deeply consequential for political life and, indeed, for the (re)production of social life as a whole. These powers may be ideologically depoliticised – and thus rendered democratically unaccountable – in liberal representations separating a naturalised and privatised economy from the formally political sphere. The operation of this economy (and the implicit social powers residing within it) may then be represented as something approaching a universal social good, the engine of economic growth and a generalised prosperity.<sup>2</sup> However another of these enduring Marxian insights is that social power relations are also *processes* – dynamic, contradictory and contestable.

As usefully emphasised by Scott Solomon,<sup>3</sup> Marx's capitalism is not a seamless web of oppression, but rather represents a contradictory life of 'dual freedom'. On such a dialectical Marxian view, capitalism entails liberation from the relations of direct politico-economic dependence characteristic of feudalism and other pre-capitalist forms, and hence presents possibilities for social individuation and 'political emancipation' within the parameters of republican forms of state. But capitalism simultaneously limits the historically real emancipatory possibilities it brings into being by (re-)subjecting persons to social domination through the compulsions of market dependence and the disabling effects of fetishism and reification. Under historical conditions of capitalism, social relations are mediated by things – commodities. Although the social division of labour under capitalism has brought together and collectively empowered human producers as never before, it simultaneously divides and disables them by representing their social relations as naturalised relations of exchange between commodities. To the extent that social relations are subsumed into a world of putatively independent objects – 'things' – human producers are correspondingly disempowered. Inhabitants of the capitalist market, the subjects of capitalist modernity, are represented to themselves as abstract individuals who, as such, are largely unable to discern – much less communally to govern – the social division of labour in which they are embedded. In the words of Derek Sayer's apt summary: 'People appear to be independent of one another because their mutual dependence assumes the unrecognisable form of relations between commodities.'<sup>4</sup> Further, even as capitalism realises 'political emancipation' through the development of the liberal republic in which citizens are formally equal, it effectively privatises and depoliticises class-based social powers and thereby eviscerates political democracy.<sup>5</sup> These dialectics of freedom and unfreedom, the powers they

<sup>2</sup> Rupert, *Ideologies of Globalization*, ch. 3; also Manfred Steger, *Globalism: The New Market Ideology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Scott Solomon, 'Marx's 'Dual Freedom' Thesis and Globalization', paper presented at the workshop *The Politics of Protest in the Age of Globalization*, University of Sussex, UK, 26–27 September 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Derek Sayer, *Capitalism and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 64; the *locus classicus* is of course Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. I (New York: Vintage, 1977), ch. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Marx, 'On The Jewish Question', in *Karl Marx: Early Writings* (New York: Vintage, 1975); also Sayer, *Capitalism and Modernity*, ch. 2; Paul Thomas, *Alien Politics: Marxist State Theory Retrieved* (London: Routledge, 1994); and Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy versus Capitalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

generate and resistances they engender, have produced families of capitalist historical structures which are fraught with tension and possibilities for change. Whether any such possibilities are realised, and in what particular ways, depend upon open-ended political struggles in which the power relations of capitalism will necessarily be implicated.

Ellen Wood has argued consistently and with great force that the critical leverage of a Marxian critique of capitalism is generated by its explicit focus on the social power relations which inhere in, and yet are obscured by, the structures and practices of capitalist production and exchange.

The fundamental secret of capitalist production disclosed by Marx . . . concerns the social relation and the disposition of power that obtains between workers and the capitalist to whom they sell their labor power. This secret has a corollary: that the disposition of power between the individual capitalist and the worker has as its condition the political configuration of society as a whole – the balance of class forces and the powers of the state which permit the expropriation of the direct producer, the maintenance of absolute private property for the capitalist, and his control over production and appropriation. . . . for Marx, the ultimate secret of capitalist production is a political one.<sup>6</sup>

Capitalist social relations generate the possibility of asymmetrical social powers distributed according to class. Socially necessary means of production are constituted as private property, exclusively owned by one class of people. The other class, whose exclusion from ownership of social means of production is integral to the latter's constitution as private property, are then compelled to sell that which they do own – labour-power, that is, their capacity for productive activity – in order to gain access to those means of production and hence – through the wage – their own means of survival. As consumer of labour-power, the capitalist may control the actual activity of labour – the labour process – and appropriate its product, which is then subsumed into capital itself. In Jeffrey Isaac's apt summary, 'The capitalist class thus possesses two basic powers: the power of control over investment, or appropriation; and the power to direct and supervise the labour process . . .'.<sup>7</sup>

As *employers*, capitalists and their managerial agents attempt to assert control over the transformation of labour-power – the abstract, commodified capacity for labour – into actual labour. They seek to maximise the output of workers in relation to wages paid for labour-power, and may lengthen the work day or transform the labour process itself in order to do so.<sup>8</sup> In the social position of *investors*, their decisions directly determine the social allocation of labour and resources – the pace

<sup>6</sup> Wood, *Democracy versus Capitalism*, pp. 20–21. It is possible, I would argue, to mount a political critique of capitalism without committing oneself to Wood's more fundamentalist claims about the universal and overriding significance of class relative to other social relations of domination; see the arguments developed below and in Rupert, 'Globalising Gramsci', paper prepared for the workshop *Images of Gramsci: Connections and Contentions in Political Theory and International Relations*, convened by Andreas Bieler and Adam Morton, University of Nottingham, UK, 24–25 October 2003; compare Wood, *Democracy versus Capitalism*, pp. 256–63, 266–70, 282–3.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Isaac, *Power and Marxist Theory* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 126; the *locus classicus* is Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 291–2; see also Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Democracy and Capitalism* (New York, Basic Books, 1986), pp. 64–91; and Wood, *Democracy versus Capitalism*, pp. 28–31, 40–44.

<sup>8</sup> Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 948–1084; on the latter tendency as it was instantiated in struggles surrounding Fordist workplace regimes, see M. Rupert, *Producing Hegemony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

of aggregate economic activity and the shape of the social division of labour – and indirectly limit the scope of public policy through the constraint of ‘business confidence’ and the implicit threat of ‘capital strike’. Insofar as these social powers are effectively privatised – associated with private ownership and exchange of property among juridically equal individuals in an apparently depoliticised economic sphere – they are ideologically mystified and democratically unaccountable.<sup>9</sup>

Anti-democratic and disabling as they might be, these class-based powers are neither uncontested in principle nor uncontested in fact. Like all relations of social power, capitalist power relations are reciprocal, constituting a ‘dialectic of power’, subject to ongoing contestation, renegotiation and restructuring.<sup>10</sup> They represent, in short, historically particular forms of social power. As such, class powers must be actualised in various concrete sites of social production where class is articulated with other socially meaningful identities resident and effective in those historical circumstances. Capitalist power over waged labour has been historically articulated with gendered and raced forms of power: separation of workplace from residence and the construction of ideologies of feminised domesticity rationalising unpaid labour; ideologies of white supremacy rationalising racial segregation and inequality; gendered and raced divisions of labour; and so forth. These relations of race and gender have had important effects on class formation.<sup>11</sup> This implies that in concrete contexts class cannot be effectively determining without itself being determined. However this is not to say, in some pluralist sense, that class is only one of a number of possible social identities all of which are equally contingent. Insofar as productive interaction with the natural world remains a necessary condition of all human social life,<sup>12</sup> I would maintain that understandings of social power relations which abstract from the social organisation of production must be radically incomplete.

To the extent that capitalism and its putatively private relations of power organise crucial parts of social life on a transnational scale, the struggles surrounding these relations and their various articulations in sites around the world merit serious study as part of the question of global governance and resistance. Critical analyses of class-based powers and their historical interweaving with gender, race-based and other relations of privilege may shed new light not only on issues of transnational power and global governance but also on possibilities for democratising projects and the social production of alternative possible worlds.

### **Gramsci: common sense and transformative politics**

If Marx left us with incisive theorisations of capitalism, its core relations and constitutive tensions, it was the Italian political theorist and communist leader

<sup>9</sup> On the constraint of ‘business confidence’ and the implicit threat of ‘capital strike’, see Fred Block, (1977), ‘The Ruling Class does not Rule’, *Socialist Revolution*, 33 (1977), p. 16; and Bowles and Gintis, *Democracy and Capitalism*, pp. 88–90; on the anti-democratic character of capitalist politics more generally, see Thomas, *Alien Politics*, and Wood, *Democracy versus Capitalism*.

<sup>10</sup> Isaac, *Power*.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Michelle Barrett, *Women’s Oppression Today* (London, Verso: 1988); Johanna Brenner; ‘The Best of Times, the Worst of Times: US Feminism Today’, *New Left Review*, 200 (1993), pp. 101–59; and Michael Goldfield, *The Color of Politics* (New York, New Press, 1997).

<sup>12</sup> Marx, *Capital I*, p. 290.

Antonio Gramsci who contributed to the historical materialist tradition a conceptual vocabulary with which to enable processes of transformative politics. Marx suggested that socialist transformation might emerge out of the confluence of capitalism's endemic crisis tendencies, the polarisation of its class structure and the relative immiseration of the proletariat and, most importantly, the emergence of the latter as a collective agent through the realisation of its socially productive power, heretofore developed in distorted and self-limiting form under the conditions of concentrated capitalist production. Gramsci accepted in broad outline Marx's analysis of the structure and dynamics of capitalism, but was unwilling to embrace the more mechanical and economistic interpretations of Marx circulating in the international socialist movement.<sup>13</sup>

Contrary to vulgar Marxist dogma, progressive social change would not automatically follow in train behind economic developments, but must instead be produced by historically situated social agents whose actions are enabled and constrained by their social self-understandings.<sup>14</sup> Thus, for Gramsci, popular 'common sense' becomes a critical terrain of political struggle.<sup>15</sup> His theorisation of a social politics of ideological struggle – which he called 'war of position' to distinguish it from a Bolshevik strategy of frontal assault on the state – contributed to the historical materialist project of dereifying capitalist social relations (including narrowly state-based conceptions of politics) and constructing an alternative – more enabling, participatory, intrinsically democratic – social order out of the historical conditions of capitalism.<sup>16</sup>

Popular common sense could become a ground of struggle because it is an amalgam of historically effective ideologies, scientific doctrines and social mythologies. Gramsci understood popular common sense not to be monolithic or univocal, nor was hegemony an unproblematically dominant ideology which simply shut out all alternative visions or political projects. Rather, common sense was understood to be a syncretic historical residue, fragmentary and contradictory, open to multiple interpretations and potentially supportive of very different kinds of social visions and political projects. And hegemony was understood as the unstable product of a continuous process of struggle, 'war of position', 'reciprocal siege'.<sup>17</sup>

Gramsci's political project thus entailed addressing the popular common sense operative in particular times and places, making explicit the tensions and contradictions within it as well as the sociopolitical implications of these, in order to enable critical social analysis and transformative political practice. His aim was 'to construct an intellectual-moral bloc which can make politically possible the intellectual progress of the mass and not only of small intellectual groups', and thereby 'to create the conditions in which this division [leaders/led] is no longer necessary', and in which 'the subaltern element' is 'no longer a thing [objectified, reified] but an historical person . . . an agent, necessarily active and taking the

<sup>13</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), pp. 34, 201–2, 419–72.

<sup>14</sup> Gramsci, *Selections*, pp. 164–5, 172, 326, 344, 375–7, 407–8, 420, 438.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 323–34, 419–25.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 229–39, 242–3; on 'statolatry', see p. 268.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 182, 210, 239, 323–34, 350, 419–25.

initiative.<sup>18</sup> At the core of Gramsci's project was a critical pedagogy which took as its starting point the tensions and possibilities latent within popular common sense, and which sought to build out of the materials of popular common sense an emancipatory political culture and a social movement to enact it – not simply another hegemony rearranging occupants of superior/subordinate social positions, but a *transformative* counter-hegemony.<sup>19</sup>

Gramsci's historical materialism understands history as a complex and contradictory story of social self-production under specific social circumstances. The meaning of this social history, then, resists reduction to simple formulae: 'The experience on which the philosophy of praxis is based cannot be schematised; it is history in all its infinite variety and multiplicity'.<sup>20</sup> But while history is infinitely complex, from within the context of capitalist modernity it is possible to imagine grounds for emancipatory collective action and more meaningful social self-determination. Gramsci's historical materialism thus envisions a process of 'becoming which . . . does not start from unity, but contains in itself the reasons for a possible unity':

. . . The unity of history (what the idealists call unity of the spirit) is not a presupposition, but a continuously developing process. Identity in concrete reality determines identity in thought, and not vice versa. . . . every truth, even if it is universal, and even if it can be expressed by an abstract formula of a mathematical kind (for the sake of the theoreticians), owes its effectiveness to its being expressed in the language appropriate to specific concrete situations. If it cannot be expressed in such specific terms, it is a Byzantine and scholastic abstraction, good only for phrase-mongers to toy with.<sup>21</sup>

I understand this to mean that the class-based relations of production under capitalism create the *possibility* of particular kinds of collective agency, but this potential can only be realised through the political practices and struggles of concretely situated social actors, practices which must negotiate the tensions and possibilities – the multiple social identities, powers, and forms of agency – resident within popular common sense.

Gramsci was, of course, a Marxist, and assigned to class identity a relatively privileged position in his vision of transformative politics.<sup>22</sup> But Gramsci's Marxism was an historicism which explicitly disavowed the notion that historical materialism represented trans-historical or universal truth. Rather, he insisted that historical materialism was a *situated knowledge*, constructed within and relevant to the historical relations of capitalism in particular times and places: upon the historical supercession of capitalism, then, historical materialism would be superceded by other forms of knowledge relevant to their own socio-historical context.<sup>23</sup> This understanding of historical materialism as situated knowledge implies, at the very least, the potential for productive political dialogue with other forms of situated knowledge constructed in contexts where capitalism has been articulated with various kinds of social identities and relations not reducible to class.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 332–5, 144, 337; also 346, 349, 418.

<sup>19</sup> This argument is developed more fully in Rupert, 'Globalizing Gramsci'.

<sup>20</sup> Gramsci, *Selections*, p. 428.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201; the preceding quote is from pp. 355–6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 139–40, 148, 151, 227, 259, 263.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 152, 201, 248–9, 404–7, 436–7, 445–6.

Despite Gramsci's insistence that a counter-hegemonic bloc should be led by anti-capitalist forces, his vision of this historic bloc in terms of a dialogic process creates openings for engagement with other situated knowledges in ways which, his relational ontology implies, will reshape the identities of all participants in the conversation. Gramsci emphasises the transformative potential of such a relational vision by interpreting politics – entailing the historical problem of leaders/led – in terms of education – which to the extent that it is successful is transformative of the teacher/student relation along with the parties embedded within that relation.<sup>24</sup>

An historical act can only be performed by 'collective man', and this presupposes the attainment of a 'cultural-social' unity through which a multiplicity of dispersed wills, with heterogeneous aims, are welded together with a single aim, on the basis of an equal and common conception of the world. . . . This problem can and must be related to the modern way of considering educational doctrine and practice, according to which the relationship between teacher and pupil is *active and reciprocal* so that every teacher is always a pupil and every pupil a teacher. . . . Every relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily an educational relationship and occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which the nation is composed, but in the international and world-wide field, between complexes of national and continental civilizations.<sup>25</sup>

The political-educational process he envisions is to be distinguished from indoctrination insofar as the former entails reciprocal development and seeks to enable the student to construct new truths independent of his/her teacher and, in the process, to teach the teacher, thereby transforming their relation. The relation teacher/student (and leader/led) is then reciprocal but (in the context of capitalist modernity) initially asymmetrical: Gramsci envisions developing the reciprocity of the relation until the asymmetry approaches the vanishing point. I am claiming, in other words, that Gramsci's political project aims at overcoming the historical division between leaders and led through 'active and reciprocal' processes of transformative dialogue and the concomitant reconstruction of social relations and identities. This is why, I believe, he emphasises (contrary to more economic Marxisms and their mechanical interpretations of Marx's base/superstructure metaphor) that the core of his pivotal concept of 'historic bloc' entails 'a necessary reciprocity between structure and superstructure, a reciprocity which is nothing other than the real dialectical process'.<sup>26</sup>

How then to account for his insistence that this process should be led, initially at least, by class-based social forces<sup>27</sup> and that the counter-hegemonic historic bloc should be '100 percent homogeneous on the level of ideology' in order to effect a social transformation?<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to observe that the assertion of reciprocity between structure and superstructure quoted in the paragraph above occurs immediately following Gramsci's suggestion that an historic bloc must be '100 percent homogeneous on the level of ideology' and so on, and hence implies a

<sup>24</sup> For the leading role of anti-capitalist forces, see Gramsci, *Selections*, pp. 259, 263, also 139–40, 148, 151, 227; on transformative politics as education, see pp. 227, 242, 247.

<sup>25</sup> Gramsci, *Selections*, pp. 665–66; my emphasis.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 366.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 139–40, 148, 151, 227.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 366; also, less categorically, 158, 168, 328, 445; but compare the seemingly much more rigid formulation on 265.

critique of economism<sup>29</sup> which would undercut a simple class-reductionist interpretation of what he meant by ‘homogeneous’. Rather than reading Gramsci as straightforwardly (and, in light of his larger project, perversely) reasserting the economic Marxist eschatology of the ‘universal class’ as historical messiah, I would make sense of these claims in the context of the relational theory of transformative process sketched out here. I understand Gramsci to be suggesting that, in a capitalist social context, the necessary condition for any sort of transformative project whatever is a re-opening of political horizons effectively foreclosed by capitalist social relations. Whatever else they may be or become (that is, ‘history in all its infinite variety and multiplicity’), transformative politics from within a capitalist context must necessarily entail shared anti-capitalist commitments in order to open up future possible worlds which are obscured by the social identities of abstract individualism and disabling ideologies of fetishism and reification produced by capitalism.

But the counter-hegemonic historic bloc should not be ‘homogeneous’ in the sense of annihilation of meaningful political difference, a unitary and uniform class-based identity imposed by a party uniquely in possession of a full understanding of history.<sup>30</sup> Indeed this would entail a self-defeating refusal to engage with and learn from potential allies (a position of ‘intransigence’) which Gramsci derisively identifies with ‘economistic superstition’.

It is clear that this aversion on principle to compromise is closely linked to economism. For the conception on which this aversion is based can only be the iron conviction that there exist objective laws of historical development similar in kind to natural laws, together with a belief in a predetermined teleology like that of a religion.<sup>31</sup>

If the historical supercession of capitalism is to be achieved, this will entail a relational transformation not just of the social-structural environment but of the participants in the struggle themselves. Gramsci’s vehicle for the realisation of this kind of transformation was the historic bloc, led/educated – initially at least – by a class-identified political party:

Although every party is the expression of a social group, and of one social group only, nevertheless in certain given conditions [a counter-hegemonic bloc] certain parties [the party of the non-owners of capital] *represent a single social group precisely insofar as they exercise a balancing and arbitrating function between the interests of their group and those of other groups, and succeed in securing the development of the group which they represent with the consent and assistance of the allied groups.*<sup>32</sup>

In other words, the party of those subordinated under capitalism’s class-based dominance relations can realise its potential as such only by transcending a narrow, instrumental or sectarian approach to politics and by attaining hegemonic leadership of a bloc of social forces committed to attaining post-capitalist futures.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Gramsci’s critique of economism is sharply made elsewhere in the Notebooks: see pp. 158–68, 419–72.

<sup>30</sup> Although see Gramsci, *Selections*, p. 265 for a passage which, if abstracted out of the larger relational context I am suggesting here, might be read as an instance of economic class-determinism.

<sup>31</sup> Gramsci, *Selections*, pp. 167–8; for ‘economistic superstition’, see p. 164; and on the undialectical Marxist ‘religion’ of determinism and teleology, see Gramsci’s critique of Bukharin, esp. pp. 434–48.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148, my emphasis.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180–2.



Gramsci's historic bloc is not a one-way street, nor is it based on an instrumental understanding of compromise in which the constituent groups and their core interests remain essentially the same even as they accommodate one another. Rather the counter-hegemonic historic bloc involves the transformation of all parties actively involved in its construction, including the leading party:

The development of the party into a State [that is, a new form of collective social self-determination, 'an integral state, and not into a government technically understood'] reacts upon the party and requires of it a continuous reorganization and development, just as the development of the party and State into a conception of the world, i.e., into a total and molecular (individual) transformation of the ways of thinking and acting, reacts upon the State and party, compelling them to reorganize continually and confronting them with new and original problems to solve.<sup>34</sup>

The goal of this process is not the permanent institutionalisation of the rule of one particular, preconstituted social group or its party over all others, but the transformation of capitalist social relations and their characteristic structural separations of state/society, politics/economics, in order to enable the devolution of implicitly class-based political rule into a more generalised social self-determination – a future for which the democratisation of economic relations would be a necessary, if not sufficient, condition: 'the [new, integral] State's goal is its own end, its own disappearance, in other words the re-absorption of political society into civil society'.<sup>35</sup>

In light of all this, I suggest that Gramsci's counter-hegemonic bloc may be understood as 'homogeneous' to the degree that it shares a rejection of capitalism's abstract individuals in favour of more socially-grounded relational ontologies, process-oriented visions of social reality, and acknowledgements of the historical situatedness of political knowledge and practice. Once developed within popular common sense, these elements of a 'homogeneous – in other words, coherent and systematic – philosophy'<sup>36</sup> constitute the necessary common ground for forging an anti-capitalist bloc which would, if successful, construct new forms of political community and open doors to a rich variety of possible futures, all of which are occluded by capitalism's reification of social life. Once this post-capitalist political horizon was approached, the anti-capitalist bloc would lose its historical reason for existence and its social condition of intelligibility, it would transform itself in ways appropriate to the new social context and new identities it had brought into being, and would thus be superseded by new forms of social self-determination.<sup>37</sup>

This is, I confess, not an innocent reading of Gramsci (I doubt whether any such thing is possible). Rather, my reading is motivated by a desire to reappropriate his thinking in order to enable a politics of solidarity in the increasingly unified, but at the same time nonetheless plural world, of globalising capitalism. I do not mean to suggest by this that Gramsci's thinking entirely escapes the potential pitfalls of Marxian teleology; only that there are resources within his thought for auto-critique and continual reopening of political possibility. And, in the present context of globalising capitalism and neo-imperialism, such resources are no less important than they were when Gramsci wrote.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253, also 260.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 769.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

### Globalising capitalism, governance, resistance

While I would agree with the claim that capitalist class powers have never been more effectively global, I am equally persuaded that these powers have never been contained within the confines of particular states. Recent Marxian scholarship has argued persuasively that capitalism may be fruitfully understood as a transnational social system which has encompassed the system of sovereign states as well as the seemingly discrete sphere of the capitalist economy: 'The separation of the political and the economic indicates precisely the central institutional linkage between the capitalist economy and the nation state: that is, the legal structure of property rights which removes market relationships from directly political control or contestation and allows the flow of investment capital across national boundaries'.<sup>38</sup> It is through these latter processes of transnational economic activity that the privatised powers of capital have been projected on an increasingly global scale. 'For under this new arrangement, while relations of citizenship and jurisdiction define state borders, any aspects of social life which are mediated by relations of exchange in principle no longer receive a political definition (though they are still overseen by the state in various ways) and hence may extend across these borders'.<sup>39</sup>

Scholars sharing a broadly historical materialist perspective have identified historical processes through which internationally active segments of the capitalist class have organised to frame common interests, project a universalising worldview which effectively depoliticises the economic sphere, and coordinate their own political action to realise their interests and visions.<sup>40</sup> Capitalism's globalising tendencies have been substantially realised in a particular historical context, and this has been the political project of a tendentially transnational – if also US-led – historic bloc comprised of particular fractions of the capitalist class, state managers and international bureaucrats, journalists, and mainstream labour leaders.

Constructing the institutional infrastructure of international trade and finance, this historic bloc fostered the growth of international trade and investment through the postwar decades, especially within and between the so-called 'triad' regions. Moreover, with the founding of the World Trade Organisation in 1995, the infrastructure of liberalisation has been substantially strengthened and extended. The WTO wields unprecedented powers of surveillance and enforcement, and has extended its ambit to include trade in services as well as trade-related investment and

<sup>38</sup> Justin Rosenberg, *Empire of Civil Society* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 14; but for an important qualification to this line of argument compare Hannes Lacher, 'Making Sense of the International System: The Promises and Pitfalls of the Newest Marxist Theories of International Relations', in M. Rupert and H. Smith (eds.), *Historical Materialism and Globalization* (London: Routledge 2002).

<sup>39</sup> Rosenberg, *Empire*, p. 129.

<sup>40</sup> Kees van der Pijl, *Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class* (London, Verso 1984) and *Transnational Classes and International Relations* (London, Routledge 1998); Stephen Gill, *American Hegemony and the Trilateral Commission* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), and 'Globalization, Market Civilization, and Disciplinary Neoliberalism', *Millennium*, 24:3 (1995), pp. 399–423; William Robinson, 'Capitalist Globalization and the Transnationalization of the State', in Rupert and Smith (eds.), *Historical Materialism and Globalization*; Robinson and Jerry Harris, 'Towards a Global Ruling Class', *Science and Society*, 64:1 (2000), pp. 11–54; Rupert, *Ideologies*; Leslie Sklair, *The Transnational Capitalist Class* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001). The significance of globalisation within an historical materialist frame is, however, very much a matter of debate: some important positions are staked out by contributors to Rupert and Smith (eds.), *Historical Materialism and Globalization*.

intellectual property issues.<sup>41</sup> This reflects a broadening of the agenda of liberalisation beyond tariff reduction to encompass 'harmonisation' of (formerly 'domestic') rules and regulations governing business insofar as these appear, from the liberal perspective, as potential non-tariff barriers to trade.

A second aspect of postwar processes of globalisation has been the emergence of multinational firms and the transnational organisation of production.<sup>42</sup> Developing countries have been increasingly, if unevenly, incorporated into these global production networks. This globalisation of production has substantially enhanced the powers of employers in relation to their workers. For workers in developed countries, globalisation means that employers are able more credibly to threaten plant relocation and job loss when faced with collective bargaining situations, and there is strong evidence to suggest that this is increasingly widespread.<sup>43</sup> For workers in developing countries, globalisation may imply opportunities for employment which might not otherwise be available, but along with that come the subordination and exploitation entailed in the capitalist labour process.<sup>44</sup>

In the realm of finance, excess liquidity from consistent US balance of payments deficits, the collapse of the Bretton Woods fixed rate regime and its associated capital controls, the recycling of petrodollars and the emergence of offshore xeno-currency markets, together resulted in breathtaking volumes of foreign exchange trading and speculative international investment which now dwarf the currency reserves of governments and can readily swamp, or leave high and dry, the financial markets of particular nations.<sup>45</sup> Responding to short-term differences in perceived conditions of profitability and variations in business confidence between one place and another, as well as speculative guesses about future market fluctuations, these enormous flows are highly volatile. These developments have been consequential, for the emerging historical structures of neoliberal capitalism embody an enhancement of the social powers of capital, especially finance capital, which can discourage or deter expansionary macro-policies aimed at increasing employment or wage levels. Accordingly, the globalisation of finance has been accompanied by a resurgence of *laissez-faire* fundamentalism since the late 1970s, as neoliberal austerity has largely eclipsed the growth-oriented ideology which originally underpinned the postwar world economy.<sup>46</sup> This disciplinary power has the effect of prioritising the interests

<sup>41</sup> World Trade Organization, *Trading into the Future*, 2nd edn. (Geneva: WTO, 1998); Lori Wallach and Michelle Sforza (1999), *Whose Trade Organization?* (Washington: Public Citizen/Global Trade Watch, 1999).

<sup>42</sup> Peter Dicken, *Global Shift* (New York: Guilford, 1992); John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space* (London: Routledge, 1995); D. Held, A. McGrew, D. Goldblatt, and J. Perraton, *Global Transformations* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999); Robinson and Harris, 'Global Ruling Class'.

<sup>43</sup> Kate Bronfenbrenner, 'We'll Close!: Plant Closings, Plant-Closing Threats, Union Organizing and NAFTA', *Multinational Monitor* (March, 1997), pp. 8–13; and 'Raw Power: Plant-Closing Threats and the Threat to Union Organizing', *Multinational Monitor* (December, 2000), online at: <<http://www.essential.org/monitor/mm2000/00december/power.html>>

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Andrew Ross (ed.), *No Sweat* (London: Verso, 1997); R. Kamel and A. Hoffman (eds.), *The Maquiladora Reader* (Philadelphia, PA: American Friends Service Committee, 1999).

<sup>45</sup> Howard Wachtel, *The Money Mandarins* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1990); Agnew and Corbridge, *Mastering Space*; Held et al., *Global Transformations*.

<sup>46</sup> Stephen Gill and David Law, 'Global Hegemony and the Structural Power of Capital', *International Studies Quarterly*, 33 (1989), pp. 475–99; Gill, *American Hegemony*, ch. 5, and 'Disciplinary Neoliberalism'; Wachtel, *Money Mandarins*; Agnew and Corbridge, *Mastering Space*, ch. 7; Walden Bello, *Dark Victory: The United States, Structural Adjustment, and Global Poverty* (San Francisco, CA: Food First, 1994); Arthur MacEwan, *Neoliberalism or Democracy?* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

of investors, who are as a class effectively able to hold entire states/societies hostage. Moreover, the particular interests of the owning class are represented as if they were the general interests of all: 'since profit is the necessary condition of universal expansion, capitalists appear within capitalist societies as bearers of a universal interest'.<sup>47</sup> In this ideological construction, the social and moral claims of working people and the poor are reduced to the pleadings of 'special interests' which must be resisted in order to secure the conditions of stable accumulation. Indeed this is a central part of the ideological justification for the package of austerity policies which the IMF typically imposes on developing countries experiencing financial crisis – the latter itself being largely a result of systemic forces, especially the globalisation of finance and its attendant exchange rate instabilities.<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps ironically, then, neoliberalism's resurrection of market fundamentalism has been attendant upon the increasing extensity and intensity of transnational relations. Even as people in locations around the globe are increasingly integrated into transnational social relations, neoliberalism seeks to remove these relations from the public sphere – where they might be subjected to norms of democratic governance – and instead subject them to the power of capital as expressed through the discipline of the market.<sup>49</sup> In van der Pijl's apt summary, 'The core of the new concept of control which expressed the restored discipline of capital, neoliberalism, resides in raising micro-economic rationality to the validating criterion for all aspects of social life.'<sup>50</sup>

In general, the neoliberal agenda of integrating and depoliticising the global economy fosters a 'race to the bottom' which enhances capitalist power through intensified market competition and the dull compulsion of the economic. Such an implicit class bias is evident in the WTO's governance of the global trading system. The WTO has refused to link human rights or labour rights protections to participation in the global trading system; its rules forbid discrimination against traded goods based upon how they were produced – outwardly similar goods must be treated similarly regardless of whether they were produced by processes abusive to workers or environment; and the WTO's trade-related investment measures (TRIMs) proscribe performance requirements placed upon foreign direct investment (FDI) and shield transnational corporations (TNCs) from potentially important kinds of host government regulation, such as those requiring linkages with local economy, and thus higher levels of employment, developmental spinoffs, and so on.<sup>51</sup> Taken together, these aspects of WTO governance promote nodes of uneven development linked into globalising production systems. And, in combination with the draconian austerity programmes, public sector retrenchment, openness to foreign investment and export orientation enforced by the IMF upon many of the world's

<sup>47</sup> Adam Przeworski, quoted in Thomas, *Alien Politics*, p. 153.

<sup>48</sup> Bello, *Dark Victory*; Robin Hahnel, *Panic Rules* (Boston, MA: South End, 1999); William Tabb, *The Amoral Elephant: Globalization and the Struggle for Social Justice in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Monthly Review, 2001).

<sup>49</sup> Gill, 'Disciplinary Neoliberalism'; Rupert, *Ideologies of Globalization*, ch. 3; Steger, *Globalism*, pp. 43–80.

<sup>50</sup> Van der Pijl, *Transnational Classes*, p. 129.

<sup>51</sup> Compare: WTO, *Trading*, p. 51 with Wallach and Sforza, *Whose Trade Organization*, ch. 7; WTO, p. 49 with Wallach and Sforza, pp. 15, 22–6; and WTO, p. 35 with Wallach and Sforza, pp. 133, 152.

developing countries, all of this facilitates capital's intensified exploitation of labour and environment through transnational commodity chains.<sup>52</sup>

It is important analytically and politically to note that the world of cheap labour and 'under-pollution' (to paraphrase Lawrence Summers) in which transnational production is organised is a world which is neither race- nor gender-neutral. The great bulk of workers in export processing zones (EPZs) – the most labour-intensive nodes of global production chains – are young women.<sup>53</sup> Their labour may be culturally constructed as cheap insofar as they are presumed to be under the social umbrella of a male (either father or husband) and therefore not requiring a self-sufficiency wage, and insofar as the gender division of labour marks off 'women's work' as 'something that girls and women do "naturally" or "traditionally"' rather than the expression of hard-won, and more highly rewarded, skill – this latter presumptively an attribute of more masculine employments.<sup>54</sup> Further, the austerity programmes of neoliberalism heavily impact women, intensifying the double burden of gendered work as retrenchment of public services puts greater burdens upon households – and therefore feminised domestic labour – for the care of children, the elderly, the sick; even as those same cutbacks impact areas of the gender division of labour, such as education and health care, in which women are concentrated.<sup>55</sup> Economic austerity and a narrowing of options may then channel women toward employment in export industries and EPZs, or into the informal sector. Moreover, Eurocentrism and racism have generated representations of naturalised poverty among peoples of colour in the developing world, attributed to a lack of those things which are presumed to distinguish the more developed (and white) countries – capital, technology, managerial expertise, effective and honest governance, skilled labour, and so forth.<sup>56</sup> Liberalisation of trade with, and investment in, the developing world may then appear as the twenty-first century version of the 'white man's burden'. Bound up with capitalist globalisation, then, are ideologies and relations of gender and race-based domination. Capitalism may not have created these dominance relations, but it has effectively internalised them within the historical structures of capitalist globalisation.

The structures of globalising capitalism generate not only possibilities for domination and exploitation, but also new forms of potential solidarity in resistance to these.<sup>57</sup> These forms of solidarity have in recent decades taken on an increasingly transnational character. For twenty years or more, there has been resistance to the imposition of IMF-mandated neoliberal austerity measures in a number of developing countries, with masses of people protesting against privatisation, dramatically increased costs for basic services, curtailment of subsidies for staple foods, and so

<sup>52</sup> Bello, *Dark Victory*; Joshua Karliner, *The Corporate Planet* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 1997); Hahnel, *Panic Rules*; Tabb, *Amoral Elephant*.

<sup>53</sup> Dicken, *Global Shift*, p. 186; Kamel and Hoffman, *Maquiladora Reader*, pp. 18, 21–2.

<sup>54</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1989), p. 162; see also Jan Pettman, *Worlding Women* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 167–8.

<sup>55</sup> Pettman, *Worlding Women*, p. 168.

<sup>56</sup> Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Stuart Hall, 'The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power', in S. Hall, D. Held, D. Hubert, and K. Thompson (eds.), *Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 184–227.

<sup>57</sup> Rupert, *Ideologies of Globalization*, 'Class Powers and the Politics of Global Governance', and 'Anti-Capitalist Convergence?'

on.<sup>58</sup> Articulating the identities of indigenous peoples, Mexican peasants, and global resisters, Subcommandante Marcos has clearly linked the Zapatista struggle against neoliberalism – inaugurated on the very day the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect (1 January 1994) – to the 500 year-long history of European colonialism and North American imperialism. The Zapatistas denounced neoliberalism as the vehicle for commodification of social life and the imposition of a universal model of development which would result in destruction of alternative ways of life – including their own. Eschewing the conquest of state power, the Zapatistas practiced a complex multi-level politics which involved organising self-determining base communities, resisting the military and ideological power of the Mexican state, coordinating with social movements and civil society groups across Mexico, and transnational networking among autonomous but related nodes of resistance.

Inspired by the diverse and dialogical networks of resistance imagined by the Zapatistas, a variety of social movements and activist-oriented non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – perhaps predominantly but by no means exclusively from the global North<sup>59</sup> – have in recent years coalesced into ‘a movement of movements’ resistant to neoliberal globalisation. Among them may be found a wide variety of groups with overlapping emphases: critics of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and advocates of debt relief for developing countries; groups focused upon global inequality and development; advocates of re-regulation and taxation of global finance capital; groups critical of the heightened power of multinational firms; environmental protection advocates; those critical of the WTO and its agenda of global liberalisation; movements of and for small farmers and landless peasants; women’s groups and lesbian activists; radical and not-so-radical labour advocates; and anti-capitalist groups motivated by articulations of anarchist and socialist ideologies.<sup>60</sup>

Over the last few years, highly visible mass protests involving tens or hundreds of thousands and explicitly targeting capitalist globalisation and neoliberalism have occurred in numerous locations around the world. The World Social Forum of Porto Alegre, Brazil – conceived as a grassroots-oriented and democratic alternative coinciding with the annual meetings of the World Economic Forum – drew ten thousand participants to its inaugural meeting in 2001 and perhaps as many as 70,000 in 2002 and up to 100,000 in 2003. Highlighting the most important factor bringing these various movements and agendas into (at least partial) alignment, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri wrote:

<sup>58</sup> Bello, *Dark Victory*; George Katsiaficas, ‘Seattle was not the Beginning’, in E. Yuen, G. Katsiaficas, and D. Rose (eds.), *The Battle of Seattle* (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2001).

<sup>59</sup> For example, People’s Global Action – a transnational network coordinating localised nodes of resistance to neoliberal globalisation since 1998 – includes many of the best known direct action groups around the world: the Direct Action Network and the Anti-Capitalist Convergence in North America, the KRRS peasant farmers’ movement in India, in Europe Ya Basta (Italy) and Reclaim the Streets (UK), the MST landless peasants’ movement of Brazil, and a broad and variegated network of associated groups on every populated continent: see Rupert, ‘Anti-Capitalist Convergence?’. For further evidence of the broadly transnational scope of this movement of movements, see E. Bircham and J. Charlton (eds.), *Anti-Capitalism: A Guide to the Movement* (London: Bookmarks, 2001), pp. 149–267.

<sup>60</sup> On Anarchism and the global justice movement, see Rupert, ‘Anti-Capitalist Convergence?’

The protests themselves have become global movements, and one of their clearest objectives is the democratization of globalizing processes. This should not be called an anti-globalization movement. It is pro-globalization, or rather, it is an alternative globalization movement – one that seeks to eliminate inequalities between rich and poor and between the powerful and the powerless, and to expand the possibilities of self-determination.<sup>61</sup>

Influential Canadian author-activist Naomi Klein suggests that the movement coalesces around ‘a radical reclaiming of the commons’ – slowing, halting or reversing tendencies toward privatisation and commodification which effectively colonise and consume public space, thereby displacing grassroots processes of democratic deliberation. ‘There is an emerging consensus’, she writes, ‘that building community-based decision-making power – whether through unions, neighborhoods, farms, villages, anarchist collectives or aboriginal self-government – is essential to countering the might of multinational corporations’.<sup>62</sup> Similarly Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke underscore this common thread woven through what they call the New Democracy Movement: ‘the most persistent theme underlying the mobilisation of popular resistance to corporate globalisation is opposition to the systematic assault on democracy and the commons’ which they name as ‘a form of global class warfare’. ‘Developing a new democracy along these lines at local, national and international levels is the only possible antidote to corporate globalisation’.<sup>63</sup> On the broad terrain of formulations such as these – all of which presuppose a view of the world economy as a sphere of social power relations which can and should be reconstructed in more democratic forms – anarchists, socialists, autonomist radicals and activist communities of various kinds have found sufficient common ground to converge for collective acts of resistance. A new kind of social movement was emerging and seemed to be constructing a new political culture, forms of political organisation and activity, which were premised upon transnational solidarity and emergent norms of collective responsibility and reciprocity. This resistance, and the alternative possible worlds which it imagined, were the source of much hope and optimism around the turn of the century.<sup>64</sup>

### Governance and resistance in the neo-imperial moment

While the market-oriented liberal vision continues to animate US world-order policy, it is no longer represented by chief US policymakers to be presumptively natural or spontaneous – that is, voluntary, cooperative and multilateral – but is now

<sup>61</sup> M. Hardt and A. Negri, *New York Times*, 20 July 2001.

<sup>62</sup> Naomi Klein, ‘Reclaiming the Commons’, *New Left Review*, 9 (2001), p. 82; ‘The Vision Thing’, in Yuen, Katsiaficas, and Rose (eds.), *Battle of Seattle*, p. 312; see also *No Logo* (New York: Picador, 1999).

<sup>63</sup> Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke, *Global Showdown* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 2002), pp. 125, 26, 208.

<sup>64</sup> Documents such as *The People’s Hemispheric Agreement* (1998) reflect iterative dialogues among transnational coalitions of NGOs and social movement groups seeking to produce preliminary strategies for reconstruction of transnational economic relations and institutions in more democratic, egalitarian and socially responsible forms: see Rupert, *Ideologies of Globalization*, pp. 83–5; also Barlow and Clarke, *Global Showdown*, chs. 6–10.

portrayed more explicitly as the product of the global assertion of unilateral US power, especially military force. Coercion was never absent from neoliberal capitalism, of course, but to the greatest extent possible the exercise of power underlying this system was hidden or disguised. During recent decades the most significant coercive mechanisms prying open the global South for neoliberal capitalism and (re-)subjecting working people to the discipline of capital were the structural adjustment programmes administered by multilateral international financial institutions as part of a generalised, worldwide roll-back of public sector programmes, regulations and protections – a brutal exercise of power simultaneously mystified and legitimated by the scientificity of neoclassical economics. Now, however, there has been a shift in the balance of coercion/consent at the core of US global policy, with the unilateral and directly coercive elements officially foregrounded in ways which they have not been in recent years. The most hawkish and hard-line elements in the Bush administration (the Cheney-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz axis) have exploited the atmosphere of jingoism and fear in the US following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 to put into effect their long-cherished vision of US global military supremacy, unilateral action, and the pre-emptive use of military force deployed to create a world in which the American model of capitalist democracy is unquestioned.<sup>65</sup> Made public in September 2002, Bush's *National Security Strategy for the United States* clearly and explicitly outlines a long-term vision of US global predominance based upon military power, a world in which the US would face no serious military competitors and tolerate no challenges to its interests and its authority, and in which the US government would feel free to use pre-emptive military strikes against those perceived to be potential emergent challengers or who deviate from the administration's putatively universal model of 'freedom, democracy, and free enterprise'.<sup>66</sup> The Bush administration's rush to war in Iraq may be understood as an expression of this doctrine. And, insofar as the Bush strategy clearly envisions an ongoing series of struggles which are global in their scope, the attack on Iraq may be but the first instance of a policy of self-righteous aggression which is likely to produce serial confrontations with other nations perceived in the White House and the Pentagon as potential 'rogue' states or as possible threats to US interests or 'American values'.

The administration has not, of course, abandoned the longstanding US commitment to the deepening of neoliberal capitalist relations on a global basis. Indeed the Bush doctrine explicitly elevates free trade to the status of 'a moral principle', handed down to us along with liberty and democracy as part of the heritage of Western civilisation, presumed to be universally valid and generally applicable as aspects of 'a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise'.<sup>67</sup> The institutional forms associated with neoliberal capitalism are explicitly integrated into US national security strategy: 'pro-growth legal and regulatory policies to encourage business investment'; 'lower marginal tax rates'; conservative fiscal policies (no small irony here); free trade and international capital

<sup>65</sup> For a fuller account of the Cheney-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz axis and their influence on the neo-imperial turn in US foreign policy, see Rupert, 'The Global Justice Movement in a Neo-Imperial Moment'.

<sup>66</sup> White House, *National Security Strategy for the United States* (Washington, DC, 2002), <[www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/print/nssall.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/print/nssall.html)>

<sup>67</sup> *National Security Strategy*, pp. 13, 1.



flows.<sup>68</sup> Whereas for much of the preceding decade, the core rationale of neoliberalism had been to use (primarily if not exclusively) multilateral and cooperative means in order to separate politics from economics to the greatest extent possible and thus to mystify the workings of power within the global capitalist economy, the new national security strategy directly and explicitly links neoliberal capitalism with American global military dominance. The new strategy thus shifts the balance of coercion and consent significantly toward the more coercive side of power. It is in this sense, I think, that the present conjuncture represents a 'neo-imperial moment' within the historical development of US-led global capitalism. As we are already seeing, this re-emphasis on coercive power may have the effect of rendering the power relations of neoliberal world order (or some of them at any rate) more transparent and more difficult effectively to legitimate.

Anticipating the immanent US attack upon Iraq, in early 2003 political activists around the world planned demonstrations of popular opposition. The most spectacular result was a series of nearly simultaneous protests on 15 February 2003, involving around 6–11 million persons in several hundred cities worldwide.<sup>69</sup> Demonstrators around the world were joined by hundreds of thousands of Americans demonstrating in New York, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Chicago, Seattle, Miami, Detroit and many other US cities. In a number of locations around the world the magnitude of the demonstrations was historically unprecedented, but in their totality they were a breathtaking show of the scope and intensity of popular opposition not just to the war in Iraq, but to the imperial pretensions of American power.

For 2003, 'fighting militarism and promoting peace' was designated as a central theme of the World Social Forum, the annual grassroots activist extravaganza which has become central to the emergent Global Justice Movement. After the Porto Alegre WSF, author-activist George Monbiot suggested a genetic connection between the GJM and the nascent global peace movement:

the anti-war campaign has, in large part, grown out of the global justice movement. This movement has never recognized a distinction between the power of the rich world's governments and their appointed institutions (the IMF, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization) to wage economic warfare and the power of the same governments, working through a different set of institutions (the UN security council, NATO) to send in the Bombers. . . . the impending war has reinforced our determination to tackle the grotesque maldistribution of power which permits a few national governments to assert a global mandate.<sup>70</sup>

As one Indian delegate told the WSF, 'If we are going to struggle for a better world, then our struggle cannot be separated from a struggle against the hegemony of the United States of America'. The distinguished Egyptian scholar Samir Amin was less clinical in tone: 'As long as the aggressive, fascist strategy of the United States is not defeated, an alternative globalization will not be possible'.<sup>71</sup>

To the extent that building relations of solidarity across national boundaries is the *sine qua non* of the Global Justice Movement, the reassertion of American power in

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>69</sup> As reported, for example, by Reuters, 15 February 2003 and Agence France Presse, 16 February 2003.

<sup>70</sup> George Monbiot, 'Stronger than Ever', *The Guardian* (28 January 2003).

<sup>71</sup> Both quotations are from B. Ehrenreich, 'Another World is Possible', *In These Times* (31 January 2003).

the service of US global privilege, the mobilisation of popular jingoism in support of this (re-)militarised imperialism, and the suppression of alternative voices within the US is likely to weaken the GJM in strategically significant ways. If the GJM does in fact need American social movements to democratise the USA as an integral part of the project of global democratisation – the reciprocal responsibility inherent in transnational solidarity – the onset of a neoimperial moment and the powerful reactivation of longstanding and deeply-rooted cultural tendencies toward American exceptionalism and privilege cannot but damage the culture of transnational solidarity which the movement has struggled to construct.

## **Conclusion**

A Gramscian-inflected historical materialism enables an understanding of globalising capitalism, its relations of power and structures of governance, as the product of struggles – at once material and ideological – among concretely situated social agents. As the emergent neoliberal historic bloc has sought to (re)produce its social powers on an increasingly global scale, they have encountered recurrent bouts of more-or-less explicitly political resistance from a variety of social agents (some explicitly class-identified but many others not) who have challenged neoliberal representations and called into question not just the agenda of the neoliberal globalisation, but the legitimacy of the implicitly capitalist social powers underlying it. In the neo-imperial moment, such challenges have readily broadened to encompass opposition to military expansionism by the US and its (relatively few) imperial partners. However, this refocusing of the Global Justice Movement brings with it an important source of tension, for the ideological cement which bound the movement together and enabled it to begin to envision alternative possible worlds was a culture of solidarity, mutual respect and reciprocity which transcended national boundaries and formal citizenship. The GJM had begun, in short, to (re-)construct a transnational common sense and corresponding forms of political organisation and activity. Although it may not have been their explicit intent, the architects of the newest imperialism may have reinvigorated nationalisms – in the form of US popular jingoism and its global mirror-image, anti-Americanism – within transnational common sense, and thereby placed a roadblock directly in the path of the Global Justice Movement and its potentially transformative project. The future meanings of the global justice movement will be determined in large part by struggles over popular common sense in various locales around the world, and whether activists and ‘organic intellectuals’ embedded within those sites are able to articulate globalisation/solidarity in opposition to strong currents of globalisation/nationalism.