The Dimensions of the Divide: Theorising Inequality and the Brandt Line in International Relations

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Recent attempts at developing social-structural accounts of the core processes underlying international order have, perhaps surprisingly, chosen not to focus on inequality and stratification. Thirty years on, international relations theory has chosen to ignore the Brandt Line. This paper however argues that inequality should be understood as part of the ‘deep structure’ of the international system. We can understand how stratification and unequal differentiation between North and South emerge by examining five dimensions of social interaction. These are: inter-state political hierarchy; differentiation between states based on a trajectory of socio-economic development; stratification within the global order understood as a single world-society; the dynamic of competitive development that emerges out of these three; and the process of overall collective management and supranational governance of the international system/global order. It is in the fifth dimension of interaction that we find the clearest North-South demarcation. This dimension has become increasingly important due to Northern ‘trilateralisation’ and the growth of international institutional authority. As a result the North-South division forms one of the central political cleavages of the international system. The paper concludes by suggesting that the place of individual states/societies within this stratified order can be examined in terms of three axes: mass, socio-economic development, and centrality.

Introduction

Over thirty years ago a commission chaired by Willy Brandt, former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, published a report entitled ‘North-South: A Programme for Survival’ (1980). The report drew an imaginary line to delineate the boundary between the advanced industrialised North and the poorer South. In doing so it attempted to conceptually organise the political geography of the previous decade, during which tensions between North and South had nearly eclipsed those between East and West after the then ‘Third World’ demanded a New International Economic Order (NIEO).
In the intervening thirty years, the politics of North-South may never have regained quite the same level of prominence as it did in the 1970s, but neither did it ever truly fade away. Nor did the inequalities that provide the basis for this division in the international order disappear in the interim, far from it. According to Milanovic, global Gini inequality of PPP dollar income remained roughly static, falling very slightly from 65.7 points in 1980 to 65.4 points in 2002 (Milanovic 2009b: 12). Between-nation population weighted inequality remains the primary component of global inequality, accounting for 56.8 points of global Gini in 1980 and 52.6 points in 1980 (Milanovic 2009b: 12). Accounting for 86.5% of global income inequality in 1980 and 79.8% in 2002, population weighted between-nation differences in income declined only slightly as a component of global inequality. Modest decreases in this measure of inequality are attributed by Milanovic to steady improvements in the mean per capita incomes in populous Asian states, primarily India and China (Milanovic 2009b: 11).

Thus the economic inequalities between nations on which notions of the North-South divide were based have remained in place. Furthermore, if we examine non-population-weighted Gini inequality between nations, then we find the international system even more starkly divided between North and South than thirty years ago. From 1978-2002, the divergent fortunes of middle-income nations effectively ‘emptied out’ this section of the non-population-weighted income distribution (Milanovic 2005: 61), effecting a transition from a trimodal to a bimodal distribution of international incomes. A few middle income nations joined the rich world, whilst others sunk into a broader category of poor nations (Milanovic 2005: 52). Milanovic therefore notes that the trend after the late 1970s has therefore ‘reinforced the strong domination of Western countries at the very top of the income distribution’ (Milanovic 2005: 61), with only Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea graduating to ‘Northern’ levels of income out of the entire group of middle income NICs. Income, furthermore, is not the only metric of inequality within the international system: nation-states are unequal on every measure that could be considered politically relevant (Payne 20005). Miniscule Nauru and Tuvalu must coexist in the same international system as China and the US. Military capabilities remain highly concentrated, with the US accounting for 41.5% of world military expenditure in 2008 and the top 15 ‘big spenders’ accounting for 81% of the total (SIPRI 2009: 183).

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1 For purposes of comparability ‘old’ PPP measurements have been employed. Recent surveys and attempts to develop a new PPP benchmark indicate that global inequality is significantly higher than these measurements, placing the latest estimates of Gini inequality in 2002 at 70.7 points. See Milanovic (2009a). Using this measure, population weighted international incomes inequality makes up an even higher proportion of global inequality, see Milanovic (2009b: 12).
Although solid growth in India and China as well as the resultant buoyancy in commodity markets since 2004 have likely helped to close some small part of the international income gap, the international system remains drastically and enduring unequal. Inequality remains one of the most empirically striking features of international relations. The goal of social science is however to provide an account of the structures and social processes that underlie and arise from such broad empirical regularities. One influential approach to analysing the large-scale features of the international order has been that of Barry Buzan, according to whom a theory ‘organises a field systematically, structures questions and establishes a coherent and rigorous set of interrelated concepts and categories’ (2004: 24). The primary purpose of theory is therefore to provide a ‘descriptive apparatus’ that enables theorists to understand the social world in a structured and organised way (Buzan and Waever 2003: 64), a conceptual framework that renders international processes intelligible, provides for the evaluation of significant change and allows comparisons to be made across time and space (Buzan 2004: 25). The goal is not to locate a ‘master key’ to the international system, but to focus on specific sets of processes that produce the most salient features of the contemporary international order. This sort of approach, which emerged from engagement with the work of Kenneth Waltz (1979), has been adopted by scholars examining regional security complexes (Buzan and Waever 2003), the international negotiation of norms and identities (Wendt 19999) and the state-nation imbalance (Miller 2007).

Nonetheless, there has been surprisingly little sustained analysis of inequality within international relations theory. Why have inequality and the North-South divide not been taken as seriously as they might? An important factor has been the decline of the world-systems and dependency perspectives in international relations theory², whose insistence that developing nations could not overcome international inequality was falsified by the economic success of the East Asian NICs. The decline of these perspectives was reinforced by the anti-materialist shift towards an emphasis on discourse and socially constructed categories as the constitutive structures of the international system. As a result scholars have tended towards the default assumption that inequality is a ‘surface’ phenomenon arising from the properties of individual nation states rather than part of the ‘deep structure’ (Ruggie 1986: 135-136) which constitutively shapes international relations. In addition, the divergence in fortunes amongst developing nations led to scepticism regarding the notion of a singular ‘Third World’, a term which Berger persuasively argues is obsolete due to the decline of the anti-colonial political ideology which temporarily united African, Asian and Latin American during the Cold War (Berger 2004: 30-2). Some, perhaps following the trend toward discursive accounts of international relations, have argued that the notion of membership as part of the ‘Third World’ is a subjective self-identification on the part of disparate outsider-states, a ‘structuralist perspective’ based on shared memories and experiences (Parks and Roberts 2007:  

² See Waever (1998; 2010) for surveys of trends within the discipline of international relations.
Others such as Thomas argued that the ‘Third World’ has ‘gone global’ (Thomas 2003) and international inequalities had given way to global patterns of stratification. Similarly, Payne (2005: 324) has repeatedly argued that development has become a universal problematic involving all nations and that the inequalities between nations, salient as they are, do not neatly map onto familiar notions of North and South.

None of these perspectives can be lightly dismissed. Nonetheless, whilst the ‘Third World’ is no longer useful as an analytic category, the international order remains highly stratified. Similarities can be identified in the position in which the majority of nation-states outside of the Northern ‘core’ find themselves in within the international system, despite large local variations. Thus this paper will seek to demonstrate that we can analyse inequality as part of the ‘deep structure’ of the international system, indeed that we must do so if we are to work towards a theoretically satisfying account of the contemporary international order.

The ambition of this paper is to sketch how we might advance a theoretically cogent account of stratification and inequality within the international system, and to advocate returning inequality to the centre of debates in international relations theory. In order to accomplish this goal, the paper adopts the pluralist, synthetic approach advocated by Buzan (2004: 25). This involves searching for theoretically plausible and empirically grounded mechanisms (Elster 2007) in a variety of literatures, and synthesising them into a theoretical account which links together the processes which create and sustain the process of stratification in the international system. Inequality on a world scale operates along many dimensions, on many levels of analysis: it cannot simply be categorised as either international or global, economic or political. Furthermore distinguishing between these levels involves a degree of artifice, in reality they are emergent phenomena which arise as interpersonal transactions crystallize into durable social structures (Tilly 1984: 33). Thus the analysis below works towards synthesis by analysing in turn inter-state hierarchy, temporal differentiation along a trajectory of development, and global socio-economic stratification. These three dimensions interact to produce a fourth, the geopolitics of development. Finally, the first dimension and the fourth lead to the emergence of collective management of the international system. This final dimension of inequality is where we find the starkest difference between North and South, where the international politics of inequality is most visible.

**Dimension 1: Hierarchical Inter-State Relations**

Inequality is one of the most immediately striking features of inter-state relations, yet there has been resistance amongst theorists to taking questions of international inequality seriously beyond
the ‘surface structure’ of the inter-state system. According to neo-realist accounts, states are functionally undifferentiated security seekers who differ only in their relative material capacities (Waltz 1979: 96). No matter how large the differences between the power-capabilities of states, the ‘ordering principle’ or ‘deep structure’ (Ruggie 1986: 135-136) of international anarchy imposes uniformity on units. Irrespective of inequalities, states remain sovereign as in the last instance they retain the ability to decide how to cope with internal and external threats (Waltz 1979: 96). As Vattel claimed, a dwarf is as much of a sovereign as a giant. Inequalities exist only in terms of state endowments, not structured relationships between agents.

Nonetheless, Waltz’s frequent comparisons between international relations and oligopolistic markets (Waltz 1979: 72, 77-78, 93-94, 98-99, 105-106, 134-135) undermine the notion that all states are equally subject to the same structural forces. Just as oligopolistic firms are less subject to the ‘tyranny of small decisions’ and have at least some ability to collude and control the market, great powers acts as poles exerting ‘fields of force’ which shape the overall pattern of relationships in the international system (Donelly 2009: 55). In the same way that there is a structural difference between the position of those who act as ‘price makers’ and ‘price takers’ in oligopolistic markets, great powers and minor powers experience the ‘logic of anarchy’ in very different ways. International politics takes place according to the terms set by the great powers, insofar as they themselves can buck the logic of the anarchic international system through oligopolitistic management of world politics (Little 2007: 208).

The oligopolistic management of world order will be returned to in the fifth section of the analysis. But as has been recognised by Latin American traditions of realism (Escudé 1998; Tickner 2003a), bilateral interstate relations can be hierarchical even under conditions of anarchy. Recent theoretical contributions have demonstrated that anarchy and hierarchy are not antonyms, the former refers to absence of government whilst the latter concerns the existence of a rank order between actors, or vertical differentiation (Donelly 2009: 50). Rejecting the binary distinction between anarchy and hierarchy, we can focus on both the informal and formal relationships of inequality in the inter-state system.

Even if all states retain the formal sovereignty, we can still make a qualitative distinction between those states capable of directly subordinating other states, and those who must resist or adapt as

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3 Waltz misses these features of his theory because he is focused on great power politics: ‘A general theory of international politics is necessarily based on the great powers’ Waltz (1979: 73). ‘It would be as ridiculous to construct a theory of international politics based on Malaysia and Costa Rica as it would be to construct an economic theory of oligopolistic competition on the minor firms in a sector of an economy’ Waltz (1979: 72). This is no reason to ignore international politics from the perspective of Malaysia and Costa Rica, however.
best they can. Drawing on Lukes’ second facet of power (Lukes 1974: 16-20), agenda setting and non-decision making, enables us to more fully understand inter-state inequality in terms of effective control of outcomes. Indeed, Waltz seems to acknowledge that the non-use of coercion and the ‘automatic’ alignment of the preferences of the weak with the interests of the strong starkly demonstrates the significance power inequalities (Waltz 1979: 185). The fact that decision making ability is retained by even the weakest of states is beside the point. As Poggi notes: ‘every command implicitly acknowledges that compliance with it is, when all is said and done, a contingent matter’ (emphasis added, Poggi 1990: 6). Thus the formal contingency of obedience is not sufficient to establish the absence of hierarchy.

Scholars have also demonstrated that more formalised relations of hierarchy and institutionalised semi-sovereignty have been common to international systems past and present. As Krasner points out, in a competitive ‘self-help system’ states will have occasion to advance their goals by suborning the juridical sovereignty of others or even sacrificing their own (Krasner 1999: 53). Indeed, research has demonstrated that the international system has contained many complex forms of super and sub-ordination. A central (re)discovery is that sovereignty is not indivisible, but consists of a bundle of rights that can be separated and ‘thus may be imperfectly or incompletely — unequally — enjoyed’ (Donnelly 2006: 146). A subordinate actor may cede authority over one issue area, but not another, or may cede the right to take some actions autonomously, but not others (Lake 2007: 56). Lake argues that there exists an unbroken continuum from alliance, to protectorate, to informal empire, to formal empire (Lake 1996: 7). At each step along the continuum one state cedes authority to their ally (Lake 2007: 60). This form of hierarchy endures in the global US network of bases, Russia’s relationship with many CIS nations and India’s relationship with Bhutan (Donnelly 2006: 149). The authoritative element of such ‘hub and spoke’ alliances is bilateral, but others have examined enduring imperial sub-systems within international politics, such as within the C19th British commonwealth (Sharman and Hobson 2005: 73), the Soviet sphere of influence (Wendt and Friedman 1995: 699), and the Francafrique.

Patterns of hierarchy are therefore revealed once we recognise the existence and variety of both informal and formal relationships of political inequality in the inter-state order. An exclusive focus on the inter-state system, however, must be complemented by a consideration of other

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4 Organisationally, the practices of imperial administration are distinct from those of anti-colonial resistance, those of counterinsurgency different from insurgency.

5 The wider literature on power acknowledges that the difference between compliance extracted through coercion and through authoritative political command differs only in that the former is usually more costly, less enduring and more brittle. See Poggi (1990: 7).

6 Indeed as relations approach the imperial, authority is better understood as being delegated by the superordinate power than ceded by the subordinate Lake (1996: 9)
dimensions along which inequality operates. Inter-state inequality also gives rise to practices of collective management and rule creation on the part of major powers which are intrinsically ‘public’ and therefore go beyond bilateral inter-state relations. These practices are examined separately in section five. Likewise, focusing only on the inter-state dimension ‘black boxes’ the state. As a result there is a risk of ignoring long-term, path dependent processes through an overemphasis on ‘repetition and recurrence’ (Wight 1966: 33) of inter-state relations throughout history. The next section therefore attempts to break out of this static approach by the temporal dimension into the analysis through examining the process of development – the process of sequential social change that differentiates societies from one another along a common path.

Dimension 2: Secular Socio-Economic Development

Societies might be differentiated within the international system by their level of development, that is, their stage of progress along a putatively universal socio-economic trajectory. The best known example of such a schema represented by modernisation theory, a tremendously influential account of social change within C20th social science. Modernisation theory combined Parsonian sociology with economics and political science to create a general framework of analysis based on the notion of a qualitative ‘break’ between traditional and modern societies. This mirrored the orthodox Marxism claim that societies pass through a series of stages due to the development of productive forces, sequentially revolutionising the relations between producing classes, ushering in a new mode of production and transforming wider social relations. Again, development was understood as a unilinear process: ‘The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future’ (Marx 1867).

Theories of modernisation, whether ‘classical’ or Marxist, have nonetheless been subjected to vituperative criticism from many different perspectives. Post-colonial theorists saw modernisation theory as a paradigm example of Orientalism, positing a universal path from an archaic past to an enlightened Western present (Pieterse 1991); the determinism of modernisation theory was challenged by empirical studies of the complexity of the relationships involved in political change (Dahl 1998); ‘stagist’ master-theories of social change came under

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7 The most cogent systematic defence of ‘orthodox’ historical materialism is GA Cohen’s Karl Marx’s Theory of History: a Defence (2000). Many neo-Marxists have departed from this stagist account, see for example Rosenberg (2009).
8 The notion of underdevelopment, employed by dependency theorists in their criticisms of modernisation theory, presumes existence of some hypothetical process of development, which underdevelopment is the negation or flipside of. The deconstruction of the ideas of development and modernisation therefore caused major problems for dependency theory and its successors.
thoroughgoing criticism by historical sociologists (Tilly 1984: 41-2); whilst the failure of ‘high modernist’ development projects sapped enthusiasm for policies based on modernisation theory (Scott 1998).

Nevertheless, despite the problems with the concept of modernisation, it still seems plausible to speak of a process of ‘development’ that meaningfully links together diverse processes in changing societies. Scholars such as Inglehart and Werzel have put forward what might be termed ‘neo-modernization theory’, which draws on a large body of evidence to demonstrate that ‘economic development does tend to bring about important, roughly predictable changes in society, culture, and politics’ (Inglehart and Welzel 2009). Although this position remains contentious, the notion that there are similarities between societies experiencing a process of social transformation seems inescapable (cf. Roxborough 1988: 755). There is enormous variation within this process, but this does not change the fact that all societies must come to terms with certain broad social features of the contemporary world, chiefly ‘bureaucratic states and economic markets’ as Donnelly pithily summarises (Donnelly 2007: 287). Drawing on Mann’s historical sociology (1986, 1993), development might be understood as greater control over nature, greater ability to organise social action across social space, and greater ability to draw on power resources for individual and social purposes. Modernisation can be understood as the standardisation and rationalisation that accompanies development, and is not only a feature of the modern era: the Chinese Warring States period witnessed a tremendous period of modernisation nearly two thousand years before the rise of the West (Hui 2004). What should, however, be jettisoned is the notion that some societies are ‘developed’ and have reached a stable end state where they need no longer adapt to and promote economic, social and political change (Payne 2005: 324).

The essence of their argument is that rising individual resource endowments produces change in social values that lead to institutionalisation of individual rights and democratisation (Inglehart, Welzel and Klingeman 2003: 346). Neo-modernisation theory therefore reverses classical modernisation theory’s assumption that cultural change leads to economic change (Inglehart and Welzel 2009).

Sceptics such as Przeworski and Limongi criticise the claim that economic development generates democracy and instead emphasise the idiosyncratic causes of regime change. Yet they find that democracies are more likely to survive in wealthy countries and so establishes a long run probabilistic relationship between economic growth and democratisation (Przeworski and Limongi 1997). Both sides of the argument are therefore in agreement about macro-trends.

This position is echoed by Tilly, who writes that ‘the development of capitalism and the formation of powerful, connected national states dominated all other social processes and shaped all social structures [in the modern world]’ (1984: 15).

The notion of development, as the term is used here, is not a synonym for ‘progress’ but simply refers to the secular, empirical tendency in world history towards more extensive and intensive forms of organisation and control over both nature and human action. As Adorno argued, there is no general historical pathway leading from ignorance to universal enlightenment, but there is one from the slingshot to the atomic bomb (Adorno 2006: 12).
Therefore, rather than regarding social change as entirely local and contingent, development and modernisation can be thought of as a common process, and therefore as a means of vertically differentiating between societies within the international system. More and less socio-economically developed societies differ in respects which cannot be reduced to their relative capabilities. Particularly relevant for international relations is the extent to which actors have been successful at establishing political order, building a cohesive polity and constructing a set of Weberian bureaucratic state institutions (Evans and Rauch 1999). In this vein Ayoob and Holsti have sought to explain global patterns of insecurity in terms of the challenges arising from the project of state-building, which has been delayed or protracted in much of the global South (Ayoob 1995; Holsti 1996).

Qualified distinctions can be usefully made by international theorists between states and societies on the basis of their level of socio-economic development, despite the fact that because it refers to society-wide changes the concept is difficult to capture using a single metric. Nonetheless, as Rosenberg has insightfully pointed out (Rosenberg 2006), the central problem with theories of development has been the assumption that development is an endogenous process that societies undergo in isolation from one another. It is therefore necessary to consider first the global dimension of development and the spontaneous emergence of self-sustaining inequality between macroregions before considering the way in which developmental, transnational and geopolitical processes have been united in international relations.

Dimension 3: Global Socio-Economic Stratification

Rather than focusing on the inter-state system or comparing individual nations in isolation as they develop, we can adopt a perspective that posits the existence of a singular, unequal global society. This was the approach adopted by strong structuralist approaches including dependency and world-systems theories which argued that the global order should be considered as a single social system stratified in terms of core and peripheral macro-regions. These theorists asserted that economic convergence between underdeveloped and industrialised societies was difficult if not impossible due to a self-reinforcing global division of labour based on unequal exchange between core and periphery. Developmental outcomes were hypothesized to be over-determined by this world-system, a self-organising and self-reinforcing pattern of unequal exchange based on

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13 Again it should be stressed that the processes of state-and-nation building have never been truly ‘completed’ even in the North – as evidenced by the existence of regionalist movements in Europe and North America as well as violent separatist campaigns in Spain and Northern Ireland. Political cohesiveness, furthermore, is also clearly a factor in the extent to which a state can prevent external actors from subverting it and reducing it to subordinate status, as analysed in the first section.

14 Abu-Lughold (1989); Arrighi (1995); Arrighi and Silver (1999); Chase-Dunn (1998); Frank and Gills (1993); Wallerstein (1974).
a hierarchical division of labour determining the economic fortunes of societies and social groups.

The world-systems and dependency perspectives lost ground following criticisms of their reductive economism, their failure to move beyond general theoretical pronouncements, mechanical assumptions and their denial of state agency through an overriding focus on the system level of analysis (Hobson 2000: 134-7, 142). Perhaps most damaging has been the success of the East Asian economies in achieving ‘core’ levels of economic development\(^{15}\). This bifurcation of fortunes amongst economies of the periphery has been taken by many as falsifying the claims of strong structuralist approaches that the global division of labour is fixed and that development is impossible within the capitalist world economy. In a total reversal of dependency/world systems claims, neo-liberal theorists have put forward ‘conditional convergence’ theories which advocate integration into the world economy as the engine of ‘catch-up growth’\(^{16}\) and identify impediments to economic development as being entirely internal to LEDCs (de Soto 2000)

Yet, as will be further discussed, these account overlook the active involvement of the state in the process of economic development within the NICs, who were able to achieve growth and structural transformation by actively seeking to change their position within the global division of labour rather than passively acquiescing to the logic of comparative advantage (Chang 2002; Rodrik 2007). Furthermore several prominent economic theorists have posited that the assumption that economic integration will automatically lead to convergence is faulty, and that under certain circumstances an economic system can spontaneously bifurcate into a ‘core’ and ‘periphery’. Krugman, Venables and Fujita have demonstrated theoretically that an initial divergence between the rates of manufacturing growth between two regions might be self-reinforcing. Buyers and sellers of intermediate and finished goods may wish to relocate in already industrialised areas to minimise transportation costs (Krugman and Venables 1995: 7). Real wages may fall in the periphery as manufacturing capability and investment relocates to core regions (Krugman and Venables 1995: 7). Rather than diminishing returns driving the diffusion of capital throughout an international economy, new spatial economics shows that these forward and backward linkages generate ‘economies of agglomeration’ and a spontaneous bifurcation between economic regions (Fujita 1996). These findings echo other mechanisms of positive feedback identified by development economists, such as how industrial growth might promote general productivity growth within an economy (Verdoorn’s Law), enabling a region to capture

\(^{15}\) For a fairly typical offhand dismissal, see Krasner (1999: 54). It’s worth noting that the benefit of the doubt that neo-realists such as Krasner pleaded for in the aftermath of the unforeseen end of the Cold War was not granted to dependency and world systems theorists.

\(^{16}\) Dollar (1992), and Sachs & Warner (1995) are amongst the most influential contributions to have advanced this position.
further export markets through competitive advantage, increasing its prospects for further growth (Thirlwall 2003: 276).

There is evidence that these processes have historically retarded the ability of late developing regions to undergo economic development. Amsden provides evidence that the British technological revolution in textiles after 1815 imposed the necessity to innovate, either in terms of ability to compete on volume or quality, on all rival producers. Unlike some European producers, Asian textile producers were unable to technologically adapt to the challenge and were therefore forced to compete on price by accepting lower wages (Amsden 2001: 31-4). Contra the assumptions of neoclassical economics, technological know-how diffuses only very gradually from the advanced core to the rest of the world economy (Rasler and Thompson 2009; Reuveny and Thompson 2001, 2008). Centres of innovation are therefore able to reap monopolistic rents in these leading sectors by seizing market share and outcompeting other producers. The contemporary transnational reorganisation of production may have exacerbated this problem by disaggregating increasing-returns, high-value added aspects of production from low value-added manufacturing (Wade 2005: 23). Without developing technological know-how of their own, less developed regions are forced by the logic of comparative advantage to specialise in low value added industries, further undermining their ability to keep up with technological change.

Indeed, the longstanding structuralist argument that primary commodity extraction is a poor basis for economic development remains plausible. The Singer-Prebisch thesis that the terms of trade for unprocessed commodities would gradually decline has been largely vindicated (Kaplinsky 2006; UNCTAD 2005), with the proviso that the same effect has also impacted simple manufactures. Accumulation of evidence on the resource curse and the example provided by rentier petro-states demonstrates that a political economy based on primary commodity extraction rarely provides the basis for broad-based, inclusive economic development (Ross 1999; Bulte, Damania and Deacon 2005). But whilst generic manufactures have fallen in their barter-price, certain niche market primary commodities have not. This nonetheless is consistent with a structuralist account that stresses the role of leading sectors and quasi-monopolies in determining the returns from participation in the global economy. A second major qualification must be made that primary commodity prices have risen rapidly since around 2004 due to the industrialisation of China. Nonetheless, this trend is entirely consistent with the original theoretical explanation of the thesis offered by Prebisch, which drew on Engel’s Law. See Kaplinsky 2006 for a detailed discussion of trends.

Kevin Rudd’s ill-fated attempts to tax the windfall profits of the Australian mining sector demonstrates that all primary commodity exporting nations, both more and less economically developed, can face difficulties in attempting to harness their commodity endowments for wider social benefit.

17 From this perspective, the success of the East Asian NICs was closely related to their successful participation in the leading sector of electronics manufacturing and the opportunity this offered to take advantage of Northern economic demand. This fits with Rodrik’s account of the economic development of these nations, which stresses the key stimulatory role played by external demand.
18 But whilst generic manufactures have fallen in their barter-price, certain niche market primary commodities have not. This nonetheless is consistent with a structuralist account that stresses the role of leading sectors and quasi-monopolies in determining the returns from participation in the global economy. A second major qualification must be made that primary commodity prices have risen rapidly since around 2004 due to the industrialisation of China. Nonetheless, this trend is entirely consistent with the original theoretical explanation of the thesis offered by Prebisch, which drew on Engel’s Law. See Kaplinsky 2006 for a detailed discussion of trends.
19 Kevin Rudd’s ill-fated attempts to tax the windfall profits of the Australian mining sector demonstrates that all primary commodity exporting nations, both more and less economically developed, can face difficulties in attempting to harness their commodity endowments for wider social benefit.
The mechanism put forward by many dependency and world-systems theorists, unequal exchange, relies on Marx’s discredited labour theory of value and is therefore a dead-end. But there are strong reasons to suppose that there exist spontaneous global structures that limit economic development and that the benefits of the global division of labour can be contingent and unevenly distributed. Furthermore, bifurcations between more and less economically developed regions can generate additional forms of maldevelopment as negative externalities from the North spill over into the South. Roberts and Parks for example have provided evidence that, although the North reaps the benefits of continued industrial growth, the costs in terms of anthropogenic environmental insecurity are disproportionately shouldered by those in the least developed regions (Roberts and Parks 2007: 103-132). Pollution and waste created in the industrial world is exported to the global South due to frequently weak laws and enforcement capabilities (Roberts and Parks 2007: 133-184). Northern demand for commodities creates rents which are captured by political elites and used to buy off the population to forestall political opposition, undermining the link between taxation and representation. Demand for narcotics and supply of small arms from the industrialised world exacerbates problems of criminality and political fragmentation in less economically developed nations. Scholars have argued that some sub-Saharan African political regimes rely almost entirely on the rents from global commodity chains, ‘shadow networks’ in illicit goods and the pecuniary benefits of de jure sovereignty for their political survival, producing a pattern of ‘extraversion’ (Bayart 2009: 21-22).

These patterns of external orientation have in some instances produced a non-identity of interests between Southern elites and their populations, encouraging the former to enter into alliances with external actors as identified by dependency theorists and classical structuralists such as Galtung (1971). Indeed, to understand the process of global stratification, it is necessary to reintroduce states and inter-state interaction to our analysis. As Bergson argues, it was colonial conquest that incorporated large parts of the world into the world economy, the global division of labour did not just emerge spontaneously from small local economic variations (Bergson 1990: 70-2). Amsden likewise suggests that the coercive aspects of colonial economic practices might have arisen as attempts to prevent market forces and Ricardian comparative advantage from operating to the advantage of the colonised (Amsden 2007: 28-9). Conversely, it is through state-building in the context of a hostile inter-state environment that successful Southern industrialisers have promoted national development and succeeded at ‘swimming against the tide’ by improving their position in the global division of labour (Amsden 2001, Chang 2002, Evans 1995, Kohli 2004, Wade 1990).

This section has attempted to examine what is living and what is dead in the classical structural analysis of global stratification. Although the notion of unequal exchange, and mechanistic and
rigid formulations of the perspective must be discarded, there are reasons to believe that self-reinforcing economic processes and forms of cumulative causation (Wade 2005) may well have promoted structural bifurcation in the world economy and consequently the international system. A focus on the global level is incomplete, however, as states and other political actors are not passive recipients of irresistible system-level pressures but have adopted differing strategies for coping with the challenges of inequality and development. The following section thus aims to integrate the three dimensions thus far considered in order to provide an account of how interstate, secular and global processes have generated patterns of stratification in the contemporary international system.

**Dimension 4: The Geopolitics of Development**

Synthesising the three dimensions detailed above allows us to analyse how the geopolitics of the process of socio-economic development has shaped the international system and led to the emergence of enduring patterns of stratification. To reveal more clearly these processes we can draw on the work of Mann (1986; 1993) and abandon the ‘billiard ball’ model of the international system as made up of self-contained, unitary states. From the outset, the state developed in a world of multiple political communities embedded in extensive transnational networks of social interaction. Doing justice to this fact requires us to put ‘relations before states’ (Jackson and Nexon 1999) and acknowledge that social and political institutions are composed of networks that organise and mobilise human action. The fact that ‘state-society complexes’ are continuously interacting with other societies undergoing development undermines the possibility for any ‘pristine’ process of development. Thus the process of socio-economic development has been ‘jagged and discontinuous’ rather than linear (Rosenberg 2006: 330). Interaction between different state-society complexes draws all societies and regions into a common process of development, but different processes may both promote and work against inequality and stratification.

Interaction might encourage uniformity within the international system through the ‘horizontal’ transfer of innovations from the ‘leading edges’ of socio-economic development, interrupting the internal trajectory of societies. This might well occur through processes of cultural diffusion, but as Rosenberg has argued, the key mechanism has frequently been geopolitical pressure from actors who possess more advanced means of socio-economic organisation (Rosenberg 2010: 9).

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20 Rosenberg (2006) argues that social theory has generally ignored multiplicity, therefore theorising in terms of a single isolated society or in terms of one encompassing world society.  
21 Rosenberg (2006) provides an extended discussion of how the spread of innovations cuts across social space and developmental trajectories.
In a competitive inter-state system, political actors may find themselves on a ‘treadmill’: forced
keep pace with the fastest runner, or risk ‘falling off’ and being subordinated\(^\text{22}\) (Little 2007: 214-
15). Spruyt (1994; 2001) develops this line of enquiry most fully, building on Tilly’s analysis of the
emergence of the early modern state (1985, 1992)\(^\text{23}\). An exogenous shock, European
incorporation into patterns of long-distance trade, produced a diversity of new political units. In
addition to ‘selection’ through geopolitical rivalry, coalitions of domestic actors consciously
imitated the most successful of the new institutional forms, the sovereign state, in order to
advance both their domestic and international goals (Spruyt 1994: 6-7). Finally, these early
modern states ‘empowered’ one another by promulgating new principles of political legitimacy
and authority based on the notion of sovereignty (Spruyt 1994: 15). Thus mechanisms of
diffusion, geopolitical competition, conscious emulation, and empowerment can promote
uniformity amongst interacting inter-state actors.

Yet some political communities were not able to keep up with the ‘geopolitical treadmill’, and
have thus faced collapse or outright conquest. Colonial powers created a spectrum of different
forms of colonial administrations, from totally extractive colonies such as the Belgian Congo, to
the liberal ‘neo-Europes’ of North America and the Antipodes. Acemoglu, Johnson and
Robinson argue that the former provided the basis for robust institutions of private property and
representative government, the latter for a stagnant extractive economy and oligarchic rule (2001:
1376). This resulted in divergences in the pace of industrialisation leading to path dependent
courses of development and international income disparities (Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson
2002: 179). Inter-state inequalities may consequently have generated long-term patterns of
inequality and stratification within the international system and the global division of labour.

Analysing the colonial powers themselves, Arrighi develops Tilly’s analysis (1992) to contend that
capitalism developed out of the military revolution in Europe which promoted the rationalisation
of social institutions and technological development for war-making purposes (1995; 2007: 63-68,
73-95). In a process of positive feedback, these were then deployed in the pursuit of new markets
in a self-reinforcing cycle of warfare, imperialism, profit and reinvestment. Arrighi’s speculations
are supported by the close links between the development of the means of destruction by
European states and subsequent industrial growth, for example through advantages in steel
production bequeathed to the British economy generated by cannon manufacture during the
Napoleonic wars (McNeil 1982: 203). The ‘virtuous’ cycle linking geoeconomics with geopolitics

\(^{22}\) This is the interpretation of Kenneth Waltz’s theory of inter-state politics (1979) offered by Little (2007:
214-15).

\(^{23}\) Tilly’s arguments are echoed by other historical sociologists such as Mann and Giddens, who also
emphasize the extent to which the development of the modern state has been driven by war. See Giddens
has continued, with American military research projects such as ARPANET giving rise to innovations such as the internet that have generated further waves of economic growth.

Indeed many theorists of hegemony have seen geopolitical competition as leading to a form of vertical differentiation where a state-society complex takes on a leadership role, reshaping the international order. Many of these theorists have focused, not only on military preponderance, but on leadership at the edge of socio-economic development. The hegemon or system-leader leads waves of technological innovation (Modelski and Thompson 1996: 52) and/or acts as a model for economic development by generating new industrial practices, political institutions and modes of business organisation (Arrighi and Silver 1999; Cox 1983: 171; Murphy 2001: 303-305; Teschke 2005; van der Pijl 1998, 2006). These benefits do not necessarily diffuse uniformly throughout the international system, as innovations have frequently only been successfully absorbed by those at already at a certain level of socioeconomic development.

Succession between hegemons in the modern era has so far occurred within the core of maritime European states, amidst a gradual expansion of the circle of states firmly incorporated within this core. The process of absorbing these innovations and undergoing the necessary social and economic restructuring to keep pace has on the other hand been extremely disruptive and potentially destabilising outside of this core, however, generating patterns of precariousness and insecurity (Murphy 2005). Neo-Gramscian scholars have examined how, unable on their own to affect this process of restructuring, elites may look towards external actors able to assist them transforming their own societies (Cox 1983: 166). As examined in section three, early developing regions and centres of innovation may inadvertently force other regions to specialise in producing low value added goods or focus on primary resource extraction. Finally, Spruyt’s third mechanism of empowerment, where like political units legitimise one another and delegitimise non-alike units, can clearly generate stratification rather than uniformity by introducing a ‘standard of civilisation’ for acceptance into international society.

Thus innovations on the part of the leading, advanced state-society complexes do not necessarily result in homogeneity within the international system. It may, in evolutionary fashion, lead to the emergence of a core and a periphery as a result of differentiation along an axis of ability to integrate socio-economic innovations and generate endogenous socio-economic development. State-society complexes have faced a succession of different internationally and transnationally transmitted pressures to adapt and modernise right up to the present. Within this context, social

24 An important piece of potential counterevidence to this argument would be if the rapid spread of wireless and mobile information-communications technologies throughout much of the less economically developed world were to have a significant impact on patterns of inequality and economic development.

25 Thus elite actors within less socio-economically developed societies have actively supported relationships of political subordination with external powers.
actors responding to these pressures have not simply passively reacted to external pressures, but adopted a wide variety of strategies\textsuperscript{26}.

The pressures from European state-society complexes have been very intense, and so it is not difficult to find clear examples of adaptive emulation. After Commodore Perry and the Black Fleet had forced the Shogunate to end its policy of \textit{sakoku}, Japan self-consciously embarked on a process of break-neck modernisation and emulation of the West, first modelling itself after Britain and then Germany. Empires such as Iran and Siam, who had claimed authority to the very extent of the world with which they had contact, attempted to refashion themselves as modern states (Spruyt 1994: 16). After decolonisation, post-colonial nations took to statehood like ducks to water, universalising both the institutional features of the modern state\textsuperscript{27} and the principle of sovereign equality. Yet the divergence between the European core and the non-European was great enough in some cases to make the colonial encounter almost terminally destabilising. After Moctezuma’s capture by Cortez, the Mexica had little opportunity to adapt to the tactics of the conquistadores. Most other non-European societies had a range of options in attempting to cope with European power.

One option has been for existing elites to embrace a hierarchical relationship with external actors, as described by dependency theory. This strategy of ‘bandwaggoning’ may provide social actors with advantages against local rivals (Wohlforth 1999: 30) and still allow for autonomy vis-à-vis, or even manipulation of, the patron\textsuperscript{28}. The consequence, however, has frequently been an enduring legacy of ‘extraversion’, breaking the linkages between elites and the rest of society (Bayart 2009: 21-22).

A potential option was ‘aloofness’\textsuperscript{29}, a policy of scorning European influence and resisting external intrusion on the part of foreign Empires, as when the Chinese emperor dismissed the possibility of trade with European powers on the grounds of having no need for their ‘ingenious articles’ (quoted in Brzezinski 1997: 14-15). Darwin notes that this strategy remained plausible for the most successful non-European empires throughout most of the C19th, as they did not hold European achievements in particularly high regard (Darwin 2007: 137-145). Yet these policies could not ultimately be maintained in the face of organised European geopolitical pressure and transnationally mediated domestic pressures for reform. Severe pressures of this kind have

\textsuperscript{26} The following discussion is influenced by Paul Schroeder’s (1994) attempts to enumerate the actual options available to states in early modern Europe beyond those offered by neo-realism and apply a similar analysis to the strategies of societies under pressure from core states.
\textsuperscript{27} Or at the very least the trappings of modern statehood.
\textsuperscript{28} The problem of tails wagging dogs is well documented and as Hilton L Root has analysed (2008), the problem continues to bedevil powers such as the US. Of course, the fact that tails might wag dogs does not alter the anatomical relationship between the two.
\textsuperscript{29} This is similar to Schroeder’s strategy of ‘hiding’ (1994).
sometimes resulted in extreme re-assertions of local values and the attempt to return to the pure, uncorrupted fundamentals of a culture in order to expel external influence, as in the case of the Chinese Righteous Harmony Movement in the C19th or Al-Qaeda today (Mead 2007: 373).

A more frequent approach has been ‘neo-traditionalism’, the selective appropriation of European innovations to a specific cultural setting and an attempt to adapt ‘traditional’ practices to the modern world. Frequently this has taken the form of an attempt to preserve, or even invent, a cultural sphere relating to the home, spiritual values and femininity, whilst adopting the ‘masculine’ tropes of modernity in such fields as politics, science, industry and warfare (Tickner 2003b: 323). In many cases both neo-traditional and modernising strategies resulted in ‘dual’ polities in which modern forms of organisation extended little beyond the capital, mirroring the dual, enclave economies of developing societies.

This highlights how the process of interactive development produces not only inequality but hybridity. Late developing societies find themselves in profoundly different circumstances than early developers, preventing convergence amongst state-society complexes. Early developers may have blocked others from adopting the path they have taken whilst simultaneously opening up ‘short cuts’ in socioeconomic development, a contradictory process of combined and uneven development (Rosenburg 2009). New models of social organisation arise and become candidates for emulation. The increasing capital intensity of industrialisation (Gerschenkron 1963) and the destabilising strains caused by war and social change (Skocpol 1979) have repeatedly created radical models of social organisation. As a result ‘contender states’ (van der Pijl 2006)30 have arisen, posing a threat to states within the liberal ‘core’ due to both their ability to mobilise power resources and the rival vision of modernity and international order they represented. Rivalry between the liberal core and these contender-states has been more than just military and geopolitical, the Cold War was a battle between two systems that each claimed the ability to manage the problems of modernity and promote material wellbeing (Westad 2007; Leffler 2007). Both powers found themselves caught in a ‘third race’ promoting rival models of development for emulation in the developing world (Cullather 2007). A central factor in the failure of the Soviet model was its inability to adapt to a further round of economic change, its inability to emulate the ‘scientific and technological revolution’ which was predicated on interfirm linkages the Soviet Union could not take advantage of (Brooks and Wohlforth 2001: 25).

The exhaustion of Soviet communism not only closed the most important horizontal cleavage in the international order, but confirmed that all but the most predatory states face an imperative to

30 The tendency for major challenges to hegemonic and imperial dominance to emerge from ‘marcher states’ through international history has been noted by many scholars including Chase-Dunne (1998), Little, Kaufman and Wohlforth (2007), Gilpin (1981) and Mann (1986)
promote socio-economic development. As Payne argues, development has become a universal problematic within the international system (Payne 2005: 324). Yet after the Cold War, a narrower range of strategies remain open for late developing state-society complexes. As former Brazilian president Cardoso argued: ‘either the South enters the democratic-technological-scientific race, invests heavily in R&D, and endures the ‘information economy’ metamorphosis, or it becomes unimportant, unexploited, and unexploitable’ (2001: 276). As in other examples of durable inequality, subordinate actors have found it may be preferable to adapt to circumstances rather than directly challenge structures of inequality (Tilly 1998: 96). Nonetheless successful economic development still seems to require an effective catalytic state capable of exercising ‘governed interdependence’ (Weiss 2006: 181,184).

With complex interdependence and global economic integration, the importance of shaping the international political economy has become increasingly important. States find themselves enmeshed in the politics of unequal but interdependent development. Yet attempts to collectively govern and bring order to the international system are not new, and in the politics of global rule making structural inequality has played an enduring role. This is the subject of the final section.

**Dimension 5: Collective Management and World Order**

Historically, multiple attempts have been made to collectively write the rules of the international order. Although the international system is characterised by anarchy in that no world government exists, the existence of enduring forms of great power management suggests that the international system should be understood as oligarchic. A rank order or hierarchy has long existed in which ‘disparities in capability are reflected, more or less formally, in the decision making of the society of states’ (Clark 1989: 2). Less consensual and voluntaristic than the image sometimes offered by the English School or international society approach (see Bull 2002 [1977]: 13; Wheeler 2000: 25), the great powers have repeatedly arrogated certain prerogatives and responsibilities amongst themselves based on mutual acknowledgement of each other’s role in the ‘club’ of great powers (Clark 2009: 214; Clark 1989: 3). As Little suggests, the international peace settlements after major wars have been crucial junctures in the making of modern international society, as it is after victory that architects of the peace have the opportunity to create an international order in line with their values and interests (Little 2007: 270)

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31 According to Amsden (2001: 190-248) for example, industrialising nations cannot passively depend on FDI for crucial technological transfers but must foster national firms capable of promoting technical and managerial skills.
Suzuki highlights the problems with emphasising only the positive, cooperative facets of international society (Suzuki 2005: 156), noting the ‘Janus-faced’ character of the European order (Suzuki 2005: 148-9). At the very same time that the major European states were creating a Europe-wide order predicated on sovereign equality and mutual non-interference, an extra-European colonial order was being created based on the principle of the division of sovereignty and the construction of hierarchy (Keene 2002: xi). After European colonial expansion the non-European world was incorporated into global international society, but on an unequal basis. Outside of Europe, the colonial powers acted ‘on the basis of very different practices, rules and values to those that they applied to themselves’ (Little 2007: 272-3). A distinction was recognised between fully sovereign states, semi-sovereign states whose sovereignty was divisible and over whom trusteeship could be exercised, and non-sovereign peoples who lacked any of the rights of statehood (Keene 2002: 76-83, 102-106). This order was publicly codified in the form of unequal treaties (Keene 2007), ratified amongst European powers through conferences and agreements, and legitimated through the diffusion of inegalitarian theories that justified the stratification of peoples, civilisations and races (Said 1979).

Although post-colonial perspectives emphasise how representations of the non-European world were constitutive of an enduring, unequal world order (Doty 1996), they neglect the question of why some representations came to dominate. Those non-European empires able to hold their own against the Europeans were able to disdain European culture and practices, remaining aloof long into the 19th Century (Darwin 2007: 137-145). The ‘turn to empire’ in European political thought (Pitts 2005) was directly preceded by cotemporaneous ‘geopolitical earthquakes’ which undermined previously resilient Eurasian empires (Darwin 2007: 160-162). As they were surpassed materially, Eurasian civilisations found themselves ‘organizationally outflanked’ (Mann 1986: 7) as the European powers ratified and consolidated this order amongst themselves by constructing a hierarchical and dualistic international society buttressed by Eurocentric and later racist ideas.

The major powers acted collectively not only to underwrite international inequality, but to form alliances to repulse ‘contender states’ such as Napoleonic France challenging the extant international order. The evolution of the fundamental institutions of international society has therefore been deeply related to the process of unequal and uneven development. After the

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32 This corresponded to the distinction drawn between civilized, semi-civilized and barbarous peoples on the basis of whether and how productively a people worked the land which they occupied. The trichotomous distinction also reflects the influence of theories of the life-cycle of civilisations on European thinking. Drawing lessons from the decline of the classical Greco-Roman world and the rise of Christian Europe after the renaissance, many Europeans came to believe that other civilisations such as India were at the nadir of a civilisation cycle whilst Europe was in its ascendancy. ‘Barbarous’ or ‘savage’ peoples, however, were seen as outside of time and outside of this process. See Cowen and Shenton (1996).
Second World War a ‘great-power directorate’ (Clark 2009: 205) once again set the terms of the peace and created the architecture for the post-war international order. Whilst the UN system did represent an ambitious attempt to expand the scope of international organization (Kennedy 2006: 24-47; Murphy 1994), it was within the Atlantic bloc that the most significant attempts in international institution-building took place. The neo-liberal institutionalist research programme attempts to understand this post-war Atlantic order in terms of a pattern of mutually beneficial cooperative interactions, buttressed by a set of institutions and regimes which provide solutions to otherwise difficult to solve problems of coordination, credibility, monitoring and enforcement (Axelrod and Keohane, 1985: 249-250). As Baker points out, however, Pareto-improving outcomes might still be massively unequal and ‘cooperation’ can be the product of rational acquiescence to coercion as much as a voluntary arrangement between equals. In some circumstances cooperation may take the form of exploitative collusion, leaving actors outside the transaction worse off (Baker 2006: 14).

Gruber has examined the dark side of cooperation through his notion of ‘go-it-alone-power’., where one set of actors can remove options available to other actors, leaving the latter no option but to cooperate according to terms set by the former. Although the decision to cooperate after their most preferred option is removed is pareto-improving for the ‘losers’ compared to non-cooperation, they end up worse off than under the status quo ante (Gruber 2000: 39). For example during the Uruguay Round trade negotiations the Quad33 terminated the GATT, incorporating past agreements within the massively expanded remit of the WTO. Developing countries were presented with an all or nothing choice to acquiesce to the new arrangements or be left outside of the multi-lateral trading system (Steinberg 2002: 360). As Gruber notes, the exercise of this form of power to rewrite global rules rests only on the ability to form a coalition of indispensable actors, no direct coercion is required (Gruber 2000: 40).

As Drezner notes, there is now an increasingly thick institutional environment in the international political economy, composed of ‘regime complexes’ comprising multiple organizations and agreements (Drezner 2007: 24). Under conditions of complex interdependence, major economies have increasingly attempted to harmonise their regulatory systems. Deeper levels of integration have meant that regulatory regimes increasingly come to govern ‘behind the border’ issues through the development of international trade law, the process of legalization, the universalisation of professional standards and practices, and growth of conditionalities attached to international agreements. Major states have remained the primary drivers behind this process (Drezner 2007: xii), international organizations remain the agents of state-based principals. Whilst networks of non-state actors may have a greater role in rule making

33 The US, EU, Canada and Japan.
and standard setting than before, the advanced economies of the core ultimately set the rules by which the international economy is governed. Leading states have not been displaced but becomes enmeshed in new intergovernmental and public-private policy making networks, remaining central to systems of ‘governed interdependence’ (Weiss 2006: 181,184). Similarly, Slaughter argues that states have increased their ‘effective sovereignty’ (Slaughter 2004: 268-9) through disaggregation, participating within transgovernmental networks and passing certain components of sovereignty to new supranational organisations (Slaughter 2004: 12, 20-1).

Yet as the international regulatory order now stretches more deeply within state borders, those outside of the nexus of global rule making increasingly become responsible for enforcing rules made by, and in the interests of, the core34. The present world order has become more deeply hierarchical in that rules made by the most economically advanced states have increasingly come to govern economic life the world over. What emerges is an infrastructure or skeleton of world order ‘based on an intricate three-dimensional web of links between disaggregated state institutions’ (Slaughter 2004: 15); or as Strange characterised it, a nascent transnational empire (Strange 1989).

The state has not, therefore, withered away; rather state power has been reorganised and redeployed (cf. Wendt 1997) through deeper integration and new forms of global authority that have emerged out of the trilateral Western bloc forged in the Cold War (Shaw 2000). Thus Hoogvelt terms globalisation ‘implosive’ (Hoogvelt 2001: 19) and Nayar argues it is ‘truncated’ (2005) because integration has proceeded much faster within the Atlantic alliance and the ‘Greater West’35. Members of this advanced core no longer wield power purely as a result of their material capabilities, but also because of their position within an increasingly dense and extensive system of global organization. As Mann argues, when human activity is institutionalized in order to collectively reap the benefits of cooperation, ‘those who occupy supervisory and coordinating positions have an immense organizational superiority over the others’ (Mann 1986: 6-7). Those outside the apex of systems of organization find themselves ‘organizationally outflanked’ (Mann 1986: 7), as they lack the ability to set the terms of social cooperation, yet are compelled to continue participating due to their lack of exit power. State-society complexes on the outside of the Northern bloc are therefore in a structurally dissimilar position from ‘insiders’ with regards to the management of the international economic order. As Bailin suggests, advanced industrial states of the core are able to act as a kind of ‘group hegemon’ within the

34 The onus now placed on states in the developing world to enforce the technological monopolies of Western firms by both WTO agreements and the extra-territorial, unilateral Special and Super 301 policies of the US is perhaps the most egregious example.
35 This is geopolitical analysis of the nature of the liberal international order is advanced by a surprising range of theorists, from Deudney and Ikenberry (1999), ‘liberal materialist’ champions of the US-led order, to neo-Gramscian critics such as Gill (2003: 83).
world economy as a result of patterns of close coordination and vehicles such as G7 (Bailin 2005: 62, 110). Patron-client relationships between core and periphery have similarly been multilateralised through international institutions in a manner that parallels past practices of imperial trusteeship (Watson 2007: 72).

The above analysis attempts to delineate the historical transition from a Eurocentric world order founded on an oligarchy of great powers and a diffused standard of civilisation encoded into international law, to a dense transgovernmental and tentatively supranational capitalist order centred on the advanced core. An enduring constellation of increasingly integrated states, led by the US, therefore retains the ability to shape the structure of the international and global order. Other states find themselves in a structurally different position of being outsiders within the process of global rule making. This outsider status and the position as ‘rule takers’ is ultimately what defines the contemporary ‘global South’ in contemporary international politics.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to analyse the extent to which the Brandt line between North and South remains relevant for international relations theory through an analysis of five dimensions within which inequality operates within the international system. It has sought to demonstrate that by drawing on a diverse set of literatures and debates it is possible to reconstruct and defend a perspective which acknowledges inequality as part of the deep structure of international relations. Thus although mechanically determinist versions of structuralism cannot be supported, a strong case can be made in support of a non-fatalist structuralism which recognises the importance of agency on the part of states and social actors as well as the contradictory pressures for convergence and divergence that exist within the international system36. Such a perspective can fruitfully contribute to attempts at social-structural theorising within international relations, providing a useful theoretical lens to that allows us to understand the significance of inequality for world politics.

In providing a theoretical account of inequality and stratification within the international system, this paper has claimed that the North-South cleavage is real and enduring. Thus it has attempted to provide an explanation of why in virtually every issue-area in international politics we find a rough division between North and South, from trade, to nuclear proliferation, to humanitarian

36 The exemplar of such an approach remains Cardoso and Faletti’s Dependency and Development in Latin America (1979).
intervention, to climate change\textsuperscript{37}. Although this political division is not as deep or clear-cut as it was in the era in which the Brandt report was written, it remains essential for understanding contemporary international politics. Although few states in the South are committed to radical opposition towards the international system, under present circumstances all must assertively, even confrontationally (Hurrell and Narlikar 2006), engage with structures of inter-state coordination and supra-territorial governance.

The account offered has departed from the position which regards the North-South cleavage as largely subjective in character, arising from the perception of grievance on the part of the South, rooted in the common memory of European colonialism and subsequent post-colonial experiences (Parks and Roberts 2007: 62-63, MacFarlane 1999: 19). It has also attempted to challenge strongly globalist perspectives such as that of Hoogvelt, who has argued that stratification is primarily a social division between global classes, cutting across nation-states (Hoogvelt 2001: xiv). Halperin defends the similar position that stratification primarily occurs between classes within nations in the context of a wider global economy (Halperin 2004: 279), arguing that ‘dependency is class dependency, not state dependency’ (Halperin 2004: 115). Yet these class-based structuralist accounts fail to emphasise that between-nation inequality remains been a much larger component of global inequality than within-nation inequality (Milankovic 2009b) and downplay the irreducibly inter-state character of many forms of worldwide stratification. Such perspectives imply that autonomous national development policies on the part of states within the South will do little to ameliorate global inequality and encourage a shift in focus from inter-state contention to de-centralised, capillary patterns of governmentality (Duffield 2001, 2009). Yet the notion of a global deterritorialised system of rule (Hardt and Negri 2000) is wildly inaccurate: there exists a core within the international system where rules are made, and there exists a periphery subject to those rules.

Nonetheless, although the inquiry began with the notion of a ‘line’, this paper has analysed the North-South divide in a non-binary fashion. Several dimensions of interaction exist which together produce the emergent division between core and periphery. Based on the theoretical account above, the position of individual state-society complexes in the international system can be plotted using three axes: mass, socio-economic development and centrality. The first corresponds roughly to the notion of ‘material capabilities’ in neo-realist accounts. State-society complexes commanding greater populations, financial assets and productive potential are able to play a structurally different role to minor powers. They engage in the management of the

\textsuperscript{37} This should not be misunderstood as a claim that there is unanimity within either the North or the South, but that in each of these cases there is a distinctive and easily recognisable Northern or Southern position. The analogy being made is with political cleavages within contemporary politics, the recognition that class provides one of the main electoral cleavages does not mean that all members of a socio-economic group have identical political loyalties.
international system, may establish hierarchical relationships with other states, and impact on the options of other actors, whether consciously or not. The second corresponds to how close a society is to the ‘leading edge’ of social power, how successful it has been at originating and adopting innovations in mobilising resources to meet social goals. This second axis is related to the first because there is a close connection or even feedback loop between socio-economic development and ability to project power internationally. The third corresponds to how central a state-society complex is to international and global systems of organisation and rule-making. The third relates to the first in that major powers have played a greater role in shaping international rules, and to the second in that the growth in infrastructural power of the state-society complexes of the core has led them to create a denser system of international and global rules.

The three axes, though closely associated, are conceptually and substantively distinct. As Tilly suggests, although stratification is pervasive in human society it rarely gives rise to entirely consistent rank orders or homogenous strata (Tilly 1998: 29). But the three axes align closely enough in most cases to make it meaningful to speak of a periphery or global South, even if all Southern states and societies are not equally peripheral along each axis38. Furthermore, the positive existence of an integrated advanced core necessarily places other actors in the position of being ‘outsiders’. This commonality of exclusion provides a kind of negative unity to the South even though the three primary axis of inequality listed above cross-cut and only imperfectly align with one another.

Finally, it is worth noting three implications of the position advanced in this paper for contemporary international politics. First, the ongoing process of democratisation worldwide may not necessarily result in reduced political friction between North and South. Democratic governments can be assumed to be more likely to attempt to advance the interests of their populations than autocrats dependent on external support, and this may bring them into conflict with aspects of the present global order39. Second, the impressive growth rates of populous emerging economies may only slowly be closing the global income gap, but in the interim there may be pressure on the North to incorporate them into the institutions of global decision-making. This opens up the possibility that ‘mass’ may predominate over the other axes, creating a potential split between large and small less economically developed nations40, and/or moving the international system towards a C21st equivalent of the Concert of Europe dominated by the great

38 Drawing on the comparison with socio-economic class once again, this is an acknowledgement that stratification is not binary but a matter of gradation. In addition cross-cutting cleavages complicate the idea of a neat rank ordering amongst actors and groups.
39 By providing an avenue for Southern populations to advance their interests it might, however, help to diffuse more radical dissatisfaction with the present global order and thus stem violent expressions of discontent against the North.
40 As seemed to have occurred at the Copenhagen Climate Conference 2009, when China’s intransigent position infuriated both Northern nations and small LEDCs such as Tuvalu.
powers. Alternatively the emerging economies might exercise leadership on issues of relevance to the broader global South, as during parts of the Doha round of world trade negotiations (Narlikar and Tussie 2004). Finally, if the arguments put forward here are valid then the power shift currently underway in the international system has profound implications for the evolution of the international system. What is at stake is not just a change in the distribution of material capabilities amongst states, but potentially a shift in the ‘deep structure’ of the international system affecting the global division of labour, the ability of state-society complexes worldwide to pursue development, and global patterns of authority and rule-making.

Thus the division between North and South is likely to be relevant to international politics for the foreseeable future. International relations theorists might do well, therefore, to take another look at the Brandt line.
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