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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The difference multiplicity makes: The American Civil War as passive revolution

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Abstract
This article examines and further develops the relationship between the theory of uneven and combined development (UCD), recently taken up by International Relations (IR) scholars to furnish a social theory of 'the international', and the Gramscian concept of 'passive revolution', which refers to a molecular process of top-down revolution and state formation that preserves ruling-class power by transforming its social base. To this end, the paper: (1) advances a productive distinction between 'societal' and '(geo)political' multiplicity, increasing the transdisciplinary potential of UCD and challenging dominant state-centric approaches to IR; (2) demonstrates that UCD is central to creating the conditions for passive revolution; and, (3) argues that UCD illuminates the distinct spatial dimensions of passive revolution, for which the succession of 'classes' in time requires the expansion of capitalist social relations in space. To illustrate these claims, the article demonstrates how the American Civil War is best understood as an inter-societal conflict, exacerbated by the coexistence of two social formations within a single state, leading to war. It then shows how, upon victory, the North's abolition of enslaved labour and the subsequent attempt to re-subsume the South within a single sovereign polity constituted a radical instance of passive revolution.

Keywords: American Civil War; historical sociology; multiplicity; passive revolution; uneven and combined development

Introduction

Nation-statist ontologies have long been an issue in disciplinary International Relations (IR). The problem goes far beyond (neo-)realist iterations. Even approaches that claim to reject state-centrism, including certain constructivist and historical sociological approaches, often fall back on geopolitical conceptions of 'society', using sovereign-state borders to distinguish one society from another.[1] Yet the conflation of geopolitical and societal borders occludes the dynamic interactions of non-congruent states and societies. The fact that societies sometimes straddle the borders of sovereign states or coexist within a single state poses distinct challenges for state actors trying to manage both domestic and foreign relations, as is evident in past and present 'national' self-determination movements. Drawing a distinction between the societal and the geopolitical is therefore important for social theories of IR.

In this article, we provide one way of introducing this distinction and demonstrate some of its consequences for theorising historical events. We argue that the American Civil War was the

[1]Cf. Fiona B. Adamson and Madeleine Demetriou, 'Remapping the boundaries of "state" and "national identity": Incorporating diasporas into IR theory', *European Journal of International Relations*, 13:4 (2007), pp. 489–526; Julian Go and George Lawson, 'For a global historical sociology', in Julian Go and George Lawson (eds), *Global Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. ix–xii.

outcome of growing tensions between two distinct societies – one organised around wage labour, the other around enslaved labour – that coexisted within a single state. More than just an issue of identity and ideology, this entailed a conflict between the respective socio-material interests of the North and South's dominant classes, which were also inextricably bound up with capitalist world development. We therefore argue that the American Civil War is best understood as an *inter*-societal conflict, exacerbated by the two formations' coexistence within a single state, leading to a civil war that resulted in the North's victory.

This victory was a decisive event in an historical process of 'passive revolution', a concept first developed by Antonio Gramsci to capture molecular processes of top-down revolution and state formation that both maintain and transform ruling-class power. The North's attempt to re-subsume the South into the new US state during Reconstruction ultimately *preserved* the power of the Southern ruling classes by reconstituting this power in distinctly *capitalist* relations of exploitation. The top-down transformation of a society built around the 'peculiar institution' of chattel slavery into one based on sharecropping and wage labour cleared the way for the extension and development of US capitalism. Moreover, the distinction between the societal and geopolitical illuminates an important *spatial* dimension of passive revolution, for this top-down transformation was also *externally imposed*. The subsumption of the Southern slavocracy by Northern capitalists was not the act of a rising class defeating the old, as illustrated by other bourgeois revolutions.[2] Rather, it was the outcome of a conflict between two dynamic, growing societies, each thoroughly integrated into the sinews of capitalist world development. Casting the American Revolution and Reconstruction as a radical instance of passive revolution, then, enriches our understanding of Gramsci's concept, while situating it within a distinctly non-linear account of history.

For this reason, we theorise 'passive revolution' in relation to the idea of uneven and combined development (UCD), contemporaneously developed by Leon Trotsky, which captures and explains the intrinsically interactive and multilinear trajectory of historical development. UCD scholarship theorises 'the international' in terms of the consequences of 'multiplicity', i.e. the fact that societies coexist and continually condition each other's development. Drawing on and modifying the UCD framework, we trace the complex economic, political, and ideological interconnections between the North, the South, and the wider 'international'. In doing so, we distinguish between societies and polities within UCD theory: the fleeting political divorce of North and South exemplifies societal multiplicity (within one polity) leading to an emergent (geo)political multiplicity (two antagonistic polities), marking the societal and the geopolitical as distinct registers of social ontology.

Additionally, we demonstrate that the passive revolution of the American Civil War and Reconstruction not only arose from the wider conditions of UCD – i.e. from tensions between the conflicting imperatives of two interrelated but distinct social formations, Northern capitalism and Southern slavery, both internal to capitalist world development – but also unfolded according to its very logic, as the North's reconstruction of the South represented an instance of the *(re-)combination* of two distinct societies. This combination produced a unique amalgamation of social forms, replete with its own peculiar tensions, that contributed to the rise of Jim Crow. Thus, our account draws attention to the fundamental spatiality of passive revolution *and* UCD, developing our understanding of these interrelated phenomena and contributing to a growing literature on these concepts.

We begin with an overview of UCD followed by a critique of 'societal' multiplicity, demonstrating how the (geo)political (namely, the state) continues to define the dominant UCD approach. Here, we argue for a distinction between 'societal' and '(geo)political' multiplicity within the UCD framework. We then turn to 'passive revolution', addressing Gramsci's understanding of the concept

[2]Following Neil Davidson, we define bourgeois revolutions as socio-political transformations that promote or consolidate the capitalist production mode through the reconstruction of the state as an autonomous site of capital accumulation (*How Revolutionary Were the Bourgeois Revolutions?* [Chicago: Haymarket, 2012], ch. 19).

and its contemporary uses before drawing out its specifically spatial as well as temporal dimensions. While the new sublates the old, the 'here' also sublates the 'there'. Both constitute processes of UCD wherein an amalgamated social form simultaneously preserves and transforms the initial entities involved in combination. In order to demonstrate the utility of this conception, we advance two novel arguments: (1) that the American Civil War/Reconstruction was an outcome of uneven and combined development; and (2) that these events signify an instance of passive revolution in which Northern elites used the state to transform the social relations undergirding the political power of the Southern ruling class in order to preserve this power, abolishing the peculiar class relations of chattel slavery, thus removing the single greatest obstacle to the expansion of American capitalism.

Multiplicity: Societal and (geo)political

Classical approaches to social theory have been commonly criticised for theorising 'the social' in isolation, focusing on the endogenous sources of a given society's reproduction and transformation.[3] Exogenous factors are then assimilated into historical accounts on an ad hoc basis, conceived as extra-theoretical, contingent encounters between societies that are otherwise conceptualised as self-contained entities developing according to their own internal logics. While a theoretical space is sometimes held open for the inevitable conditioning of societies by geopolitical-military relations, this typically evacuates 'the international' of any social content or historical grounding.

A recent wave of scholarship, initiated by Justin Rosenberg,[4] has worked to systematically develop the idea of UCD as a framework that integrates 'the international' into social theory without reproducing the well-worn problems of proto-realist reification.[5] UCD puts interactive multiplicity at the heart of the historical process: different entities coexist and, as their interactions condition each other over time, their development is *combined*. Based on the work of Leon Trotsky, the framework of UCD posits two logics of development that are generated by multiplicity. First, there is the 'whip of external necessity', which captures the external pressures placed on a social formation overdetermining its development as the dominant classes are compelled to try and develop their productive forces and material capabilities. Second, this same coexistence creates conditions wherein the resources and social forms forged by more 'advanced' formations are already available to later-developers. In this way, the latter benefit from a 'privilege of backwardness' because they can 'import' the most cutting-edge techniques and ideas from the former and adapt them to their own local conditions, consequently engendering peculiar combinations of 'the modern' and 'archaic'.

Importantly, 'combination' produces unique tensions generated by the amalgamation of disparate social forms. These combinatory processes create new developmental trajectories that subvert linear historical accounts. There is no single generalisable developmental path available to latecomers because every prior development alters the possibilities for future developments. As efforts to 'catch up' consist of borrowing 'advanced' elements developed elsewhere, under different conditions and adapting them to local conditions, development is continually redirected. It is a contingent accumulation of disparate forms that are combined and recombined, producing an endless array of hybrid formations. UCD reveals a *general* fact about development, which, as many

[3] See esp. Friedrich Tenbruck, 'Internal history of society or universal history?', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 11:1 (1994), pp. 75–93.

[4] Justin Rosenberg, 'Isaac Deutscher and the lost history of International Relations', *New Left Review*, 215 (1996), pp. 3–15.

[5] Justin Rosenberg, 'Why is there no international historical sociology?', *European Journal of International Relations*, 12:3 (2006), pp. 307–40; Justin Rosenberg, 'Basic problems in the theory of uneven and combined development. Part II: Unevenness and political multiplicity', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 23:1 (2010), pp. 165–89; Justin Rosenberg, 'The "philosophical premises" of uneven and combined development', *Review of International Studies*, 39:3 (2013), pp. 569–97; also Alexander Anievas and Kamran Matin (eds), *Historical Sociology and World History: Uneven and Combined Development over the Longue Durée* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). A comprehensive list of recent works is available at: {https://unevenandcombineddevelopment.wordpress.com/writings/}.

scholars are demonstrating today, can illuminate historical and contemporary phenomena in new and exciting ways.[6]

In short, multiplicity – the coexistence of multiple social formations – is a fundamental dimension of development. UCD offers a theoretical framework that enables us to see this fact and explore its significance in concrete historical processes and events. But the exact outlines of this framework are still being drawn.

One widespread assumption within the UCD literature is that a single register of multiplicity – 'societal' multiplicity – comprises 'the international'. This is repeated by many of UCD's leading proponents,[7] including, most notably, Rosenberg himself.[8] Upon closer examination, however, it is clear that the units that comprise 'societal' multiplicity – i.e. coexisting 'societies' – are *(geo)politically* defined because they are delineated by the sovereign borders of states alone. In other words, irrespective of the social 'content' of these entities (which plays a major role in UCD-based historical accounts), the state functions as the political 'container' for this sociological content, and it is these state containers that constitute 'societal' multiplicity as such. In the dominant UCD approach, *societal multiplicity is (geo)political multiplicity.*[9]

Rosenberg has explicitly justified the (geo)political containment of societies in theory, writing that inter-societal interaction

> adds 'external' causes to the pattern of development which are *over and above those given in its 'internal' configuration alone* … these external influences differ not only in (socio-spatial) origin but also in kind from their internal political, material, and ideational equivalents. *Because they traverse more than one political jurisdiction, they add a strategic, geopolitical dimension to social development.*[10]

He expands on this in a later article:

> By granting this central importance to political multiplicity, are we not now re-grounding IR in the very ontology of Political Science from which we are seeking to free it? If it is *political* fragmentation that makes the international, is not IR properly *at home* as a subfield of Political Science? The answer to this is twofold. On the one hand, political multiplicity must indeed have a special importance for IR – *without it, there would be no plurality of units* [emphasis added]. On the other hand, in International Relations, the *multiplicity* of polities … radically impacts the nature of politics itself – hence, in Waltz's view, the whole need for a separate theory of international politics. Furthermore, where societal multiplicity obtains, its significance is not restricted to politics and relations of power. It extends into the social, economic,

[6]See, *inter alia*, Robbie Shilliam, 'The Atlantic as a vector of uneven and combined development', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 22:1 (2009), pp. 69–88; Alexander Anievas and Kerem Nişancıoğlu, *How the West Came to Rule: The Geopolitical Origins of Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2015); Jessica Evans, 'The uneven and combined development of class forces: Migration as combined development', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 29:3 (2016), pp. 1061–73; Kamran Matin, 'Lineages of the Islamic state: An international historical sociology of state (de-)formation in Iraq', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 31:6 (2018), pp. 6–24; Johanna Siebert, 'The greening of uneven and combined development: IR, capitalism and the global ecological crisis', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 34:2 (2021), pp. 164–85.

[7]For example, Kamran Matin, 'Deciphering the modern Janus: Societal multiplicity and nation-formation', *Globalizations*, 17:3 (2021), pp. 436–51; Matin, 'Lineages', pp. 6–24; Luke Cooper, 'The international relations of the "imagined community": Explaining the late nineteenth-century genesis of the Chinese nation', *Review of International Studies*, 41:3 (2015), pp. 477–501.

[8]See especially Rosenberg, 'Basic problems'.

[9]Dabney Waring, 'Multiplicity, group identity and the spectre of the social', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 36:2 (2023), pp. 145–63; Dabney Waring, 'Collective identity, multiplicity, and the ontology of the international', PhD thesis, University of Connecticut (2022).

[10]Rosenberg, '"Philosophical premises"', p. 583, emphasis added.

> cultural and developmental dimensions too; and its causal implications there … proliferate beyond any logic deriving from political multiplicity alone.[11]

Rosenberg implicitly acknowledges that UCD is defined, ultimately, by *(geo)political* multiplicity alone (i.e. the multiplicity of states, each of which marks off one society from another). Yet he departs from realist IR insofar as (1) he is concerned with the wider array of consequences that follow from geopolitical multiplicity, not only in the political dimension but in the 'social, economic, cultural and developmental dimensions too' and (2) believes that the geopolitical can and must be explained vis-à-vis the social relations that produce it (i.e. it is not wholly autonomous). In this respect, Rosenberg continues to operate within the 'prison of Political Science' and its statist ontology. For each unit of 'the international' is defined by its geopolitical boundaries – 'without [political multiplicity], there would be no plurality of units'[12] – although Rosenberg's explanation of the state itself and his approach to historical development are more broadly sociological.[13]

Even in this restricted form, UCD is a highly significant and productive theoretical intervention. In systematically integrating 'the international' into social theory, UCD offers a fundamental reconceptualisation of the ontology of the social itself, making coexistence and interaction significant aspects of any society's evolution and reproduction: 'societies' are always co-constitutive. This means that (1) societies affect each other's development over time, and (2) inter-societal relations are generally part of each society's 'internal' constitution (i.e. the societal presupposes the inter-societal). The basic units of classical social theory are thereby brought out of (theoretical) isolation, their interconnections embraced: the ontology of a society now includes its interactive coexistence with others.

As currently formulated, however, UCD is unduly restricted by Rosenberg's *political-quasi-societal multiplicity* assumption, which hampers both its explanatory power and potential trans-disciplinary reach. This is especially troubling because UCD explicitly offers a fundamental insight into the *general* significance of multiplicity. According to Rosenberg, the key to UCD is 'the (unannounced) fourth premise of non-identity – numerical multiplicity – that transforms a generic argument about the dialectical nature of reality into one which is uniquely focused upon "the international" as a theorizable dimension of historical change'.[14] Yet, UCD theorists have taken this general ontological insight (the significance of multiplicity) and constructed a methodology for socio-historical research that thematises only *one* register of multiplicity – the multiplicity of states – thereby shifting towards a narrower statist ontology.[15]

The justification for this move, as noted, is the claim that (geo)political multiplicity plays the dominant role in historical development when compared to other multiplicities. UCD does not, then, rest on a general denial of the existence of other multiplicities. Rather, it assumes that the (geo)political, upon its emergence from pre-political social relations, such as hunter-gatherer bands,[16] successfully 'regulates, interrupts and corrals the free play of' the effects of all other social interactions.[17] But this implicit *methodological* commitment to statism obscures the causal implications of societal multiplicity more generally, failing to register how polities are always co-constructed by interrelated and non-congruent social formations, the multiplicity of which is relevant to historical explanation.[18] Consider, for example, how the co-existence of Kurdish society

[11] Justin Rosenberg, 'International Relations in the prison of Political Science', *International Relations*, 30:2 (2016), pp. 127–53 (pp. 135–6); see also Justin Rosenberg and Benjamin Tallis, 'Introduction: The international of everything', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 57:3 (2022), pp. 250–67 (pp. 257–8).

[12] Rosenberg, 'International Relations', p. 136.

[13] Cf. Rosenberg, 'Basic problems'.

[14] Rosenberg, '"Philosophical premises"', p. 583.

[15] For notable exceptions, albeit still partial, see Kamran Matin, *Recasting Iranian Modernity: International Relations and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 2013), ch. 2; Anievas and Nişancıoğlu, *How the West Came to Rule*, ch. 3.

[16] Rosenberg, '"Philosophical premises"'.

[17] Rosenberg, 'Why is there no international historical sociology?', p. 323.

[18] Waring, 'Multiplicity'.

with the states that claim sovereignty over different parts of Kurdistan – Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey – affects both state and societal development, including by fostering and shaping the project for statehood.[19]

The inability to capture such interactive relations derives from the unrecognised inheritance of internalism from the classical social theory tradition. For UCD, this inheritance comes from canonical Marxism's tendency to treat societies and polities as congruent (despite the fact that, at a higher level of abstraction, certain modes of production may be conceived as traversing political boundaries).[20] The state itself first emerges from the alienated social relations that comprise a class society, constituting a new political form of social power. Integrating 'the international' into theoretical explanations, as UCD does, keeps this approach more or less intact. It takes the societal-cum-political units of canonical Marxism and considers how their ongoing interactions along different dimensions have a more general theoretical and historical significance.

In this sense, UCD offers an improved account of historical causation based on an outmoded ontology that is no longer adequate to it. To cast 'the international' in terms defined by political multiplicity fails to register the specific consequences arising from the *relatively* autonomous interactive development of societies, conceptualised as territorial formations comprised of a distinct set of social productive relations and institutions, and a shared ideo-cultural context that facilitates the reproduction of those relations. By this definition, societies are not necessarily coextensive with states: they sometimes exist *across* state boundaries or coexist within a single state. (Geo)political multiplicity does not, then, exhaust the 'international' dimensions of historical development, as the multiplicity of *societies* is also causally significant. Or, put differently, 'the international' might name the causal dimension arising from (geo)political multiplicity specifically, but 'the international' does not capture the broader causal import of multiplicity for world-historical development.

An alternative to this explanation is that UCD theorists recognise the existence of other multiplicities but, in the interest of parsimony, do not theorise them. The question becomes whether other forms of multiplicities play so negligible a role in development as to justify their theoretical exclusion – that is, whether the multiplicity of non-state social entities matter in our theories and explanations. For if the multiplicity of states is not the only 'multiplicity that matters',[21] we need a broader conceptual framework capable of mapping out the different (interactive) registers of multiplicity constituting social reality.

In what follows, we demonstrate that other multiplicities do matter, and that distinguishing between societal and (geo)political multiplicity helps reveal important historical processes through which states and societies mutually condition each other.[22] We aim to show how this distinction can deepen existing theoretical concepts and frameworks, expanding their explanatory remit in a way that sheds new light on historical phenomena. To this end, the next section presents Gramsci's concept of passive revolution, which, we argue, complements UCD's theorisation of 'the international'. The following section then considers how distinguishing between societal and (geo)political

[19] Cf. Kamran Matin and Jahangir Mahmoudi, 'The Kurdish Janus: The intersocietal construction of nations', *Nations and Nationalism*, 29:2 (2023), pp. 718–33. The authors quietly make an unusual distinction between 'societies' and 'the societal', the latter only emerging with the political (p. 730, n. 6).

[20] Cf. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. xx. World-Systems Analysis is an important challenge to the internalism of canonical Marxism. It nonetheless fails to theorise societal multiplicity because it treats the world-system as a *single* society (Anievas and Nişancıoğlu, *How the West Came to Rule*, pp. 16–19).

[21] Milja Kurki, 'Multiplicity expanded: IR theories, multiplicity, and the potential of trans-disciplinary dialogue', *Globalizations*, 17:3 (2020), pp. 560–75.

[22] This distinction is also salient for some non-capitalist societal and (geo)political relations – for example, the relations between nomadic and sedentary societies in pre-modern Iran, mediated by the political institution of the *uymaq*, through which bands of herdsmen systematically 'pumped out the surplus produced by the juridically and legally free peasants', who constituted a distinct society (Kamran Matin, 'Uneven and combined development in world history: The international relations of state-formation in premodern Iran', *European Journal of International Relations*, 13:3 [2007], pp. 419–47 [p. 435]).

multiplicity enriches our understanding of passive revolution. Finally, we use this revised theoretical perspective to elucidate how the American Civil War and subsequent period of Reconstruction are best understood as both (1) an outcome of UCD and (2) a passive revolution.

Passive revolution

A once-neglected topic, Gramsci's idea of passive revolution has become a central leitmotif of many recent (neo-)Gramscian studies, which have persuasively demonstrated the category's foundational status in the overall theoretical architecture developed in the *Prison Notebooks*.[23] Some scholars have gone so far as to claim that 'everything in the *Notebooks* has to do with the concept of passive revolution'.[24] Given the elasticity of meanings associated with the concept and the resultant charges of conceptual over-extension,[25] we must first examine the specific ways that Gramsci developed and refined the idea.

Borrowed from the historian-politician Vincenzo Cuoco, who first used the term to describe the failed Neapolitan Revolution (1799), passive revolution was originally deployed by Gramsci to conceptualise the variegated paths to capitalist domination. More specifically, the category was used to examine the making of bourgeois states in cases where deep-rooted structural transformations were achieved in a more or less *non-revolutionary* fashion. The concept captured the more gradual, elastic, and top-down forms of bourgeois revolution in 'late' developing societies, which lacked the 'popular initiative' of the Jacobin variety.[26]

From Gramsci's 'internationalist perspective',[27] he did not simply posit the radical Jacobinism of the French Revolution as an ideal type from which all other bourgeois revolutions were comparatively contrasted and (inevitably) judged a failure. Instead, the real import of the Jacobin experience was the world-historical role it played in transforming the international conditions from which every subsequent bourgeois revolution emerged. In other words, the passive revolutions marking the various fractured 'transitions' to modern capitalist statehood not only occurred after but *in reaction to* the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. 'All history from 1815 onwards shows the efforts of the traditional classes to prevent the formation of a collective will', Gramsci wrote, 'and to maintain "economic-corporate" power in an international system of passive equilibrium.'[28] For it was at that point in the evolution of the European states-system that 'restoration becomes the first policy whereby social struggles find sufficiently elastic frameworks to allow the bourgeoisie to gain power without dramatic upheavals, without the French machinery of terror'.[29] Rather than the bourgeoisie directly seizing political power, the 'old feudal classes' of Europe were 'demoted from their dominant position to a "governing" one', without, however, being entirely 'eliminated'. Europe's feudal relics were thereby transformed from a class into 'a "caste" with specific cultural and psychological characteristics, but no longer with predominant economic functions'.[30] In consequence,

[23] See especially, Adam David Morton, 'Waiting for Gramsci: State formation, passive revolution and the international', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 35:3 (2007), pp. 597–621; Adam David Morton, *Unravelling Gramsci: Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Economy* (London: Pluto, 2007); Peter Thomas, 'Modernity as "passive revolution": Gramsci and the fundamental concepts of historical materialism', *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 17:2 (2006), pp. 61–78; Peter D. Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009); Peter D. Thomas, 'Gramsci's revolutions: Passive and permanent', *Modern Intellectual History*, 17:1 (2020), pp. 117–46.

[24] Dora Kanoussi and Javier Mena, *La revolución pasiva: Una lectura de los 'Cuadernos de la Cárcel'* (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1985), p. 13.

[25] Alex Callinicos, 'The limits of passive revolution', *Capital & Class*, 34:3 (2010), pp. 491–507.

[26] Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks, Volume III*, ed. and trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 252, Q8§25.

[27] Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p. 55; see further, Morton, *Unravelling Gramsci*.

[28] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), p. 132, Q13§1.

[29] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 115, Q10II§61.

[30] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 115, Q10II§61.

industrial-capitalist development on the Continent proceeded within a 'semi-feudal framework' characterised by 'a fusion between the old and the new'.[31]

In addition to the constitutive role of geopolitics and military conflict in processes of passive revolution, the place of the state – and especially a specific *territorialised state apparatus existing at a 'sub-national' level* – was crucial. Gramsci repeatedly highlighted the distinctly spatial and statist aspects of passive revolutions, recognizing 'a "Piedmont"-type function in passive revolutions – i.e. the fact that a State replaces the local social groups in leading a struggle for renewal',[32] as the Piedmont monarchy did in making the Italian nation-state. A similar role was played by Prussia in Germany, the Satchō Alliance uniting the Chōshū and Satsuma domains in Japan,[33] and, as examined below, the Northern Union states in America. Passive revolution captures the ways such states can replace social forces in leading a struggle for 'revolution-restoration' while also highlighting the multiplicity of intersecting spatial scales involved in such processes. In discussing the 'complex problem' that arose in examining the 'relation of internal forces in the country in question, of the relation of international forces, of the country's geo-political position', Gramsci stressed how in many instances 'the impetus of progress is not tightly linked to a vast local economic development … but instead the reflection of international developments which transmit their ideological currents to the periphery – currents born on the basis of the productive development of the more advanced countries'.[34]

Such geopolitically pressurised forms of mimetic 'catch-up' development were integral to many of the passive revolutions of the late 19th century, from the Italian Risorgimento and the German Wars of National Unification to the Meiji Restoration in Japan and the confederation of Canada.[35] At the same time, Gramsci was attentive to the multilinear developmental paths to – and differentiated forms of – passive revolution. Reflecting upon the diversity of revolutionary experiences in the making of bourgeois Europe, he noted how 'variations in the actual process whereby the same historical development manifests itself in different countries have to be related not only to the differing combinations of internal relations within the different nations, but also to the differing international relations'.[36]

While Gramsci's primary example of passive revolution was the Risorgimento, the concept was never restricted to the peculiarities of Italian history. Passive revolution was, from the start, envisioned as encompassing a more general set of events and phenomena emerging out of the historically staggered and geopolitically interconnected formation of modern states in post-Restoration Europe. This is evinced by the very first note that refers to passive revolution, dating from November 1930, where Gramsci '*already* deploys it in an *expansive* and *global sense*'.[37]

Notably, Gramsci highlighted the specifically *international* conditions of passive revolution, which he pursued in much greater detail and depth in subsequent notes. This 'internationalist perspective' was a central 'methodological criterion' for examining any national situation. 'A determinant European historical nexus is at the same time an Italian historical nexus', Gramsci argued, 'to be necessarily inserted in the development of Italian national life': 'The national personality (like the individual personality) is a mere abstraction if it is considered outside the international (or social) nexus. National personalities express a "distinct element" [*distinto*] of the international complex, and are therefore linked to international relations.'[38]

[31] Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks, Volume II*, ed. and trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 205, Q4§49; Gramsci (1971), p. 83, Q19§24.

[32] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp. 105–6, Q15§59.

[33] Jamie C. Allinson and Alexander Anievas, 'The uneven and combined development of the Meiji Restoration: A passive revolutionary road to capitalist modernity', *Capital & Class*, 34:3 (2010), pp. 469–90 (p. 482).

[34] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp. 116–17, Q10II§61.

[35] See Davidson, *How Revolutionary*; Allinson and Anievas, 'Meiji Restoration'.

[36] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 84, Q19§24.

[37] Thomas, 'Gramsci's revolutions', p. 126, emphases added.

[38] Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere, Vol. 3: Quaderni 12–29*, ed. Valentino Gerratana, 2nd edn. (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1977), p. 1962, Q19§2. The authors wish to thank Peter Thomas for help translating this quote.

For Gramsci, the national (or domestic) domain is not posited as ontologically *antecedent* or *extrinsic* to 'the international'. The two dimensions are instead viewed as organically interconnected and co-constitutive. Gramsci nevertheless maintains that there are specific properties or determinations distinguishing each side of the relation. It is only through the geo-social 'nexus' that the peculiarities of a given nation are produced as a 'distinct element' of a wider international whole. Far from upholding the analytical primacy of the nation, Fabio Frosini notes, Gramsci asserts the 'primacy of the "nexus"' itself as 'relations' not only 'precede[s] the "distinct"', but 'constitute[s] it as a "distinct", i.e. as an *autonomous* element'.[39] In his examinations of the 'historical relationship between the modern French state created by the Revolution and the other modern states of continental Europe',[40] Gramsci furnished a theoretical approach capturing their fundamentally *interactive* development. From the international perspective of passive revolution, he would write of the 'national revolts against French hegemony' and the 'birth of the modern European states' achieved through 'successive small waves of reform … made up of a combination of social struggles, interventions from above of the enlightened monarchy type, and national wars – with the latter two phenomena predominating'.[41]

Passive revolution in time and space

Although the state is the site of passive revolution, as the ruling classes employ state power to promote their own interests, the *process* is international. It is located within a global constellation of structures and events that create the conditions in which passive revolution is both possible and necessary: possible because the ruling classes learn from the successes and failures of alternative hegemonic projects in other states, and necessary because the subaltern classes learn from these too. In this way, the concept enables us to visualise the spatio-temporal interconnections between past and present processes of 'revolution-restoration'. For the 'ongoing consequences of uneven development' that resulted from earlier instances of passive revolution were also 'linked to the construction of hegemonic projects of new class alliances' in Gramsci's own time.[42] A more thorough incorporation of passive revolution into the theory of UCD, building on the pathbreaking work of Adam David Morton, therefore assists in illuminating the different ideologies, politics, and strategies of the ruling classes in their attempts to molecularly absorb antithetical class challenges in ways both conditioned by and constitutive of 'the international'.[43]

In addition to the strategic implications of reading passive revolution through UCD, in which class actors learn from developments in other social formations, there are more structural implications too. The conditions that lead to the 'organic crises' that passive revolutions typically address are always overdetermined by 'external' developments: through processes of UCD, social forces and relations are continually introduced, recombined, and transformed, and these developments produce new societal contradictions and tensions, altering the terrain of class struggle. Consequently, some theorists have theorised unevenness and combination as producing a kind of staging ground for passive revolution: driven by both the 'whip of external necessity' and 'privilege of backwardness', UCD is seen as a generalised process that creates new conflicts and potentialities within societies that make passive revolution possible.[44]

[39]Fabio Frosini, 'Time and revolution in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*', in Francesca Antonini, Aaron Bernstein, Lorenzo Fusaro, and Robert Jackson (eds), *Revisiting Gramsci's 'Notebooks'* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 125–40 (p. 131).

[40]Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 114, Q10II§61.

[41]Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 115, Q10II§61.

[42]Chris Hesketh, 'Passive revolution: A universal concept with geographical seats', *Review of International Studies*, 43:3 (2017), pp. 389–408 (p. 407).

[43]Esp., Morton, 'Waiting for Gramsci'; Morton, *Unravelling Gramsci*. See also Allinson and Anievas, 'Meiji Restoration'; Hesketh, 'Passive revolution'.

[44]See, *inter alia*, Andreas Bieler and Adam David Morton, 'Interlocutions with passive revolution', *Thesis Eleven*, 147:1 (2018), pp. 9–28; Morton, *Unravelling Gramsci*; Allinson and Anievas, 'Meiji Restoration'; Davidson, *How Revolutionary*; Hesketh, 'Passive revolution'.

On this account, UCD in the 19th century involved, in part, 'lagging' societies adapting resources developed in the more 'advanced' societies, accelerating the pace of development. Having witnessed the 'active' bourgeois revolutions in other states, various *anciens régimes* used state power to transform the social relations on which their own power rested, reconstituting the state on new capitalist grounds. Under geopolitical-military pressure from without and rising class demands from below, the old ruling classes effectuated a 'revolution without revolution' at the price of losing their own social dominance. In other words, passive revolution is one way the dominant class responds to the *consequences* of UCD. And this response, as Morton argues, 'has ongoing effects that subsequently shape the contingent and structural conditions of uneven and combined capitalist development'.[45]

Therefore, passive revolution should be conceived as complementary to – and organically emergent from – the wider dynamics of UCD. Though Gramsci never explicitly used the latter idea, the *Notebooks* do contain several suggestive formulations. 'International relations intertwine with' the 'internal relations of nation-states', Gramsci wrote in one particularly evocative passage, 'creating new, unique and historically concrete combinations', as illustrated by the dissemination of ideologies from the 'advanced' to 'less developed countries, impinging on the local interplay of combinations'.[46] More thoroughly integrating passive revolution with Trotsky's theory helps make explicit certain presuppositions never fully thematised in the *Notebooks* – assumptions present in a 'practical' but not theoretical state.[47]

The 'interlocution' of UCD and passive revolution[48] has more concrete implications for Gramsci's theory as well. For, while UCD serves to conceptualise and explain the conditions in which passive revolution takes place, it also has the capacity to further illuminate the *spatial* dimensions of passive revolution itself.[49] This is distinct from the widespread framing of passive revolution in terms of historical time and developmental trajectories, as a means by which the 'old' and 'new' negotiate their relation to each other, as emphasised in the classical model of passive revolution: the *ancien régime* survives through sublation, abolished as a *class* yet preserved as a 'caste' within the new ruling class, its power re-grounded in capitalist relations. In this way, the bourgeoisie *succeeds* the *ancien régime* as the class that exercises both economic and (at least indirectly) political dominance.

While this account embraces the idiom of time – tracking a series of successive endogenous developments that transform an entity – UCD turns our attention to the fact that entities, imbued with their own distinct temporalities and historical trajectories, coexist, side by side, resulting in an 'asynchronous simultaneity'.[50] In this respect, UCD can be said to *spatialise* global historical time in a specifically *non-linear* and *anti-stagist* way, showing how it is fractured into different temporalities that co-constitute and interact with each other. It is this spatial dimension of passive revolution, as an interactive non-linear historical process, that UCD uniquely elucidates. Therefore, considering passive revolution through the lens of UCD can, at the same time, demonstrate the significance of space in UCD.[51]

Take, again, the model example of passive revolution, in which the bourgeoisie becomes dominant through a transformation of state power – typically achieved through national wars and led by *non*-bourgeois agents ('interventions from above of the enlightened monarchy type') – that extends and consolidates capitalist relations. To think about such 'revolutions from above' primarily in

[45] Adam David Morton, *Revolution and State in Modern Mexico: The Political Economy of Uneven Development* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), p. 239.

[46] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 182, Q13§17.

[47] Allinson and Anievas, 'Meiji Restoration', p. 474.

[48] Bieler and Morton, 'Interlocutions'.

[49] For some crucial contributions to this effort, see Bob Jessop, 'Gramsci as a spatial theorist', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 8:4 (2005), pp. 421–37; Hesketh, 'Passive revolution'; Andreas Bieler and Adam David Morton, *Global Capitalism, Global War, Global Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[50] Rosenberg, 'Why is there no international historical sociology?', p. 315.

[51] Cf. Hesketh, 'Passive revolution'; Bieler and Morton, 'Interlocutions'.

terms of a succession of the old by the new is to miss the geo-spatial unevenness of the social terrain on which the process unfolds. In many instances of passive revolution, the state claimed sovereignty over a set of geographically distinct social formations, each with its own dominant productive relations crystallised in various local institutions that frequently obstructed capitalist development. A bourgeoisie had emerged, but its power and the social relations that sustained it were localised. Passive revolution, then, entailed interventions 'from above', using state power and force to subsume geo-spatially differentiated social formations impeding capitalist growth *within the new sovereign borders of a distinctly capitalist state*. In other words, the succession of classes, in time, required the expansion of capitalism, in space. Space and time were inextricably linked in the (passive) revolutionary struggles that ultimately gave rise to the modern system of sovereign nation-states.

In this way, UCD should also be understood as a fundamental dimension of passive revolution itself. That is, passive revolution, as it unfolds, is a process of differentiated geo-social formations (unevenness) engaging in combination: as one formation transforms and subsumes the other, it imposes its own social forms onto the other, creating a new amalgamation with its own distinct features and tensions (see below). Emphasising this spatial dimension of passive revolution, as a process that involves the interaction of distinct geo-social formations, enables us to see it as encompassing a wider set of historical phenomena.

The Reconstruction period that followed the American Civil War is one such example. As a response to the potentially revolutionary pressures from below, Reconstruction witnessed the dominant class deploy the new federal state to initiate molecular processes of change that reconstructed the 'old' Southern ruling class while simultaneously revolutionising their socio-material foundations. Although the American Civil War and Reconstruction (1861–77) took place concomitantly with the classic passive revolutions in Europe, it has not itself been considered a passive revolution.

UCD and the American Civil War

The prospective problems arising from the political coalescence of such radically different social formations in the post-1776 American state was a central issue facing the Republic's founders. The US Constitution was in many respects an institutional framework for the *attempted (geo)political management* of America's combined development and its potentially destabilising consequences. A key question confronting American leaders at the Constitutional Convention and long thereafter was how to address the dilemmas posed by the 'free-labor mode of production versus the slave-labor, and how to reconcile them, or provide for their codevelopment, within one frame of government', making 19th-century US politics to a 'large and essential degree, the art of reconciling different modes of production': that art, that is, of governing America's combined development.[52]

The issue at stake is not whether slavery was – or is – necessarily incompatible with capitalist development. Far from it. Slavery was indispensable to the growth of capitalist relations, serving as a 'powerful engine of primitive accumulation'.[53] It not only afforded exceptionally high rates of return on capital invested in plantations and the transatlantic cotton trade[54] but also provided vital resources stimulating capitalist industrialisation in both Britain and the United States alongside the corresponding growth of 'free' wage labour there.[55]

In the antebellum South, market competition induced plantations to operate according to distinctly capitalist laws of motion, even if the enslaved labourers themselves were not subject to

[52]Martin J. Sklar, *The United States as a Developing Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 17.

[53]Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 558.

[54]Ronald Bailey, 'The other side of slavery: Black labor, cotton, and textile industrialization in Great Britain and the United States', *Agricultural History*, 68:2 (1994), pp. 35–50 (pp. 44–50); Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), pp. 312–24.

[55]Anievas and Nişancıoğlu, *How the West Came to Rule*, pp. 162–8; see further, Blackburn, *Making of New World Slavery*, pp. 509–73.

capitalist 'rules of reproduction'.[56] Today, there is an 'emerging consensus view of a "modernizing" and even "capitalist" South', as John Clegg notes, 'in which cost-cutting innovation was just as rapid and widespread as in the North'.[57] Though this might be a slight overstatement, a wealth of recent studies have convincingly demonstrated that Southern plantations were highly dynamic productive units capable of technological adaptation and change, which exhibited impressive rates of labour productivity growth.[58] The 'real issue' of Southern slavery's relationship to capitalism is not, then, 'that some relations of production in the South had an ambiguous relationship to capitalism', as Neil Davidson remarks, 'it is that the South had constructed an *entire society* around these relationships and that, with the succession of the Confederacy, that society had consolidated itself into a new and aggressive state'.[59]

Unlike every other society based on the large-scale exploitation of enslaved labour, the centrality of slavery to Southern society did not diminish over time – it grew. In 1776, slave production existed in virtually every corner of the Atlantic colonial world. By the American Civil War, the number of enslaved labourers in the South alone far exceeded the *total* enslaved populations of all the remaining slave societies[60] combined.[61] Over the antebellum era, moreover, racialised slavery – like race more generally – became a defining feature of Southern identity. Subject to 'withering attack from without … white Southerners increasingly came to identify their section with the peculiar institution' of chattel slavery.[62]

In this respect, slavery constituted a central facet of Southern society, distinguishing its distinctive 'civilisation' and 'way of life' from the rest of American society.[63] The Southern slavocracy was already developing a self-consciously sectionalist identity by the time of the Philadelphia Convention (1787), with the Constitutional Settlement only strengthening it. 'The *geopolitical framework* created by the new Constitution', Joseph Fry writes, 'combined with …indigenous southern apprehensions and commitments to republican ideology to reinforce the region's sectional perspective.'[64] In turn, the deepening unevenness of US economic development promoted a growing 'sense of alienation' among white Southerners from the rest of society, nurturing more localised and regional identifications. The rise of a distinctly Southern sense of community and belonging – of nationalism – not only compelled many white Southerners to defend Dixie 'against northern attacks on slavery and southern economic and political interests, but to counteract the destabilizing forces unloosed by the region's relatively slower but still significant move toward economic modernity'.[65]

As a result, Southern identity and culture were becoming ever more rooted in idealised anachronisms that went far beyond anything the likes of which Thomas Jefferson or James Madison had ever imagined even as – or, more precisely, *because* – antebellum society was becoming more

[56] Anievas and Nişancıoğlu, *How the West Came to Rule*, pp. 160–2; cf. James Parisot, *How America Became Capitalist: Imperial Expansion and the Conquest of the West* (London: Pluto Press, 2019); John Clegg, 'A theory of capitalist slavery', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 33:1 (2020), pp. 74–98.

[57] John Clegg, 'Credit market discipline and capitalist slavery in antebellum South Carolina', *Social Science History*, 42:2 (2018), pp. 343–76 (p. 346).

[58] See esp. Alan L. Olmstead and Paul W. Rhode, 'Biological innovation and productivity growth in the antebellum cotton economy', *Journal of Economic History*, 68:4 (2008), pp. 1123–71; Alan L. Olmstead and Paul W. Rhode, 'Cotton, slavery and the new history of capitalism', *Explorations in Economic History*, 67 (2018), pp. 1–17; Caitlin C. Rosenthal, 'From memory to mastery: Accounting for control in America, 1750–1880', *Enterprise & Society*, 14:4 (2013), pp. 732–48; Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*; Clegg, 'Theory of capitalist slavery'.

[59] Neil Davidson, 'The American Civil War considered as a bourgeois revolution', in *We Cannot Escape History: States and Revolutions* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), pp. 121–47 (p. 136, emphasis added).

[60] That is, Brazil, Cuba, and Puerto Rico.

[61] Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery: 1619–1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), p. 190.

[62] Kolchin, *American Slavery*, p. 190.

[63] James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[64] Joseph A. Fry, *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1789–1973* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), p. 12, emphasis added.

[65] Cobb, *Away Down South*, pp. 45–6.

modern. In this way, a 'consciousness of backwardness' developed among white Southerners that worked – paradoxically or not – to reinforce and intensify their claims regarding Dixie's distinctive 'backward' agrarian structure. Less than a month after the siege of Fort Sumter, former senator Louis Wigfall of Texas colourfully boasted to a British journalist then travelling in the South that:

> We are a peculiar people, sir! … We are an agricultural people; we are a primitive but a civilized people. We have no cities – we don't want them. We have no literature – we don't need any yet … We have no commercial marine – no navy – we don't want them. We are better without them … We want no manufactures: we desire no trading, no mechanical or manufacturing classes … As long as we have our rice, our sugar, our tobacco, and our cotton, we can command wealth to purchase all we want from those nations with which we are in amity, and to lay up money besides. But with the Yankees we will never trade – never.[66]

For Dixie elites like Wigfall, preserving the 'primitiveness' of Southern society rooted in racialised chattel slavery was of the utmost importance. As white Southerners increasingly identified themselves as standing apart from the North, a particular form of virulent nationalism took hold.[67] For, despite all their celebrations of difference, Southerners came to believe that they were the only true representatives of 'Americanism'. Claims to be American that did not conform to the 'Southern way of life' were viewed with suspicion. Worse still, political critics of the region's slave system were deemed enemy Others: un-American subversives conspiring with the external foes of a Southern-defined American liberty and freedom. 'To the extent that domestic opponents seemed to be allied with foreign threats to southern interests', Fry observes, 'these adversaries within the United States were similarly viewed as "foreigners"'.[68]

The further development and territorial consolidation of chattel slavery in the antebellum South consequently portended a different way of organising society. For a much broader configuration of social, ideo-cultural, and political relations of the South became increasingly geared toward *systematically reproducing* the institution's 'peculiar' class relations. The region was, in this specific sense, becoming *less,* not more, capitalist. As the importance of slavery grew in (re)producing Southern culture and society, the region's slavocracy became ever more antagonistic toward Northern capitalism.

Southern slave society was surely *not* 'outside' capitalism. Yet neither was it fully subsumed under capitalist relations of production. Instead, the 'peculiar' class nature of Southern chattel slavery formed the 'basis for an entire society and ultimately of a short-lived state' with expansionist aims that, 'had they been successful', as Davidson argues, 'would have blocked and even rolled back the development of capitalism in the Americas, and perhaps beyond':

> In the US two territorially bounded societies, within the same state, were in competition to determine the direction taken by a third, the West. Once battle was joined the aims of the Confederacy were to expand slave production northward to areas where it had never previously existed…[69]

In other words, the already-existing tensions built into the Republic's foundations – resting as it did on an political amalgam of geo-spatially distinct formations institutionalised by a Constitution that both entrenched Southern political power at the federal level while simultaneously extending systemic slavery throughout the region – produced two spatially distinct social formations imbued with increasingly antagonistic expansionist aims that formed the basis for two rival territorialised

[66] Quoted in William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South* (New York: Harper, 1863), p. 179.

[67] See James M. McPherson, '"Two irreconcilable peoples"? Ethnic nationalism in the Confederacy', in David T. Gleeson and Simon Lewis (eds), *The Civil War as Global Conflict: Transnational Meanings of the American Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2014), pp. 85–98.

[68] Fry, *Dixie Looks Abroad*, p. 12.

[69] Davidson, 'Bourgeois revolution', p. 143.

states. Hence, the deepening unevenness of US historical development generated new forms of *societal multiplicity* at the ('sub-national') regional level that eventually begot *political multiplicity* and war.

The menace Southern slavery presented to the North's burgeoning industrial capitalism was widely recognised. At every turn, the slavocracy obstructed Northern demands for a more unified national state with the power and resolve to protect the home market from the economic competition of the more 'advanced' European powers. In the process, Southern forces threatened a renewed form of quasi-colonial British dominance over the US formation. Southern slavery was effectively 'an enclave of the British economy, with an interest therefore in free trade'.[70] The system's prospective territorial expansion to the West threatened to extend British economic influence while simultaneously blocking the further development of Northern capitalist industry and agriculture.[71]

Furthermore, slavery's relentless territorial drive was not merely the result of Southern republican ideology or imprudent policy decisions. It was built into the very nature of the system, forming one of its 'laws of motion'. The dynamism and profitability of Southern slavery demanded the system's incessant extension into new territories. Expansion through geographical space was a central mechanism for growing slavery's profits, as the movement of plantations from overworked, less fertile soils in the East to new, more nutrient-rich soils in the West promoted greater productivity.[72]

Yet the enhanced productivity attained by relocating or extending plantations to more arable lands did have certain upper limits. Unlike the industrialising North, 'productivity gains in the South were achieved not by moving workers from agriculture to an industrial sector made productive with machinery and new technology', as Richard Ransom and Richard Sutch note, 'but by moving workers to more productive soil. The difference is significant, since a process of physical capital formation could, in principle, continue indefinitely, whereas there is a natural limit to gains that can be achieved from geographical relocation.'[73] This 'natural limit' was inherently problematic, since the system's relentless logic of territorial accumulation applied to the Southern economy *in toto*. This meant that 'slavery in one society was never going to remain viable' without the guarantee of ever more territorial additions putting the South into direct conflict with Northern interests.[74] The moment new states incorporated into the Union were no longer automatically open to slavery's extension, that territorial guarantee was lost. Owing to the issue of slavery, the ceaseless expansion through territorial space upon which America's 'empire of liberty' rested thereby worked 'to undermine the whole system by forcing the federal government to make fundamental *decisions*, something that it was, intentionally, never well equipped to do'.[75]

In a word, the institutional framework constructed by the Constitutional Settlement to (geo)politically manage America's combined development broke down in spectacular fashion. The sectionalist pressures and geographically uneven development the Settlement itself exacerbated ultimately split the country into two inherently antagonistic societal-cum-political forms, the eventual outcome of which was Northern victory in a civil war that cemented the political hegemony of capital through the most revolutionary of all 'passive revolutions'. The systemic and territorial dimensions of the North–South conflict help explain both the initially radical nature of this Northern-led 'revolution from above' and why it soon reached its limits.

[70] Alex Callinicos, *Imperialism and Global Political Economy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p. 150.

[71] Michel Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation: The U.S. Experience* (London: Verso, 1979), pp. 77–8.

[72] Parisot, *How America Became Capitalist*, p. 132; Olmstead and Rhode, 'Biological innovation', pp. 1155–6.

[73] Roger Ransom and Richard Sutch, 'Capitalists without capital: The burden of slavery and the impact of emancipation', *Agricultural History*, 62:3 (1988), pp. 133–60 (p. 138).

[74] Davidson, 'Bourgeois revolution', p. 140.

[75] Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), pp. 31–2.

American Civil War and Reconstruction as passive revolution

In Gramsci's conception of passive revolution, 'passive refers … to the nature of the attempt at "revolution" or development of the productive forces through a degree of State intervention', as Anne Showstack Sassoon writes, 'without any expansion of real political control by the mass of the population over politics'.[76] As this description makes clear, the site of passive revolution is the state: the nature of state power is transformed in a capitalist direction (a sovereign centre of capital accumulation) and used to develop the productive forces.[77] As noted, however, the US was characterized by the increasingly contradictory coexistence of two distinct societies: one characterised by wage labour, the other by chattel slavery, though each was intimately bound up with global capitalism. Importantly, this societal coexistence was *geo-spatially articulated*, forming what Gramsci referred to as a 'differentiated geo-economic organism'.[78]

By 1861, the South had become a separate territorially bound society *and* state built around chattel slavery. This situation fostered a distinct logic of conflict: the threat the Confederacy posed to the North turned into that of a *foreign* enemy. The externalisation of threat involved in this geopolitical relation was a crucial condition enabling the extraordinary violence the Union Army unleashed upon the South during the ensuing war. It also helps explain the Northern bourgeoisie's increasingly radical objectives. As the conflict progressed, the North proved willing to 'embrace the logic of total war' up to and including emancipating the enslaved and turning them 'against their former masters as part of the Union's military apparatus'.[79] Davidson further explains the critical import of the specifically territorial dimension of the conflict:

> If slavery had been dispersed throughout the US, then the combined pressure of abolitionist campaigning on the one hand, and of its comparative economic inefficiencies on the other, would have led to its supersession, perhaps through a series of staged transitions to free labor, without the type of violence that ultimately ensued. *But because it was territorially concentrated and the basis of a distinct society in which labor was defined in racial terms, this solution was not available*.[80]

As we saw, moreover, a contradiction existed between the structural imperatives that governed the development of the North and South, as each required territorial expansion.[81] Political and institutional arrangements could only temporarily defer the impending crisis produced by the fundamental antagonism between Northern and Southern society.

Many have recognized the American Civil War and subsequent Reconstruction as a *bourgeois* revolution that reconstituted the national state as an autonomous site of capital accumulation.[82] We argue that these 'events' also constitute a *passive* revolution that, among other things, entails preserving the political power of the dominant class by transforming the social foundations on which it rests. In the case of the Civil War, the Northern bourgeoisie's goal of furthering capitalist development in the new US territories in order to protect and preserve its class power necessitated that the Southern slave system be contained and, eventually, abolished. Consequently, during Reconstruction the social basis of Southern ruling-class power was fundamentally reconfigured:

[76] Anne Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics* (London: Routledge, 2020 [1980]), p. 210.

[77] See also Hesketh, 'Passive revolution', p. 401; Davidson, *How Revolutionary*, p. 319.

[78] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, ed. David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and trans. William Boelhower (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 415, Q24§3.

[79] Davidson, 'Bourgeois revolution', p. 145.

[80] Davidson, 'Bourgeois revolution', p. 143, emphasis added.

[81] Charles Post, *The American Road to Capitalism: Studies in Class-Structure, Economic Development and Political Conflict, 1620–1877* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 152.

[82] See Alex Callinicos, 'Bourgeois revolutions and historical materialism', *International Socialism*, 2:43 (1989), pp. 113–71; Perry Anderson, 'The notion of bourgeois revolutions', in *English Questions* (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 105–18; Davidson, 'Bourgeois revolution'; Post, *American Road*; John Ashworth, 'The American Civil War: A reply to critics', *Historical Materialism*, 21:3 (2013), pp. 87–108.

the relations of chattel slave production that played a dominant role in antebellum Southern society were replaced by the landlord–tenant relations of sharecropping. The political power of the Southern ruling class was preserved (i.e. continuity) by transforming the conditions of its reproduction (i.e. revolution). This is a clear example of a bourgeois revolution insofar as it clears the obstacles to capitalist development, and it is a clear example of passive revolution because the power of the Southern ruling class was nonetheless preserved by changing its social basis.

In the classic framing of passive revolution, the *old* ruling class is sublated by the *new* ruling class. Yet the American case is better understood in spatial terms: the obstacle to capitalist development within the United States was the existence of an entire society that, while thoroughly integrated into a capitalist world economy and thus subject to its imperatives, was itself built around non-capitalist relations of exploitation. The two ruling classes that featured in this passive revolution, then, could not be distinguished in terms of waxing and waning power. In fact, as demonstrated above, the US South was becoming both increasingly non-capitalist and productive. Its ruling class was *not* the anachronistic vestige of a declining mode of production, i.e. it was not an *ancien régime*. Instead, it was the dominant class in a peculiarly modern society, its power rooted in an expanding, dynamic economy that combined capitalist laws of motion with non-capitalist relations of exploitation. Unlike every other social formation based on plantation slavery, moreover, the South was evolving into an entirely novel society, hitherto unseen in human history.

The causes of the Civil War, then, can be attributed to the coexistence of two territorially defined societies that both co-constituted and contradicted each other. This conflict was hastened by the fact that they coexisted within a single state. This not only meant that the conflict took the form of a civil war; societal co-existence within a single state was also a condition for state-driven passive revolution. And the specific geo-economic dimensions of the conflict corresponded to a distinct *spatial* dynamic of passive revolution. In the American Civil War and Reconstruction, passive revolution effected a horizontal subsumption of one contemporaneous (albeit still nascent) mode of production by another, a transposition of difference into sameness, not a surpassing of the old by the new.

While the Civil War was a result of an intra-ruling-class conflict, the Reconstruction era in which passive revolution entered its second phase was defined by counter-revolutionary 'rollback', during which the ruling classes in the North and South effectively allied in order to address the growing threats from the subaltern classes. In the years immediately following the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, the autonomy of the Southern states was dramatically curtailed: Northern-led federal troops occupied the South; the federal government disenfranchised many former confederates; and Black male suffrage was made a condition of joining the Union again.[83] In this way, the federal government undermined the South's existing planter-led power bloc and set the conditions for the emergence of a counter-hegemonic apparatus driven by the alliance of Black and white radical Republicans. Freedmen joined many non-slave-owning whites to elect Republican officials across the South, most notably in South Carolina, 'the state where African Americans probably achieved the greatest political power after the Civil War'.[84] New state governments began to advance a policy agenda that increased the power and independence of tenants, wage labourers, smallholding farmers, and debtors at the expense of the former slave-holding class, remade as landlords. These policies included pro-tenant lien laws, property taxes on large holdings, and public investments in hospitals and schools, which helped shield ordinary people from the imperatives

[83] Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, updated ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2015), ch. 2; Robin Blackburn, 'State of the Union: Marx and America's unfinished revolution', *New Left Review*, 61 (2010), pp. 153–74 (pp. 156–7); Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861–1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

[84] Eric Foner, 'Introduction', in James Lowell Underwood and W. Lewis Burke, Jr. (eds), *At Freedom's Door: African American Founding Fathers and Lawyers in Reconstruction South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), pp. xv–xxvi (p. xv); see also Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post–Civil War North, 1865–1901* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), ch. 3.

of capitalist markets.[85] The newly politicised subaltern classes also organised protests and strikes against the landowning class, demonstrating their collective power and fostering increasingly radical goals.[86]

At the same time, progressively radical demands were being made in the North, where the power of organised labor was growing. Trade union activity flourished from the 1860s to 1890s, gaining momentum and intensifying class struggle.[87] Interestingly, as Charles Post emphasises, the language of this struggle was often set within the framework of the radical Republican ideology that the Northern intellectuals had used to attack the institution of slavery in the South when it served the war effort.[88] The earlier discourse of radical Republicanism had revolved around the romantic figure of the independent yeoman farmer – which, in any case, had become a fantasy by the 1840s.[89] But as actual workers borrowed and adapted this discourse to address real, existing social conditions in an industrialising capitalist society, they arrived at conclusions that were at odds with the interests of the bourgeoisie, including advocating for greater workers' protections and an eight-hour workday.[90] At the same time that the discourse of Republicanism was made to fit reality and employed to change it, the ruling class, increasingly alert to the threat that substantive democracy posed to its class power, was taking up a different ideology that better captured its own evolving understanding of the world: that of liberalism, with its emphasis on free markets, restricted democracies, and limited government.[91]

In order to re-establish a hegemonic bloc and consolidate power, the ruling classes of the North and South allied to counter the threat from below, what W. E. B. Du Bois, in his landmark study of Reconstruction, called a 'counter-revolution of property'.[92] This new hegemony required breaking the economic power of the working class, independent farmers, and freedpersons. It was, above all, accomplished through the American state. The federal government offered amnesty to Confederate leaders and, in the Compromise of 1877, agreed to withdraw troops from the South.[93] Federal anti-labour laws were passed, anti-labour judgements were rendered by the Supreme Court, and the income tax was repealed.[94] In the North, 'state authorities … frequently used the state militia as strikebreakers. While striking workers sometimes enjoyed public support, the newspapers and middle-class opinion easily turned against them.'[95]

By 1877, 'redeemer Democrats' controlled most of the Southern state and local governments, and they used this power to pass and implement laws that restored the power of the ruling class.[96] Privatised violence was also deployed to consummate the passive revolution and re-consolidate capitalist hegemony. In the North, private security firms (such as 'Pinkerton's men') were used to threaten workers and break strikes, often violently. In the South, white vigilante groups terrorised freedpersons and radical Republicans, both black and white, through intimidation, beating, and lynching.[97] In short, once the military threat of the Confederacy was extinguished, the coherence

[85] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877*, updated ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2014), ch. 7; Post, *American Road*, pp. 272–3; Blackburn, 'State of the Union', p. 158.

[86] Foner, *Reconstruction*, ch. 3; Richardson, *Death of Reconstruction*, p. 55; Post, *American Road*, p. 269.

[87] Blackburn, 'State of the Union'; Foner, *Reconstruction*, chs. 10–12; Richardson, *Death of Reconstruction*, pp. xiii, 44; Heather Cox Richardson, *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America After the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); Post, *American Road*, pp. 260–2.

[88] Post, *American Road*, p. 261.

[89] Charles Post, 'The American path of bourgeois development revisited: A response', *Science & Society*, 78:3 (2014), pp. 369–79 (p. 375).

[90] Blackburn, 'State of the Union', p. 159; David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2007), ch. 8; Foner, *Reconstruction*, ch. 10.

[91] Foner, *Reconstruction*, ch. 10; Post, *American Road*, ch. 5.

[92] W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Howe, 1935).

[93] Foner, *Reconstruction*, ch. 12.

[94] Blackburn, 'State of the Union', p. 168; Richardson, *Death of Reconstruction*, pp. 215–6.

[95] Blackburn, 'State of the Union', p. 165.

[96] Foner, *Reconstruction*, ch. 12; Richardson, *Death of Reconstruction*, p. 158; Post; *American Road*, p. 275.

[97] Blackburn, 'State of the Union', p. 167.

of Southern society smashed, and the chattel-slave system it rested upon dismantled, 'the majority of the Northern ruling class, many of whom were themselves racists, had no particular interest in ensuring equal rights and democratic participation for the black population'.[98] As a result, by the 19th century's close, an emergent hegemonic bloc of planter-industrial forces managed to resecure a stranglehold over Dixie's chief political and economic institutions. In the process, they also created an entirely novel system of racial oppression: Jim Crow.[99]

David Roediger has referred to Reconstruction as a 'tragedy of failed solidarities'.[100] This accords with Gramsci's understanding of passive revolution as marking the failure of hegemony from below, the failure of the subaltern classes to effectively organise and counter the ruling class during crises. For Gramsci, the 'successful imposition' of a passive revolution 'involved conscious, political choices', as Peter Thomas argues:

> on the one hand, the choice of the ruling classes to develop strategies to disaggregate those working classes and confine them to an economic-corporative level within the existing society; on the other, the political choices of the subaltern classes that had resulted in a failure to elaborate their own hegemonic apparatuses capable of resisting the absorptive logic of the passive revolution.[101]

In this way, passive revolution calls our attention to the role of agency and ideology in historical development. The 'failure of solidarities' was the failure of the subaltern classes to elaborate a shared identity or ideology that could sustain a revolutionary struggle against the ruling classes. Reconstruction in the United States was a means of addressing objective social crises from above in order to stymie attempts to address them from below.

Consequently, the 'failure of solidarities' was also a defeat on the ideological terrain of struggle. The white ruling classes in both the North and, especially, the South propagated racist ideologies that worked to disassemble and neutralise the challenges raised by the varying multiracial alliances of subaltern forces of the Reconstruction era who struggled for a more racially and socially egalitarian American society. As it turned out, this was – and still is – an effective way of addressing the discontent of white workers, foreclosing class solidarity by insisting on race solidarity. As the freedman and newspaper editor T. Thomas Fortune wrote in 1884, 'when the black laborer and the white laborer come to their senses, join issues with the common enemy and pitch the tent of battle, then will come the tug of war'.[102] And when that day comes, 'the rich, be they black or be they white, will be found upon the same side; and the poor, be they black or be they white, will be found on the same side'.[103]

Conclusion

As theorists of 'the international' increasingly extricate themselves from the 'prison of Political Science'[104] and formulate non-statist approaches to IR, they must be conscious of the hidden statist premises that continue to inform their thinking. Identifying and distinguishing between states and societies without privileging (geo)political borders is one important part of the project of seeing 'the international' more clearly. In thematising multiplicity, UCD offers an important approach to 'the international'. However, within the current UCD literature, there is simply no grammar of

[98] Davidson, 'Bourgeois revolution', p. 145.

[99] Bruce Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South 1938–1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. viii.

[100] David Roediger, *Seizing Freedom: Slave Emancipation and Liberty for All* (London: Verso, 2014).

[101] Thomas, 'Modernity as "passive revolution"', pp. 74–5.

[102] T. Thomas Fortune, *Black and White: Land, Labor, and Politics in the South* (New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1884), p. 210.

[103] Fortune, *Black and White*.

[104] Rosenberg, 'International Relations'.

multiplicity that can capture the interactive coexistence of states and societies as distinct entities.[105] This conflation of political and societal multiplicity has hampered UCD's capacity to illuminate the full significance of multiplicity for explaining historical development.

In this article, we showed the explanatory and theoretical potential of an expanded UCD. Through an examination of the American Civil War and Reconstruction, we demonstrated the crucial role that *societal* multiplicity, distinct from but in combination with *(geo)political* multiplicity, played in influencing the outcome and legacy of these highly significant events. We also illuminated how an expanded multiplicity can complement and enrich the way we understand passive revolution, emphasising the spatial logic at work in creating its *conditions of possibility*, while also identifying the *uneven and combined spatial logic operative within processes of passive revolution itself*.

Our argument makes an important contribution to the overlapping literatures on UCD, passive revolution, and spatiality. It also has wide-reaching implications for international historical sociology and IR more generally, as these fields remain largely structured (explicitly or implicitly) around fundamentally statist ontologies. This includes many critical frameworks that consciously reject state-centrism yet reflexively reproduce its ontological premises. As shown, our approach decisively breaks with state-centrism in a non-reductive way, according significance to both states and societies, while capturing their historically consequential interactions. This enables us to integrate the distinct significance of the geopolitical into socio-historical theory without succumbing to statism.

This approach better captures and accounts for significant dynamics of historical development. For example, nearly all geopolitical conflicts that originate in claims to self-determination – an important dimension of 20th-century history – are only intelligible if we analytically distinguish states from societies, attributing to each a distinct but interrelated existence. Consider, then, how an expanded UCD may inform contemporary theories of revolution. It would, for instance, answer George Lawson's recent call for an *inter-social* theory of revolution that 'does not presume that the objects of analysis are societies, nations, or states, respectively'.[106] Theorising both (geo)political and societal multiplicity within a more expansive UCD framework can help illuminate, as Lawson puts it, 'the ways in which differentially located, but interactively engaged, social sites affect the development of revolutions without containing a prior presumption of what these social sites are',[107] capturing the fact that 'revolutions are amalgams of transnational and local fields of action'.[108]

Our proposed expansion of UCD also increases its trans-disciplinary potential, making multiplicity visible in other fields of study. This increases the purchase UCD and other IR theories can have when engaging concepts and approaches in cognate fields that deal primarily with societal entities existing *within* and/or *traversing* state formations, while providing its own 'value-added' to such areas of study. That is, a properly sociological theorisation of the different, interacting dimensions of multiplicity that reconceptualises them as co-constitutive aspects of a much wider totality, the international 'social structure of humanity'.[109] An expanded UCD approach could thereby prove useful in diverse areas of study across, for example, Anthropology, Sociology, Political Science, and Geography, as well in more specialised fields such as diaspora and cultural studies.

UCD theorists should position themselves to demonstrate the role that multiplicity plays in these other registers of social ontology, which parse social space in ways that fracture and overlap with sovereign states. For an expanded UCD ultimately holds the promise of a new historical sociology of 'the international' that addresses the overlapping registers of the societal and (geo)political, better rendering the complexity of the social world and offering a more comprehensive view of the entities and interactions that drive historical development.

[105] Waring, 'Multiplicity'; Waring, 'Collective identity', ch. 4.
[106] George Lawson, *Anatomies of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 64.
[107] Lawson, *Anatomies of Revolution*, p. 64.
[108] Lawson, *Anatomies of Revolution*, p. 71.
[109] Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects* (London: New Park, 1962 [1928]), p. 9.

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