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**Article:**

Hobson, J.M. (2016) *The lacuna of capital, the state and war? The lost global history and theory of Eastern agency*. *International Politics*, 53 (5). pp. 600-617. ISSN 1384-5748

<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-016-0005-9>

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## **The Lacuna of Capital, the State and War? The Lost Global History and Theory of Eastern Agency**

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### **Abstract**

In this article I seek to constructively engage Alex Anievas's seminal book that is deservedly the subject of this forum. For Anievas has become a key figure in the revival of Trotskyism in IR and his is one of the first book-length treatments of the New Trotskyist theory of the international. My critique is meant merely as a constructive effort to push his excellent scholarship further in terms of developing his non-Eurocentric approach. In the first section I argue that his book represents a giant leap forward for the New Trotskyist IR. However, in the following sections I argue that although undeniably a brave attempt nevertheless, in the last instance, Anievas falls a few steps short in realising a genuinely non-Eurocentric account of world politics. This is because while he certainly restores or brings in 'the lost theory and history of IR' that elevates class forces to a

central role in shaping world politics, nevertheless he fails to bring in ‘the lost global theory and history of Eastern agency’ that constitutes, in my view, the key ingredient of a non-Eurocentric approach to world politics. I also argue that while his anti-reductionist ontological credentials are for the most part extremely impressive, nevertheless, I argue that these are compromised in his analysis of Hitler’s racism. Finally, in the conclusion I ask whether the theoretical architecture of the New Trotskyism in IR is capable of developing a non-Eurocentric approach before concluding in the affirmative with respect to its modern revisionist incarnation of which Anievas is in the vanguard.

Keywords: Eurocentrism, Eastern Agency, neo-Trotskyism, Uneven and Combined Development,

## **Introduction**

In recent years the theory of uneven and combined development (U&CD) advanced by the New Trotskyism in IR (NTIR) has emerged as a serious contender for the theoretical hegemony that Gramscianism has held within the Marxist IR canon since the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> Importantly, Alex Anievas’s *Capital, the State and War* constitutes one of the first single-authored book-length treatments of NTIR, which in itself makes it worthy of consideration. But the fact that the book breaks new ground makes it a compelling piece of work and a highly accomplished contribution to IR scholarship for a whole host of reasons, many of which I do not have the space to discuss.

My primary interest in Anievas’ book lies in his contribution to the non-Eurocentric stream of NTIR with which I have a direct interest. But it is necessary for me

to specify why I have chosen this focus beyond the point that this is where my own intellectual interests lie. For I am only too well aware of the dangers of reviewing someone else's book wherein the reviewer chastises rather immodestly the author for not writing the book that the former would ideally like. This danger is important to note in this particular context, for Anievas admits candidly in the Conclusion chapter that while 'some examination of racism and ideology has been offered in this work, the linkages between culture, agency and identity in the nexus of North-South imperial relations feeding into the geopolitics of the era is in need of much further attention' (2014: 218). That said, though, this statement exists in tension with the many non-Eurocentric cues found in the book and with Anievas's desire to bring in various 'non-Western vectors' – particularly the North-South and the Transatlantic. Moreover, given that his most recent interests lie in constructing a non-Eurocentric NTIR theory of the rise of European capitalism (Anievas and Nişancioğlu 2013; Anievas and Nişancioğlu 2015), so I feel it legitimate to interrogate the issue of non-Eurocentrism in the book under review here.

In essence, one of the problems I have is that the combination of the 'North-South vector' with the 'West-East vector' turns out to be highly uneven within this book. Strangely while this is inserted into the case study of WWI, nevertheless, the North-South vector drops out of the two chapters on the origins of WWII. So we receive mixed messages concerning the precise scope of the spatial terrain that Anievas seeks to recover in what he terms the 'lost history and theory of IR'. But this is an anomaly that only partially concerns me. Much more importantly, while Anievas produces all manner of important and exciting cues for a non-Eurocentric approach, nevertheless, in the last

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<sup>1</sup> See especially the contributions in Anievas (2010).

instance I feel that he fails to fully deliver on them. I take no joy in making this claim given that Anievas is clearly sympathetic to such an intellectual cause; and not least because I believe that Eurocentric or otherwise, this is simply a superb book, as I shall explain shortly. Accordingly, my criticisms are offered only as a constructive means of ‘helping’ him in his current project of developing non-Eurocentric theory.

Perhaps it might be conjectured that the present book, which is a revision of his PhD thesis, occupies a liminal/transitional juncture in Anievas’s own thinking concerning the shift from a Eurocentric Marxist approach to a non-Eurocentric Marxism. For I am guessing that when he began the PhD his prime objective was to advance NTIR but that somewhere along the line he began to convert to the cause of non-Eurocentrism, by which time it was rather too late to integrate this properly within the present book. I suspect this to be the case not least because, I am proud to say, I was Anievas’s external examiner of his excellent PhD thesis. And having been so impressed by his thesis, I hope I can be forgiven for providing a sympathetic critique of his book – even if he might not always perceive it as such!

The article is divided into four sections, the first of which highlights some of the many strengths of the book. Section two finds that his break with Eurocentrism in the discussion of WWI is incomplete given that while East-West interactions are discussed nevertheless Western agency remains the locus of attention such that Eastern agency fails to register on Anievas’ causal radar screen. The third section considers Anievas’s discussion of the inter-war years and seeks to recover the lost story of Eastern agency while the fourth section interrogates his analysis of Woodrow Wilson and Adolf Hitler. There I argue that while he is certainly sensitive to Wilson’s racism nevertheless his

discussion of Hitler's racism is problematic in various ways including the point that in this instance he offends his otherwise excellent non-reductionist ontological credentials. Finally, in the conclusion I consider whether NTIR can constitute the basis for a non-Eurocentric theory of world politics given that while Trotsky's work provides all manner of non-Eurocentric cues he failed to properly deliver on them. I conclude that neo-Trotskyism can indeed realise such a promise and that Anievas's latest book does indeed deliver such a non-Eurocentric approach.

### **One Giant Leap for Marxist IR theory...**

Given my claim that Anievas falls short of fully breaking with Eurocentrism the reader of this piece might very well assume that this article is primed as a wrecking operation. If so then (s)he would be sorely mistaken. I believe that this is a truly outstanding book and I find much of it to be plausible. First and foremost, the book constitutes a giant leap forward for the cause of the 'NTIR infant'. It is situated here because, to coin the phrase of one of the infant school's godfathers, Justin Rosenberg (2006, 2008), it develops and applies a 'social theory of the international' to the big test case of IR – that of the causes of war in general and those of the first and second world wars more specifically. This is obviously a huge terrain that Anievas explores, and most deftly does he engage it. Of perhaps principal import is the way in which Anievas brings to life the interplay of domestic social forces and international economic-cum-military pressures. This is especially relevant given that the principal danger of the 'social theory of the international' that Rosenberg and others are in search of lies with the potential omission

of domestic, especially class, forces. This trap, otherwise known as ‘methodological internationalism’ or, in Marxist parlance, ‘bourgeois fetishism’, is one, after all, that undid Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-systems theory in the early 1990s. But the retreat of WST within Marxism came at a price – namely the subsequent trumping of domestic class forces and the ontological downgrading of the international as a significant causal factor of world politics. So it is no small accomplishment that Anievas has developed an argument and approach which treats the articulation of internal and external causal forces in a fluid, seamless and effortless way; so much so that it all appears as entirely second nature for him. In this way, too, with respect to the wider IR literature, Anievas succeeds in taking us beyond the sterile binary of extant theories that focus either on the ‘primacy of *innenpolitik*’ or the ‘primacy of *aussenpolitik*’.

The book also brings to life a series of international spatial ‘vectors’ – the North-South, the Atlantic and the West-East – which are activated by the emphasis on ‘uneven development’, while the ‘combination’ aspect that proceeds subsequently enables an extremely sophisticated treatment of social development, with societies re-appearing more properly as amalgams or hybridised entities; a manoeuvre that is simultaneously a key property of non-Eurocentrism, as I explain later.

Last, but by no means the least, the old spectre of economic reductionism which haunts the minds of many a Marxist, is something that Anievas manages, for the most part, to exorcise. Whether he has succeeded in exorcising this spectre altogether ultimately matters less to me than the point that his book is about as good as it gets in dispelling economic reductionism within Marxist IR theory. His treatment of the role of ideology, of the relationship between the state and capital and of the role of geopolitics

and international capitalism is a highly impressive achievement for any theory, let alone a Marxist one, and provides a breath of fresh ontological air. Indeed, in the context of NTIR, it goes further than the heroic efforts made by Alex Callinicos (2007), whose New Trotskyist article was the subject of a Cambridge Review of International Affairs forum, in which my own response critiqued his self-proclaimed non-reductionist ontology (Hobson 2007 and 2010). Indeed, in my view Anievas has taken the original pioneering anti-reductionist insights that were trail-blazed by Louis Althusser (1969) and Nicos Poulantzas (1973) to a much higher level of importance and significance. The only fly in the ointment, I feel, lies with Anievas's treatment of Hitler's racism, which I shall deal with in my discussion of non-Eurocentrism later on. Overall, given that this non-reductionist objective is clearly very important to Anievas, he might well anticipate that my article will interrogate this issue given that he consistently engages my earlier critiques of Marxist reductionism and, not least, because this was the thrust of my engagement with Alex Callinicos's 2007 NTIR article.

But with the exception of his treatment of Hitler's racism, I feel that a full interrogation of Anievas's engagement with non-reductionism is mostly redundant for two reasons: first, because of his largely exceptional efforts in refuting this charge and second, because I now feel that Marxists have generally become rather too hung up with this issue. I feel pretty safe in declaring that probably no non-Marxist conventional IR theorist worries about this issue given that neorealists, constructivists and liberals all produce highly reductionist ontological accounts, with very few even feeling the need to redress this problem. I have a theory as to why this is the case but I shan't waylay the reader with such musings. In any case, the argument that states act ultimately in the



interests of the general bourgeoisie and that modern world politics is in some way shaped by capitalism remain extremely important insights that render Marxist IR such a powerful theory. So why shy away from it simply because some critics use it as a means of tormenting Marxist theory not least by tarnishing it as quasi-Stalinist? I fear, therefore, that Anievas will be disappointed by my decision not to interrogate this issue though equally I hope that he will not be disappointed by my preference to interrogate his non-Eurocentric credentials, given that he has certainly made a bolder attempt at going beyond Eurocentrism than have the vast majority of IR theorists.

**... One small step for non-Eurocentrism (1): World War I and the elision of Eastern agency**

One of the themes of this book is to restore what Anievas calls ‘the lost history and theory of IR’. Thus, he claims,

[f]oregrounding the ineluctably intertwined and co-constitutive nature of imperial rivalries, social revolutions, and anti-colonial struggles evident to policymakers during the decades of crisis but subsequently lost in academic analyses, the study seeks to demonstrate how standard interpretations and assumptions about the period have been incomplete and often mistaken (Anievas 2014: 2).

Such a lost theory and history that Anievas clearly wants to restore involves the inclusion of processes that are specific not just to Marxism but also to non-Eurocentrism. So the key question is: how successful has he been in restoring this lost account? My analysis

will go through each of the empirical chapters (3 through 6) in turn selecting only those discussions that are brought into focus by my non-Eurocentric lens. My basic claim is that while Anievas has indeed carved out a fruitful and promising space for a non-Eurocentric analysis of the Thirty Years' Crisis, nevertheless, in the last instance he fails to fully deliver on it. For what ultimately is missing is the inclusion of Eastern agency. Thus while non-Western spaces and vistas are certainly opened up nevertheless they are treated as passive backdrops to the real theatre of agency – that of the European arena. Accordingly, I want to argue that it is the 'lost global history and theory of Eastern agency' in Anievas' account (not to mention those advanced by rival theories) that needs to be restored. I shall begin with Chapter 3 – the first empirical case study – which looks at the uneven and combined developmental origins of WWI.

From my non-Eurocentric perspective the framework articulated right at the outset of Chapter 3 for rethinking the origins of WWI looks extremely promising. For here Anievas sets out to examine three spatial vectors; first, a West-East plane of unevenness which looks at the successive phases of industrialization mainly within Europe but also beyond; second, a transatlantic vector that interlinks North America with Europe in general and the British Empire in particular; and third, a North-South vector/constellation interlinking and differentiating the multi-ethnic empires from Central and Eastern Europe to the Asia Pacific (especially India and China) into a dynamic of asymmetrical interdependency with the capital-industrial powers.

In the second section of this chapter Anievas considers the role of the Ottoman Empire in the causes of WWI and focuses specifically on Ottoman decline. Caught in the headlights of the European juggernaut, with its vastly superior European economic

and military power, the Ottoman Empire was unable to respond in an effective way, with the ensuing disintegration phase exhibiting the problem of 'blocked development'. The critical part of the argument concerns the claim that following the coming to power of the Young Turks in 1908 and the rise of Turkish nationalism the Ottoman Empire became embroiled in the Balkans War, which constituted a direct prelude to August 1914. Moreover, he claims that the Empire then came to react back upon Europe in causally significant ways. Upon this claim rests a great deal so far as a non-Eurocentric perspective that emphasises the role of Eastern agency is concerned. How does he execute this?

Essentially the claim is that the retreat of the declining Ottoman Empire created a vacuum into which various European powers moved. Thus Turkey's withdrawal from Europe created a space for the outward expansion of the aggressive Magyar nobility of the Hungarian half of Austria-Hungary, which now came to be a crucial player in Central Eastern Europe. And following the 1878 Berlin Conference, Austria-Hungary came to govern over the provinces inhabited by Croats, Serbians and Muslims. Moreover, as Anievas put it:

A further consequence of the Habsburg's eastward drive was the conclusion of the Dual Alliance of 1879 contributing to closer Franco-Russian relations. Though originally conceived as a defensive strategy by Bismarck, over time the Alliance turned in to yet another factor undermining international order (Anievas 2014: 93).

The Hungarian nobility's aggressive policy of Magyarization poisoned Austria-Hungary's relations with its southern neighbours which also fed into the causes of WWI. But the problem with the role envisaged of the Ottoman Empire as a causal factor in WWI concerns the point that it is essentially conceived of as a passive arena, with the country's retreat from Europe feeding into the all-important actions, as well as changes in the balance of power, within what constitutes the real theatre of agency in Anievas's narrative – i.e., Europe. But what of India and China that he also considers?

In the discussion of India and China we encounter the very same Eurocentric mantra or trope that envelops the discussion of the Ottoman Empire. Once again, the industrialization of Europe opened up a huge power gap between the ancient empires of China and India. And here, the absolute decline of the Qing Dynasty and the slow collapse of colonized India helped to restructure the direction and dynamics of inter-imperial rivalries between the European great powers. The Chinese power vacuum sucked Russia in and thereby changed the direction of Russian imperialism. That is, this, albeit unintentionally, caused a deflection of Russian economic expansionism into Manchuria that in turn effected a partial alleviation of European rivalries in the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire. This served simultaneously to relieve the tensions between Austria-Hungary and Russia and enabled an entente in 1897 to secure the Balkan status quo, while also enabling a kind of ultra-imperialist moment of European great power cooperation through its collective intervention in the Boxer Rebellion. And finally, the decline of the Qing effectively sucked Russia into war with Japan over Manchuria that led to Russia's humiliating defeat which, in turn, led onto the 1905 Russian revolution while simultaneously effecting a westward shift of Russian foreign policy. Accordingly,

he concludes, ‘the disintegrating Qing Dynasty effected a dramatic reconfiguration of the European balance of power’ (Anievas 2014: 95) given that the myth of Russian power was now revealed to all.

Anievas concludes from this undoubtedly interesting and insightful discussion that the ‘Asian “periphery” of the North-South vector constitutes an important if overlooked, factor unsettling the international system in the immediate post-war years’ (Anievas 2014: 96). Though I do not wish to denigrate what has been included here, nevertheless it only goes half-way to meeting my non-Eurocentric criteria. For the search for the ‘lost global history of Eastern agency’ in the context of this argument remains an elusive quest since it is the actions of the European great powers that remain central to Anievas’s narrative, with the decline of China, India and the Ottoman Empire constituting, in effect, passive backdrops to the headlining story of European agency.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the rest of the discussion of the North-South vector reconvenes the analysis already considered, thereby reinforcing my conclusion.

### **One small step for non-Eurocentrism (2): Recovering Eastern agency in the inter-war era and beyond**

Turning now to Chapter 4, Anievas develops a fascinating discussion of Wilsonian diplomacy as it impacted the goings on at Versailles in 1919. I share entirely in his surprise concerning Woodrow Wilson’s thought, policies and actions insofar as they have conventionally been understood within IR as embodying a liberal internationalist politics

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<sup>2</sup> For excellent discussions of war in the context of Eastern agency see Barkawi (2006);

Laffey and Barkawi (2006).

that accords centrality to self-determination and anti-imperialism. Anievas clearly refutes this by insisting that Wilson was in fact a racist who was concerned to maintain Western imperialism in the world. With this I am in full agreement and I have developed just such an argument elsewhere (Hobson 2012: 165–75). But the problem I find here is not so much with that which Anievas has said but with that which he has omitted or understated.

The major thrust of Anievas's re-reading of Wilson is undeniably important, bringing to light his deep concerns and anxieties about the rise of communism in Bolshevik Russia in particular. This is an important corrective, though it has also been marvellously brought to life by Michael Hunt (1987: ch. 4). I guess that it should come as no surprise to learn that such a focus would be alighted upon by a Marxist! But, I argue, there is also a vitally important 'lost global theory of Eastern agency' alongside a 'lost global history and historiography of IR' that needs to be recovered here. Of what do these comprise?

The 'lost global history and historiography of IR' is one which places emphasis partly on the pre-1919 world of international theory,<sup>3</sup> while also noting how 1919 was indeed significant but not simply for the reasons that are conventionally accorded it. Standard IR historiography reifies 1919 as the birth-year of the discipline and believes that it was girded from the outset by the desire to exorcise the spectre of warfare from the international system following the recent carnage of WWI.<sup>4</sup> We could say that Anievas has provided an alternative way of thinking about 1919: that it was important because it

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<sup>3</sup> See especially Schmidt (1998); Knutsen (2008); Vitalis (2005, 2010, 2016); Hobson (2012: chs. 2–7 and esp. chs. 6–7).

<sup>4</sup> A claim that finds its original formulation in Carr (1946/1981).

furnished IR with the desire to eradicate the Bolshevik threat from the international system. However, 1919 also witnessed the first phase not simply of the Cold War between the USA and USSR, as Anievas deftly reveals, but also the explosion onto the world stage of an anti-colonialist surge that culminated in the era of decolonization following WWII. Moreover, this post-1919 turn did not spring up magically from nowhere but had been gestating ever since Italy invaded Abyssinia in 1896 and suffered a defeat in the Battle of Adwa at the hands of the ‘inferior’ non-white races; an event that Anievas also singles out but for the inverse reason to mine insofar as he deems its significance only in terms of the ramifications this had for the European balance of power.<sup>5</sup> In addition, Russia’s defeat at the hands of the ‘Yellow Japanese’ was particularly important not simply for the unintended consequences that this had for changes in the European balance of power as Anievas assumes, but more for the massive psychological boost that it gave to the nascent anti-colonial nationalist movements (Aydin 2007: ch. 4), as well as for the massive shock that it imposed on many Western minds. Indeed, this was an event that rattled the very self-confidence of the white race. Probably no one made more of this than the American arch-Eugenicist, T. Lothrop Stoddard, who eulogised the Russian defeat in 1905 accordingly:

[m]ost far-seeing white men recognized [the Japanese victory] as an omen of evil import for their race-future.... [The Japanese victory was] momentous... for what it

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<sup>5</sup> The irony here is that Anievas could easily have narrated this event in non-Eurocentric terms had he argued that Eastern agency led to the defeat of Italy, which then reacted back to thereby re-channel the direction of intra-European international politics.

revealed. The legend of white invincibility was shattered, the veil of prestige that draped white civilization was torn aside, and the white world's manifold ills were laid bare for candid examination (Stoddard 1920: 171, 154, also 12, 21).

Moreover, this fear of the non-white revolt against Western hegemony was a signature tune of inter-war liberal international theory, as I have explained elsewhere (Hobson 2012: ch. 7), the upshot of which is my claim that 1919 was a significant, though not an originary, moment of the discipline of IR and that it was so in no insignificant part because of the threat that the East now posed to Western imperial hegemony and white racial supremacy in world politics.

Thus, much more importantly, whether Bolshevism was viewed in Lord Milner's terms as 'the greatest danger of the civilized world' as Anievas insists, is a moot point given that many Westerners, whether they be IR scholars such as Alfred Zimmern and Gilbert Murray or political representatives at Versailles such as Woodrow Wilson, Jan Smuts, Billy Hughes and Lord Robert Cecil, viewed the 'Eastern (anti-colonial) threat' that emerged with a vengeance in 1919 as a colossal challenge to Western hegemony and white racial supremacy (Hobson 2012: ch. 7). More likely, though, the Bolshevik and Eastern 'perils' constituted the paramount twin-threats that exercised Western minds in the inter-war era and indeed beyond. For the twin-issues of revolutionary class praxis and white racial supremacy were linked in the minds of many racists, especially Eugenicists. For them a key danger to white racial vitality was the threat posed not simply by the non-white barbaric races but also by the 'enemy within' – the white working class. Indeed 'white racial vitality' was a euphemism for white *elite* vitality such that the survival of



the white race lay in the hands of the superior white elite which comprised the white ‘neo-aristocrat’ as opposed to the white working class ‘under-man’ (Stoddard 1922) or the white ‘sub-man’ (Freeman 1921).<sup>6</sup> This is significant because the issues of race and class entwine and, as such, they underpinned the Eugenicist fear of the proletarian threat that Bolshevism allegedly posed for white racial supremacy. To wit Lothrop Stoddard’s proclamation that

Bolshevism... reveals itself as the arch-enemy of civilization and the [white] race. Bolshevism is the renegade, the traitor within the gates, who would betray the [white] citadel, degrade the very fibre of our being, and ultimately hurl a rebarbarized, racially impoverished world into the most debased and hopeless of mongrelizations.... Therefore, Bolshevism must be crushed out with iron heels, no matter what the cost (Stoddard 1920: 221).

And for many Westerners the obvious link here lay in the point that it was the Bolsheviks who called for anti-colonial self-determination (rather than Wilson, since for him, self-determination turned out to apply only for Eastern European peoples, as Anievas also points out).

At this point my critique morphs into recovering ‘the lost global theory of Eastern agency’, given my perception of its omission within Anievas’s account of the development of world politics in the inter-war era. At the outset it is noteworthy that the

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<sup>6</sup> Significantly, Freeman sees in the British sub-man a lowlier figure than the Negro (Freeman 1921: 249–252).

Eastern revolt against empire exhibited a wide variety of forms. It witnessed, for example, the resistance actions of the May Fourth movement in China, the March First movement in Korea, the Destour Party in Tunisia and, not least, the Indonesian Nationalist Movement. Added to this was a string of rebellions against empire, the most famous of which constituted the Amritsar rebellion against the repressive Rowlatt Acts, which saw nearly 400 Indians killed by British guns and a further 1,000 wounded. Also important were the demands made by returning Black African-Americans for real democracy in the United States that in turn prompted the Ku Klux Klan, which had been revitalised during the war, to go on the rampage in America. These events received major negative press coverage around the world and were seized upon by the Russians and Japanese in their efforts to tarnish US democracy as a sham. Indeed, the cause of everyday Western racist behaviour became a major discursive fault-line of the Cold War, certainly in its 1947 to 1965 phase, wherein the Soviets constantly chastised the USA for the racist repression of its own Negro population; a discursive weapon that was wielded to great effect (Füredi 1998).

My point here is that while Anievas recognises some of this when discussing Wilsonian diplomacy, my problem is that he understates the issue of Eastern resistance. Moreover, Anievas's script of world politics as it unfolds in the inter-war years in Chapters 5 and 6 pays no attention to the rise of the anti-colonial nationalist movements. It is as if their presence in world politics had all but disappeared. Instead the vast majority of the narrative focuses on intra-European and intra-Western developments, which are treated as almost entirely devoid of influence by the non-Western world. This is

surprising because their inclusion would certainly fit into Anievas's theoretical architecture – specifically via the North-South vector.

It is accordingly at this juncture where we encounter the unevenness of the treatment that the North-South vector receives in the book. For while it is clearly present in his analysis of the causes of WWI it is conspicuous for its absence in his discussion of the causes of WWII. This, once again, returns us to the Eurocentric problem whereby the European arena is treated as the real theatre of agency. This is perplexing because Japan was a formative 'actor' in WWII and, not least, because its invasion of Pearl Harbor was a key factor that brought the United States into the war and thereby changed its dynamic altogether. Moreover, while Europeans tend to equate WWII with Nazi Germany, many peoples around the world equate it with Japanese militarism. And as even Niall Ferguson (2009) argues – hardly the world's most well known non-Eurocentric – WWII arguably began with the war between China and Japan in 1937. In other words, it is possibly the case that the North-South vector is even more important in the context of the causes of WWII than it was vis-à-vis WWI. Its omission from Anievas's analysis of the causes of WWII, then, is doubly perplexing given that it could be such a fruitful area of analysis both for a non-Eurocentric approach on the one hand and as a means to flesh out his important conceptual analysis of the North-South vector in the development of world politics on the other.

There is one clear exception here, however, that proves Anievas's rule of treating European actors as the agents of world politics. For Anievas certainly brings the issue of European imperialism into the foreground throughout the book. This is certainly a vital corrective to liberal Eurocentric analyses of world politics and it is no less an important

ingredient for any non-Eurocentric analysis. But the key problem – that which makes his discussion of imperialism the exception that proves his quasi-Eurocentric rule – is that an approach which focuses almost exclusively on the actions of the Western imperial great powers at the expense of the role of Eastern agency returns us back into the Eurocentric cul-de-sac. For the reification of Western agency is the very hallmark of Eurocentrism, whether it takes the form of a critical Marxist approach or one of a more consensual liberal approach.

**One small step forward for non-Eurocentrism, one step backwards for non-reductionism?**

We also encounter an uneven intellectual treatment of two key figures who feature prominently in the book – Adolf Hitler and Woodrow Wilson. For while Anievas discusses Wilson's racism in Chapter 4 to good effect, nevertheless, Hitler's racism receives far less consideration in Chapter 5. Moreover, I want to argue that the discussion of Hitler's racism simultaneously offends Anievas's non-reductionist- and non-Eurocentric-credentials. Thus throughout this chapter it appears that Hitler's racism is largely epiphenomenal to broader social and economic interests, to wit his summary found on page 42: 'The Nazi regime's aggressive expansionism "can thus be rationalized as an intelligible response to the tensions stirred up by the *uneven development* of global capitalism"' (Anievas 2014: 168).

A further problem emerges from his reference to the well-known claims made by Hannah Arendt and Sven Lindqvist:

[A]s Hannah Arendt observed, this long history of European colonial plunder, conquest and genocide was the *direct forbearer* to the Holocaust.... [And as Lindqvist shows] the Holocaust was unique – in Europe. But the history of Western expansion in other parts of the world shows many examples of total extermination of whole peoples (Anievas 2014: 168).

In drawing from Lindqvist's *Exterminate All the Brutes* (2002), Anievas is by no means alone when trying to understand the relationship of scientific racism to imperialism. But the notion that nineteenth-century scientific racism followed a teleological path which steamed towards the terminus of Auschwitz is deeply problematic. For scientific racism was far more multivalent than this common misconception recognises. In particular, the German *Geopolitik* school, which included Friedrich Ratzel, Karl Haushofer and Richard Hennig, worked within an environmental-based Lamarckian racist approach which differed in certain fundamental respects to Hitler's genetic-determinist, anti-Semitic Eugenics. Critically, Hitler's anti-Semitic Eugenics *required* the physical destruction of the Jews as well as what turned out to be about 250,000 'physically defective Aryan' *Germans* who were 'mercifully culled' in the Nazi Euthanasia Program that went by the codename, *Aktion T4*.<sup>7</sup> No such plan could have been conceived either by the Lamarckian

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<sup>7</sup> Taken from the street address of the Euthanasia Program's coordinating office in Berlin – Tiergartenstrasse 4.

*Geopolitikers* or by many other scientific racist imperialists who developed non-genocidal conceptions of imperialism such as Paul Reinsch, Alleyne Ireland, Raymond Leslie Buell and Woodrow Wilson, let alone the many anti-imperialist scientific racists who include Herbert Spencer, William Graham Sumner and David Starr Jordan (in his pre-1919 writings) (see Hobson 2012: ch. 4).

Moreover, it is here where the economic-reductionist treatment of Hitler's racism intersects with the problem of representing racist-imperialism in monolithic terms. While economic and social factors are undoubtedly important for understanding Hitler's views on imperialism, it would be problematic to treat these as ontologically fundamental. For as I just noted, it was a fundamental aspect of Hitler's Eugenicist discourse that the 'dirty Jew' (as well as the 'defective' Aryan elements) should be eradicated from Germany and Europe in order to prevent the infection of the Aryan race through miscegenation that would lead to its subsequent degeneration and demise. Surely, such a sensitivity to the partial autonomy of discourse constitutes a vital component of a non-reductionist, not to mention a non-Eurocentric, approach? For, after all, the Jews remain to this day far more sensitive to the issue of racist anti-Semitism than they do the excesses of global capitalism, the linkages between these two social processes notwithstanding. All in all, then, it would be a great shame if, in admirably 'bringing in the lost history of class and capitalism' into the causes of the Thirty Years' Crisis, Anievas should throw out the racist-discursive baby with the bourgeois bathwater and thereby lose sight of the lost history of race and racism within world politics.

## **Conclusion: Is Marxist Eurofetishism an inevitable consequence of Trotskyist IR theory?**

Elsewhere I have discussed the problem of what can be called ‘Eurofetishism’ which, I argue, infects much of Marxist IR (Hobson 2012: ch. 10). What, then, is Eurofetishism? Karl Marx’s system of political economy was founded on the critique of ‘bourgeois fetishism’ – the tendency of non-Marxists to treat non-class factors as having an ontological power in their own right, divorced from the bedrock of the social relations of production that generate them. For example, ‘commodity fetishism’ occurs when liberal political economists assume that a commodity’s value is intrinsic to it via the demand that it engenders within the market place. Rather, for Marx, a commodity is not an autonomous entity because its value is derived from the average number of hours of labour-power that are expended and exploited in producing it. In this way, Marx’s method tunnels down beneath the realm of the everyday appearance of (autonomous) things in order to reveal the underlying social relations of production that produce them, thereby redirecting focus towards the class struggle within the mode of production (e.g., Marx 1867/1954, 366, 483, 567–70; Marx 1867/1959, 45–8, 168, 392–99, 827, 829–31). Above all, because bourgeois fetishism exorcises the ontological primacy of class struggle so the motor of development that underpins the mode of production is banished, thereby negating, or rendering impossible, its overthrow through revolution. Accordingly, bourgeois fetishism has the effect of eternalising capitalism while at the same time (re)presenting it as entirely natural and harmonious. By analogy, I argue that Eurofetishism occurs when the analyst reifies the West into a fetish by ascribing it with too much agency, thereby failing to recognise the co-constitutive relations of civilizations

that partly make and re-make the West as well as world politics. Thus the elision of Eastern agency and co-constitutive inter-civilizational struggles has the effect of fetishising the West and thereby naturalising and eternalising Western power/domination in world politics.

The question, then, is does Anievas's analysis suffer from Eurofetishism and is it, more generally, an inevitable product of Trotskyism? Certainly Anievas sets out to bring in various non-Eurocentric properties to his analysis. But the omission of Eastern agency comprises the major deficit that in turn leads Anievas's analysis, albeit unwittingly, back into the trap of Eurofetishism and hence the eternalisation and naturalisation of Western power in the world. I'm sure that this is a trap that Anievas would want sincerely to avoid. But the question now becomes: is this an inevitable product of his NTIR? To answer this I shall discuss Trotsky before turning back to Anievas.

My own view on Trotsky is that of all the classical Marxists his oeuvre held out the most potential for a non-Eurocentric analysis of world politics. In this regard I can think of no better example than Trotsky's claim, cited by Anievas, which serves to transcend Marx's Eurocentric evolutionary theory, to wit:

it was clear by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that the development of the more advanced societies were not destined to show the less developed 'the image of its own future' [Marx]. In this sense, the course of history had proven Marx mistaken. 'England in her day revealed the future of France, considerably less of Germany, but not in the least of Russia and not of India' (Trotsky cited in Anievas 2014: 42).



This seminal refutation of Marx's famous claim goes to the very heart of Trotsky's theoretical arsenal. For this claim is generated from his key concept of 'uneven and combined development' as well as that of 'permanent revolution'. As Anievas shows clearly in Chapter 2, permanent revolution issues from the uneven nature of the international constitution of capitalism, whereby the Russian working class is able to telescope the supposed inevitable stagist sequence of development, from feudalism to capitalism and thence socialism, into a single uninterrupted stage. International capitalism issues various challenges to non-European countries not the least of which is the 'whip of external necessity'. Thus the superior capitalist-cum-military power of European states in the context of a capitalist world order imposes the requirement of non-European states to adapt or perish. Uneven development, therefore, is the immediate backdrop to this. The subsequent adaptation phase involves a 'backward' country 'combining' elements of the advanced capitalist states within its own social domestic order, thereby creating a complex, hybrid amalgam. This is usually treated in the context of Trotsky's notion of the 'privilege of backwardness' in which backward societies can jump stages by drawing on the more advanced technologies – military and economic – that were pioneered in this case by the European societies. Certainly this was the thrust of Trotsky's (1965) analysis of Russian industrialization. But this enabling face of the capitalist-cum-geopolitical international can also be negated by its constraining face, in which the backward society borrows the inventions of the advanced countries but in so doing effects a debasement of the borrower society. Either way, though, the key upshot of all this is the concept of 'amalgamation', where borrower societies become 'hybridised' amalgams comprising advanced and backward properties.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, the recognition that societies are not purely self-generating and self-constituting monoliths but are hybrid amalgams is a fundamental property not just of Trotskyism but also of non-Eurocentrism and postcolonialism. There are several links here, though they require a further twist of the non-Eurocentric screw to grasp them. One such link comprises the postcolonial emphasis on the Eastern strategy of ‘mimicry’, whereby Eastern societies copy but also subvert Western civilizational ideas and in the process become ‘almost the same, but not quite’ (Bhabha 1994: 122; see also Bilgin 2008). It is also important to note the rather obvious point that a non-Eurocentric approach must first of all conduct its analysis at the global level rather than that of the intra-European system – where the latter tendency finds its expression in Alexander Gerschenkron’s (1962) classic economic history of Europe, which itself owes much to Trotsky’s work even though this inspiration went unacknowledged.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless while Trotsky’s analysis is applied to non-European states the problem is that the direction of analysis goes squarely from West to East. That is, Western states develop first and the Eastern states simply follow and emulate the superior European societies as best they can, albeit by plying a different path to that which was trail-blazed by the European countries. Put differently, this is precisely what James Blaut (1993) originally called ‘diffusionist Eurocentric history’.

Thus while hybridity is significant in that it transcends the Eurocentric story of world development as one in which the Rest is remade in the image of the West, nevertheless in the absence of an account of Eastern agency whereby the Rest comes to

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<sup>8</sup> For an excellent comparison of Gerschenkron’s theory with Trotsky’s, see Selwyn (2011).

affect the development and indeed constitution of Western societies in manifold ways, so we necessarily find ourselves back in the Eurocentric cul-de-sac. The one pregnant exception to this lies with Trotsky's belief that the Rest can fight back by resisting Western capitalism through revolutionary Eastern agency, as well as with his claim that socialist revolution is more likely to occur first in the non-Western world than within Europe. Though certainly an important point it seems as though there are no other cues in Trotsky's work concerning Eastern agency in the terms that I have described it within this article.

So is a non-Eurocentric analysis in the last instance a lost cause for NTIR? I do not believe so for there are clearly some NTIR scholars who are working precisely within a non-Eurocentric framework. In this context I have already mentioned various works (Matin 2007, 2012; Shilliam 2009), though I might, albeit modestly, add myself given that I advanced my non-Eurocentric approach to U&CD through a non-Marxist framework (Hobson 2011). And even outside of IR there have been significant Trotskyists such as C.L.R. James (1938/2001) and Marxists such as Eric Williams (1944), who have transcended Eurocentrism, not to mention a number of other neo-Marxists (e.g., Wolf 1982; Amin 1989; Abu-Lughod 1989; Frank 1998). All of these works seek to subvert Eurocentrism by drawing on the broad canvass of historical sociology.

If I may be indulgent for a moment, it is worth noting that in my own piece I confronted Trotsky's Eurocentric assumptions that industrialization was pioneered in England and that England can be treated as *sui generis* (Hobson 2011; see also Hobson 2004: chs. 9–11). I did this by arguing that England was not the pioneer but was a 'late-

developer' that tripped the industrial light-fantastic partly because it enjoyed the 'privilege of backwardness'. That is, through the combination process it was able to draw on the many inventions that had been pioneered by the earlier developers – the Middle East/Egypt, India and, above all, China – in order to make the final breakthrough into modernity. In other words, the uneven and combined developmental process can run from East to West. Added to this were the many imperial sites of exploitation that England engaged throughout the world, with Black African slavery, Chinese and Indian indentured labour, together with the vast array of countries from which the English extracted crucial raw materials, all contributing to enable English industrialization. In this way, I was able to retrieve the 'lost global history and theory of development/Eastern agency', thereby elevating the experience of one country into a thoroughly global context.

I mention my own analysis here because it works on a similar canvass to that which Anievas and his co-author Kerem Nişancioğlu have developed in their excellent book on the rise of the West (Anievas and Nişancioğlu 2015). Thus while Trotsky provided various cues for a non-Eurocentric approach but failed to properly deliver on them, nevertheless it is perfectly possible to deploy his well-known concepts of U&CD/amalgams in a genuinely global context in order to deliver NTIR to the promised non-Eurocentric intellectual land. While I do not believe that Anievas quite managed such a feat in the book under review here, I believe that he has undoubtedly succeeded in his most recent book (Anievas and Nişancioğlu 2015). All in all, though, for Anievas's non-Eurocentric efforts I say 'two cheers for Capital, the State and War' and for the book

in the round and as an original contribution both to NTIR and IR more generally, I say wholeheartedly ‘three cheers!’

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