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Capital and the state system: a class act

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Abstract *This paper is set up as a critique of Alex Callinicos's contribution, 'Does capitalism need the state system?' It challenges his understanding of the relationship between capitalism and the state system and the theory of imperialism, before presenting an alternative view that conceives the connection between capitalism and the state system as embodied in the formation of a transnational capitalist class holding power in an English-speaking, liberal Atlantic core or 'heartland', facing a series of 'contender states', which developed under state auspices. This constellation has to be analysed in its own right by applying the method of historical materialism to it, rather than confining that method to the analysis of capital and then bringing in state-centric International Relations. Today, the rise of China as the new contender illustrates how the combined process has evolved. The response to China comes from the larger constellation of the West and not just from the United States: the capitalist class acts to ensure the sovereignty of capital in the process.*

Introduction: external relations or inner structure of the global political economy?

My argument in this contribution is based on the idea, developed at length elsewhere (see van der Pijl 1998, 2006), that the global political economy has for more than a century evolved as a specific spatial constellation combining at least two different state-society complexes (Robert Cox's (1986) term): on the one hand, an originally Anglophone, integrated West made up of states sharing a liberal constitution and allowing their societies a considerable measure of self-regulation enshrined in civil law; and, on the other, a succession of relatively strong states organizing their societies from above with varying degrees of central planning and coercion. France, Germany, Japan, Italy and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) have been such rivals or *contender states* to the liberal heartland; China would be the key contender today.

Capital as mobile wealth competitively exploiting society and nature emerged as an extraterritorial social force in the context of the liberal, 'Lockean' West. It profited historically from the structural free space and entry conditions prevailing in the Atlantic English-speaking world; the West has all along pursued global liberalism and created the spaces for capital to expand transnationally. Nevertheless, the limits to the power of the West as a social and geopolitical

¹ I thank the editors of the *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* for the invitation to participate in this symposium and three anonymous reviewers for their comments, which prompted me to rewrite my original draft in a more constructive fashion. Thanks also to Ian Richardson for sharing some of his Bilderberg links with me.

formation are set in a different context (that of foreign and international relations) than the limits of capital, which are today becoming evident in the exhaustion of society and nature on a global scale.

If we accept that this is a fruitful way of interpreting the structure of the global political economy in the modern age, it will be obvious that Alex Callinicos's question, 'Does capital need the state system?', in this issue of the *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* is problematic on several counts.

First of all, in the perspective I propose here, the structure of the state system is itself differentially related to capital. In the Lockean West, capital 'needs' the military-diplomatic power of the leading states (Britain in the 19th century, the United States in the 20th) to open up spaces otherwise closed to it. This may take place through actual violence, but also through economic diplomacy and other less conspicuous forms of coercion. The West in turn will 'need' certain states outside its own orbit. To minimize the cost of opening up the primary contender for capital, it has typically recruited vassals among the lesser, secondary contenders (the East Asian states were such vassals in the Cold War; see Castells 1998, 277). Finally, capitals forming in the contender context, such as the financial groups organized by activist investment banks (Paribas in France, Deutsche and Dresdner in Germany) will need *their* states, but not so much the state 'system', which is organized very much around the home turfs of their main competitors. So there is no single answer to the question of whether capital needs the state system, because the state system does not exist as an undifferentiated singularity either in its own domain or in its relations with capital.

Secondly, and related to this, I have difficulty with Callinicos's approach because it suggests that the two sets of forces and relations are *externally* related to each other. In my reading, they are *internally* related, emanations of what Richard Ashley (1986) calls a 'deep structure' constitutive of actors that are then mistaken for autonomous forces. It was not just capital that came of age through state intervention in the process of dissolution of the feudal order, just as the unevenly timed capture of state power by capitalist interests worked as a differentiating factor in structuring the state system. There are also powerful internal connections between the ruling and governing classes in the liberal West, between them and the aspirant liberalizing forces and world-market-oriented fractions of capital in certain contender states, between domestic private or privatizing interests in a country like China today, its own state class and foreign capital, and so on. Clearly, as soon as we begin to really try and identify the material interconnections between the political and economic sphere, we are speaking about social classes.

Finally, the direction of 'need', that is, who needs whom, is premised on a structural primacy and autonomy for capital that is not warranted. It suggests a basis-superstructure approach that goes back to naturalistic materialism (which holds that all that we experience is ultimately given by nature, including the experience itself). Karl Marx developed his historical materialism by synthesizing the materialist idea that humanity exists as a force of nature, with Hegel's conception of a realm of active spiritual development. In Hegel of course this was still understood as an emanation of the divine (the World Spirit), but in Marx it becomes a historical force in its own right, what Antonio Gramsci calls 'absolute historicism' (1971, 465). By 1900, however, Marxism had been adopted as a theory of economic causation again by the labour movements of the late industrializers, our contender states, notably, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia. It was reproduced in the Second International, as well as in Soviet Marxism, in both its Stalinist and Trotskyist

lines of development. The materialist theory of Louis Althusser is only the most recent restatement of this economic, basis-superstructure interpretation of Marxism, an interpretation for which the entire corpus of early writings (the 'young Marx') had to be dismissed as pre-scientific (for example, Althusser 1977; Althusser and Balibar 1975). Ultimately, however, all spheres of social life are encompassed by the methodology of historical materialism in their own right, not just the economy.

In the remainder of this contribution, I will first of all address this last issue. All social relations, I argue, are instances of the exploitative transformation (socialization) of nature. This is the 'deep structure' of economic, political and foreign (international) relations. The contradictory nature of this socialization points to the issue of method, which must be applicable to these various terrains as well. Second, I will briefly come back to the notion of the heartland/contender structure of the global political economy and illustrate how a Western ruling class acts as the embodiment of the interconnections between capital and the state system, illustrating this with some evidence from the most recent meeting of the Bilderberg group.²

The deep structure: nature, the productive forces and social relations

The 'deep structure' of social life, understood in the most general sense, resides in the exploitation and socialization of nature by historical humanity. Transforming nature yields what Marx called the *productive forces*, nature (including human nature) transformed and objectified into means of existence placed at the disposal of an evolving humanity, as its material culture—from iron ore to a Yale lock, or from reproductive mating to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The exploitation of nature proceeds by definition through goal-directed human effort, namely, labour. As Peter Dickens notes (1996, 102), 'all forms of work are necessarily work on nature'. Marx captures the interactive aspect of the exploitation of nature when he defines labour as:

a process between man (*Mensch*) and nature, a process in which man mediates, regulates and controls his metabolism with nature by his own action. He confronts the substance of nature (*Naturstoff*) as one of its own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate what nature yields in a form useful for his own life. *Whilst influencing and changing external nature in this movement, he simultaneously changes his own.* (*Marx-Engels Werke* (MEW), xxiii, 192, emphasis added)

The 'he' in this quote (like 'humanity') is of course an abstraction. His or its nature not only changes over time with the exploitation of the world, but people develop differentially, across space, as specific communities different from or foreign to each other. Productive *and* foreign relations are therefore immediately given by the notion of the unity of nature and humanity, that is, once people begin to create their own means of existence. These relations develop within what Fernand Braudel (1981) calls the 'limits of the possible', as a specific historical format of productive *and* foreign (as well as political, ideological) relations into which people enter involuntarily, and which they experience as being as much 'natural' as nature itself. From the dawn of historical humanity, communities occupying separate spaces and considering each other as outsiders have therefore developed their

²Istanbul, 31 May to 3 June 2007.

mutual relations as an aspect of how they dealt with the specific geographical and climatic conditions facing them (Shirokogorov 1970, 12; Borochoy 1972, 137).

Importantly, the same array of productive forces allows a community to engage in the transformation of nature through a labour process (in which it differentiates internally) and to engage in foreign relations (in which it deals with those who appear as already different). The emergence of states only condenses and formalizes the social and foreign relations within and between communities and societies; it does not add a qualitatively different dimension. The 'state system' in this sense is premised on a reordering of foreign relations across a particular grid, which includes, at some point, the attempt to homogenize the ethnic profile of the society under the state's jurisdiction and hence a parallel effort to exteriorize the 'foreign' from that society. But, as indicated, this itself proceeds through a differentiated structure.

Productive and foreign relations thus provide a specific structure to how the productive forces are developed. These relations (and others I do not separately address here) foster that development up to a point, and then become an obstacle to it. Thus, the competitive exploitation of labour by capital will initially have a highly dynamic effect in societies organized around relations of personal dependence and used to a slow pace of reproduction. At some point, however, it becomes more and more difficult to force the growth of the productive forces into the straitjacket of capitalist relations of production. The Internet, one of the most dynamic productive forces today, is unifying large parts of the world's available knowledge and information into a single grid, available to everybody with access to it. Although inundated with advertising and spawning large fortunes for a handful of pioneers, capital has difficulty imposing market discipline on Internet use in any comprehensive sense; indeed the World Wide Web is evolving into what may be termed a global brain through which humanity thinks collectively (not only of noble causes, of course). Not coincidentally, the campaign against the abortive Multilateral Agreement on Investment, the defining moment in the emergence of the alternative, 'anti'-globalization movement, gained its breadth and strength through widespread use of the Internet (Mabey 1999).

In foreign relations, the conquest of the oceans by political formations on the Atlantic frontier of Western Christianity likewise had a dynamic effect on the development of the productive forces; shipbuilding and navigational expertise, cartography and astronomy were all fostered through foreign relations (for example, through information obtained by the Portuguese monarchy from experience gained by Chinese ocean-going enterprise) as much as they were specifically linked to commerce (see van der Pijl 2007, chapter 4). The productive forces, from stone tools and elementary language to nuclear technology and the Java computer language, do not at once become available to humanity as a whole, but to *specific communities who develop culturally on the basis of their mastery*. The indigenous peoples of the Americas were conquered by Europeans because the latter had horses and iron metallurgy and the former did not; just as Hernando Cortes and Francisco Pizarro had a level of intellectual sophistication combined with brutality with which they could outwit and subdue the indigenous rulers and their populations, in spite of the fact that they had come with only a handful of men. The current effort to deny Iran access to its own uranium enrichment base, of which the consequences would certainly be important but not necessarily more dangerous than its availability to the US, Britain or Israel, is a reminder that even today not every advance in terms of the development of the productive forces

is immediately global. The same applies to medicines and other products of science ring-fenced by intellectual property rights (May 2000).

Summing up, the productive forces develop in the context of specific sets of relations of production and of foreign relations. Even if, at some point, it would appear that capital 'faces' the state from the outside (from Raymond Vernon's thesis in 1973 to globalization arguments about the loss of sovereignty today), we are in fact looking at differential forms of social relations reproducing a common fund of productive forces, the deep structure in which they are both anchored.

Contradictory unity and differential development

In the historical materialist perspective, the productive forces and the social relations in which the exploitation and socialization of nature evolves are related in a contradictory way: they are compatible *and* they are not. From the perspective of formal logic, a contradiction is a meaningless antinomy, but, since Hegel, we may look at the contradictory unity as a combination in development because a contradictory state of affairs can only exist in movement—not just in thought, but also objectively (Hegel 1923, 68).

To identify the key contradiction within a specific field (apart from the fundamental one of humanity in or over nature, and the one between the productive forces and social relations), Marx left us a method of abstraction and concretization applied to the economic structure of bourgeois civil society—a method cited by Alex Callinicos in his article. It starts from the dual nature of the commodity, which is contradictory in itself, as use value constrained by its simultaneous social form as exchange value. The constraining, *alienating* social form given by the relations of production complicates actual use: you do not just eat, but have to first buy your food, earn the money for it, and so on. In the end, there may be plenty to eat, but you still go hungry. This inner tension is amplified and reproduced in more developed forms, such as 'work' being subjected to the need to valorize capital, varieties of daily life selected on grounds of profitability, and so on.

All the qualitative aspects of social existence are thus subjected, hemmed in, by quantitative criteria. The method, however, allows us to deconstruct and then reconstruct social reality through a step-by-step procedure. Each contradiction is traced back to a more fundamental one, until we get to a core principle that allows us to see how the complex reality facing us is determined by the modalities of these underlying structures (Marx 1973, 100; Hegel 1923, 106). As always, what Marx adds is real historicity (Ritsert 1973). How a contradictory process develops is not given *in nuce*, as a Hegelian rationality 'unfolding' from the cell form into an immanent totality. It develops through departures and struggles in which elements that were not originally part of the equation enter into it from the outside as well, such as the original expropriation of the direct producers that precedes the commodity form and actual capital accumulation (Luxemburg 1966).

In foreign relations, I would argue, the core contradiction (and, hence, the polarity within which all foreign and international relations evolve) is the *contradictory unity of community and humanity*. Humans are all part of a single species, but the social form in which human groups become aware of themselves and the existence of others who are (culturally) different is that of foreign relations. The singular human substratum thus develops within this contradiction as different and mutually foreign (I have developed this at greater length in

van der Pijl 2007). The contradiction will tend to push towards a breaking point where it must be overcome; 'globalization', the use of terms like humankind, planetary community, etc all reveal that in our contemporary consciousness, this stage is becoming a reality. Clearly, the globalization of capitalist market discipline and the evolution of foreignness are profoundly imbricated in this process. In the drive towards 'global governance' and the isolation of residual 'rogue states' supposedly still outside the process, the suspension of foreign relations becomes apparent even though its contradictory nature is far from being transcended—never mind *The end of history* (Fukuyama 1992), *Empire* (Hardt and Negri 2000—though see their own refutation in 2004), or any other claim to the contrary.

The aspect of alienation means that we perceive practical, tangible relations through the contradictory social form imposed on them. In capitalist relations of production, the market is naturalized to the point where we can only think of food in terms of its price and other quantitative aspects related to its commodity form, or a job in terms of what it pays and makes possible financially. Hence, the form obscures the substance—its historical specificity evaporates and, along with it, the idea that we can change the relations through which we obtain food or work. In the case of foreign relations, a community we perceive as different can be engaged with, equally on account of alienation, only by crossing real or imaginary boundaries between social spaces—something that requires particular forms of legitimation. Whether we think of informal gestures of submission or of a passport makes no difference here. The social form, which is a historical product, is again taken for granted and naturalized. Form is taken for substance; the option of changing the form remains unrecognized; and historical time, in the sense of past, present and future, is suspended.

The state system and international relations, then, rest on a primordial differential exploitation or socialization of nature that results in cultural difference, just as capital has emanated from that process. Foreignness as the alienated form, derived from foreign relations, means that we perceive others as though they were a different species—a practice called 'pseudo-speciation' (Tiger 1970, 213). 'Race', the unintelligibility of a foreign language or strange habits may trigger pseudo-speciation; just as low-grade work and slavery, past and present, will have that effect (Enzensberger 1994, 109–110; Inayatullah and Blaney 2004, 7, 9). Overcoming this particular alienation requires not just that we recognize this as problematic and appreciate the common humanity in a foreigner. The contradiction is not a moral category, but a principle that we derive from the study of history.

Today, the contradiction between the social and the private constitutes the specific form in which the subjection of the productive forces by the relations of production develops. The real economy tends towards a single, world-embracing labour process into which all inputs enter and which is operated by what Marx called the 'collective worker'. At the same time, it is enveloped by a system of financial frenzy pumping wealth from that global productive organism on an unprecedented scale (*MEW*, xxv, 485–486; Merk 2004).

Socialization, the fact that, more and more, productive activity hangs together, thus develops *within* capitalism; it is the contradictory transformation contained in it. It has to be recognized, not just to understand how we may move beyond capitalism, but also by those committed to its preservation. Keynesianism and state intervention, or managerialism (with restriction of the rights of shareholders, another aspect of the Keynesian programme), are forms of such recognition that seek to remain within capitalist relations of production. Not everybody was of course

confident that this would remain so: this is what the neoliberal counterrevolution, prepared by the Mont Pèlerin Society and its scions, such as Friedrich August von Hayek and Milton Friedman, was about (Cockett 1995; Walpen 2004).

One of the mistakes often made is to assume that capitalist development drives forward socialization 'objectively', so that, at some point, only the capitalist shell has to be removed and we have the finished infrastructure of a socialist society. This was a major misconception taken from Lenin's famous piece on state monopoly capitalism, *The impending catastrophe and how to combat it* of October 1917, in which he claimed that state control of the economy for war purposes created 'the complete *material* preparation for socialism, the *threshold* of socialism' (Lenin, *Collected works*, xxv, 363). This idea resonated in much 1960s and 1970s Soviet Marxist theorizing; the subsequent *Programme commun* of French Socialists and Communists was very much based on it.

However, the contradictory unity of productive forces and relations of production should not be read as productive forces merely adding up positively. As will be clear once we think of work, the form of wage labour has a huge effect on its content, on the people performing it, on products, etc. Indeed, society evolves in increasingly awkward and lopsided ways as a result of the need to satisfy the requirements of 'the market'. So even if there are many instances of a global socialization of labour in evidence, and it is possible to think about them in terms of what they could develop into if only the discipline of capital were to be removed, we must recognize that the specific form of capitalist socialization has also worked to exhaust and poison the biosphere and society. People, exhausted by capitalist exploitation, Veblen argued in 1898, become conservative because this exploitation reduces 'their means of sustenance, ... and consequently their available energy, to such a point as to make them incapable of the effort required for the learning and adoption of new habits of thought' (quoted in Ross 1991, 209). This does not rule out regeneration, but that certainly is not a given either.

In terms of foreign relations, the common humanity that we may hope will at some point emerge in the course of the drive towards global governance will likewise be a degraded one. War and destruction are obvious causes. But also, if we only think of what happened to 'global justice' (desirable in itself) with its war crimes tribunals ('justice' for Slobodan Milosevic, who died in his cell, but not for Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, who still enjoy celebrity status), or how the societies in which the West pursued 'humanitarian intervention' were left behind, it will be clear that here too, a mutilated and exhausted humanity has been created at the receiving end of 'liberation'. Whether in the case of the West imposing global governance on the state system, or capital exploiting society and nature on a world scale, the alienating form distorts the productive forces and impoverishes and degrades its human substratum. Whatever social form will be achieved in the coming crisis of Western hegemony and capitalist discipline, it will have to rebuild this substratum and the exhausted and contaminated biosphere in which it precariously survives today (Brennan 2000).

The class form of imperialist global governance

The global governance projected by the liberal West (which I will call imperialist to distinguish it from an equitable variety) builds on the prior experience with

informal, flexible forms of class rule operating behind the formal structures of parliamentary government. They were pioneered in the British Commonwealth and transmitted to the English-speaking world at large and to the European Union. The West's hegemony and coercive power contribute to laying the foundations for equitable global governance, but are distorting them in the same process. As I have argued elsewhere (2006, chapter 4), the 1970s attempt to create a New International Economic Order through the United Nations, for all its shortcomings, was an attempt to build a global governance on the basis of equality; the specific degradations of the social infrastructure of today's world can be catalogued by the Western counter-revolution unleashed against this enterprise, detailed in the study referred to, as much as they result from two more rounds of rapacious exploitation by globalizing capital.

Now categories like the 'West' for the Atlantic, liberal heartland of the global political economy, 'transnational capital' and 'contender state' should not be read as referring to real entities, even though we can identify them fairly well. Today, the West is obviously spearheaded by the US and Britain, with the other white, English-speaking countries and the EU tied to their bandwagon. But, as concepts, the 'West' and other such terms denote postulated structures and relations that have empirical aspects, but are not themselves 'facts'. As Peter Bratsis argues (2006, 21–22), the concept of 'state', for instance, should not be reified into something that exists, as such, as a singularity. The state is a unifying category under which we can range a broad set of practical actions and experiences; it is a 'sublime concept'. Others have qualified this in terms of 'over-determining' structures that are not themselves present, but appear through a range of other instances that derive their coherence from them (Laffey and Dean 2002; Althusser 1977).

Let us assume, then, that the West (W) and transnational capital (C) are joined together in a hegemonic structure (H) projecting an imperialistic global governance and organization of production and finance on the planet at large. In the process, it encounters obstacles and opposition (from current and past contender states in international relations, to social forces fleeing or resisting capitalist discipline and its consequences). But the West, capital and, certainly, the hegemonic structure into which they are welded together are not as such *actors*. They denote fields of action which in combination reveal a certain orientation and sense of direction; but the actually directive social forces, the ruling classes, first of all, are constantly engaged in shaping this orientation and direction. It is not a given. It must be elaborated as an ideational constellation, what I call a 'comprehensive concept of control'—a structural constraint supported by a particular configuration of classes and fractions of classes galvanizing themselves behind a common strategic orientation, which then serves as the framework in which everybody defines their 'interests'. As Max Weber famously put it,

not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the world-images that have been created by "ideas" have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interests. (quoted in Seidman 1983, 252)

The social substance of either foreign or productive relations can only be made up of people who act in a particular capacity on these dimensions. They act under a compulsion they have articulated among themselves and for themselves (a comprehensive concept of control), and seek to impose this as a formula on the

rest of society and, via the heartland-contender structure, on other states. Today, the exploitative, energy-intensive Western way of life appears to be reaching the limits of sustainability; it is only a matter of time before the pyramids of debt and the fragile webs of global finance will begin to unravel, and energy resources are running out in spite of the increasingly aggressive attempts by the West to retain control of them (see, for example, Klare 2001 and Nesvetailova 2007). The actual opposition is still in the stage of anomic terrorism, but will broaden as more mainstream social forces become negatively affected.

In terms of the heartland-contender structure, Russia remains incompletely integrated even after the collapse of the USSR; China, with India rising behind it (although nothing is preordained here—India can also break up), poses the major obstacle to Western hegemony today. As *New York Times* commentator and champion of neoliberal globalization Thomas Friedman notes in an article entitled 'Contending with China':

when the history of the [present] era is written, the trend that historians will cite as the most significant will not be 9/11 and the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. It will be the rise of China and India. How the world accommodates itself to these rising powers, and how America manages the economic opportunities and challenges they pose, is still the most important global trend to watch. (Friedman 2006)

As the American manufacturing base crumbles without a compensating ability for Western capital to participate in the direct exploitation of Chinese labour, the US line must be expected to resort to a strategy that has a long pedigree in Democratic party foreign policy: translate domestic discontent into a policy of opening up new areas for foreign investment, for which a 'human rights' policy has become the most obvious instrument in the modern era. By such a policy, which hides a more comprehensive attempt to restructure the relationship between state and society in a contender state to a liberal, Lockean one and dispossess the current state class, the West would achieve what it has achieved so many times before: derailing the contender effort, even if in this case, as in most others, this will not by itself end friction and rivalry, but rather change its nature by removing the anti-systemic aspect.

Every contender state is or has been characterized by a state-society configuration in which the state serves as the directive centre, the initiator of social development; a single state class holds power, deriving its effective command over society from its control of the state apparatus and centralized resources. Even so, the revolution from above by which this state class renews and retains its hold on social development, works to generate, even in nominally state-socialist formations, the differentiation between a capitalist class properly speaking and a managerial cadre running the state answerable to it. The former develops, in Gramsci's famous phrase, 'molecularly', as an unintentional effect of the effort to emulate the achievements of the liberal West. He coined this phrase in his discussion of the concept of *passive revolution*: the modernization of society from above, which must remain 'passive' to ensure that the state class is not dispossessed (Gramsci 1971, 114). But as private social forces become more prominent, they may succeed in removing the limits of liberalization, transnationalize or link up with 'privatizing' elements in the state class.

A class act in Istanbul

The process of establishing and renovating the hegemonic consensus of the West is achieved through an infrastructure of informal networks, from business board-rooms to the more prestigious planning bodies. These bring together, in the private surroundings required to allow the expression of differences, key statesmen, media managers and other 'organic intellectuals' of the transnational capitalist class (Gill 1990; Carroll and Carson 2003; Graz 2003). In the contemporary world, the Bilderberg conferences, the Trilateral Commission, the World Economic Forum and a range of comparable bodies are active in this sense. As Gramsci recognized, transnational class networks 'propose political solutions of diverse historical origin, and assist their victory in particular countries—functioning as international political parties which operate within each nation with the full concentration of the international forces' (Gramsci 1971, 182, note). Let me confine myself here to the role of the Bilderberg group in relation to the Chinese challenge.

Since its inception in the early 1950s (building on discussions among exiles in wartime London), Bilderberg has been the key channel of communication for the Atlantic ruling class (van der Pijl 1984, 1998, 2006). In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, its attention naturally veered to China as the obvious next contender. True, Beijing's decision to peg the Chinese currency on the dollar in 1994 was seen as a move to tie its fate more emphatically to the US economy and a further commitment to become integrated into the expanding West at the height of the Clinton 'globalization' drive.

At the Toronto Bilderberg conference in May–June 1996, the usual roster of royalty, economic statesmen and blue-chip corporate executives heard former US Assistant Secretary of Defence, Chas W Freeman, Jr, deliver a paper entitled 'Let China awake and join the world'.³ China, Freeman argued, should be guided into the multilateral regulatory infrastructure of the heartland in order to prevent its rise from destabilizing the Western-dominated world order. China, he argued, 'is well along in its efforts to create the central institutions necessary to manage an increasingly dynamic and integrated national economy', with a growing nationalism among the population to back it up politically. Unlike the previous contender state, the USSR, China in his view was 'not an implacable foe of the West or the world order the West has created'. Therefore,

the question before Europeans and North Americans is not how to prevent what cannot be prevented. It is how to ensure that the rise of China in the new millennium buttresses rather than erodes the international system we have constructed with such difficulty in this century. To that end, we must urgently consider how to speed up China's integration into existing institutions on acceptable terms.⁴

We may leave aside the supposed contrast with the USSR; the anti-Western posture of prior contenders was always a product of the contender experience itself. Its failures and frustrations in one stage guide it to a more militant, radical confrontation in the next. The Chinese challenge to the West *and the response to it* were, in 1996, still in a benign stage and were soon beginning to mutate in a different direction.

³ Published in part in *The Straits Times*, 30 June 1996.

⁴ < <http://www.tlio.demon.co.uk/reports.htm#Kinder> >, accessed 12 September 1996.

The West historically has exerted pressure on other societies to submit to capitalist discipline and consciously probes for partners in the target state willing to be mobilized behind transnational liberalism. China is no different. Condoleezza Rice, on the eve of her appointment as George W Bush's national security adviser, saw the main foreign policy job as 'finding peace, security, and opportunities for entrepreneurs in other countries'. Whilst advocating a policy of confrontation with 'rogue states' like North Korea and Iraq, the policy towards China in her view should be guided by the fact that change in that country is being led by 'people who no longer owe their livelihood to government'⁵. At the same time, in the first intelligence memo Bush received as president-elect, three strategic threats were identified: first, al-Qaeda terrorism; second, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and, third, the rise of China as a military power—but only because it still 'was 5 to 15 or more years away' (Woodward 2004, 12). Soon after, Paul Wolfowitz, in an echo of the statements on the USSR made by Richard Pipes in Ronald Reagan's days, stated that 'over the long run the Chinese political system is going to have to change' (quoted in Kolko 2002, 120).

Certainly the September 11 emergency deflected any intended confrontation, but it remains on the horizon. US geopolitical strategy since the collapse of the USSR has been aimed at a forward push into eastern Europe, as well as in the Middle East and Asia; or, as Dan Plesch put it in the run-up to the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, 'Iraq first, Iran and China next'.⁶

Now, if we go over the list of participants of the Bilderberg group meeting of 31 May to 3 June 2007 in Istanbul, it is obvious that for every possible problem, including China, there is, so to speak, one or more interested representative who embodies the experience of prior responses to comparable problems and thus can contribute meaningfully to developing a strategic consensus to related contemporary challenges.

In Table 1, I have reordered the official list of participants of the Bilderberg group meeting (as provided by the Bilderberg Secretariat) into three categories, 'w 1–3' as a subset of 'W', the liberal West as a political formation; 'c 1–2' of 'C', transnational capital; and 'h 1–4' of 'H', the instances of the hegemonic order on which the two converge. Between square brackets, I have given information not in the official list, but meaningful to understand the importance of why these individuals attended the Bilderberg conference.

From this list, it first transpires to what extent the West has remained the 'West' in spite of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and EU enlargement. Although both the EU Enlargement commissioner (Rehn, *h.1*) and the key strategist involved in NATO enlargement (Donilon, *w.3*) attended, not a single representative of the newly integrated, former Warsaw Pact/Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) countries was present—Austria and Finland are obviously the furthest east the Atlantic ruling class reaches (Turkey has been an established member much longer). Of course, the level of government members of the lesser countries tends to be higher than those of the main Western states, though these are represented by key strategists. All the big globalizing investment banks, key industrial sectors, such as informatics or energy, are all present. A quick glance at the list certainly reveals that

⁵ Quoted in *Financial Times*, 25 July 2000, emphasis added.

⁶ *The Guardian*, 13 September 2002.

Table 1. Participants of Istanbul Bilderberg meeting 31 May to 3 June 2007 by category (w: politics, h: hegemonic order, c: business)

Country	Name	Category
<i>w.0. Royalty</i>		
NL	Netherlands, HM the Queen of The	
B	Belgium, HRH Prince Philippe of	
E	Spain, HM the Queen of	
<i>w.1. Members of government</i>		
GR	Alogoskoufis, George	Minister of Economy and Finance
TR	Babacan, Ali	Minister of Economic Affairs
A	Bartenstein, Martin	Minister of Economics and Labour
S	Bildt, Carl	Minister of Foreign Affairs
S	Borg, Anders	Minister of Finance
A	Gusenbauer, Alfred	Chancellor
NL	Heemskerck, Frank	Minister of Foreign Trade
FIN	Katainen, Jyrki	Minister of Finance
E	Léon Gross, Bernardino	State Secretary for Foreign Affairs
US	Luti, William B.	Special Assistant to the President and Director of Defense Policy, NSC
IRL	McDowell, Michael	Minister of Justice
US	Silverberg, Kristen	Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of International Organization Affairs
FIN	Tiilikainen, Tinja	Secretary of State, Ministry for Foreign Affairs
US	Wood, Joseph R.	Deputy Advisor to the Vice President, National Security Affairs
<i>w.2. Other politicians and government personnel</i>		
GB	Clarke, Kenneth	Member of Parliament
GR	Diamantopoulou, Anna	Member of Parliament
TR	Duna, Cem	Former ambassador to EU
DK	Federspiel, Ulrik	Permanent Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
US	Feldstein, Martin	President/CEO National Bureau of Economic Research
US	Geithner, Timothy F.	President/CEO Federal Reserve Bank of New York
CND	Kenney, Jason	Member of Parliament
D	Klaeden, Eckart von	Foreign policy spokesman Christian Democrats (CDU)/Christian Social Union (CSU)
DK	Lykketoft, Mogens	Member of Parliament
GB	Osborne, George	Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer
GB	Patten, Christopher	Member, House of Lords [former UK Governor of Hong Kong until handover to China in 1997]

US	Perry, Rick	Governor of Texas
US	Sebelius, Kathleen	Governor of Kansas
US	Summers, Lawrence H	University Professor, Harvard [former Secretary of Treasury at the time of the Asian crisis]
D	Westerwelle, Guido	Chair, Free Democratic Party (FDP)
US	Wilson, Ross	Ambassador to Turkey

w.3. Military-strategic and intelligence-related functionaries and consultants

US	Boyd, Charles G	President, CEO Business Executives for National Security (BENS)
US	Bremmer, Ian	President, Eurasia Group
TR	Çetin, Hikmet	Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, former NATO representative for Afghanistan
B	Daele, Frans van	Permanent Representative at NATO
GB	Dearlove, Richard	Master Pembroke College, Cambridge [Former Head of MI6]
US	Donilon, Thomas E	Partner, O'Melveny & Myers, LLC [involved in NATO expansion under Clinton]
US	Grossman, Marc	Vice Chairman, The Cohen Group
US	Kissinger, Henry A	Chair, Kissinger Associates
US	Perle, Richard B	Fellow, American Enterprise Institute
US	Weber, Vin (Jr)	Partner, Clark and Weinstock [Chair, National Endowment for Democracy]
US	Zelikow, Philip D	Professor of History, University of Virginia [Terrorism adviser, US Department of State]

h.1. International financial and economic organizations

INT	Derviş, Kemal	Administrator, UNDP
INT	Kroes, Neelie	Commissioner, European Commission [Competition]
INT	Monti, Mario	President, Luigi Bocconi University [predecessor Kroes EU Commission until 2004]
INT	Rato y Figaredo, Rodrigo de	Managing Director, IMF
INT	Rehn, Olli	Commissioner, European Commission [Enlargement]
US	Sheeran, Josette	Executive Director, UN World Food Programme
INT	Trichet, Jean-Claude	President, Central European Bank
INT	Wolfowitz, Paul	President, The World Bank [former US Under Secretary of Defence]

h.2. Other foundations and planning councils

P	Belcza, Leonor	President, Champalimaud Foundation
US	Haass, Richard N	President, Council on Foreign Relations
US	Kravis, Marie-Josée	Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute

Continued

US	Matthews, Jessica T	President, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
D	Perthes, Volker	Director, <i>Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik</i>
CH	Schwab, Klaus	Executive Chairman, World Economic Forum
<i>h.3. Media and public opinion</i>		
US	Barone, Michel	<i>US News & World Report</i>
TR	Birand, Mehmet	Columnist
A	Bronner, Oscar	Publisher, Editor, <i>Der Standard</i>
TR	Çandar, Cengiz	Journalist
E	Cebrián, Juan Luis	CEO, PRISA <i>El País</i>
D	Döpfner, Matthias	Chair CEO, Axel Springer AG
US	Gigot, Paul A	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>
US	Hart, Peter D	Chair, Peter D Hart Research Association
FIN	Jääskeläinen, Atte	Director of News, <i>YLE</i>
GB	Micklethwait, John	Editor, <i>The Economist</i>
D	Nass, Matthias	Deputy Editor, <i>Die Zeit</i>
F	Ockrent, Christine	Editor-in-Chief, <i>France Télévision</i>
D	Bredow, Vendeline AH von*	Business correspondent, <i>The Economist</i>
GB	Wooldrige, Adrian D*	Foreign correspondent, <i>The Economist</i>
<i>h.4. Intellectuals</i>		
US	Allison, Graham	Professor of Government, Harvard University
US	Bierbaum, Rosina	Professor of Natural Resources and Environment, University of Michigan
TR	Gönensay, Emre	Professor of Economics, Işık University, former Minister of Foreign Affairs
NL	Halberstadt, Victor	Professor of Economics, Leiden University
F	Roy, Olivier	Senior Researcher, CNRS
TR	Soysal, Ayşe	Rector, Bosporus University
GB	Taggart, Paul A	Professor of Politics, University of Sussex
<i>c.1. Private business: Financial</i>		
I	Bernabè, Franco	Vice Chairman, Rothschild Europe
US	Blankfein, Lloyd	President, CEO, Goldman Sachs
F	Castries, Henri de	Chairman, CEO, AXA
US	Collins, Timothy C	Senior Managing Director, CEO, Ripplewood Hdgs LLC

ISR	Gilady, Eival	CEO, Portland Trust Israel [private investment into Palestinian territories]
IRL	Gleeson, Dermot	Chair, Allied Irish Bank Group
US	Holbrooke, Richard C	Vice Chair, Perseus LLC
US	Jacobs, Kenneth	Deputy Chairman, Head, Lazard US, Lazard Frères & Co LLC
US	Johnson, James A	Vice Chairman, Perseus LLC
US	Jordan, Vernon E, Jr	Senior Managing Director, Lazard Frères & CO LLC
TR	Koç, Mustafa	Chair, Koç Holdings
US	Kovner, Bruce	Chair, Caxton Associates, LLC
US	Kravis, Henry R	Founding Partner, Kravis Kohlberg Roberts & Co
N	Kreutzer, Ida	CEO, Storebrand ASA
E	Rodriguez Inchauste, Matías	Executive Vice Chairman, Grupo Santander, Ciudad Grupo
A	Scholten, Rudolf	Member of Board Executive Directors, Oesterreichische Kontrollbank
US	Scully, Robert W	Co-President, Morgan Stanley
I	Siniscalco, Domenico	Managing Director and Vice-Chairman, Morgan Stanley
US	Thiel, Peter A	President, Clarium Capital Management LLC
NL	Tilmant, Michel	Chair, ING NV
S	Wallenberg, Jacob	Chair, Investor AB
N	Ulltveit-Moe, Jens	CEO UMOE AS

c.2. Private business: Other

B	Davignon, Etienne	Vice-Chairman, Suez-Tractebel
P	Balsemão, Fernando	Chair, CEO Impresa, former Prime Minister
F	Barnier, Michel	Vice President, Mérieux Alliance, former Minister for Foreign Affairs
F	Baverez, Nicolas	Partner, Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP
TR	Boyner, Ümit N	Executive Council, Boyner Holdings
D	Burda, Hubert	President, CEO, Burda Media Holdings
GR	David, George A	Chairman, Coca Cola HBC SA
US	Dyson, Esther	Chair, EDventure Holdings, Inc
DK	Eldrup, Anders	President, DONG A/S
I	Elkann John	Vice Chairman, FIAT Spa
F	Hermelin, Paul	CEO, Cap Gemini
NL	Hommen, Jan HM	Chairman, Reed Elsevier
GB	Kerr, John	Member House of Lords; Deputy Chair, Royal Dutch Shell plc
US	Kent, Muhtar	President and COO, Coca Cola Company
US	Mundie, Craig J	Chief Research and Strategy Officer, Microsoft Corp
N	Myklebust, Egil	Chair Board of Directors, SAS, Norsk Hydro ASA

Continued

A	Nowotny, Ewald	CEO, BAWAG psw
FIN	Ollila, Jorma	Chair, Royal Dutch Shell plc
F	Parisot, Laurence	President, MEDEF [employers' federation]
CDN	Reisman, Heather	Chair & CEO, Indigo Books and Music
I	Scaroni, Paolo	CEO, ENI SpA
US	Schmidt, Eric	Chair of Executive Committee and CEO, Google
D	Schrempp, Jürgen	Former Chair Management Board, Daimler-Chrysler
IRL	Sutherland, Peter D	Chair, BP plc and Chair, Goldman Sachs International
S	Svanberg, Carl-Henric	President & CEO, LM Ericsson
US	Taurel, Sidney	Chair CEO, Eli Lilly & Co
GB	Taylor, J Martin	Chair, Syngenta International AG
CH	Vasella, Daniel L	Chair & CEO, Novartis AG
NL	Veer, Jeroen van der	CEO, Royal Dutch Shell AG
TR	Yücaoglu, Erkin	Chair Board, MAP, former president, TUSIAD [employers' federation]

* Rapporteurs

this is as full an array of the contemporary ruling class as they come. Those missing will be kept informed through key links with adjacent networks, such as the World Economic Forum, the Council on Foreign Relations and others, represented by their respective heads; Henry Kissinger (*w.3*) and Peter Sutherland (*c.2*) have key roles in the overlapping Trilateral Commission. Chris Patten (*w.2*) may tell anecdotes from the House of Lords, but he also has crucial experience from the time he introduced, just before the handover to China, democracy to Hong Kong, an issue on which Vin Weber (*w.3*) may bring expertise associated with organizing 'Orange revolutions' and their equivalents in former Soviet-bloc countries.

The themes discussed at this closed meeting can only be surmised from the materials transpiring from the Istanbul Bilderberg meeting.⁷ I have selected a few items with the notice that some of these have been posted by US right-wing anti-globalists with a strong conspiratorial bent who consider Bilderberg a permanent quasi-world government rather than a nodal point (among several others) of the Atlantic ruling class as it evolves and seeks to work out a strategic consensus.

Key items at this meeting were concern about the rise of anti-globalization backlash among the broader population. Sutherland (*c.2*, chair of BP and Goldman Sachs) was quoted as saying that it had been a mistake to have referenda on the EU constitution: 'You knew there was a rise in nationalism; you should have let your parliaments ratify the treaty, and it should be done with'. Kissinger said words to the same effect concerning unification of the Americas, stressing the need to mobilize the enlightened media behind its propagation.

On the Middle East and Central Asia, there was continuing disagreement on Iraq, pressure by Americans (with Kissinger quoted again) to admit Turkey into the EU, as well as the need to confront Iran, for its oil as much as against its nuclear ambitions. It was argued at the conference that strategic air bombardment should do the trick and that, unlike Iraq, there should be no 'boots on the ground'. The presence of Richard Perle (*w.3*), Paul Wolfowitz (*h.1*) and Richard Dearlove (*w.3*) may have served to reflect on some lessons from the Iraq adventure.

One expert, asked to identify the main items of discussion at this Bilderberg meeting, gave the following list:

1. How to divide Iraq into 3–4 new nations.
2. Not if, but when to invade Iran and which nations will participate in the invasion (but see the contradictory evidence above).
3. How to control the oil and natural gas reserves around the world.
4. The creation of the North American Union.
5. The creation of the American Union.
6. The creation of the Pacific Rim Union.
7. When it will be appropriate to start talking about China as the World's next Evil Empire and next enemy. They must always have an enemy in order to justify the massive military spending.

This last point reminds us of the persistent aim of the West to open up China and dispossess its state class. But here, the reader should be warned, we are well into the realm of informed speculation. It is enough to establish that the question to be answered is not whether capital needs the state system, but how the

⁷ < <http://www.bilderberg.org/2007.htm#tbbr> >, accessed 28 June 2007.

transnational ruling class, operating through the heartland-contender state structure of the global political economy, will utilize the levers of power available to master this and other challenges.

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