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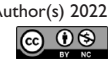

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Debating Uneven and Combined Development/ Debating International Relations: A Forum

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Abstract
This forum arises from an online event on the theory of uneven and combined development (UCD). Following an introduction which proposes a 'special affinity' between UCD and International Relations (IR), four presenters at that event discuss their 'view from outside' UCD, including perspectives from Global Historical Sociology, Realism, Decolonial theory and Gramscian Marxism. Meanwhile four members of the audience add their views on UCD and disciplinarity, the need for pluralism in UCD methodology, UCD and 'whiteness', and its potential contribution to ecological theory and practice.

Keywords
uneven and combined development, international theory, disciplinarity

Débattre du développement inégal et combiné/Débattre des relations internationales

Résumé
Ce forum est issu d'un événement en ligne sur la théorie du développement inégal et combiné (DIC). Après une introduction qui suggère l'existence d'une « affinité particulière » entre le DIC et les RI, quatre intervenants de l'événement présentent leur point de vue « extérieur » au DIC, en adoptant notamment une perspective de sociologie historique globale, de réalisme, de théorie décoloniale et de marxisme gramscien. En parallèle, quatre membres du public apportent leurs points de vue : sur le DIC et la disciplinarité, le besoin de pluralisme dans la méthodologie du DIC, le DIC et la « blanchité », et l'apport potentiel du DIC à la théorie et à la pratique écologiques.

Mots-clés
développement inégal et combiné, théorie internationale, disciplinarité

Debate sobre el desarrollo desigual y combinado/Debate sobre las relaciones internacionales

Resumen
Este debate surge de un evento en línea sobre la teoría del desarrollo desigual y combinado (DDC). Después de una introducción que presenta una «singular afinidad» entre el DDC y las RRII, cuatro ponentes de este evento discuten su «visión desde fuera» del DDC, incluyendo perspectivas de la sociología histórica global, el realismo, la teoría decolonial y el marxismo gramsciano. Al mismo tiempo cuatro participantes del público aportan sus visiones sobre el DDC y la disciplinariedad, sobre la necesidad de un pluralismo en la metodología del DDC, sobre el DDC y la «blanquitud» y sobre su potencial contribución a la teoría y a la práctica ecológicas.

Palabras clave
desarrollo desigual y combinado, teoría internacional, disciplinariedad

Introduction

In March 2021, the *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* published a special issue on 'New Directions in Uneven and Combined Development' (CRIA 2021). To mark the occasion, CRIA and the European International Studies Association hosted two online discussions.[1] The second of these, held on 25 May, was entitled 'UCD in International Studies and Beyond'; and its purpose was to invite critical perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of UCD and its claims about the radical significance of 'the international' for all the human disciplines. The pieces collected below comprise edited versions of the five presentations given there, together with four additional contributions from members of the audience.

In his opening comments, Justin Rosenberg suggests that UCD is able – perhaps uniquely – to supply four key requirements of IR as an academic discipline: an ontological premise, an empirical method, a theory of the international, and a voice of its own for IR in the interdisciplinary conversation of the social sciences and humanities. Next, Ayşe Zarakol argues that UCD also points beyond the self-limiting Marx-Weber divide that has characterised historical sociology in IR; and she underlines the need for UCD to retain its intellectual distinctiveness while avoiding the dangers of essentialism that often accompany longue durée modes of social explanation. From a Realist perspective, David Blagden argues that UCD illustrates a longstanding overlap between Realism and Marxism; moreover, while Realism's 'security dilemma' helps in the theorising of UCD's 'whip of external necessity', UCD can assist Neoclassical Realism's quest for a unified understanding of the internal and external causes of state behaviour. Meanwhile, Olivia Rutazibwa invites UCD to reflect on how it could benefit from embracing 'epistemic Blackness'. Such a standpoint, she suggests, would enable it to circumvent the 'logics of Whiteness' that distort our understanding of both the human and natural worlds; and it would also enable UCD to participate in knowledges that are no longer constrained by an underlying preoccupation with mastery and capturing. Finally, Kevin Gray explores the relationship of UCD to the ideas of Antonio Gramsci. Gramscian approaches, he suggests, have never produced an explicit theorisation of the international of the kind provided by recent writings in UCD. However, the concept of 'passive revolution' and Gramsci's writings on ideology could help UCD to develop a more agent-centred analysis of its own core object: combined development.

The live discussion which followed these presentations also stimulated four written contributions from members of the audience. In the first of these, Olaf Corry argues that a disciplinary identity for IR, of the kind offered by UCD, is actually an enabler of IR's interdisciplinary ambitions, rather than a retreat from them. Next, Kamran Matin responds to Rutazibwa's invitation to 'epistemic Blackness'. He tests UCD against criteria advanced by leading Decolonial writers in IR in order to answer the question 'Is UCD White?'. Meanwhile, Felipe Antunes de Oliveira argues that UCD can and must pluralise its own methods for analysing the international. This proliferating, he argues, could produce 'an emerging UCD lingua franca – one which may even bridge the many fragmentations of

1. Recordings of these discussions may be viewed by EISA members at: https://eisa-net.org/eisa-videos/

international theory itself'. Finally, Luke Cooper suggests that this fragmentation of IR theory has also had the effect of slowing the field's response to the ecological crisis. And yet, he argues, UCD's distinctive conception of the international could unlock IR's unique contribution to the politics of climate change. For the intellectual structure of this idea matches both the barriers to action (in a world where the effects of climate change are unevenly spread), and a key precondition for overcoming these barriers: an understanding that through 'combined development' particular national experiences are the building blocks of a universal condition, rather than a contradiction of it.

Taken together, the contributions to this forum suggest that UCD and its Realist, historical sociological, Decolonial, Gramscian and ecological interlocutors can only benefit from further dialogue. Indeed, the benefit might even extend more widely. UCD, it seems, strikes a special chord in international studies: one that resonates strongly with the field itself, while also having the potential to be heard beyond it. And surely the day on which IR both fully owns its unique focus on 'the international' and brings this focus to the shared conversation of the human disciplines – that day is long overdue.

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Uneven and Combined Development and International Relations – a Special Affinity?

Justin Rosenberg[2]
University of Sussex

Twenty-five years ago, IR scholars began the revival – and radical expansion – of Leon Trotsky's idea of uneven and combined development (UCD). Since then, several books and more than a hundred articles have appeared, and the recent *CRIA* special issue suggests the revival is still going strong.[3] At the same time, UCD emerged into an already crowded field of international theories. And this raises the question of what its place is within that wider field. What particular contribution *does* UCD make to IR theory? Moreover, how does this contribution look *from the outside*? And what can be learned from other approaches in order to overcome – or at least recognise – its shortcomings, as well as building on its strengths?

Before turning to the 'view from outside', it may help to start by saying how things look from the inside, because from this vantage point there does appear to be a special affinity between UCD and IR theory. The affinity might be summed up as follows: it is one thing to have a general social theory – like Marxism or feminism or poststructuralism – that can *also* be applied to IR. It is quite another to have a social theory that is fundamentally *about* the international itself, and which draws its own internal logic from that focus. How many theories of this second kind actually exist? It sometimes appears as if Realism may be the only other one we have – and even Realism restricts itself to the

2. Justin Rosenberg is Professor of International Relations, University of Sussex.
3. 'New Directions in Uneven and Combined Development', Special Issue of *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021).

power-political dimension, rather than conceptualising the international *per se*. By contrast, UCD is directly about the international on at least four different levels: as an ontological premise; as an empirical method; as an explanatory theory; and as a claim about IR's place among the human disciplines. Let us consider each of these in turn.

As we know, all intellectual approaches are lenses: they make us see the world in very particular ways. Feminism makes us see the gender dimension. Marxism reveals the centrality of production and class. Realism focuses on power politics. So what about UCD? Arguably, what UCD brings into focus is the specifically multiple and interactive quality of social reality. It pictures the human world in terms of different things going on, at different speeds, in different places – that is the unevenness part – but all of them happening in parallel, in real time. And that simultaneity means they can also interact and combine with each other to produce hybrid effects and non-linear outcomes – whether these outcomes are new social forms or unique historical events. As an ontological premise, UCD asserts this quality of interactive multiplicity as intrinsic to the substance of the social world. As Trotsky once put it: 'it is all a question of concrete correlations'[4] (Trotsky 1980 [1932], 379) – in other words, of what is intersecting with what.

UCD, then, offers a fundamentally *dialectical* view of reality. But it is also one that corresponds in a special way to the subject matter of International Relations (IR). After all, by definition, IR tries to understand a human world made up of multiple social formations with different characteristics which nonetheless continuously interact with each other to produce particular outcomes. So, whether we are looking at the causes of war(s), the negotiation of an agreement, the spread of new norms or the structure of the international system overall, our subject matter *itself* presents us with a logic of process that is not singular, but multiple and interactive. And at this first level UCD comprises an ontological premise that draws our attention specifically to that logic of process.

But UCD does not just provide a premise. It also, secondly, points to an empirical method of analysis. This method is summed up by the sequence of terms internal to the idea itself: unevenness, combination, development. We always start with *unevenness* – that is, by specifying the differential actors, histories, capacities, viewpoints and social forces involved in a given situation. We then look at how these different elements *combine* with each other to produce new causal logics. And finally, we trace the operation of these logics to see how far they explain the particular *developments* (or outcomes) we are trying to understand. When we concretise this three-step sequence for a given situation in IR, we are pin-pointing and tracking its specifically international dimension And once again, this is a highly distinctive method in international theory. It should not be, and yet it is.

Third, UCD is not just a method for analysing *random* local situations. It originated in Trotsky's modification of the Marxist *theory* of modern history as a whole – the theory of capitalist world development. And it is itself an explanatory theory. We can say this because from his *general* ontology of unevenness and combination Trotsky also derived two causal mechanisms (among others) which enabled UCD to explain things that other versions of

4. Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Volume III, trans Max Eastman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980 [1932]), 379.

Marxism could not: 'the whip of external necessity' and 'the privilege of historic backwardness'. Both of these mechanisms are irreducibly international: they arise not from the logic of capital *per se*, but from the coexistence of multiple social formations at different points in their development. Trotsky used them to account *theoretically* for why the actual historical trajectory of capitalist world development had diverged so radically from the more unilinear one projected by Marx. And in more recent times, UCD has been used to provide alternative explanations of numerous other phenomena – from Brexit and Trump to political Islam, the First World War, the French Revolution, the origins of capitalism, and even the pre-historic emergence of the international itself.[5] So UCD is not just an ontological premise and an empirical method. It is also a *theory* that works specifically by incorporating the international dimension into existing sociological perspectives.

And that brings us to the fourth level at which UCD focuses the international in a unique way – namely, the interdisciplinary level. Trotsky famously wrote that unevenness was 'the most general law of the historical process'.[6] But what did he mean? He cannot have meant that unevenness is a positivist covering law that applies in a uniform way across history. That would have contradicted the very idea of unevenness itself. What he must have meant therefore is this: taken as a whole, human social existence has *never* been either unitary or homogeneous. It has always comprised a *multiplicity* of non-identical instances. This *coexistence* of social formations has always been a key part of how these formations are constituted and how they evolve.[7] And it is 'the most *general* law' not only because it extends far back into the past, but also because it affects every aspect of social life. Politics, economics, ideas, language, music, cooking-none of these happens outside the context of multiple interacting societies, and all of them therefore have an international dimension.

Why is this so important for IR? The reason is simple: arguably it is the intellectual challenge of bringing this particular dimension of the human world into focus *theoretically* which explains the peculiar frustrations of international theory – why it is that, as Kenneth Waltz once put it, '[s]tudents of international politics have had an extraordinarily difficult time casting their subject in theoretical terms'.[8] As a result, scholars frequently lament the failure of IR as an academic discipline – the fact that it endlessly imports ideas from outside without having any big ideas of its own to send back.[9] But if Trotsky was right, we do have a truly fundamental idea to send back: the significance of 'the international' for the subject matter of *all* the social sciences and humanities. This is a significance which has long been concealed by the 'methodological nationalism' of

5. For a brief overview, see Justin Rosenberg, 'Results and Prospects: an Introduction to the CRIA Special Issue on UCD', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021): 146–63.
6. Trotsky, *History*, 5.
7. For a recent defence of UCD as a 'general abstraction' in this sense, see Justin Rosenberg, 'Uneven and combined development: a defense of the general abstraction', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (2020): 1–24. doi: 10.1080/09557571.2020.1835824
8. Kenneth Waltz, 'Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory', *Journal of International Affairs* 44, no.1 (1990): 21.
9. Barry Buzan and Richard Little, 'Why International Relations Has Failed as an Intellectual Project and What to Do About It', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 30, no. 1 (2001): 19–39.

other disciplines. Potentially, UCD is an idea which can be used to uncover it. And if used in this way, UCD would then be revealing the general, interdisciplinary potential of IR itself – just like spatial, ethnographic and linguistic methods of analysis do for Geography, Anthropology and Comparative Literature.

So when we ask ourselves why UCD is still going strong in IR after 25 years, perhaps the answer lies in this fourfold contribution: UCD provides us with both an ontological premise and an empirical method of analysis which uniquely fit IR's subject matter; it includes a theorisation of the international itself and its role in history; and it gives IR a big message of its own for all the human disciplines. Arguably, no other approach provides all these because no other theory connects to the international at all four levels in this way.

But this is just the view from the inside – a vantage point that always brings with it a special short-sightedness of its own. How then does UCD appear *from the outside*, from other vantage points in IR such as historical sociology, realism, decolonial theory, Gramscian thought and beyond? That is the discussion that this forum hopes to initiate.

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Uneven and Combined Development and Global Historical Sociology

Ayşe Zarakol[10]
University of Cambridge

As Justin Rosenberg details in the introduction to the 2021 special issue in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*,[11] the Uneven and Combined Development (UCD) approach is the most recent in a long, often distinguished, line of Marxist contributions to the field of International Relations.[12] For this forum, I have been asked to provide some reflections as an outsider on the strengths and weaknesses of UCD : my own research agenda is based more within Global History Sociology (GHS), which is defined by Julian Go and George Lawson as representing 'an interest in social relations as they unfold in time and as they are articulated on multiple scales'.[13] Go and Lawson note that 'GHS does not promote any particular theory, program, or grand narrative', and explicitly discuss UCD under the general banner of IR approaches that could fall under this umbrella.[14] It could be argued, however, that GHS is generally friendlier to Weberian flavoured approaches in historical sociology and IR (though it should be noted that

10. Ayşe Zarakol is Professor of International Relations, University of Cambridge.
11. Volume 34, no. 2.
12. Justin Rosenberg, 'Results and Prospects: An Introduction to the CRIA Special Issue on UCD', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021): 146–63.
13. Julian Go and George Lawson, 'Introduction: For a Global Historical Sociology' in *Global Historical Sociology*, ed. Julian Go and George Lawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 5.
14. Ibid., 19–21.

loosely Weberian approaches are less likely to claim that as a mantle compared to Marxist or neo-Marxist schools). In other words, in the conversation between UCD and GHS we potentially have another articulation of one of the oldest debates in sociology.

Looking at UCD from the vantage point of GHS, then, there is much to appreciate. It would be hard to disagree that its starting point as articulated by Justin Rosenberg is highly stimulating: the question of 'how the fact of multiple, co-existing social formations has influenced the shape and the politics of capitalist (world) development itself'.[15] Rosenberg notes that UCD answers that question by 'analyzing the international configurations of "unevenly" developing societies co-existing at any given moment, and by tracing the processes arising from their interaction (or 'combination') in real time'.[16] This seems to strongly resonate with the core element of GHS, which is relationalism, and GHS also examines 'the diverse interactions that take place between historically situated peoples, networks, institutions, and polities'.[17] In other words, there is a lot of common ground between the two approaches.

Compared to most Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches, UCD is a commendably open and flexible field of enquiry. I mean this in a number of ways. In the social sciences, schools of thought, once they emerge, tend to pursue one of two survival strategies. Some become clubby and insular, perhaps in the hopes of carrying out a deeper conversation among adherents who have already bought into the precepts of the approach. Over time, the conversation evolves to being highly specialised, becoming difficult to follow for outsiders who may otherwise be interested in the arguments. The other strategy is to reach out, to collaborate with other approaches, and to aim to win new advocates by persuasion. Both strategies have their disadvantages. Those who follow the first approach may find themselves without sympathisers outside their core-group and thus may be heading towards an expiration date delimited by the age of its members. Those who follow the second approach could find their vision co-opted or subsumed by other approaches. Nevertheless, I think the latter strategy is more productive than the former, because scholarship cannot be *primarily* about group belonging or using certain concepts just the right way – for that we have religion and theology. Therefore, I admire proponents of UCD for being open to conversations with other approaches, an openness that the CRIA online symposium ably illustrates.

There is a further way in which UCD is open: it studies subjects that Marxist approaches traditionally have not been particularly interested in. This is well-exemplified by the CRIA special issue, which includes papers on the global ecological crisis,[18] Occidentalism,[19] and Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars Trilogy*,[20] to name a few. Given that traditionally what demarcated Marxist and Weberian approaches was the materialist bottom-line of the

15. Rosenberg, 'Results and Prospects', 147.
16. Ibid., 147.
17. Go and Lawson, 'Introduction', 23.
18. Johanna Siebert, 'The Greening of Uneven and Combined Development: IR, Capitalism and the Global Ecological Crisis', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021): 164–85.
19. Joseph Leigh, 'Geoculture and Unevenness: Occidentalism in the History of Uneven and Combined Development', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021): 186–206.
20. Luke Cooper, 'Worlds beyond Capitalism: Images of Uneven and Combined Development in Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars Trilogy*', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021): 228–49.

former, UCD offers the way to a beyond-the-Marxist-Weberian-divide conversation that is more ecumenical about its point of departure and, therefore, wider in its empirical reach.

That said, I have a couple of areas of reservation about UCD as an approach. First, given that many of the scholars who follow this approach stray far away from traditionally Marxist ground and do not always strictly invoke the UCD mechanisms of 'the whip of external necessity' and 'the privilege of historic backwardness' in their causal explanations, it is not clear to me why they do not cross over all the way to GHS or historical sociology in general. To put this in a less facetious way: when it becomes more ambitious and leaves its more materialist beginnings behind, it is not always obvious what makes UCD distinctive as an approach. Given the cautionary notes above, I do not mean this as a recommendation that UCD become more insular and jargon-y, but rather as an observation that, like all approaches, it needs to tack between openness and distinctiveness.

Second, for reasons that I do not have space to go into here — but hopefully will be apparent to anyone familiar with UCD — it seems to me that the UCD is particularly well suited to analysis of the *longue durée*. As a proponent of macro-historical approaches myself,[21] I do not have a problem with this; to the contrary, it is another aspect of UCD that I appreciate. However, I think *longue durée* approaches are particularly prone, if they are not careful, to collapsing into essentialism. After all, what does it mean to apply categories such as 'society', 'external', or 'international' to far away places and times? These categories are not prefabricated *outside* time, but produced and contested *in* time. The good news is that this is a discussion that historical sociologists of all persuasions can take part in. As such, it positions UCD within a wider research agenda, opening up a productive space between UCD enthusiasts on the one hand and those who see themselves primarily as Global Historical Sociologists on the other. I very much look forward to these conversations.

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Realism's Relationship with Uneven and Combined Development

Philosophically Feuding Fiefdoms or Unnecessarily Estranged Siblings?

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University of Exeter

Realism and UCD are typically associated with quite different strains of IR scholarship.[23] At International Studies Association conferences, for example, a predominantly American-based

21. Ayşe Zarakol, *Before the West: The Rise and Fall of Eastern World Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).
22. David Blagden is Senior Lecturer in International Security, University of Exeter.
23. I thank Justin Rosenberg for invaluable feedback on this essay. Of course, all errors remain my own.

group of realists attends panels that pore over the US-China military balance while a predominantly European-based community of historical materialists attends gatherings critiquing the distortions of global capitalism – to indulge some crude yet not entirely baseless stereotypes – with precious little cross-pollination. But does it need to be this way? Are these two traditions of international thought destined to remain distinct fiefdoms with too little shared philosophical ground to productively collaborate, or might they instead be unnecessarily estranged siblings who could benefit from hugging and making up?

In pursuit of narrowing the intellectual gulf, this forum contribution attempts to build bridges between UCD and realism in three ways.[24] First, it identifies certain pre-existing parallels between the paradigms. Second, it notes some shared philosophical priorities. Third, it suggests an approach to their combination. It concludes that realism and UCD will never be perfectly harmonious twins – to extend the metaphor, their parents' children will always have somewhat different lifegoals – but they are related nonetheless and can therefore benefit from fruitful collaboration in pursuit of persuasive answers to similar questions.

Parallels Between Paradigms: The Dangers in Differential Development. One rendition of UCD's core IR-theoretical explanatory argument runs as follows.[25] Economic development necessarily occurs in – and is mediated through – some socio-political context. Accordingly, development is socio-economic ('combined') in character. Yet it also necessarily starts from different bases and advances at different paces across different socio-economic contexts; development is thus also 'uneven'. To grow and survive in the face of military, economic, and geopolitical competition from the most advanced developmental centres, industrial late-comers face Leon Trotsky's 'whip of external necessity': an existential imperative to emulate more advanced centres' productive modes, lest such leaders coerce/destroy developmental laggards (an imperative also familiar to realists). Enjoying so-called 'advantages of backwardness' – progressing straight from A to an emulated C, rather than moving through the slow and costly development of intermediate stage B – such developmental later entrants can make rapid productivity strides, thereby accounting for interstate relative power shifts.[26] In the course of such rapid transformation, however, domestic social, economic, and political order experiences the turmoil born of fundamental and accelerated upheaval. Such turmoil manifests itself as domestic contestation with potential to generate revisionist demands and external bellicosity. 'Uneven' and 'combined' development thus produces not only differential change in states' *ext*ernal capabilities, but also variation in their *int*ernal conflict propensities.

24. In doing so, it draws extensively on pre-existing work: David Blagden, 'Uneven and Combined Development: Convergence Realism in Communist Regalia?', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021): 250–66.
25. Alexander Anievas, '1914 in World Historical Perspective: The 'Uneven' and 'Combined' Origins of World War I', *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no.4 (2013): 724–26.
26. Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max. Eastman (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008 [1932]), 4.

On the realist front, meanwhile, 'static' polarity theories have a certain utility in explaining systemic conditions under some given distribution of power – the frosty balancing of the bipolar Cold War, say, or the bellicose assertiveness of a sole post-1990 superpower[27] – but such static 'snapshots' are also unhelpful in their own ways. First, because power and politics are always shifting (so such snapshots are immediately out-of-date). And second, because the political dynamics of most importance to explain – such as the onset of international conflict – may themselves be outcomes of shifting power. After all, the logic of the security dilemma relies on the possibility of change in manifested and/or potential power,[28] for without the possibility of such change, no state need fear that another could turn revisionist tomorrow having built up their forces today. Accordingly, the most compelling realist approaches in accounting for the onset of interstate conflict – the single most negative outcome in international politics for human welfare – are those that account for dynamic change in the relative wherewithal of the political units,[29] such as Robert Gilpin's 'power transitions' theory or Dale Copeland's 'dynamic differentials' theory.[30]

Combining the preceding summaries, parallels between UCD and realist concerns/arguments are apparent.[31] Gilpin himself recognised the common ground between his realism and Marxist international thought – of which UCD is a variant – noting that both 'explain the dynamics of IR in terms of the differential growth of power among states' (albeit with different accounts of underlying motives).[32] Furthermore, both rely on the 'advantages of backwardness' thesis to account for such differential power growth. As Gilpin explains, 'Through trade, foreign investment, and the transfer of technology, wealth and economic activities tend to diffuse. . .[such that] new centers frequently overtake and surpass the original center'.[33]

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27. Kenneth N. Waltz, 'The Stability of a Bipolar World', *Dædalus* 93, no. 3 (1964): 881–909; Nuno P. Monteiro, 'Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful', *International Security* 36, no. 3 (2011–12): 9–40.
28. Robert Jervis, 'Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma', *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 167–214.
29. William C. Wohlforth, 'Gilpinian Realism and International Relations', *International Relations* 25, no. 4 (2011): 499–511.
30. Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000). This is not solely realist terrain, moreover; for example: Stacie E. Goddard, *When Right Makes Might: Rising Powers and World Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).
31. Noting such parallels previously, see John Glenn, 'Uneven and Combined Development: A Fusion of Marxism and Structural Realism', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 25, no. 1 (2012): 75–95; Justin Rosenberg, 'Kenneth Waltz and Leon Trotsky: Anarchy in the Mirror of Uneven and Combined Development', *International Politics* 50, no. 2 (2013): 183–230.
32. Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 93. He also explicitly recognises his argument's basis in Trotskyite UCD's account of power shifts' sources, Ibid., 178–9.
33. Ibid., 178. For summary overview of historic Euro-Atlantic convergence patterns, see Bart van Ark and Marcel Timmer, 'Economic Convergence and Divergence', in *The Oxford Economic History of Europe: Volume 1*, ed. Joel Mokyr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 128–31. For relevant underlying theory, see for example: Robert J. Barro and Xavier Sala-i-Martin, 'Technological Diffusion, Convergence, and Growth', *Journal of Economic Growth* 2, no. 1 (1997): 1–26.

However, the similarities run deeper still. Both UCD and realism draw inferences from – and require explanations of – shifts in states' relational capabilities. Yet just as UCD offers not only an account of external power shifts but also states' internal conflict propensity, so too realism – even parsimonious structural realism – requires the same. For as Randall Schweller explains, if all states were 'security-seekers' motivated by nothing more than the imperative to survive, there would be no security dilemma (every state would *know* that every other state is non-revisionist and thus means them no harm).[34] As such, for there to even *be* a security dilemma, there must be at least the possibility of states turning revisionist for domestically 'greedy' motives. And since there clearly *is* insecurity among states in the world, the possibility of such greedily-motivated bellicosity clearly *is* a real concern. Accordingly, UCD's potential to provide an explanation for states' domestic turn towards external belligerence coupled with its accounting for shifts in the international power balance – both traced back to the same underlying source, i.e. uneven and combined socio-economic development – makes it a potentially valuable contributor to realist explanations.[35] At the same time, however, realism's ability to account for mutual fear and hostility makes it a useful component of UCD-based conflict explanations (see below).

Shared Priorities: Contingency Bad, Comprehensiveness Good(?). Beyond these parallel concerns and symbiotic arguments, realism and UCD share certain similarities of philosophical orientation too. Notably, as an approach to explanation, UCD rejects social-constructivist contingency. In Ned Lebow's constructivism, for example, the outbreak of World War I required the contingent, non-linear confluence of multiple separate chains of causation, leading to an ideational shift among European policymakers.[36] For UCD, by contrast, the material base strings these seemingly distinct threads of causation together. On such tellings, UK relative decline, risen Germany's domestic-political belligerence, Russia's developmental weaknesses and associated domestic-political fragility, and the Balkan crises augured by Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian decay – four key contributors to the war's outbreak, taken together – can all be traced back to a shared underlying cause: 'uneven' and 'combined' development, and the politico-economic tensions born thereof.[37] Likewise, realists may disagree among themselves over how much of

34. Randall L. Schweller, 'Neorealism's Status-quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?', *Security Studies* 5, no.3 (1996): 90–121.
35. Realists have provided such explanations, of course; consider Jack Snyder's account of domestic coalitions' logrolled demands turning states towards imprudent expansionism: Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). Yet this is not incompatible with UCD, which may contribute to underlying socio-economic explanations of where such domestic-coalitional demands come from.
36. Richard Ned Lebow, 'Contingency, Catalysts, and International System Change', *Political Science Quarterly* 115, no.4 (2000–2001): 591–616.
37. Anievas, '1914 in World Historical Perspective', 726; see also Jeremy Green, 'Uneven and Combined Development and the Anglo-German Prelude to World War I', *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no.2 (2010): 345–68.

international politics any given IR theory should aim to explain, from the parsimonious Waltzian claim to illuminate only 'systemic outcomes' (rather than individual states' behaviour) through to others' promise to also explain such state-level foreign-policy choices.[38] Yet realism shares UCD's conviction that the catastrophe of 1914 – to sustain the same example – owed more to underlying structural causes than a contingent confluence of ideas.

As a social-scientific argument, meanwhile, Trotsky's original UCD was ahead of its time. Most significantly for the inter-paradigmatic ontological alignment considered here, his effort to synthesise a compound theory of the interaction between internal and external variables in the making of international behaviour mirrors the continuing ambition of contemporary neoclassical realism, specifically its effort to systematise the relationship between external systemic constraints and the domestic transmission belt that determines state behaviour.[39] In short, UCD and realism – in their IR-theoretical forms – are united by a shared desire to obtain explanations of behaviour grounded in underlying material-structural determinants, rather than resort to more contingent accounts of particular ideational circumstances.

Prospects for Combination: Is UCD Realist, Does Realism Require UCD? Given these similarities of substantive focus and philosophical orientation, how might realism and UCD productively collaborate? One way forward notes that differential socio-economic development can account for power shifts *between* polities as well as distributional effects – and attendant political contestation – *within* polities.[40] Such 'external' and 'internal' effects, meanwhile, sum between them to produce both a shift in potential offensive *capabilities* and some probability of offensive future *intentions* (all within an anarchic system that lacks reliable peace-enforcement): the pillars of realist theory's all-important security dilemma, and the international conflict that it can generate. UCD can thus complement realism's need for an account of the destabilising shifts that its explanations rely upon, just as realism can complement UCD in explaining why such shifts might generate interstate conflict. Furthermore, in explicating intercommunal competitive pressures in this way, such UCD-realist fusions may shed light on the constitution(/otherwise) of human communities as state-like entities – with associated national identities and constructed institutions – under corresponding circumstances. Accordingly, UCD can potentially elucidate the connections between human socio-economic development and the very inter*national* politics that realism theorises,[41] just as realism can offer insight into the causes of conflict between political communities (however configured). At the same

38. John J. Mearsheimer, 'Reckless States and Realism', *International Relations* 23, no.2 (2009): 241–56.
39. Gideon Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy', *World Politics* 51, no.1 (1998):144–72.
40. Blagden, 'Uneven and Combined Development', 255–63.
41. Justin Rosenberg, 'The Elusive International', *International Relations* 31, no. 1 (2017): 90–103. Of course, this does not mean that communal politics necessarily must be – or historically has been – universally conducted through the medium of contemporary nation-states: Brieg Powel, 'Deepening 'Multiplicity': A Response to Rosenberg', *International Relations* 32, no. 2 (2018): 248–50.

time, however, this is only one possible model of constructive collaboration between the two paradigms. Other such approaches may be available, and merit investigation.

In sum, realism and UCD will never be identical intellectual endeavours. As Gilpin noted, while realist and Marxist approaches explain the dynamics of international politics with reference to interstate development differentials, the former's motivational concern is the effect of power struggle among states – with various micro-foundational accounts of its origins – whereas the latter's is the effect of capitalist societies' profit incentives.[42] Yet despite these differences, both share an interest in understanding the consequences for human welfare of continuity/change in the material-structural base and its development. Crucially, moreover, each provides valuable insights that can complement the other. Recognition of such complementarities therefore offers the possibility of superior scholarly answers to important questions in international politics.

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Engaging Uneven and Combined Development in Anticolonial Epistemic Blackness

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I join this conversation on Uneven and Combined Development (UCD) as an early student of UCD and political economy as scholarly ways to make sense of the global social world. My understanding of UCD at this time of writing is that it is a convincing and useful theory of capitalist world development. Other salient characteristics are its non-linear, dialectic approach and explanatory purchase. It carries with it also the potential to move beyond methodological nationalism. I join this conversation with the question of the extent to which – building on the work of Gurminder Bhambra[44] – UCD manages to overcome methodological Whiteness. And why does this matter?

In this brief intervention, I therefore engage UCD with both decolonial thought and epistemic Blackness. I offer them, not necessarily as competing schools of thought, but as a way to take up a constructive space as a constituent of UCD and to intentionally inscribe it into an anticolonial project.

Engaging Decoloniality and epistemic Blackness for UCD, generates two questions around knowledge-making that could anticolonially enrich the further development of UCD as a school of thought of capitalist world development, and the possibility of (a quality of) life in the global social more broadly:

42. Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 93–94.
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44. Gurminder K. Bhambra, 'Brexit, Trump, and "Methodological Whiteness": On the Misrecognition of Race and Class'. *The British Journal of Sociology* 68, no. 1 (2017): 214–32 and most recently: Gurminder K. Bhambra and John Holmwood, *Colonialism and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021).

1) *Where do we engage from?* It is important to point out that the answer need not be singular, but needs attending to, not in the least so that we can pay attention to the loci of enunciation that are systematically – if not systemically – eclipsed;[45]
2) *What for?* Here I would say that it is important for UCD to resist the temptation to proliferate engagements in defence of itself – a temptation too many of our paradigmatic and disciplinary conversations have not been able to resist. To qualify as other than at the service of the status quo – actively or simply by thinking that the normative question can be circumvented if we pretend it's not *always* there – UCD needs to think of how its further development enables thinking around the possibility of indiscriminate life in dignity.[46]

In what follows I concretise these questions with the help of these two prompts: '*Happy Africa (Liberation) Day!'* and: '*What are UCD's desires, its jouissances?'*[47]

Rather than offering definitive answers to these prompts in relation to UCD, this commentary limits itself to formulating them as an invitation to those of us contributing to the future development and invocation of the insights of UCD.

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Happy Africa (Liberation) Day! *Grounding epistemic Blackness, materially, relationally and historically*

'We have no time.'[48]

May 25, the day the contributors to this forum came together in 2021 to engage UCD, marks since 1963 what is today known as Africa Day. It used to be called African Freedom Day and later African Liberation Day (my personal favourite as it doesn't let us get away with de-politicising and de-historicising it) and commemorates officially the creation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa in 1963. But it builds on the first Pan-African Conference on African soil in 1958 in Ghana under the auspices of its leader Kwame Nkrumah, where the focus was on the resolve of African peoples to rid themselves of foreign domination and exploitation and move towards liberation. It is here that the first African Freedom Day is celebrated.[49]

45. See for example Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (New York: Routledge, 2014) or Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 'Against Bringing Africa "Back-In"', in: *Recentering Africa in International Relations*, ed. Marta Iñiguez de Heredia and Zubairu Wai (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 283–305; Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 'The Cognitive Empire, Politics of Knowledge and African Intellectual Productions: Reflections on Struggles for Epistemic Freedom and Resurgence of Decolonisation in the Twenty-first Century', *Third World Quarterly* 42, no. 5 (2021): 882–901.
46. See Olivia U. Rutazibwa, What's There to Mourn? What's There to Celebrate? Decolonial Retrievals of Humanitarianism, in *Amidst the Debris: Humanitarianism and the End of Liberal Order*, eds. Juliano Fiori et al. (London: Hurst, 2021), 369–78.
47. See Ilan Kapoor, *Confronting Desire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020) asking this question in the context of International Development.
48. Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 6.
49. See for example, Pambazuka News, 'African Liberation Day: A Celebration of Resistance', 10 May 2012. Available at: https://www.pambazuka.org/pan-africanism/african-liberation-day-celebration-resistance. Last accessed July 19, 2021.

I bring up Africa (Liberation) Day as a precursor to my comments on epistemic Blackness. It is a reminder that decentring the White and Western-centric nature of our academically sanctioned ways of knowing and sense-making, and centring the knowledges and experiences of peoples of African descent/ (politically) Black peoples – this is what I understand epistemic Blackness, in a non-zero-sum sense, to entail – is not merely an identitarian (if at all) or representational move. Sabaratnam[50] reminds us of what centring Blackness is about: *'*One way of doing this might be, as Wynter does, to re-centre blackness as the starting point for the embrace of the "human"'. Another way of saying the same about the stakes of engaging epistemic Blackness is to say that it interpellates our knowledge-making efforts on the extent to which they engage questions of life and death and the unevenly distributed value of life. The argument is not that a focus on Black/African experiences is the only way to go about this, but that it saves us crucial time. Consider, for instance, the recurrent, almost cyclical consternation around racism and violence against Black bodies as a newly discovered phenomenon (both within and outside the academy). Similarly, in the recent emergence of Anthropocene studies, the questioning of the division between nature and culture is often framed as a novel insight in the social sciences. Both these moves are only possible in a context of a White supremacist sense-making of the world, in which Black and Indigenous knowledge-systems are continuously and structurally disappeared. I often wonder how much time we would save to get straight at those many life and death related research questions, were we to actively stop these erasures. It is important to add – especially in these times of commodified interest in 'diversifying', 'decolonising', and 'inclusion' – that epistemic Blackness is about engaging them as a point of departure, rather than as an add on, and engaging them constitutively rather than merely inclusively (the infamous 'add-and-stir'). The takeaway question for the discussion here could be: *What is needed for UCD to also be a solution to Methodological Whiteness?*[51]

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50. Meera Sabaratnam, 'Is IR Theory White? Racialised Subject-positioning in Three Canonical Texts', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 49, no.1 (2020): 3–31.

51. Sabaratnam ('Is IR Theory White?) helpfully asks: 'What does it mean to say that International Relations (IR) is white? Whiteness in IR theory does not reside in authors' skin colour, conscious intentions or places of origin but rather the ways in which a set of epistemological tropes, locations, assumptions and commitments naturalise racialised accounts of world politics – i.e. ones based on hierarchies of the human. In brief, whiteness is not an 'identity' so much as a 'standpoint' rooted in structural power. This standpoint (re)produces significant flaws in the logic of IR theories, skews the supporting evidence and has various disciplinary consequences. Thus, a regional 'diversification' of the field and a 'pluralization' of perspectives from beyond the West – as advocated by the Global IR project for example – is an important but inadequate response to the problem of race in IR. Rather, the field also needs to uncover, disrupt and ultimately overcome the epistemologically-limiting logics of whiteness themselves'. 3. For further readings, see for example Robbie Shilliam, `The Atlantic as a Vector of Uneven and combined development', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2009): 69 -88; Sankaran Krishna, `Race, Amnesia, and the Education of International Relations', *Alternatives* 26, no. 4 (2001): 401 -24; Gurminder K. Bhambra, *Connected Sociologies* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2014); Gurminder K. Bhambra, `The Refugee Crisis and Our Connected Histories of Colonialism and Empire', 1 October 2015. Available at: http://www.sicherheitspolitik-blog. de/2015/10/01/the-refugee-crisis-and-our-connected-histories-of-colonialism-and-empire/, last accessed November 5, 2021; Robbie Shilliam and Lisa Tilley, eds. `Special Issue: Raced Markets', *New Political Economy* 23, no. 5 (2018): 531 -639.

What are UCD's desires? *Against mastery, totalising knowledges and knowing*

'(. . .) black people bring together various sources and texts and narratives to challenge racism. Or, black people bring together various sources and texts and narratives not to capture something or someone, but to question ***the analytical work of capturing****, and the desire to capture, something or someone.'*[52]

The epigraphs framing the two prompts in this intervention are from McKittrick's recent book *Dear Science and Other Stories* (2021). The last one in particular reveals an important question on not just the purpose of our knowledge practices, but also how this connects to our modes of knowing. The argument here is that both need attending to in an anticolonial project.

McKittrick's observation on the analytical work of capturing and the desire to capture directly connects to the anticolonial potential of epistemic Blackness but it also resonates more broadly with Singh's ideas around *mastery*,[53] El Malik's commentary on *totalising knowledges*[54] or the distinction drawn between knowledge *production* and knowledge *cultivation* as offered by Shilliam. He invites us to think about knowledge cultivation instead of the linear, speed, 'originality' and quantity-obsessed features embedded in the idea of knowledge production.[55] This raises the following concrete questions for UCD: Is it wedded to knowledge production or can it imagine itself as a much more uncertain yet generative knowledge project of cultivation? Concretely: does it need to be a *theory* as defined and understood in terms of rigour, superior explanatory purchase, validity. . .? Maybe there is something to be gleaned from some decolonial approaches that explicitly call for understanding decoloniality as an *option* or *invitation*[56] rather than decolonial *theory*. It is a way to not

52. McKittrick, *Dear Science*, 4 emphasis is mine.
53. Julietta Singh, *Unthinking Mastery: Dehumanism and Decolonial Entanglements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).
54. See for example Shiera S. El-Malik and Isaac A. Kamola eds., *Politics of African Anticolonial Archive* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017).
55. It is worthwhile citing him at length: 'To my mind, decolonial science cultivates knowledge, it does not produce knowledge. Using the Latin roots of these words, we could say that to produce knowledge is to lengthen, prolong or extend, whereas to cultivate knowledge is to till, to turn matter around and fold back on itself so as to rebind and encourage growth. Knowledge production is less a creative endeavour and more a process of accumulation and imperial extension so that (post)colonized peoples could only consume or extend someone else's knowledge (of themselves). (Chatterjee, 1998) In short, a colonial science produces knowledge of and for subalterns. Alternatively, knowledge cultivation is a necessarily creative pursuit as it requires the practitioner to turn over and oxygenate the past. Most importantly, cultivation also infers habitation, which means that knowledge is creatively released as the practitioner enfolds her/himself in the communal matter of her/his inquiry. What is more, this constant oxygenation process – a circulatory one – necessarily interacts with a wider biotope, enfolding matter from other habitations. To cultivate knowledge of deep relation can therefore be understood as "grounding"'(Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific: Anticolonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 24–5.
56. From the original idea of Zulma Palermo (for example, 'La Teoría como Proyecto Político. Otras Memorias, "Narrativas Otras"', *De Signos y Sentidos 1*, no. 11 (2010): 177–92), see also Walter Mignolo and Arturo Escobar, *Globalization and the Decolonial Option* (London: Routledge, 2013); Rosalba Icaza, 'Decolonial Feminism and Global Politics: Border Thinking and Vulnerability as a Knowing Otherwise', in *Critical Epistemologies of Global Politics*, eds. Marc Woons and Sebastian Weier (Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing, 2017): 26–45, 27.

just speak of or theorise pluriversality – i.e. a world in which many worlds are possible – but attending to them in their knowledge practices.

Why is it important and salient, to contemplate dislodging the ways in which we have defined and judged rigorous scholarship so far? To my mind, this takes us back to the purpose question, and the anticolonial answer which invites us to think of the uneven distribution of the value of life. The modality of knowledge-making wedded to mastery, superiority and exclusivity, is profoundly entangled with the imperial practices of capture, domination, extraction that produce the uneven development UCD is committed to make sense of – ideally in view of developing tools to dismantle it. Intentionally resisting the desire for mastery is both a way to keep a steady eye on the ball (the purpose) and invite in intellectual abundance (rather than competition) at the heart of the UCD research agenda.

I am writing up this commentary in the latter half of July 2021. The Movement for Black Lives and the raced, gendered and classed uneven impacts of both the climate catastrophe and the COVID-19 pandemic remind us yet again of the manifold research agendas needed to address these challenges better, with a greater sense of urgency and from the concerns of the global majority. These days I have particularly been thinking about the hunger strikers in Brussels on two university campuses and in a church. More than sixty days of hunger strike in addition to a thirst strike in the last days of their action. At last, on the Belgian national holiday on 21 July 2021, an ad hoc (rather than structural) concession of the Belgian government made it possible for them to break their strike. In an ideal world, UCD as a research agenda, contributes to scholarly and public understanding of the deeply entangled political economic and historical nature of this phenomenon of unspeakable suffering and cruelty. Ideally, it enriches the legalistic, state-centric or humanitarian 'generosity' and victimhood approaches of for instance migration and refugee studies, with generative analysis that radically denaturalises world capitalist development. Not as an add on, but as the point of departure from which to think solutions and alternatives anew.

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Uneven and Combined Development and Gramscian International Relations

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The immediate challenge in discussing the relevance of UCD for Gramscian approaches to IR is that within the latter there exist multiple approaches that are divergent and often in contradiction with each other. This reflects in part the somewhat scattered and unsystematic nature of Gramsci's writings and the absence of an explicit statement on 'the international' such as we find in Trotsky's introduction to *The History of the Russian Revolution*.

Thus, the neo-Gramscian 'world orders' approach of Robert Cox, for example, focuses on how a particular class becomes hegemonic in a national setting, and then on how that

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state plays a central role in establishing a hegemonic world order.[58] Yet, this approach is one that has been rightly criticised for its Eurocentrism and diffusionism,[59] thereby playing down the inter-societal dynamics that lie at the heart of UCD's analytical approach.

The 'global capitalism' school of William Robinson, on the other hand, examines how hegemony is exercised not by a national bourgeoisie via a national state apparatus but by transnational social forces and institutions grounded in the global rather than inter-state system.[60] This approach has similarly been challenged for its 'ontological flatness', which downplays any semblance of difference or unevenness in the international system, and conceptualises national restructuring during times of globalisation as a uniform process, integrating all states in the same way into the global dialogue.[61]

A potential corrective is offered by Kees van der Pijl's distinction between the Lockean Heartland and the Hobbesian contender state, the latter of which is characterised by a state-society configuration in which the state serves as directive centre and initiator of social development, with a state class deriving its command over society through its control of the state apparatus and resources.[62] Yet this still understands unevenness in somewhat dualistic terms and falls short of capturing the complexity of so-called 'backwardness' and its political responses. These include what Tüyloğlu refers to as 'secondary unevenness', namely a series of multi-directional and causally relevant relationships amongst the late developing countries themselves.[63]

In contrast, the Gramscian approach that arguably has the strongest parallels with UCD is that which draws from Gramsci's concept of passive revolution. The latter occurs in situations of international unevenness, whereby transformations taking place on a global scale (or what Trotsky refers to as 'the whip of external necessity') lead to revolutions from above in late developing societies aimed at facilitating a constrained transition to or within capitalist modernity (i.e. either from a non-capitalist to capitalist mode of production, or between different regimes of capital accumulation). Passive revolution is thereby characterised by heavy reliance on state power on the part of the dominant class as a substitute for the latter's limited or absent hegemony. These managed transitions from above also involve the containment of revolutionary pressures from below through such strategies as *trasformismo*. These are aimed at weakening and defusing the political potential of the subaltern class through the selective co-optation of its leadership into the

58. Robert Cox, *Production, Power and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).
59. Mustapha Kamal Pasha, 'Return to the Source: Gramsci, Culture and International Relations', in *Gramsci, Political Economy, and International Relations*, ed. Alison J. Ayers (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 160.
60. William I. Robinson, 'Gramsci and Globalisation: From Nation-State to Transnational Hegemony', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 8, no. 4 (2005): 561.
61. Andreas Bieler and Adam David Morton, *Global Capitalism, Global War, Global Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 119.
62. Kees van der Pijl, 'Capital and the State System: A Class Act', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 20, no. 4 (2007): 627.
63. Yavuz Tüyloğlu, 'Rewiring Unevenness: The Historical Sociology of Late Modernization beyond the West/East Duality', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2021.1872494 (2021): 1–18.

ruling bloc, although there is also a partial acceptance or fulfilment of the demands that the subaltern makes.

We can see then strong parallels between Gramsci and Trotsky in terms of their common concern with how international dynamics led to particular responses in late developing countries that diverged from the paradigmatic cases of England and France. The precise question they sought to answer did differ somewhat. Trotsky sought to explain why the revolution had occurred in 'backward' Russia rather than the advanced industrialised countries, whereas Gramsci explored how the 1917 revolution in Russia could not simply be applied to Italy due the differences between the two socio-economic formations in the East and West. Consequently, Trotsky believed that transitions towards capitalism would be completed by mass insurrectionary movements rather than from above by the exercise of state power, as Gramsci had analysed.[64] Nonetheless, both were trying to grapple with the implications for political praxis of the fact that history (development) did not proceed via the sequence of stages adhered to by the Second International. These parallels were not simply a reflection of the immediate context in which they wrote. As Rosengarten argues, while Gramsci was often critical of Trotsky's notion of permanent revolution, there was a considerable degree of interaction between the two men during Gramsci's stay in Moscow in 1922 and 1923, and Trotsky's influence on Gramsci can be seen in the latter's conceptualisation of the united front policy.[65]

Yet, while there are strong parallels between UCD and passive revolution, each has weaknesses that can potentially be addressed by the other. While both made extensive use of historical analogy as a means of theorisation, there is a relative absence of *explicit* conceptualisation of 'the international' in Gramsci's writings. Certainly, one can identify key quotes from Gramsci's writings that show a profound concern with how national developments were situated within broader international dynamics. For example, Gramsci wrote in 1919 that 'capitalism is a world historical phenomenon and its uneven development means that individual nations cannot be at the same level of development at the same time.'[66] Later, in his carceral writings, Gramsci argued that 'international relations intertwine with these internal relations of nation-states, creating new, unique and historically concrete combinations.'[67]

But these are quite sporadic comments and it is questionable whether the largely (though not exclusively) *outside-in* processes captured by passive revolution add up to a full-blown theory of 'the international.' In this respect, UCD can potentially make these concerns more explicit and help to fully flesh out the significance of passive revolution as a key moment in which the globally uneven spread of capitalist industrialisation along with its specific manifestations in terms of military pressures and revolutionary movements lead to reactions within late developing societies. In return, Gramsci provides the conceptual categories needed for capturing the agent-centred approaches in which the

64. Neil Davidson, *How Revolutionary Were the Bourgeois Revolutions?* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012), 317–18.
65. Frank Rosengarten, 'The Gramsci-Trotsky Question', *Social Text* 11 (1984): 73.
66. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings 1910–1920* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977), 69.
67. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 182.

'whip of external necessity' is translated into specific strategies aimed at establishing or transforming capitalist social relations.

Emphasising the complementarity between the two approaches does raise a question, however, with regards to the (trans)historical scope of both Trotsky and Gramsci's concepts. Marxist critiques of attempts to establish UCD as a fully-fledged theory of IR have focused on its claims to transhistorical universality, arguing that uneven and combined development can be understood only through foregrounding the analysis of capitalist relations of production.[68] Although the significance of 'the international' has no doubt increased as a result of the rise of globally uneven capitalist development, there seems to be no *a priori* reason why UCD cannot usefully shed light on pre-/non-capitalist settings, and indeed, this has the advantage that it is able to explain the emergence of capitalist social relations themselves.[69] Yet, with regards to the complementarities between UCD and passive revolution, Hesketh is surely correct to argue that passive revolution, despite being a concept with universal validity, properly only applies to the era of capitalism. Passive revolution is thus more historically specific and provides an explicit emphasis on the kinds of class agency involved in establishing the political rule of capital under conditions of uneven and combined development.[70] In fact, Gramsci was even more specific in terms of the temporal applicability of the concept, arguing that '[a]ll history from 1815 onwards shows the efforts of the traditional class to prevent the formation of a collective will.'[71]

Thus, with the rise of capitalist modernity, it becomes increasingly difficult to envisage non-passive revolutionary transitions. This is due to long-run developments such as the rise of subaltern forces that led bourgeoisies in late developing societies to seek accommodation with existing regimes. Additionally, the rise of 'first mover' states such as Britain whose role was both as competitor and model also helped persuade sections of the non-capitalist ruling classes elsewhere that they were compelled to carry out internal self-transformation.[72] Even ostensibly 'socialist' revolutions ultimately saw strong passive revolutionary dynamics as the working class and peasantry were politically disenfranchised and subsumed under state-led projects of catch-up industrialisation.[73] As uneven global capitalist development has continued to deepen, the whip of external necessity has intensified passive revolutionary transformations both towards and within capitalist social relations.

68. Andreas Bieler and Adam David Morton, 'Interlocutions with Passive Revolution', *Thesis Eleven* 147 no. 1 (2018), 9–28; Sébastien Rioux, 'Mind the (Theoretical) Gap: On the Poverty of International Relations Theorising of Uneven and Combined Development', *Global Society* 29 (4), 2015, pp. 481–509. Jamie C. Allinson and Alexander Anievas, 'The Uneven and Combined Development of the Meiji Restoration: A Passive Revolutionary Road to Capitalist Modernity', *Capital and Class* 34, no. 3 (2010): 469–90; Chris Hesketh, 'Passive Revolution: A Universal Concept with Geographical Seats', *Review of International Studies* 3, give issue number (2013):43 (3), 2017, pp. 389–408.
69. See Alexander Anievas and Kerem Nişancıoğlu, *How the West Came to Rule: The Geopolitical Origins of Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2015).
70. Hesketh, 'Passive Revolution.
71. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 132.
72. Davidson, *How Revolutionary*, 318.
73. Kees van der Pijl, 'State Socialism and Passive Revolution', in *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*, ed. Stephen Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 237–58.

Given their complementarity, what new areas of research might a mutual dialogue between UCD and Gramscian IR approaches open up? One potentially fruitful area is the realm of ideology, which of course represents one of Gramsci's most original and important contributions to Marxist theory. In UCD, ideology implicitly plays a key role in accounts of how late developing societies become cognisant of their 'backwardness' and mobilise their own material and cultural resources towards the goal of catch-up industrialisation and modernisation. There is, however, no explicit theorisation of ideology in UCD. A Gramscian approach can thus help to avoid the dangers of overly functionalist understandings of ideology and instead see ideas as a key material aspect of agent-centred contestations surrounding transitions to or within capitalism. This opens up space for examining how the process of combination operates within the ideological realm, for as Gramsci argues, '[a] particular ideology . . . born in a highly developed country, is disseminated in less developed countries, impinging on the local interplay of combinations.'[74] Such combinations point to how political ideologies fuse with existing forms of 'common sense.' For Gramsci, the latter is a confused and contradictory formation which is drawn in part from 'philosophy' as conventionally understood but also from people's material experiences of social life. In this sense, a Gramscian input can shed light on how inter-societal dynamics lead to particular reactions in late developing societies that give rise to combined forms of ideology: fusions of popular belief, religion and folklore with the more 'official' conceptions of industrialism, nationalism, capitalist modernity and catch-up development. In this respect, moving beyond mutual critique and dismissal towards examining the manifest parallels between UCD and Gramscian IR suggests the potential to for a particularly fruitful dialogue that can map new areas of research.

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Uneven and Combined Disciplines?

International Relations, UCD and the Question of Interdisciplinarity

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Posing the subject matter of IR in terms that make it potentially relevant to the whole of the social world, and not just politics beyond the state: this has been a key part of the rationale for a UCD-inspired understanding of the international as the dimension of the social world based on the coexistence of multiple, uneven societies.[76] Most – if not all – other IR theories focus more narrowly on the political consequences of multiplicity, often making 'International Politics' a more accurate title for IR, as things stand.[77] They

74. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 182.
75. Olaf Corry is Professor of Global Security Challenges, University of Leeds.
76. Justin Rosenberg, 'Why is There No International Historical Sociology?' *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2006): 307–40.
77. David Long, 'Interdisciplinarity and the Study of International Relations', 36, in *International Studies. Interdisciplinary Approaches*, eds. Pami Aalto, Vilho Harle and Sami Moisio (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 31–65.

point to, but cannot realise, the potential of a discipline of IR that is both wider, yet also more clearly defined, than now – so runs the UCD argument.[78]

But *should* IR become more of a discipline? Many think not or find *inter*disciplinarity more appealing. For some, IR is best understood as a crossroads for other disciplines.[79] And Catarina Kinnvall captures a currently popular concern about IR's disciplinarity: 'at a time when we are concerned with decentring IR, recognising that there may be many IRs rather than one (. . .) and when we are increasingly asked to investigate the white mythology of IR (..) the call for disciplinary cores and thus boundaries, seems to be problematic.'[80] Funders and research bureaucrats also routinely celebrate or demand interdisciplinarity. If UCD aims to contribute to IR's development as a distinct discipline, is that then problematic?

Justin Rosenberg deploys a trade metaphor to justify his broader and more positive definition of the international: with the narrow and negative conception of IR, 'imports' of theory from other disciplines have become ubiquitous while 'exports' from IR remain rare. Even Waltz's famous IR *Theory of International Politics*[81] is virtually unknown outside IR. But if nobody is keeping disciplinary 'balance of payments' accounts, is a mercantilist discipline even a meaningful and legitimate aim?

To answer this question, it helps to first recognise that the ultimate aim of using the core insight of UCD to identify *multiplicity* as a general problem for all social processes was not to escalate some kind of epistemic trade war. It was rather to allow IR to enter, in a deliberate way, into the broadest possible interdisciplinary relationships and exchanges – and ultimately to let it more fully play its unique role in avoiding (or at least supplementing) 'internalist' analyses of social problems – i.e. ones that presuppose a singular social space, implicitly excluding from analysis the type of causality that stems from the coexistence of multiple, uneven entities.[82] Internalism is commonplace in Sociology but also resides in 'methodologically nationalist' approaches like Modernisation Theory. This famously assumed all societies would develop through the same stages, their trajectories essentially unaffected by their positions *vis à vis* each other. The problem also applies in a macro-sense to some globalist perspectives that presuppose a singular worldwide or planetary space.[83] As UCD makes clear, the international adds its own irreducible determinations and causes to the social world. Other disciplines are not specifically geared to capturing this dimension, but IR is – or could be if it realises its fuller potential as a discipline.[84]

While ubiquitous, the call for interdisciplinarity is clearly paradoxical: it requires the pre-existence of the very things that it seeks to transcend, namely disciplines.[85] If an interdisciplinary project is planned and IR did not exist, or did but has no recognisable

78. Justin Rosenberg, 'International Relations in the Prison of Political Science', *International Relations* 30, no. 2 (2016): 127–53.
79. Catherine Kennedy-Pipe, 'At a Crossroads – and Other Reasons to be Cheerful: The Future of International Relations', 352, *International Relations* 21, no. 3 (2007): 351–54.
80. Caterina Kinnvall, 'Multiplicity, Discipline and the Political', *New Perspectives* 27, no. 3 (2020): 153–5.
81. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).
82. Friedrich Tenbruck, 'Internal History of Society or Universal History?', *Theory, Culture and Society* 11, no. 1 (1994): 75–93.
83. Olaf Corry, 'Nature and the International. Towards a Materialist Understanding of Societal Multiplicity', *Globalizations* 17, no. 3 (2020): 419–35.
84. Justin Rosenberg, `Multiplicity: What's the Big Deal?' *New Perspectives* 27, 3 (2019): 146–50.
85. Long, 'Interdisciplinarity', 33.

unique angle on the world, why include an IR scholar? Furthermore, interdisciplinarity is commonly associated with advancing pluralism, but it can also pose a danger to epistemic diversity. Certainly, overly monolithic disciplines can become more pluralised by bringing in other approaches and perspectives. But equally, disciplinary capture by one dominant perspective is also always a risk.[86] Multiple disciplines coexist and do sometimes combine, but they do so as highly uneven and unequal entities! At the extreme, 'invaded disciplines provide little more than data sets, issue areas, or context – the empirical domain, the field, on which the [invading] theoretical paradigm operates.'[87]

Arguably some IR has at times treated History like this, as a source of cases to 'test' its theories.[88] But the bigger picture suggests IR has more often been the colony than the imperial aggressor. Rationalist IR is beholden to actor models derived from Economics – a discipline whose practitioners feel 'no compulsion about applying their kit of tools to everything from dental hygiene to nuclear war'.[89] The decades long controversy about Kenneth Waltz's neorealist theory could be understood as a fight over an 'invasion' from Economics: a 'homo economicus' model of rational action and an oligopoly theory of polarity installed as *Theory of International Politics*.[90] Arguably IR never quite recovered from being put on this footing. Despite Waltz' own post-positivist leanings, set out in detail in Chapter 1 of his landmark book, his work became central to a dominant rationalist model of social action in IR, particularly in the US.[91]

Whether exporting from IR – or importing from elsewhere into IR – is a laudable aim depends, then (as with trade in goods and services), on the *terms of exchange* and what kind of combination comes out of the interaction. This applies even to transdisciplinary projects as they tend to be founded on a particular theoretical tradition like rationalism or World Systems Theory,[92] making disciplinary imperialism a real risk, if left unattended.

Since IR is now importing concepts and theories wholesale, not least in the form of the many recent 'turns'[93] it is worth considering how IR might best engage other knowledges *while keeping hold of specifically international analytics*. Such engagement requires the tools and clarity to export international perspectives from

86. Evelyn Brister, 'Disciplinary Capture and Epistemological Obstacles to Interdisciplinary Research: Lessons from Central African Conservation Disputes', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 56, (2016): 82–91.
87. Long, 'Interdisciplinarity', 43.
88. J. M. Hobson and George Lawson, 'What is History in International Relations?, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 37, no. 2 (2008): 415–35.
89. Barry Eichengreen, 'Dental Hygiene and Nuclear War: How International Relations Looks from Economics', in *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (2005): 993–1012.
90. Waltz, *Theory*.
91. Ole Wæver, 'Waltz' Theory of Theory', *International Relations* 23, no. 2 (2009): 201–22.
92. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Open the Social Sciences. Report on the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).
93. Stephanie Baele and Gregorio Bettiza, '"Turning" Everywhere in IR: On the Sociological Underpinnings of the Field's Proliferating Turns', *International Theory* 13, no. 2 (2021): 314–40.

IR to other disciplines and interdisciplinary settings, but also potentially involves the internationalisation of theories and concepts imported from bodies of knowledge otherwise poorly attuned to that dimension of the social world. Without a positive notion of what the international is, both those are likely to be difficult.

Too often, IR has grafted ontological commitments from e.g. Economics, Sociology or even Biology[94] onto objects of analysis that it considers 'international' (though without clarity about what the international entails the latter are identified more by convention).[95] If IR scholars wish to draw on Science and Technology Studies (STS) to study the 'co-production' of technical and social order, they might need to adjust STS's vocabulary and theories to make them attuned to the consequences of socio-technical co-production happening in the context of multiple coexisting societies.[96] Likewise, New Materialism-inspired IR scholars have creatively adopted notions of 'assemblages' and 'entanglements' from Anthropology, or 'tipping points' from Earth System Science, but if these elements are adopted unmodified – or even inserted *in place of* the international – the implications of societal multiplicity disappear from the resultant analysis. Thus the 'Planet Politics manifesto' proposes a whole new IR discipline on the basis that the international is obsolete whereas entanglement with the Earth and the planetary is the *real* that should structure analysis of world politics.[97] Surely the planetary real coexists with an international real, whether we like it or not?[98] Concepts like *actor-network* usefully emphasise entanglement, networked ontologies and dispersed agency, but should ideally be graspable in the context of a social sphere *fragmented* by separations between multiple uneven social formations. `Relationality' is thus not, as Milja Kurki has intimated (p.13), a synonym for multiplicity, but in some ways its opposite number, casting the world as `an unfolding relational `mesh'' (p.10) with every `thing' and `we' radically situated and intertwined.[99] 'Global' is therefore also a poor stand-in for 'international' as the former taps instead into the dimension of the social that is singular.

Here UCD provides a possible rendition of 'the international' that, by outlining a general problem stemming from the non-unity of social space, facilitates wider inter-disciplinary dialogues, even if UCD itself does not specify all the ways in which unevenness and

94. Duncan Bell, 'Beware of False Prophets: Biology, Human Nature and the Future of International Relations Theory', *International Affairs* 82 no. 3 (2006): 493–510.
95. For example, the editors of *International Political Sociology* aim to 'fracture IR' via intense diversification of approaches to, in particular, `key areas and processes that remain central to the understanding of transformations of the international, including war, militarization, migration, weapons, security, and colonial legacies'. See Jef Huysmans and Joao Pontes Nogueira, `Ten Years of IPS: Fracturing IR', *International Political Sociology* 10, no. 4 (2016): 299 -3190.
96. Daniel McCarthy, 'Imposing Evenness, Preventing Combination: Charting the International Dynamics of Socio-technical Imaginaries of Innovation in American Foreign Policy', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021): 296–315.
97. Anthony Burke, Stephanie Fishel, Audra Mitchell et al., 'Planet Politics: A Manifesto from the End of IR', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 44, no. 3 (2016): 499–523.
98. Corry, 'Nature and the International', 432.
99. Milja Kurki, 'Relational Revolution and Relationality in IR: New Conversations', *Review of International Studies* (2021): 1–16.

combination occur and create impacts. Mid-range IR theories like realism have theorised some political and military consequences of uneven coexistence of multiple societies, while approaches focused on coloniality foreground structured hierarchical relations between different social formations. But with UCD – or at least the notion of societal multiplicity that Rosenberg has abstracted from it – IR's remit includes both these and more: it is wider than politics beyond states (since all social processes are subject to multiplicity in some way), yet also more distinct. From this starting point, IR is less likely to be overwhelmed by theories and concepts from other disciplines; and perhaps with its delimitation to a *specific* dimension of the social world it may be less likely to invade and overlay the unique perspective of other disciplines. Concepts from other disciplines can be more readily be put to work to understand more fully – while not eclipsing – the international.

In sum, if IR in reaching out to other disciplines *replaces* its own perspectives with imported concepts, it risks becoming an invaded discipline where a rump-IR supplies issues and data for other disciplines. Paradoxical though it sounds, it is only if IR becomes a more self-conscious discipline with a problematic of its own that it will be most useful to interdisciplinary studies. The conversation and debate around what that problematic precisely is should not end with UCD. But UCD does appear to be a good place from which to start.

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Is 'Uneven and Combined Development' White?

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Olivia Rutazibwa has invited advocates of 'uneven and combined development' (UCD) to reflect on its vulnerability to the charge of 'Whiteness'.[101] In this short commentary I offer a tentative response in two steps. First, I assess UCD's Whiteness in terms of the 'epistemologies of immanence, ignorance, and innocence' which Meera Sabaratnam identifies as the main mechanisms of White subject-positioning'.[102] Second, I examine UCD's own decolonial potential: how far can it contribute to what Robbie Shilliam describes as the three key manoeuvres of epistemic decolonisation: 're-contextualization, re-conceptualization, and re-imagining'?[103] This two-step exercise suggests not only that UCD need not be White, but even that it may help Postcolonial theory to take its own methodological and normative injunctions further than it has been able to do thus far.

For Sabaratnam, 'epistemologies of ignorance' consist of 'representations that obscure, exclude or exceptionalise the central role of racialised dispossession, violence, and discrimination in the making of the modern world.'[104] Is UCD based on such an

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101. I would like to thank Justin Rosenberg for his helpful comments on an earlier draft.
102. Meera Sabaratnam, 'Is IR Theory White?: Racialised Subject-Positioning in Three Canonical Texts', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 49, no.1 (2020): 3−31.
103. Robbie, Shilliam, *Decolonizing Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2021).
104. Sabaratnam, 'Is IR theory White?', 12.

epistemology? To the extent that UCD is arguably a theoretical sublation (*Aufhebung*) of classical Marxism,[105] it already carries within itself Marx's dictum that 'the plunder, enslavement and exploitation of America, Africa and India' constitute the 'chief moments of primitive accumulation' as the foundation of the capitalist mode of production and hence the modern world.[106] However, UCD's dialectic of societal multiplicity also carries Marx's dictum to a new level. For it entails that the dynamics of modern world history cannot be resolved back to the singular contradiction between capital and labour. To be sure, the empirical substantiation of UCD's perspective on the co-constitution of capitalism, racism and slavery has lagged behind this theoretical affirmation. But this is changing as UCD moves from its period of theoretical consolidation to expanded empirical applications.[107]

Sabaratnam calls her second criterion of Whiteness 'epistemologies of immanence'. These refer to the 'claim that "modernity" is *immanent* or endogenous uniquely to the "West"'.[108] And yet rejecting '"immanence" (or "internalism") is already foundational to UCD and a key concern that it shares with postcolonial projects of "connected histories"'[109] and '"connected sociologies"'.[110] Indeed, a significant part of contemporary UCD scholarship has been concerned precisely with tracing key problems in the social sciences, such as Eurocentrism and 'methodological nationalism', back to their roots in internalism.[111] UCD's opposition to theoretical and methodological immanentism has also informed intersocietal accounts of the rise of capitalism which were obscured in pre-existing internalist analyses.[112] In short, UCD already shares with postcolonial theory a fundamental critique of 'immanence'.

Finally, 'epistemologies of innocence' refer to attempts 'to emphasise the *inadvertent, unintentional*, and *exceptional* character of racist behaviour or practices'.[113] In other

105. Kamran Matin, *Recasting Iranian Modernity: International Relations and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 2013), 150−4.
106. Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1* (London: Penguin, 1990), 915.
107. For example, Alexander Anievas and Kerem Nişancıoğlu, *How the West Came to Rule: The Geopolitical Origins of Capitalism* (London: Pluto, 2015); Robbie Shilliam, 'The Atlantic as A Vector of Uneven and Combined Development', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2009): 69−88.
108. Sabaratnam, 'Is IR theory White?', 13, emphasis in the original.
109. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected Histories: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005).
110. Gurminder Bhambra, *Connected Sociologies* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).
111. For example, Kamran Matin, 'Deciphering the Modern Janus: Societal Multiplicity and Nation-Formation', *Globalizations* 17, no. 3 (2020): 436−51; Kamran Matin, 'Redeeming the Universal: Postcolonialism and the Inner Life of Eurocentrism', *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 2 (2013): 353−77; Justin, Rosenberg, 'The "Philosophical Premises" of Uneven and Combined Development', *Review of International Studies* 39, no. 3 (2013): 569−97; Justin Rosenberg, 'Why Is There No International Historical Sociology?', *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2006): 307−40.
112. Cf., Anievas and Nişancıoğlu, *How the West Came to Rule?*; Matin, *Recasting Iranian Modernity*, 49−58.
113. Sabaratnam, 'Is IR Theory White?', 13, emphasis in the original.

words, 'epistemologies of innocence' downplay or even elide structural dynamics of racism and Whiteness, which 'is not an 'identity' so much as a 'stand-point' rooted in *structural* power'.[114] So, whether UCD harbours 'epistemologies of innocence' or not concerns the wider question of the relation between 'structure' and 'agency' in UCD. As a form of international historical materialism, UCD retains Marx's famous rejection of the false dichotomy between structure and agency in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.[115] This perspective is further clarified when we consider the interrelation of 'unevenness' and 'combination' in UCD. 'Unevenness' is the context within and through which 'combination' takes place via agential praxis. At the same time 'combination' has emergent properties and generates further 'unevenness'.[116] The outcome is that a dialectic of structure and agency is built into UCD. Thus, for UCD, political and intellectual conduct and practices, including racist ones, cannot be reduced to contingent behaviour of individual agents. Indeed, UCD has been deployed to theorise 'contingency' itself, an idea central to epistemologies of innocence (Cooper 2013).[117]

All this suggests that UCD, far from being intrinsically White, may actually be usable as a decolonising epistemology. In his recent excellent book, *Decolonising Politics*, Robbie Shilliam argues that decolonising Political Science, and the social sciences more generally, involves three 'maneuvers': recontextualisation (of thinkers), reconceptualisation (of thought-systems), and reimagination (of canons and voices).[118] Let us consider UCD's relationship to each manoeuvre.

For Shilliam decolonisation of knowledge ought to begin by 'recontextualizing' thinkers 'within the imperial and colonial contexts that form the backdrop to their ruminations'.[119] Now, 'imperial' and 'colonial' relations are particular instances of that 'unevenness' of the social world which Trotsky called 'the most general law of the historic process'.[120] Thus, for UCD they are already a part of an inter-societal dimension/context which plays into every aspect of social life, including knowledge production. The recovery of this dimension sheds a new light on the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion involved in knowledge production. Indeed, Shilliam himself used UCD's inter-societal contextualisation to inform a masterful revisionist account of modern German thought.[121]

Shilliam's second move is 'reconceptualization'. It 'especially involves tracking the connecting tissue that arranges concepts and categories in a logical fashion'.[122] Central

114. Ibid., 5.
115. Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 300−26.
116. Matin, *Recasting Iranian Modernity*, 16.
117. Luke Cooper, 'Can Contingency Be "Internalized" Into the Bounds of Theory?: Critical Realism, the Philosophy of Internal Relations and the Solution of "Uneven and Combined Development"', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26, no. 3 (2013): 573−97.
118. Shilliam, *Decolonizing Politics*.
119. Ibid., 15.
120. Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (London: Pluto Press, 1985), 27.
121. Robbie Shilliam, *German Thought and International Relations: The Rise and Fall of a Liberal Project* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
122. Shilliam, *Decolonizing Politics*, 16.

to this 'tracking' is a historical conception of the referents of specific concepts and categories that is analytically poised to incorporate imperial and colonial dynamics.[123] Now, arguably the 'connecting tissue' of 'Eurocentric' and 'White' epistemologies consists of an internalism that presents extrapolations of (White/Western) particulars as universals.[124] But if so, then UCD already involves a fundamental 'reconceptualization' of modern Western thought. There is, however, a difference here too: namely that UCD's critique of internalism enables it to subject non-Western thought to the same reconceptualising manoeuvre that decolonial thought tends to limit to Western epistemologies.[125]

Shilliam's final decolonising manoeuvre is 'reimagination': 'we must imagine, at least in principle, that those who dwell in [disciplinary cannons'] marginalized positions have traditions of thought that are generally edifying'.[126] In principle, there is nothing in UCD that would hinder this manoeuvre. Indeed, such a manoeuvre was central to Trotsky's own idea, counterintuitive to most of his Marxist contemporaries, that Russia's very 'backwardness' enabled it to produce the most 'advanced' forms of revolutionary thought and politics. Similarly, UCD has informed a radical revision of theories of revolution and modernity based on Iran's purportedly anomalous experience of 'Islamic revolution'.[127] These arguments regarding the edifying impact of marginalised spaces on the centre are rooted in UCD's fundamental emphasis on the creative potential of interactive difference as a key vector of modern world development. But once again, there is a possible, and possibly fruitful, difference which lies in the 'combination' moment of UCD's epistemic dynamic. Specifically, the combination of coexisting instances of difference – whether organised hierarchically or horizontally – renders the distinction between them an analytical device rather than an essentialising ontological claim. This in turn underpins UCD's anti-essentialist ethos, an ethos which has been, perhaps unwittingly, suspended in some of the canonical works of decolonial and postcolonial thought.[128]

It is important to note that UCD's decolonial qualities arise from a conceptual configuration that distinguishes it from other relational perspectives that also reject internalism, of which Eurocentrism is a particular instance. Global Historical Sociology (GHS) is an important case in point.[129] GHS studies `two interrelated dynamics: first,

123. Ibid.
124. Matin, 'Redeeming the Universal'.
125. For example, Kamran Matin, 'Decoding Political Islam: Uneven and Combined Development and Ali Shariati's Political Thought', in *International Relations and Non-Western Thought: Imperialism, Colonialism and Investigations of Global Modernity*, ed. Robbie Shilliam (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 108−24.
126. Shilliam, *Decolonizing Politics*, 17.
127. Matin, *Recasting Iranian Modernity*.
128. For example, Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Penguin, 2003); Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993); cf. Jung-Bong Choi, 'Mapping Japanese Imperialism onto Postcolonial Criticism', *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 9, no. 3 (2003): 325−39.
129. For example, Julian Go and George Lawson, eds. *Global Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

the *transnational* and *global dynamics* that enable the emergence, reproduction, and break-down of social orders… at subnational, national, or global scales; and second, the *historical* [dynamics] of transnational and global forms'.[130] This self-definition removes two crucial dynamics out of GHS's theoretical focus: socio-historical difference as an over-determining condition of sociological amalgamation that results from/in the mutual (re-)constitution of social orders, forms, and scales; and dynamics arising from, rather than despite, the plurality of social orders. Both dynamics are integral to the dialectical constellation of UCD's constituent concepts: unevenness (societal multiplicity) ←→ combination (mutual constitution) ←→ development (historical multilinearity)). As a result, GHS and UCD also differ in terms of their relation to classical sociology. GHS is an 'extension of historical sociology'[131] that, in Lakatosian terms, acts as an 'auxiliary' intellectual device that protects, or bypasses, classical sociology's 'hard-core' (ontologically singular conception of the social).[132] By contrast, UCD transforms that hard-core through its premise of 'unevenness'/'societal multiplicity'[133] thus effecting a 'paradigm shift'.[134] This involves an interactive and pluriversal conception of totality that critically incorporates the problematic of historical difference central to Post-/Decolonial Theories, hence chiming with Edward Said's idea of the 'symphonic whole'.[135] Moreover, UCD's fundamental postulate of societal multiplicity integrates 'the international' into socio-political theory as a dimension of social reality – one that is obfuscated by the epistemological fragmentation involved in the disciplinary compartmentalisation of modern social sciences and humanities.

The upshot of all these reflections is that the relationship between UCD and Post-/Decolonial Theory can be fruitful for both sides. Post-/Decolonial theory can help push UCD further beyond its European origins so as to realise its intrinsic potential as a universal analytic. And in realising this, UCD may simultaneously provide resources that enable Post-/Decolonial Theory to overcome its tendencies towards provincialism and essentialism.[136] This mutually beneficial engagement can further enhance the project of stripping IR of its theoretical Whiteness.

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130. Ibid., 2, emphases in the original.
131. Ibid.
132. Imre Lakatos, 'Lectures on Scientific Method', in *For and Against Method: Imre Lakatos, Paul Feyerabend*, ed., Matteo Motterlini (Chicago andf London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 19–112.
133. Justin Rosenberg, 'International Relations in the Prison of Political Science', *International Relations* 30, no. 2 (2016): 127–53.
134. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
135. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, xviii.
136. Choi, 'Mapping Japanese Imperialism'; cf. John M. Hobson, *Multicultural Origins of the Global Economy: Beyond the Western-centric Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 20−30; Kamran Matin, 'Decolonising Iran: A Tentative Note On 'Inter-Subaltern Colonialism', *Current Anthropology* (forthcoming); Leon Moosavi, 'The Decolonial Bandwagon and the Dangers of Intellectual Decolonisation', *International Review of Sociology – Revue Internationale de Sociologie* 30, no. 2 (2020): 332−54.

More Specific, More Open-ended:

Reconciling UCD's Contradictory Challenges through Methodological Pluralism

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Two decades after Leon Trotsky's concept of uneven and combined development (UCD) was postulated as the core of a distinctive IR perspective,[138] UCD scholarship is entering a new phase. As showcased in the recently published special issue of the *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (CRIA) and two EISA-sponsored roundtables, UCD is expanding its thematic scope, building bridges with other IR theoretical perspectives, and sparking crucial political debates. In a nutshell, UCD is breaking free of both its original historical sociological specialism and important but theoretically narrow debates about capitalist transition. This twofold move has allowed UCD to start fulfilling its much broader potential as a distinctively international social theory.

As UCD expands its scope and theoretical breadth, two seemingly contradictory challenges emerge. On the one hand, to establish its place among other IR theories, UCD must be able to clarify its premises and produce testable hypotheses. Variations of this point have been raised by scholars closer to more established currents of the discipline, such as Ayşe Zarakol, Kevin Gray, and David Blagden.[139] Regarding the premises, they must be sufficiently distinct from realist, liberal, and other historical materialist (Gramscian, World Systems Analysis, dependency) perspectives, to justify UCD's theoretical uniqueness. Regarding the hypotheses, they must be defined in a way that excludes alternative explanations and allows for empirical verification. If this challenge is not met, UCD risks becoming an unfalsifiable theory of everything.

On the other hand, to remain true to its disruptive, anti-capitalist, and revolutionary origins, and to be useful to contemporary postcolonial, decolonial, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist scholars, UCD must firmly reject any kind of Eurocentrism. At the most basic level, this means clearly leaving behind some of Trotsky's outdated vocabulary, including heavily loaded notions such as 'backwardness', 'stages' of development, and the 'cultural class' of nations.[140] On a deeper, epistemological level, this means questioning the 'abyssal line'[141] that defines what kind of discourses count as legitimate forms of social-scientific knowledge, and who gets to write international theory. As powerfully summarised by Olivia Rutazibwa, this means foregrounding questions such as 'where do

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138. Justin Rosenberg, `Isaac Deutscher and the Lost History of International Relations', *New Left Review* I/215, Jan/Feb (1996): 3–15; Justin Rosenberg, 'Why is There no International Historical Sociology?', *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2006): 307–40.
139. See their respective contributions to this forum.
140. Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008), 4–5.
141. B. de Sousa Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 19.

we engage UCD from?' and 'what is UCD for?'.[142] If this challenge is not met, UCD risks becoming yet another discursive artefact of epistemological imperialism.

More specific and scientific; more open-ended and political. Can UCD be both? My contribution to this emerging debate is to suggest that yes, it can – as long as it remains methodologically plural, refusing to set in stone any form of UCD orthodoxy.

Although coming from radically different perspectives, these two lines of critique actually identify the same gap: UCD's methodological openness (one could say vagueness). They do not fundamentally challenge UCD's international ontology, based on the fact of social multiplicity (or 'unevenness'). They do not question that this unevenness results in different forms of 'combination'. Nor do they deny that this produces an ever changing, 'developing' international reality. The crucial question they raise is how to specify uneven and combined development, be it for social-scientific or political, anti-imperialist purposes.

UCD is sometimes presented as an alternative to different forms of 'presentism' and 'methodological nationalism'.[143] Nevertheless, a fully developed UCD methodology is yet to be clearly spelled out. In his contribution to *Historical Sociology and World History*,[144] Rosenberg does spend a couple of pages sketching a UCD 'method of analysis' in three steps. He starts with the 'concept of unevenness' to invoke an 'international dimension' and look at the 'wider intersection of different forms and temporalities of development'. Then, he suggests that UCD scholars should investigate 'how are the particular features and temporalities of different societies (. . .) concretely combined by the historical process'. Finally, UCD scholars are invited to 'ask what unique dynamic of combined development arises from this dialectical process'.[145]

In my piece in the CRIA special issue,[146] I argued that this methodological approach, geared to an International Historical Sociological (IHS) analysis, is limited. The problem

142. See Olivia Rutazibwa's contribution to this forum.

143. For insightful contributions to some emerging debates about methodological shortcomings in mainstream International Historical Sociology (IHS), see Eren Duzgun, 'Debating "Uneven and Combined Development": Beyond Ottoman Patrimonialism', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, (2021): 1–27; and Eren Duzgun, 'Against Eurocentric Anti-eurocentrism: International Relations, Historical Sociology and Political Marxism.' *Journal of International Relations and Development* 23, no. 2 (2020): 285–307.
For similar critical contributions to mainstream Development Studies and International Political Economy (IPE) debates, see Felipe de Antunes de Oliveira, 'Development for Whom? Beyond the Developed/Underdeveloped Dichotomy.' *Journal of International Relations and Development* 23, no. 4 (2020): 924–46.
Although these contributions use UCD as a critical standpoint to question established IHS and IPE methodologies, they fall short of fully developing an alternative UCD methodology.

144. Alexander Anievas and Kamran Matin, eds., *Historical Sociology and World History: Uneven and Combined Development Over the Longue Durée* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

145. J. Rosenberg, 'Uneven and Combined Development. "The International" in Theory and History', in A. Anievas and K. Matin, eds. *Historical Sociology and World History* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 29.

146. Felipe Antunes de Oliveira, 'Of Economic Whips and Political Necessities: A Contribution to the International Political Economy of Uneven and Combined Development', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021): 267–95.

is not only the lingering Eurocentrism expressed through an explicit instance of 'denial of coevalness'.[147] It is also that the long-term UCD IHS methodology suggested by Rosenberg misses inter-capitalist unevenness and short-term economic developments. For in the contemporary world, almost all societies have completed their transition to capitalism, and poorer societies in the global South are arguably more, not less capitalist than richer Western societies. Taking into account the partial de-commodification of labour promoted by welfare states[148] in the aftermath of World War II, the most typical form of capitalist social relations – characterised by a sharp opposition between capital owners and dispossessed sellers of labour power – is to be found today in the world's periphery.

This means that the very notion of 'temporalities of development' that remains central to much UCD IHS, even when it attempts to grasp 'inter-capitalist' or 'advanced' unevenness,[149] is fundamentally unfit for International Political Economy (IPE) analysis. Social relations in the global South are not 'backward' or 'in the past' in any meaningful sense: actually, considering the progressive erosion of the welfare state, in some ways the global periphery may announce the future of so-called 'advanced' capitalist societies. During the course of the 21st century, it is easier to imagine iconic global north cities such as London and New York becoming more like iconic global south cities such as New Delhi, Shanghai or Sao Paulo than the other way round. In any case, thinking in temporal terms is not only unhelpful, but actively misleading. The kind of unevenness relevant for contemporary forms of UCD is not of 'temporalities of development', but of degrees of exploitation of labour, levels of environmental destruction, and state capabilities. Importantly, my claim is not that the IPE method sketched in my article was the 'correct' methodology for UCD at large. On the contrary, the underlying suggestion was that different objects and styles of UCD analysis will require different methodologies, attuned to different kinds of unevenness.

Expanding on that argument, the same methodological openness that at first appears as a weakness, perhaps represents one of UCD's most important strength as an IR theory. The thematic expansion of UCD has opened up varied opportunities for methodological specification. Going forward, different expressions of UCD will have to develop their own methodologies. Emerging context-specific methodologies should start by unpacking UCD's three constitutive elements: unevenness-combination-development. The first and probably the most crucial step is to specify what kind of unevenness is being analysed. This can potentially lead to very different styles of research, from highly formalised analysis of measurable forms of unevenness, to highly political analysis of entrenched social, racial, and gender inequalities between and across societies. The second step, which sets UCD's methodologies apart from simpler, comparative methodologies, is mapping how these forms of unevenness interact (i.e. 'combine'). Here, UCD scholars

147. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

148. Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Political Economies of the Welfare State* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 4.

149. For outstanding examples of UCD analysis of fully capitalist societies, see Alexander Anievas, *Capital, the State, and War: Class Conflict and Geopolitics in the Thirty Years' Crisis, 1914–1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014); and Julian Germann, *Unwitting Architect: German Primacy and the Origins of Neoliberalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021).

will have to develop a growing vocabulary of operational concepts, capable of capturing context-specific manifestations of broader UCD dynamics, such as the 'whip of external necessity' and the 'privilege of historic backwardness'. Finally, the third step is the dynamic analysis of a specific system of unevenness and combination (i.e. 'development'), calibrated according to the time frame of the research.

The new CRIA special issue is an extraordinary example of the potential of UCD's methodological pluralism. The original contributions of Siebert'[150] Leigh,[151] Cooper,[152] McCarthy,[153] and Blagden[154] push UCD in radically different directions, and sometimes may seem to be talking over each other. This joyful plurality reflects the state of the very discipline of IR, however. Embracing a plurality of UCD methodologies allows us to rise above the cacophony and recognise the distinctive traces of an emerging UCD *lingua franca* – one which may even bridge the many fragmentations of international theory itself. At the very least, this shared language may allow for permanent cross fertilisation between different expressions of UCD scholarship.

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UCD and the Politics of Climate Change: Problem? Solution? Or Both?

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It was once widely believed that the central problem facing efforts to address climate change lay in our perception of the temporal remoteness of the threat. '[S]ince the dangers posed by global warming aren't tangible, immediate or visible in day-to-day life', wrote Anthony Giddens in a version of this argument, 'many will. . . do nothing of a concrete nature about them. Yet, waiting until they become visible and acute before being stirred to serious action will, by definition, be too late'.[156] This advances a classical common sense view of the politics of climate change. It appears logical and persuasive. Yet, the claim has since been shown to be false, or at least *telescoping* in its explanation

150. J. Siebert, 'The Greening of Uneven and Combined Development: IR, Capitalism and the Global Ecological Crisis', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021): 164–85.
151. J. Leigh, 'Geoculture and Unevenness: Occidentalism in the History of Uneven and Combined Development', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021): 186–206.
152. L. Cooper, 'Worlds beyond Capitalism: Images of Uneven and Combined Development in Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars Trilogy', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021): 228–49.
153. D. R. McCarthy, 'Imposing Evenness, Preventing Combination: Charting the International Dynamics of Socio-technical Imaginaries of Innovation in American Foreign Policy', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021): 296–315.
154. D. Blagden, 'Uneven and Combined Development: Convergence Realism in Communist Regalia?', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021): 250–66.
155. Luke Cooper is Associate Researcher, LSE IDEAS.
156. Anthony Giddens, *The Politics of Climate Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 2.

of barriers to effective action. On the one hand, the proliferation of extreme climate events has been linked to rising global temperatures, but the societies affected most severely by these shocks have not necessarily responded with aggressive environmental protection measures. Australia, for example, is both the world's largest coal exporter, responsible for well over a third of the market in 2019,[157] and a major victim of climate change, having suffered devasting bushfire seasons in 2009 and 2019–2020. On the other hand, as this example also illustrates, the material impact of climate change is not felt universally; so, for many, lived experience of these perils will be limited and justification of the need to act dependent on a moral imperative: either a sense of solidarity with others (or planet Earth) *right now*, or responsibility towards *future* generations of humans.

Perhaps surprisingly given the fundamentally political nature of these challenges, Political Science and IR have been slow to recognise climate change (as well as the broader gamut of environmental issues) as a cross-paradigmatic intellectual question with potential implications for all lines of enquiry. Robert Keohane has noted, for instance, the dramatic contrast between 'our slight attention to climate change. . . [and] the enormous attention the profession paid to an earlier existential threat to the planet—nuclear war'.[158] One reason for this may lie in issues touched upon in different ways by Justin Rosenberg, Ayşe Zarakol, Olaf Corry and Felipe Antunes de Oliveira in this forum. Namely, the discipline's tendency towards theoretical fragmentation. Yet while it is understandable that ecological concerns are treated as a subject of specialisation, those undertaking work in other areas also need to reflect on their own ecological blind spots. Furthermore, reacting against this situation can lead to the difficulty that Corry highlights: frustration with IR's theoretical landscape, leads to the 'graft[ing] [of] ontological commitments' from other disciplines 'onto international objects of analysis'.

In this context, what we might call UCD's *delicate compromise* – its openness to a range of intellectual traditions but with a still resolute focus on 'the international' – seems well suited to address IR's ecological lacuna, perhaps contributing to the much-needed *greening* of the discipline. Here I want to suggest two possible avenues in this direction: firstly, how UCD might account for the barriers to climate action; and, secondly, how the normative politics of the environmental issue might, in turn, demonstrate the need for UCD to engage with ideology.

UCD conceptualises the planetary biosphere as an immense physical web of interactive multiplicity.[159] The environmental conditions in which human development takes root[160] are themselves a source of unevenness, giving spatial differentiation to the locales

157. Daniel Workman, 'Coal Exports by Country', *World's Top Exports*, 6 May 2021. https://www.worldstopexports.com/coal-exports-country/. Last accessed December 27, 2021.

158. Robert O. Keohane, 'The Global Politics of Climate Change: Challenge for Political Science', *Political Science & Politics* 48, no. 1 (2015): 19.

159. Luke Cooper, 'Worlds beyond Capitalism: Images of Uneven and Combined Development in Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars Trilogy', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021): 243–44. See also Johanna Siebert, 'The Greening of Uneven and Combined Development: IR, Capitalism and the Global Ecological Crisis', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2021): 164–85.

160. On the recasting of the people-nature relation also see Kamran Matin, *Recasting Iranian Modernity: International Relations and Social Change* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), 153.

that form across planet Earth and shaping their evolution over time.[161] However, as climate change shows with impeccable clarity, the biosphere is simultaneously a driver of interconnectedness. For ecosystems exist in a co-dependent and dynamic web of relations, giving them a profoundly uneven and combined character – and this quality lends a certain 'tragedy' to efforts to address climate change. Not all states have the same imperative to act, and even those that have high incentives may choose to prioritise other goals. Given that a high level of coordination is clearly required, humanity's uneven and combined development becomes a problem for the sustainability of the species.

How to remedy this situation requires – to move to the second point – a conceptualisation of the role ideology plays in cohering societies around feelings of historical purposeful and moral conviction. Indeed, the further fallacy in Giddens' assumption lies in its over-rationalisation of the climate question. It is as if it involved a mere calculation of self-interest and was not, itself, a question of finding a concept of morality that might guide the human endeavour. Indeed, his related claim that climate change is unlike a war because there are 'no enemies to identify and construct' but instead 'dangers that seem abstract and elusive' is surely revealing.[162] For in the throes of the kinds of arguments that lead to war and violence the 'enemies' conjured in the minds of the public are often illusory – and the willingness of individuals to die in the service of confronting these imagined threats simply cannot be explained by rational self-interest.[163] It requires a conceptual account of community and ideology. And – as Kevin Gray argues in this forum – this is where UCD could benefit from engagement with Gramscian scholarship.[164]

So, what kind of approach to ideology could UCD venture that might be harnessed in the service of the climate agenda? Perhaps its contribution may be to hold in dialectical tension two characteristics of the human world: the particular and universal.[165] Historical communities, we might argue, that come into being at different points in time, and in specific interrelations with the outside world, involve the construction of cultural frames that give them a common identity and purpose. These imagined temporalities require the repeated (and contested) construction of ideas concerning their past, present and future. And as the field of interpretation is open, societies may well choose – like Australia in its current political iteration – to incorporate fossil fuels production into their national story. But they are not predetermined to do so and these readings may – indeed must – be challenged by alternative moral conceptions of the community and its sense of shared purpose. So, contesting the

161. Justin Rosenberg, 'Basic Problems in the Theory of Uneven and Combined Development. Part II: Unevenness and Political Multiplicity', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 23, no. 1 (2010): 180.

162. Giddens, *Politics of Climate Change*, 2.

163. On this see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

164. Stuart Hall, for example, famously argued that the British New Right were not economic rationalists but pursued a highly normative agenda based on the recovery of Britain's lost greatness: 'The moral language and agenda of Thatcherism was never simply an ideological convenience. It was always the "leading edge" of its populism'. Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1988), 85.

165. On this see Kamran Matin, 'Redeeming the Universal: Postcolonialism and the Inner Life of Eurocentrism', *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 2 (2013): 353–77.

terms of these articulations by advancing a particular image of the future may allow us to incorporate the preservation of the natural world, and perhaps the very 'progress' of the community, into its subjective, internal understanding of its historical 'being'.

Yet, it is equally the case, that no community is hermetically sealed. Each is subject to a series of interrelations with the outside world, shaping not only its economic but also cultural reproduction. And awareness of this 'combined' character of human social development could underpin the kind of universal, internationally expansive account of solidarity climate action requires. This differs from a conventional liberal account of interdependence by sustaining the presence of the particular, (i.e. differential and uneven), character of the human world. Whereas beggar-thy-neighbour nationalisms essentialise this difference, UCD can contribute to the opposite: it can situate different cultural locales within a social and ecological totality that points to the construction (through ideas and ideology) of an internationalism sensitive to cultural variation and diversity. One political consequence of this theoretical shift lies in the potential to re-frame intersocietal competition. Whereas historically geopolitical conflict (including war and the threat of war)[166] was an impetus to development (the 'whip of external necessity'),[167] climate change requires and posits a new form of 'competition'. For societies that pursue pioneering, effective ecological policy will lead by example, compelling others to follow for fear of 'falling behind' their new, innovative vision.

Perhaps, then, it is a mistake to view UCD too narrowly as merely explaining the tragic qualities of the climate disaster (through its account of the barriers to action). For in both its material and ideational forms it may also be key to its resolution.

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166. Tilly Charles, *Coercion, Capital and European States, A.D. 990–1990* (Cambridge and Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).
167. For an example, see Jamie C. Allinson and Alexander Anievas, 'The Uneven and Combined Development of the Meiji Restoration: A Passive Revolutionary Road to Capitalist Modernity', *Capital & Class* 34, no. 3 (2010): 469–90.