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When the whip comes down: Marxism, the Soviet experience, and the nuclear revolution

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Abstract

This article examines the conflict between traditional Marxist attitudes toward war and the problem of the nuclear revolution. It shows how the advent of the nuclear revolution in the 1950s undermined traditional Marxist-Leninist concepts of war, and then goes on to argue that this development must be placed at the centre of contemporary Marxian IR if it is to have explanatory power in the twenty-first century. To make this case directly, it engages with Justin Rosenberg's revival of Trotsky's idea of uneven and combined development and its subsidiary law of 'the whip of external necessity', and argues that the whip can remain salient today only if one accepts the political utility of nuclear war. The impasse created by the nuclear revolution, it concludes, points Marxist IR in the direction of classic Marxist visions of supranationalism and human unity.

Keywords

Uneven and Combined Development; Nuclear Revolution; Leon Trotsky; Nikita Khrushchev; Cold War

Introduction

Over the past decade or so, Justin Rosenberg and other International Relations (IR) theorists have sought to revive Marxism as a structural theory that can explain geopolitical behaviour in both the past and present. Rosenberg argues that Leon Trotsky's idea of uneven and combined development (hereafter UCD) can provide us with a sociological theory that surpasses even structural realism in its ability to conceptualise the international. UCD portrays a more dynamic and convulsive international order than does structural realism, as the relentless imperatives of global capitalism push states into a frenetic and uneven competition that 'Defensive' Realists like Kenneth Waltz cannot readily explain.[1]

A central component of UCD is the geopolitical pressure upon states to survive in a violent international order, which Trotsky called the 'whip of external necessity'. States pursue economic development not only for conventional reasons of wealth and profit, but also because they need it to build modern and powerful military forces to fend off the predation of their enemies. Thus a major part of UCD reasoning allies quite directly with Realist IR, which places state security in a dangerous international environment at the heart of its theorising.[2]

[1] Justin Rosenberg engages closely with Waltz's defensive realism in 'Kenneth Waltz and Leon Trotsky: Anarchy in the mirror of uneven and combined development', *International Politics*, 50:2 (2013), pp. 183–230. More thorough reference to Rosenberg's writings and other work on UCD can be found in Section II. For a version of structural realism that does seek to explain relentless competition in terms of security, see John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001).

[2] On this point, see especially Andrew Davenport, 'Marxism in IR: Condemned to a realist fate?', *European Journal of International Relations*, 19:1 (2013), pp. 27–48.

Yet Rosenberg and other contemporary Marxist scholars have so far not tried to reconcile the 'nuclear revolution' – the advent of thermonuclear bombs and intercontinental missiles, the prospect of omnicidal war it raises, and the effect of this prospect on state behaviour – with the traditional understanding of interstate conflict as Trotsky viewed it a century ago.[3] The kind of war Trotsky and many of his contemporaries regarded as a natural and indeed historically necessary outcome of UCD and the imperatives of the whip now portends catastrophe of possibly existential levels, a problem that threatens UCD's salience in the nuclear age. For if Rosenberg and other UCD theorists accept that its novel dangers mean that a decision to wage nuclear war is too dangerous to ever be politically or morally justified, then they must regard the whip, at least insofar as it applies to nuclear states, as something too risky to wield. If so, then one of UCD's two conceptual foundations and its most important means of explaining violent conflict among major powers must be removed from its praxeology.

Alternatively, if they maintain that the whip continues to be salient with respect to nuclear states, then these scholars must accept that the waging of nuclear war remains politically and morally thinkable.[4] They must accept this condition, because otherwise the conflict and war they foresee culminates only in a politically meaningless nuclear catastrophe. For UCD, as Trotsky conceived of it, to apply today, nuclear powers must be able to fight and win nuclear wars, and, crucially, *the world after such wars must remain in a political condition where uneven and combined development among states can continue on as before*.[5]

This article asks how Marxism has dealt, and can deal, with this problem. How can Marxist conceptions of geopolitics contend with the novel implications of the nuclear revolution? I attempt to answer this question in two ways. First, I provide an historical account of the Soviet Union's engagement with precisely this problem, focusing finally upon Nikita Khrushchev's rejection of the traditional Marxist-Leninist approach to inevitable intra-imperialist war and his turn toward

[3] Marxists in the West have of course criticised the nuclear problem in political idealist terms, but rarely in the analytical and theoretical sense that Rosenberg, and Tolstoy, demand. For larger discussions of Marxist engagements with geopolitics, see Alexander Anievas, *Capital, the State, and War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014); Alexander Anievas, 'Introduction', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 22:1 (2009), pp. 7–8; Alex Callinicos, 'Does capitalism need the state system?', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 20:4 (2007), pp. 533–49; W. B. Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War: Kant, Clausewitz, Marx, Engels and Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 67; Davenport, 'Marxism in IR'; Karel Kara, 'On the Marxist theory of war and peace', *Journal of Peace Research*, 5:1 (1968), pp. 1–27; Bruno Teschke, 'Geopolitics', *Historical Materialism*, 14:1 (2006), pp. 327–35; and Hannes Lacher, 'Making sense of the international system: the promises and pitfalls of contemporary Marxist theories of international relations', in Mark Rupert and Hazel Smith (eds), *Historical Materialism and Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 147–64.

[4] Of course, as Scott Sagan and many others have shown, nuclear war could occur unintentionally, as a result of inadvertence or accident. Indeed, I regard this possibility, at least at present, as the most likely cause of a nuclear war in the contemporary era and a central reason to support radical policies of nuclear war-avoidance. However, the argument here is about the intentional waging of nuclear war – the decision to fight one for perceived ends of national policy. It is this latter kind of decision that serves as the *explanandum* for Trotsky's whip of external necessity and indeed attempts to account for war from many IR perspectives.

[5] As Stalin said to his interlocutor Milovan Djilas in 1945, the nations devastated by the war will recover in fifteen or twenty years, and 'then we'll have another go at it'. Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1962), p. 115. Also see William Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perception During the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 62–5, 82–5.

peaceful coexistence in the late 1950s.[6] Second, I then explore in detail how Rosenberg's neo-Marxist revival of UCD and so his reliance upon the logic of the whip of external necessity runs into the same dilemmas Khrushchev faced. In a conclusion, I suggest, following R. N. Berki, that this dilemma can be overcome if Marxist IR turns away from interstate geopolitics and toward classic Marxist notions of supranationalism.

The argument here speaks to larger questions of concern to all scholars of security studies. On one hand, the close connections between the theorising of Marxist geopolitics with non-Marxist, and particularly Realist theories ought to be of primary interest to scholars interested in materialist/structuralist explanations of the contemporary international; indeed, this is one of Rosenberg's explicit aims as well. Cold War politics and the demise of the Soviet Union created a divide between the two schools of thought that their epistemological similarities do not justify.[7] On the other, my interrogation of UCD in the nuclear age raises the more general question of whether any theory of interstate politics can really be reconciled with the nuclear revolution, a question I deal with in previous, and forthcoming, work.[8]

Marxism, inevitable war, and Khrushchev's nuclear revolution

In the original formation of Marxist thought, international power politics and war were classified as aspects of the superstructure: as effects of the class conflict engendered by economic modes of production, rather than as independent phenomena. As Berki puts it, 'international relations and conflict inhabit a world at a second remove from relations and conflicts that are really significant'.[9] To be sure, Marx, and particularly Engels, analysed the problem of modern war episodically, and indeed Engels paid close attention to it in his attempts to conceive of a military strategy of proletarian revolution. Both of them, moreover, acknowledged that armed conflict seemed to characterise intersocietal relations since the beginning of history, and that it therefore might derive from some political source independent of modern economic relations. But war for them remained secondary to the pressing issue of nineteenth-century capitalist class conflict. It would disappear as a problem after the working-class revolution, the objective to which they naturally devoted their primary political attention.[10]

[6] I do not mean to suggest here that Soviet views on war are the last, or only Marxist word on this topic, but that Moscow's reckoning with the bomb gives us a unique insight into the collision between Marxist conceptions of geopolitics and the nuclear revolution as it played out in the actual practice of international politics. For a defence of this approach, see particularly Adam Humphreys, 'The heuristic application of explanatory theories in international relations', *European Journal of International Relations*, 17:2 (2011), pp. 257–77.

[7] Affinity between the two theories was far more common during the interwar period: see, *inter alia*, Niebuhr Reinhold, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Scribners, 1932) and E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis: 1919–1939* (London: Palgrave, 2016 [orig. pub. 1939]). Also see Jonathan Joseph, *Hegemony: a Realist Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2002) and Rosenberg, 'Kenneth Waltz and Leon Trotsky'.

[8] See Campbell Craig, *Glimmer of a New Leviathan: Total War in the Realism of Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and Waltz* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); and Craig, 'International Relations theory and the nuclear revolution' (work in progress).

[9] R. N. Berki, 'On Marxian thought and the problem of international relations', *World Politics*, 24:1 (1971), p. 82. Also see Davenport, 'Marxism in IR', pp. 28–9; Bernard Semmel, *Marxism and the Science of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 1; Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War*, p. 69; Margot Light, *The Soviet Theory of International Relations* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1988), pp. 210–12; Benno Teschke, 'Marxism', in Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal (eds), *Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 163–87.

[10] Berki, 'On Marxian thought and the problem of international relations', pp. 84–5; Callinicos, 'Does capitalism need the state system?'; Alan Gilbert, 'Marx on internationalism and war', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 7:4 (1978), pp. 346–69; Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War*, pp. 68, 73–4.

As several writers have suggested, Marx and Engels were surely influenced by the environment in which they wrote, a Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century that was characterised above all by apparent great-power stability – there had been no major war since Napoleon – and the stark inequalities and working-class turmoil in the emerging capitalist states. For them, the dominant story of their time was severe industrial exploitation in Europe (and the United States) and the rise of domestic political movements in response. The international scene was less convulsive. That, according to this narrative, was why they were notoriously unable to anticipate the decisions by working-class parties across Europe to support their nations' march to war in the summer of 1914.[11]

There is more to that story, however. Engels discerned that major war could serve as an agent of progressive change, which was how he regarded the French revolution and Napoleonic wars. As the conservative diplomats at Vienna feared, international turmoil could foment domestic revolution, just as internal crises could trigger war. Marx and Engels agreed that certain kinds of wars, especially those fought for the achievement of bourgeois national independence from feudal imperial rule, were certainly on the right side of history.[12]

However, these kind of domestic political crises and regional wars were not triggering the general political upheaval both men wished to see.[13] As W. B. Gallie put it, perhaps only major war among the leading capitalist states in Europe would provide 'the opportunity, or act as the catalyst for, an effective revolutionary uprising'.[14] This led to a well-known intra-Marxist debate during the early twentieth century, but for Russian revolutionaries operating during the First World War, the answer was obvious. War was the encompassing condition of European politics, and it was war that would clear the way for revolutionary action.[15]

The two dominant figures of the Bolshevik revolution, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, had no doubts about this. Trotsky's account of the Russian revolution, and his role in it, states simply that the Great War created the necessary conditions for Bolshevik victory in 1917. The 'entire course of the revolution', he argued in *The Lessons of October,* would have been 'altogether different, if at the moment of revolution there had not been in the country a broken and discontented army of many millions'.[16]

Moreover, Trotsky's more academic consideration of international politics regarded great-power conflict as an agent of progressive change, something he believed was taking place at that moment. His idea of uneven and combined development regarded the unbalanced competition among more and less developed states as a particularly volatile feature of international capitalism. Central to this argument was the whip of external necessity, the pressure upon states to maximise their wealth in order to develop the technologies and armies required to defend themselves against more modern

[11] Gilbert, 'Marx on internationalism and war'; Berki, 'On Marxian thought and the problem of international relations', p. 89.

[12] Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War*, pp. 90–2; Semmel, *Marxism and the Science of War*, p. 6; Sigmund Neumann and Mark von Hagen, 'Engels and Marx on revolution, war and the army in society', in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 264.

[13] Neumann and von Hagen, 'Engels and Marx on revolution', pp. 268, 272–8.

[14] Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War*, p. 90; Anievas, *Capital, the State, and War*, pp. 41–2.

[15] Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War*, p. 69; Neumann and von Hagen, 'Engels and Marx on revolution', p. 269; Semmel, *Marxism and the Science of War*, pp. 13, 153–6.

[16] Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution, Volume I: The Overthrow of Tsarism* (New York: Pathfinder, 1980), p. 28.

rivals. The whip of external necessity was an essential part of UCD because it explained the urgency with which governments sought to modernise, and their frequent focus upon, as Baruch Knei-Paz puts it, 'economic-military' rather than 'economic-social' development.[17] Trotsky foresaw a world in which developed states would be in incessant competition at the international level, while their working classes simultaneously worked for revolution domestically. War was the 'inevitable' outcome of a hyper-competitive international capitalism, and it would fittingly prove the catalyst of its demise.

It was this latter insight that led Trotsky to endorse the Bolshevik project to seize power and establish a Soviet state immediately in October 1917, even though the working class of Russia was miniscule and there appeared to be no corresponding revolutions erupting elsewhere in Europe. As Trotsky stresses in his history of the revolution, had Lenin not seized the opportunity to grab power in the autumn of 1917, the revolutionary cause in Russia would have ebbed away and then been crushed by imperialist forces. Trotsky oversaw the creation of the Red Army and worked tirelessly for the survival of the new Soviet regime because he believed that only as a functioning and defensible state could the USSR act as a base to export revolution throughout postwar industrial Europe on a permanent basis. The spreading of revolution to the rest of the industrialised world, in turn, would be necessary if the Soviet state were to survive over the long term.[18]

Lenin, if anything, placed war even more centrally within his political project than Trotsky. It was his view, expressed before and after the revolution, that the imperialist stage of capitalism, with its frantic competition for territory, resources, and markets, made interstate war inevitable. Indeed, he called the period of late capitalism (as he thought it would be) the 'epoch of wars and revolutions'. As Margot Light and Bernard Semmel show, Lenin believed that three kinds of wars would define this epoch. Wars among the imperialist states were the 'locomotive of history', the international events that would play a decisive part in determining when and where revolutions occurred. Wars of national liberation, bourgeois or socialist, took place on the domestic level, and reflected the dialectical advance of political history. Finally, there were the wars that imperialist states would wage against socialist ones. By exporting revolution throughout Europe and North America the new USSR would give the capitalists further reason to attack it, and the new socialist state was far from being able to defend itself against such an assault.[19]

Lenin, therefore, regarded war and revolution as inexorable outcomes of the contemporary order no less, and probably more, than did Trotsky. He believed that intra-imperialist war was inevitable, and that proletarian victory over the bourgeois state was 'impossible' without revolution. 'True Marxism', Lenin wrote, 'was based on violence'.[20] Socialism in one country was not a policy of coexisting forever peacefully with the capitalists, but one of coping with the whip until the global revolution began.[21]

[17] Baruch Knei-Paz, *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 89.

[18] On this point, see especially Ian Thatcher, 'Uneven and combined development', *Revolutionary Russia*, 4:2 (1991), pp. 246–9.

[19] Light, *The Soviet Theory of International Relations*, pp. 212–14; Semmel, *Marxism and the Science of War*, p. 7. Also see Kara, 'On the Marxist theory of war and peace', p. 5

[20] Quoted in Semmel, *Marxism and the Science of War*, p. 16. Also see Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War*, p. 96, and Kara, 'On the Marxist theory of war and peace', p. 15.

[21] Claims that Lenin foresaw, and advocated, a 'peaceful coexistence' with the West are thus overdrawn. Lenin spoke about coexistence, but only as a temporary expedient, in opposition to demands for immediate

The process of justifying, or rationalising, this preference for state survival over spreading proletarian revolution reached a new level with Lenin's successor Stalin. Though he had, of course, repudiated Trotsky, writing him out of Soviet history and eventually ordering his assassination in Mexico, he adopted Trotsky's idea of the whip of external necessity *in toto*. Stalin's view, in hindsight probably an accurate one, was that the USSR had to industrialise rapidly in the 1930s lest it be crushed in the next intra-imperialist war.[22] That meant harnessing national resources toward the single objective of developing modern armed forces, avoiding blatant support of foreign revolutionary movements for fear of provoking the capitalists, and, for Stalin's own sociopathic purposes, destroying every last remnant of internal resistance to either his industrialisation campaign or his own position as dictator of the USSR. Lenin's decision to privilege socialism in one country over the advancement of world revolution had been driven by his belief that the inevitability of imperialist war threatened the Soviet experiment and hence socialism; Stalin took this logic to its extreme in the face of the Nazi threat.

The prospect of atomic war led many in the West to demand an alternative to an interstate order that seemed inexorably to lead to a nuclear Third World War, and this problem would soon be discussed in Moscow, as we shall see. For Stalin, however, nothing had really changed. In 1947 he denounced talk of peaceful coexistence, which could not withstand capitalist aggression.[23] And not long before his death, Stalin wrote about the 'peace movement' and the arguments of the Comintern intellectual Eugen Varga, who suggested that intra-capitalist war was no longer certain. It was of course good, 'even very good', that movements in the West were demanding peace and threatening to remove 'warmongering' governments. But 'this will not suffice to remove the unavoidability of war between the capitalist countries', Stalin said. 'To eliminate the unavoidablility of war, it is necessary to destroy imperialism.'[24] Here, in a few words, is an apt summary of the Soviet/Marxist attitude toward war and power politics up to 1953.[25]

The three dominant figures of early Soviet politics – Trotsky, Lenin, and Stalin – all regarded major war as an inevitable, and the central, feature of international relations, and so they naturally chose to incorporate it fully into their approach toward socialism at home and policy abroad. The threat of imperialist war and the ensuing extinguishing of the Soviet state pushed the USSR's leaders steadily toward survivalist policies that shelved the imperative of fomenting violent revolution in the industrialised world. But this did not mean, at all, that they had abandoned Marxist interpretations of world politics altogether. Their belief in inevitable intra-imperialist war and the whip of external necessity merely intensified Lenin's and Stalin's drive to create a defensible Soviet state, from which it might

revolution: he did not believe that the ultimate victory over capitalism could come about peacefully. See Kara, 'On the Marxist theory of war and peace', p. 20; Light, *The Soviet Theory of International Relations*, p. 31; also Geoffrey Roberts, *Molotov: Stalin's Cold Warrior* (Sterling, VA: Potomac Books, 2011). I am grateful to Alex Anievas for his comments on this matter.

[22] Light, *The Soviet Theory of International Relations*, pp. 32–3, 215.

[23] *Ibid*., p. 37.

[24] Quoted in Kara, 'On the Marxist theory of war and peace', fn. 38; also see Semmel, *Marxism and the Science of War*, p. 273; Kara, 'On the Marxist theory of war and peace', pp. 19–20; and Light, *The Soviet Theory of International Relations*, pp. 15, 215–16.

[25] Stalin originally made this statement in part one of *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR* (Moscow: International, 1952). Karel Kara, writing from an official (Brezhnev-era) Soviet Bloc perspective, pointed out in 'On the Marxist theory of war and peace' (p. 21) that Stalin 'failed to appreciate the new situation as it had evolved in the post-war period, especially due to the invention of thermonuclear weapons and the changing situation in the world'.

someday become possible to resurrect a project of global revolution. In Stalin's case, these assumptions surely underlay his unhesitating rejection of American overtures after the war to build a new world order, and his continuing belief that a third world war was inevitable even in age of atomic bombs.

Stalin's death in early 1953 preceded by only a few months the Soviet test of a thermonuclear device, matching the US effort of a year earlier. The bombs that both superpowers had now built were capable of unleashing a destructive blast perhaps a thousand times as powerful as the ones that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Both nations began working to mass-produce these weapons, and to develop long-range missiles that could deliver them to the other side in a matter of hours. This marked the advent of the nuclear revolution, whereby a total war (like the Second World War), fought with the most destructive weapons at each belligerent's disposal, could lead to the social and political extinction of all nations fighting it and threaten the existence of the human race.[26]

Even before Stalin's death, Georgi Malenkov, who would for a time emerge as the leading contender to replace him, argued that the advent of thermonuclear weapons meant that the competition between the two Cold War powers would have to become a peaceful one, and that this was a competition the USSR could win. This issue constituted one of the main issues of contention between Malenkov and his apparent chief rival for power, the long-time foreign minister Vlachyslav Molotov. In a 1955 debate Molotov earthily took Malenkov to task for his revisionism, declaring that 'Marx foretold the end of capitalism, so anyone who said that nuclear war threatened the end of civilisation didn't have his head on his shoulders, but at the other end of the body'.[27] Molotov was only iterating the core assumption of Soviet policy since Trotsky: the end of capitalism would come through war, so to say that war was no longer possible was to reject Marx.[28]

Khrushchev, early in the succession struggle, sided with Molotov: but this was only for tactical reasons. As Malenkov's position receded, Khrushchev switched sides and began to attack Molotov on this very point. The veteran foreign minister's reply, as historian David Holloway shows, confirms for us his traditional position:

> If imperialism and socialism could keep to themselves, [argued Molotov] then 'pray, what are we living for?' It was an illusion to think that communism could be reached by way of peaceful coexistence: 'We ought to preserve peace, but if we, besides fighting for peace and *delaying* war, if we also believe that it is possible to get to communism that way, than that is deception from the point of view of Marxism, self-deception, and deception of the people.'[29]

Not long after his rise to the top of the Kremlin in early 1955, Khrushchev decided that Molotov's thinking had become obsolete: nuclear weapons had invalidated the traditional Soviet view of interstate war. At the twentieth party congress in the summer of 1956, he announced his decision. The advent of thermonuclear weaponry had put an end to the presumption that violent conflict with

[26] On the nuclear revolution, see Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Daniel Deudney, 'Nuclear weapons and the waning of the *Real*-state', *Daedalus*, 124:2 (1995), pp. 209–31; and Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth* (New York: Knopf, 1982).

[27] Quoted in William Taubman, *Khrushchev: the Man and his Era* (New York: Norton, 2004), p. 266.

[28] Margot Light summarises Molotov's view: peace allows the building of socialism, but 'it must also delay international revolution. If war exposes and aggravates the endemic conflict within bourgeois society … it is only logical to suppose that peace must delay this process which promotes the speedier establishment of socialism'. Light, *The Soviet Theory of International Relations*, pp. 39–40. For a contrasting view of Molotov, see Roberts, *Molotov: Stalin's Cold Warrior*.

[29] Quoted in David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 336.

the capitalist world was inevitable. Now, the policy of the Soviet Union and the communist world at large must be one of 'peaceful coexistence', whereby the two camps would eschew direct conflict and learn to live with another indefinitely. It was that, Khrushchev plainly said, 'or the most destructive war in history. There is no third way.'[30] This new order, as he spelled out at the congress and in later declarations, would require greater cooperation between the two sides, the formal rejection of war as a suitable means of resolving international conflict, and the strengthening of the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of all nations.

Peaceful coexistence represented a thorough renunciation of the core Soviet approach to war and conflict. Not only was the inevitability of war, or at least war between the two Cold War superpowers, ruled out; so was the imperative of actively fomenting violent revolution in the industrial West – there was no other way to interpret Khrushchev's emphasis upon sovereignty and non-interference.[31] More orthodox communist regimes, notably the People's Republic of China, regarded peaceful coexistence as little more than 'selling out to the capitalists', as Margot Light has put it.[32] Molotov's earlier criticisms remained on target: if coexisting with the West was now the pre-eminent objective, then what really was the USSR's purpose? Almost immediately, Khrushchev's position was denounced as 'revisionism' not only by Marxists in China and elsewhere, but also by Soviet military and political critics of Khrushchev (who would later employ this charge when deposing him in 1964).[33]

Khrushchev answered this by insisting that the victory of socialism would now come by means of non-military competition and turning the attention of Soviet foreign policy toward the 'Third World'. The USSR would win its struggle with the West by outperforming it in peaceful pursuits, such as technological innovation and providing a decent material life for the masses. This is what Khrushchev meant when he told several Western diplomats that 'We will bury you' in November of that year. Moreover, insofar as the two superpowers would continue to compete aggressively, this would now take place in the decolonising world, where, Khrushchev reckoned, the Soviet Union could spread a socialist vision to peoples inclined toward anti-Western politics. The abolition of capitalism, wrote Kara, would come about 'not as a result of war with the socialist countries but as a result of the maturing of changes that are an objective necessity with the capitalist countries'.[34] As Light notes, claims such as this, clearly at odds with previous Soviet policy, represented 'an act of theoretical cap-doffing to an outdated tenet which cannot be explicitly abandoned'.[35]

The nuclear revolution removed systemic war from the Soviet programme, and Khrushchev's recognition of this reality, which was not predetermined, was one of the most important political

[30] Quoted in Light, *The Soviet Theory of International Relations*, pp. 46–7.
[31] See Kara, 'On the Marxist theory of war and peace', fn. 34.
[32] Light, *The Soviet Theory of International Relations*, p. 49.
[33] See Semmel, *Marxism and the Science of War*, pp 30–3; Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 64–7. The American response to the nuclear revolution was eerily similar to the Soviet one. The US president Dwight Eisenhower reached identical conclusions to those of Khrushchev about the absurdity of major war at precisely the same time, and adopted a (secret) policy of war avoidance just as Khrushchev did. This policy, eventually adopted by his successor John F. Kennedy, was later denounced by US military and political hard-liners for their own political and economic advancement – just as was the case in the USSR. See Semmel, *Marxism and the Science of War*;Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America's Cold War: the Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), ch. 5.
[34] Kara, 'On the Marxist theory of war and peace', p. 22.
[35] Light, *The Soviet Theory of International Relations*, p. 68.

decisions of the twentieth century. But, as Timothy Naftali and Aleksandr Fursenko show, he took a second, and equally important lesson from it as well.

Nuclear weapons threaten absolute destruction, but by that very fact they can provide for a very effective form of defence. By threatening nuclear retaliation, any state, once it has attained the bomb, can deter an attack on itself relatively easily, and it can do so without having to spend enormous sums, deploy large standing armies, or keep up with the most advanced technologies, as the case of China today shows.[36] For decades, the Soviet Union had faced an international environment of danger and, at times, the real possibility of national extinction. Nuclear deterrence gave Khrushchev a means of solving this problem. In the late 1950s, following on from the implications of his peaceful coexistence announcement, Khrushchev declared that it was precisely this new kind of security that would permit the USSR to focus upon a new consumer economy, technological innovation, and spreading the Soviet model to the third world.[37] Defence could be assured by deploying a small retaliatory arsenal, freeing up billions of roubles to pursue 'economic-social' development.[38]

Khrushchev's policies during the 1950s provide us with a vivid example of the collision between a conventional Marxist doctrine undergirded by the whip of external necessity and the spectre of thermonuclear war. Not only did he conclude that nuclear war had rendered the idea of inevitable war obsolete; he also envisioned, in his declaration of peaceful coexistence, a different kind of international order in which the whip of external necessity would be eclipsed by economic competition in a geopolitically stable realm. Trotsky, Lenin, and Stalin all believed that the whip of external necessity still obtained, and so an ongoing and convulsive interstate order in which war would someday occur. Khrushchev showed that it was possible for a Marxist to conclude otherwise.

Uneven and combined development and the nuclear dilemma

The nuclear revolution persuaded Khrushchev that war must no longer be inevitable and that the unique threat of nuclear destruction necessitated a new Marxist conception of international politics. In this second section, I argue that the implications of this insight are fundamental and must be accounted for in any contemporary Marxian understanding of the international. To make this case specifically, I summarise Justin Rosenberg's writings about uneven and combined development (UCD), and show how the whip of external necessity, upon which Trotsky's conception of UCD relies, is transformed by the nuclear problem. I then conclude, following in particular an important 1971 article by Berki, that this transformation forces a revival of classic Marxist notions of supranational human unity.

[36] On this point, see especially Kenneth Waltz, 'Nuclear myths and political realities', *American Political Science Review*, 84:3 (1990), pp. 731–45.

[37] See Timothy Naftali and Aleksandr Fursenko, *Khrushchev's Cold War* (New York: Norton, 2006), pp. 243–8; also see Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), ch. 2.

[38] Attaining a bomb initially, of course, can be very expensive, especially for poor states. But once a nation goes nuclear, its weapons can provide it with a relatively effective and inexpensive form of defence, should it choose to rely upon a basic retaliatory arsenal, because it need not race to keep up with its rivals as pre-nuclear great powers did. This fact is precisely what led Khrushchev to favour a basic arsenal in the late 1950s, and Chinese leaders to do the same since the 1960s. For a thorough analysis, see Nuno Monteiro and Alexandre Debs, *Nuclear Politics: the Strategic Causes of Proliferation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Rosenberg has proposed, in several recent and path-breaking writings, that Trotsky's idea of UCD can provide us with both a clear means of explaining epochal events in modern international history and a theory of international politics superior to that of the Structural Realist theory of interstate anarchy.[39] Let us summarise the main arguments of UCD as Trotsky, and Rosenberg, describe it. Conflict among societies is characterised by volatile competition for the resources necessary for development. It is not a conflict among undifferentiated and autonomous states, however, because at any moment in history there will always be some societies that are more advanced than others, and they pursue their wealth and resources in a system in which their economies are intertwined, to a greater or lesser degree, with one another. The picture of the international drawn by UCD is more integrative and dynamic than the one drawn by structural realists. It moves forward.

UCD relies upon two 'laws', ontologically akin to Realist laws like the Balance of Power. The first is the advantage of historical backwardness. This is simply the ability of less developed societies to appropriate advanced technologies and economic strategies rather than spending decades developing them themselves, allowing them to advance far more rapidly than would have been possible in isolation. 'Almost without highways', Trotsky wrote, 'Russia was compelled to build railroads', which it did overnight by borrowing technologies and expertise from the West.[40]

The word 'compelled' gives us a flavour of the second law, which of course is the whip of external necessity – the pressure upon states to make technological leaps in order to contend with their rivals, and therefore to acquire the economic means to do so. This policy is captured by Knei-Paz's notion of 'economic-military' development: states prioritise military power and external security over domestic social welfare in their use of wealth and modern technologies. Trotsky emphasises that the whip applies most urgently to weaker states. The pressure upon them to develop lest they fall prey to more powerful ones pushes them to rush toward capitalism, a process that both integrates the whip with the advantage of historical backwardness, as his comment on 'railroads' indicates, and so intensifies the larger dynamic of UCD. Rosenberg also stresses this point: for him, the whip simply 'compels weaker societies to adapt in order to survive'.[41]

But the larger relevance of the whip of external necessity speaks to the problem of violent geopolitical competition in general: the fact that states *qua* states contend with one another in an incessantly dangerous environment, where a failure to keep up with technological advancements and to have enough

[39] See particularly Justin Rosenberg, 'Why is there no international historical sociology?', *European Journal of International Relations*, 12:3 (2006), pp. 307–40 and Rosenberg, 'Kenneth Waltz and Leon Trotsky'. Also see his 'The philosophical premises of uneven and combined development', *Review of International Studies*, 39:3 (2013), pp. 569–97; Neil Davidson, 'Putting the nation back into "the international"', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 22:1 (2009), pp. 9–28; Neil Davidson, 'Uneven and combined development: Modernity, modernism, revolution', *revolutionary reflections*, 21 (3 February 2017), available at: {https://rs21.org.uk/2017/02/03/revolutionary-reflections-uneven-and-combined-development-modernity-modernism-revolution-1-the-classic-forms-of-uneven-and-combined-development/}; Jamie Allinson and Alexander Anievas, 'The uses and misuses of uneven and combined development: an anatomy of a concept', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 22:1 (2009), pp. 47–67; and Thatcher, 'Uneven and combined development'.

[40] On historical backwardness, see Thatcher, 'Uneven and combined development'; Davidson, 'Putting the nation back into "the international"'; Rosenberg, 'Why is there no international historical sociology?', p. 325; Rosenberg, 'Kenneth Waltz and Leon Trotsky', pp. 200–3; Benjamin Selwyn, 'Trotsky, Gerschenkron, and the political economy of late capitalist development', *Economy and Society*, 40:3 (2011), pp. 421–50; and Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

[41] Rosenberg, 'The philosophical premises of uneven and combined development', p. 585.

funds to build a large military invites violent defeat at the hands of a more powerful adversary.[42] To put it another way: obey the whip or become relatively weaker, with all that implied in the twentieth century. Trotsky sees this pressure as a state's 'fierce struggle for existence'; Jamie Allinson describes it simply as 'the need to survive in a competitive international system'.[43] As Alexander Anievas shows, this imperative affected powerful countries as well as weaker ones during the first forty years of the twentieth century;[44] after the Second World War, to take another example, the Soviet Union had just defeated Nazi Germany and occupied much of Europe, but its frantic race to develop the atomic bomb and match US capabilities during the early Cold War provides us with a textbook example of the whip at work.[45]

The interplay of the privilege of historical backwardness and the whip of external necessity, coming under the larger structural dynamic of UCD, gives both Trotsky and Rosenberg a powerful means of explaining the origins of the two most important events of the early twentieth century: the Russian revolution and the First World War. According to Trotsky, the startlingly rapid Russian development into a capitalist state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, driven in part by frantic fear of a rising Germany, but also by Russia's defeat at the hands of Japan in 1905, established a small proletariat in major cities without any corresponding rise of a middle-class bourgeoisie or any spread of modernity whatsoever to the vast Russian countryside. This gave disproportionate political power to a radical working class and Marxist intelligentsia, particularly (as we have seen) at a time of devastating war and the moral bankruptcy of the Russian ruling class. Historical backwardness and geopolitical pressure, vivid and violent, weaved together seamlessly.[46]

In a recent article, Rosenberg puts forward a preliminary means of explaining the origins of the First World War along similar lines. For him, the particular circumstances of German development in a context of European UCD is crucial: Germany's relatively late turn to industrial capitalism created internal political divisions long smoothed over in competitors like Britain and France, who were able to exploit their early advanced economic power to establish far-flung overseas empires. But its belated industrialisation also allowed Germany to take advantage of historical backwardness, thereby hastening its military development in the late nineteenth century. A politically immature Germany behind in the race for colonies but brimming with a modern industrial economy and a technologically advanced military was primed to demand an overturning of the European status quo.[47]

In both cases geopolitical pressure, as it was conventionally and universally understood, plays a crucial role in the larger explanatory power of UCD. Neither analysis makes sense without incorporating the problem of major war, and the vivid spectre of national defeat it raised.[48] The whip of external necessity is about obtaining the economic and technological means of waging major

[42] Rosenberg, 'Kenneth Waltz and Leon Trotsky', pp. 195–6, 199; Knei-Paz, *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky*, pp. 90–4; Davidson, 'Uneven and combined development'.
[43] James Allinson, 'The Social Origins of Alliances: Uneven and Combined Development and the Case of Jordan 1955–57' (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2012), p. 61.
[44] Anievas, *Capital, the State, and War*.
[45] See Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb* and Campbell Craig and Sergey Radchenko, *The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), ch. 6.
[46] Thatcher, 'Uneven and combined development', pp. 238–42; Rosenberg, 'The philosophical premises of uneven and combined development', pp. 587–92; Allinson, 'The Social Origins of Alliances', pp. 62–3.
[47] Rosenberg, 'Kenneth Waltz and Leon Trotsky', pp. 205–24.
[48] Rosenberg, 'The philosophical premises of uneven and combined development', pp. 593–4.

war, rather than leaving oneself outgunned and open to defeat. It is this core insight that must be stressed when asking how it is affected by the nuclear revolution.

We have suggested that the nuclear revolution fundamentally transforms attitudes about major war, and so therefore the very meaning of 'geopolitical pressure'. Let us elaborate upon this claim and describe its effects upon contemporary international relations. Khrushchev concluded in the 1950s and 1960s that nuclear weapons do two things. First, he came to believe that a major war between the two superpowers would be a catastrophic disaster, unwinnable in any politically meaningful sense. The avoidance of great-power war became his overriding concern. Second, he concluded that even a small Soviet arsenal would provide his state with an effective and relatively inexpensive means of national protection. The United States, or any other state, would never deliberately launch a major war to threaten Soviet existence: the costs of doing so would be far greater than any benefits.[49]

Today, the nuclear revolution can wield conservative effects upon the foreign policies of major powers in precisely the same ways. Most obvious, industrialised, advanced states can either defend themselves by developing nuclear arsenals, or by allying themselves to nations that have done so: in either event they count on the existential danger of nuclear war to protect them.[50] Thus the problem of national security that lies at the centre of the whip of external necessity imperative can be dealt with without having to devote large amounts of wealth to military spending or racing to keep up with the latest technologies, as has been seen for decades in Europe, but is also now the case with China, which overcame its 'backwardness' quite readily by building a nuclear arsenal in the 1960s, and continues to spend comparatively little on its military.[51] All states, and particularly those with nuclear arsenals and their allies, possess a common and overriding interest to avoid major conflict and nuclear war.

What is more, because large industrial states no longer have to frantically prepare for major war, they are more easily able to concentrate upon 'economic-social' rather than 'economic-military' development, to focus upon development and innovation as Khrushchev hoped to do in the late

[49] For broader arguments about these effects throughout the Cold War, see Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution* and Campbell Craig, 'The nuclear revolution: a product of the Cold War, or something more?', in Richard Immerman and Petra Goedde (eds), *Oxford Handbook on the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 360–75. Whether the spectre of nuclear destruction will always deter states from war remains a crucial question, even for scholars who otherwise basically agree with the logic of the nuclear revolution. On this point, see especially Nick Ritchie, 'Valuing and devaluing nuclear weapons', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 34:1 (2013), pp. 146–73. On the unusual state of contemporary scholarship about this problem, see Benoit Pelopidas, 'Nuclear weapons scholarship as a case of self-censorship in security studies', *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 1:4 (2016), pp. 326–36.

[50] On this point, see Campbell Craig, 'American power preponderance and the nuclear revolution', *Review of International Studies*, 35:1 (2009), pp. 27–44; Nuno Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); and Monteiro and Simone Paci, 'Sharing the Burden: Unipolarity, Nuclear Weapons, and World Government', unpublished manuscript. Whether 'extended deterrence' reliably provides security to non-nuclear states allied to nuclear powers is a long-standing question; see, for example, Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution*, chs 2–5. The point here is that states such as Germany, Japan, South Korea, and many others have chosen to rely on it rather than racing to build modern weaponry as the whip of external necessity would predict.

[51] See Avery Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security in the 21st Century: China, Britain, France and the Enduring Legacy of the Nuclear Revolution* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Charles Glaser and Steve Fetter, 'Should the United States reject MAD? Damage limitation and U.S. nuclear strategy toward China', *International Security*, 41:1 (2016), pp. 49–98.

1950s.[52] This permits such states, of which contemporary China is again the most obvious example, to pay far less attention to the military advancement of its rivals than major powers did in previous eras, and to zero in on domestic economic growth. During the past three decades, China has not followed the Soviet model of the postwar era, racing to match US power. Instead, it has accepted US preponderance and prioritised economic growth, in the belief that its basic nuclear arsenal will provide it with security irrespective of the US lead.[53] China may still call itself a communist country, but the last thing it wants is international convulsion, as this would threaten both its newfound wealth and its physical existence.

Thus, if the nuclear revolution and its effects on international politics are accepted as outlined above, it undermines or perverts every important element of Trotsky's conception of the whip of external necessity. Nuclear weapons give major powers easy security and radically increase their aversion to major war. They therefore permit them to concentrate on social economic development rather than frantic military and technological competition; they incline them to suppress violent or convulsive change and support a conservative, institutional international order; and if a major war happens anyway it is now an irredeemable catastrophe rather than a normal event after which politics, and so the process of UCD, continue as usual.

Of course, the foregoing claims about the transformative effects of the nuclear revolution are not universally accepted.[54] Nuclear strategists, particularly in the United States, argue that nuclear war remains politically sensible under certain conditions and that states have considered, and will continue to consider, waging it for rational political ends. This is a position generally associated with the right wing in the US, but if the whip as Trotsky characterised it is to remain salient with respect to geopolitical competition among the great powers today, its proponents must be prepared to make similar arguments. Trotsky was clear that the kind of war UCD foretold resulted not from accident or randomness but from the conventional material calculus facing states in his time: they prepare for, and fight, wars to prevail in their 'fierce struggle for existence'. If this same kind of struggle continues to obtain despite the nuclear revolution, as the strategists argue, then UCD theorists must accept as well that states continue to have reason to wage nuclear war, and that they will do so for the same reasons that states fought in Trotsky's day.[55]

[52] Again, this argument applies primarily to large states which have a long-standing nuclear infrastructure; maintaining a basic deterrent for them is relatively inexpensive, compared to the constant conventional arms racing and deployment of large standing armies which many European states fearful of the whip spent enormous proportions of their budgets on before 1945. For less developed states like Pakistan, North Korea, or Iran, the initial acquisition of the bomb is very expensive indeed.

[53] Craig, 'American power preponderance and the nuclear revolution'; Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics*; Fiona Cunningham and M. Taylor Fravel, 'Assuring assured retaliation: China's nuclear posture and U.S.-China strategic stability', *International Security*, 40:2 (2015), pp. 7–50.

[54] For a thorough repudiation of them, see Keir Lieber and Daryl Press, *The Myth of the Nuclear Revolution*, forthcoming.

[55] Other recent work on nuclear strategy includes Keir Lieber and Daryl Press, 'The end of MAD? The nuclear dimension of US primacy', *International Security*, 30:4 (2006), pp. 7–44; Keir Lieber and Daryl Press, 'The new era of nuclear weapons, deterrence and conflict', *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, 7:1 (2013), pp. 3–12; Matthew Kroenig, 'Nuclear superiority and the balance of resolve: Explaining nuclear crisis outcomes', *International Organization*, 67:1 (2013), pp. 141–71; Matthew Kroenig, 'Facing reality: Getting NATO ready for a new Cold War', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 57:1 (2015), pp. 49–70; Austin Long and Brendan Rittenhouse-Green, 'Stalking the secure second strike: Intelligence, counterforce, and nuclear strategy', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 38:1–2 (2015), pp. 38–73.

This kind of argumentation is not normally associated with Marxist IR, to say the least, but if it wishes to maintain that the whip of external necessity continues to shape great power geopolitics, it cannot reject, or ignore it. If UCD theorists agree that nuclear weaponry makes major war among large nuclear powers unthinkable, and deterrence easy for them to sustain, the whip of external necessity simply cannot explain this kind of politics in the way Trotsky, and Rosenberg, want it to do. If they want therefore to reject these implications of the nuclear revolution, they must maintain that nuclear war remains politically meaningful. They could concede that even though nuclear war may no longer be politically meaningful, it could still happen: but this move would simply avoid the problem, by putting to one side Trotsky's core assumption that war occurs because states deliberately resort to it as a means of survival, as well as his view that such a war is incorporated within a progressive political process.

UCD theorising claims that historical backwardness and the whip of external necessity explains international conflict among major states in a capitalist world better than any other structural theory. Today, the war that would ensue from such conflict would be fought among states that possess nuclear weapons. The implications of that must be confronted if UCD theorising is to apply in the contemporary era.

Back to basics: the supranational third way

Rosenberg revived the notion of UCD as a means of contending with Structural Realism, the prevailing theory of the international in IR. Central to his original argumentation was his claim that UCD provides us with a means of understanding systemic international change that Structural Realism does, and can, not. By accounting for the dynamics produced by competition among differentiated and intertwined nation-states, Rosenberg maintains, UCD is the first theoretical conception to capture the international in a way that cannot be reduced to a domestic counterpart.

The possession of nuclear weapons systems by many of these states raises fundamental problems for anyone attempting to use UCD to explain contemporary international politics. As I see it, this problem can be addressed in three ways.

First, it can *accept* that the nuclear revolution affects the practice of interstate politics along the lines proposed above. To do so, however, UCD theorising must discard the whip of external necessity and its associated assumption of regular interstate violence: it must get rid of Trotsky's assumption that major states frenetically compete with one another to prepare for war, that it is a matter of course that such a war will occur, and that this war constitutes part of a historical process. By eliminating the whip, however, the larger dynamic Trotsky foresees in UCD comes to an end. If major nuclear war is a catastrophe rather than a political event, then UCD amounts to a characterisation of an order in which either this catastrophe simply takes place, and it is nothing other than a disaster, or it does not take place. Under the latter scenario, uneven and combined economic competition among powerful nation-states continues, and the privilege of historical backwardness obtains, but the conflict that ensues is contained beneath a static geopolitical condition.[56] Some nations may increase their wealth and power, and others decline, but the concomitant military competition that Trotsky regarded as a necessary ingredient of UCD is constrained beneath the level of actual great-power war.

[56] Nuno Monteiro, in his 2014 book *Theory of Unipolar Politics*, argues precisely that the United States ought to maintain this static geopolitical order for the sake of international peace and stability (that is, nuclear war-avoidance) even at the price of its economic preponderance.

Second, it can *reject* the argument that the nuclear revolution has transformed interstate politics. This move would permit UCD theorists to retain the whip of external necessity, and so to regard the contemporary international order as subject to the same convulsive dynamics of economic and military competition as Trotsky identified a century ago. But they would also then have to agree with Trotsky's view that a war produced by these convulsive forces would not constitute a senseless catastrophe but rather fit within a progressive historical process that would continue onward after such a war. As we have shown, Trotsky, like Lenin and Stalin, believed war was a consequence of inevitable imperialist conflict, and while none of them actively welcomed war they all regarded it as a natural feature of historical development.[57] It was this view that Khrushchev rejected in 1956.

Third, it can *reject* interstate politics. Nuclear weapons demand the acceptance of either a static geopolitical order or the political utility of nuclear war for any materialist theorist who takes interstate great-power conflict as a given condition.[58] For such Marxist theorists, there is nowhere else to turn, just as was the case in practice for the USSR.[59] So as long as the state remains the unit in Rosenberg's conception of the international – as long as he conceptualises the political order to be assessed *as* international – then he must choose between a UCD deprived of the whip and hence foreseeing only peaceful economic competition, or one in which nuclear war plays the same historical role that conventional war did for Trotsky.[60]

Yet as Berki, and more recently Andrew Davenport, remind us, there is no reason why a Marxist approach to international relations must wed itself to the interstate model. In his seminal article 'On Marxian thought and the problem of international relations', Berki develops several points highlighting the core conflicts between the original Marxist project and the embrace of the nation-state by twentieth-century Marxist-Leninists. Berki gleans from Marx that capitalism 'perpetually engenders international conflict', paving the way for the emergence of an alienated proletariat without national loyalty.[61] The internationalist character of the working class is taken as a given: it embodies the dialectical advancement beyond a capitalist system characterised precisely by the ongoing existence of ethnic and national divisions.

Indeed, Berki suggests, following Marx's early writings, that intersocietal divisions and the wars fought under their banner are *products* of the international capitalist order, and so regarded equally by Marxism as doomed for the ash-heap of history.[62] 'Nations themselves in Marxian

[57] On this point, see especially Light, *The Soviet Theory of International Relations*.

[58] For a cogent critique, see Anne Harrington, 'Power, violence, and nuclear weapons', *Critical Studies on Security*, 4:1 (2016), pp. 91–112.

[59] A third alternative would be a continuation of the interstate order in which nuclear weapons become devalued and obsolete – see, *inter alia*, Ritchie, 'Valuing and devaluing nuclear weapons' and Jacques Hymans, 'The threat of nuclear proliferation: Perception and reality', *Ethics and International Affairs*, 27:3 (2013), pp. 281–98. While I personally doubt that this can happen, the more germane point is that the materialist logic of UCD and the whip of external necessity cannot be readily answered by constructivist arguments for obsolescence. For a more materialist argument on nuclear weapons from a constructivist scholar, see Alexander Wendt, 'Why a world state is inevitable', *European Journal of International Relations*, 9:4 (2003), pp. 491–542.

[60] UCD of course could still be used effectively to explain prenuclear international politics. On this point, see Davenport, 'Marxism in IR', p. 33.

[61] Berki, 'On Marxian thought and the problem of international relations', p. 73.

[62] See Davenport, 'Marxism in IR', pp. 31–3 and Adam Morton, 'Disputing the geopolitics of the states system and global capitalism', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 20:4 (2007), pp. 599–617.

theory', Berki insists, 'are not absolute, but historical, and hence ephemeral units.'[63] What this means, and here Berki follows the 'second-image' reasoning of Kenneth Waltz's foundational work *Man, the State and War*, is that the capitalist *problematique* cannot, by definition, be solved within an interstate order, even if all states became nominally socialist, a goal the Soviet Union ostensibly sought to achieve during the Cold War.[64] An 'economically integrated world', Berki argues, 'still consisting of separate nations is, whatever the internal structure of these nations, a *capitalist world*'. Globalised socialism, in a continuing interstate system, would simply be 'the highest form of capitalism'.[65]

In his recent article 'Marxism in IR: Condemned to a realist fate?', Andrew Davenport picks up on this theme. By accepting 'geopolitical fragmentation' as a given condition, Davenport argues, Rosenberg (and other Marxian scholars) politically cede the entire field to Realism: Marxist analysis becomes a variant of Realism which stresses economic competition and change, but which lacks any *political* component to envision or demand something different from that fragmentation. As long as intersocietal competition, the multiplicity of the global order, is accepted, alternative theories such as UCD are useful to explain social change in the past but only 'at the expense of effectively naturalising the Realist concept of political community'.[66] For Realism, Davenport notes, 'there is not and never has been a global social subject': this is a fact Realists purport to be comfortable with.[67] But it is an odd position for a Marxist to take.

The tension between a cosmopolitan and supranational Marxism and one wedded to an international order of sovereign states is nothing new. Anti-nationalist Marxists such as Rosa Luxemburg fought this battle a century ago, and were defeated by nationalists like Lenin who saw in her internationalism a recipe for the destruction of the revolution and total victory for the capitalists. This debate has not gone away.[68]

In 1916, Lenin and Trotsky could (and did) finesse the inconsistency between Marxist internationalism and their own focus on state survival by assuming that the intra-imperialist convulsion and war produced by forces such as uneven and combined development would lead to the violent unravelling of the interstate order, which the new Soviet state would work to foment. But as we have seen, today the violent unravelling of the interstate order portends nuclear war. Unless one is prepared to argue that such a war remains justifiable, then the finesse available to Marxists a century ago no longer is available.

[63] Berki, 'On Marxian thought and the problem of international relations', pp. 82–3.

[64] See Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), ch. 5. As I understand it, Rosenberg in his path-breaking book, *The Empire of Civil Society* (London: Verson, 1994) made exactly this point.

[65] Berki, 'On Marxian thought and the problem of international relations', p. 101, emphasis in original. See also Anievas, *Capital, the State, and War*, p. 38.

[66] Davenport, 'Marxism in IR', pp. 33, 40. See also George Lawson, 'Rosenberg's ode to Bauer, Kinkel and Willich', *International Politics*, 42:3 (2005), pp. 381–9.

[67] The ultimate implication here, of course, is that Realists are 'comfortable with' the anarchical interstate order they see as immutable culminating sooner or later in a global nuclear war. Because they are actually not comfortable with that, many Realists search for normative solutions to that problem that quietly point at a 'global subject', even if they do not admit this. See Pelopidas, 'Nuclear weapons scholarship'; Campbell Craig, *Glimmer of a New Leviathan: Total War in the Realism of Niebuhr, Morgenthau and Waltz* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), ch. 7 and William Scheuerman, *The Realist Case for Global Reform* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011).

[68] For a spirited recent debate on this very question, see Jason Schulman (ed.), *Rosa Luxemburg: her Life and Legacy* (New York: Palgrave, 2013).

This leaves the Marxist project with another place left to turn: cosmopolitan anti-nationalism.[69] Berki argues for a supranational position that partakes of Marx's original vision of human unity and, crucially, equates intersocietal conflict with the capitalist system.[70] The case for this can be made on his own terms, as his approach offers a far more decisive alternative to mainstream IR theories, and breaks cleanly from the abject failure of socialisms in one country over the past century, above all that of the USSR. If one adds the implications of the nuclear revolution expressed above to his argument, however, Berki's alternative becomes far more compelling. What is more, by placing the logic of supranational nuclear politics and human unity against the current neoliberal/interstate order, the neo-nationalisms this dynamic has produced, and the omnicidal warfare it portends, scholars interested in reviving the insights of Marxist IR have the opportunity to develop an original praxeology that speaks vividly to the demands of the twenty-first century rather than the history of the twentieth.

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[69] Alexander Wendt argues that other global social goods, including cultural pluralism and democracy, depend equally on the demise of interstate anarchy. See Wendt, 'Why a World State is Democratically Necessary' and 'Sovereignty and the World State' (video), both available at: {http://wgresearch.org/}. For a Marxian case that such goods depend upon the preservation of the interstate order, and indeed on the expansion of pluralism, see Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005).

[70] For comparable analysis from non-Marxist perspectives, see Richard Beardsworth, *Cosmopolitanism and International Relations Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011); Wendt, 'Why a world state is inevitable'; and Daniel Deudney, *Bounding Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).