

Beyond Imperialism? A journey through Empire

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Toni Negri and Michael Hardt's book *Empire* seeks to replace Marxist concepts of imperialism and the proletariat with Empire and the multitude. Rodney Edvinsson and Keith Harvey analyse their methodology and test their theory against reality.

The twenty-first century has not been kind to this book. It was published in 2000, a little before George W Bush's hijacking of the US presidential election allowed the incoming oil and defence industry plutocracy to embark on a domestic and foreign policy agenda which has comprehensively shredded Empire's central thesis.

Negri and Hardt argue that the epoch of imperialism ended in the 1970s and 1980's and was replaced by the era of 'Empire'. Empire is characterised by many features but essential to it is an end to global capitalism marked by naked imperialist expansion under the banner of national self-interest. In its place, comes a new system overseen by multilateralist institutions of global governance.

'Our basic hypothesis is that sovereignty has taken a new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule. This new global form of sovereignty is what we call Empire.' (xii)

This implies the 'declining sovereignty of nation states' which was the cornerstone of imperialism (especially European) in which 'power is exercised over external territories'. (xii)

Imperialism is defined as 'really an extension of the sovereignty of the European nation-states beyond their own boundaries' (xii) whereas 'Empire establishes no territorial centre of powers and does not rely on fixed barriers or boundaries'. (ibid)

The new forms and impulses of imperial politics are underpinned by 'the realization of the world market' and hence 'a new development in the capitalist mode of production' in which the model of the First World states dominating the Third is replaced by a world in which the First World is to be found in the Third and vice-versa.

In the era of Empire, after the cold war, there can be no one imperial power which exercises hegemony over others.

'Many locate the ultimate authority that rules over the processes of globalisation and the new world order in the United States ... Our basic hypothesis, however, that a new imperial form of sovereignty has emerged, contradicts [this]. The United States does not, and indeed no nation-state can today, form the center of an imperialist project. Imperialism is over. No nation will be world leader, in the way modern European nations were.' (xiii-xiv).

They go on, 'We think it is important to note that what used to be conflict or competition among several imperialist powers has in important respects been replaced by the idea of a single power that

overdetermines them all, structures them in a unitary way, and treats them under one common notion of right that is decidedly post-colonial and post-imperialist. This is really the point of departure for our study of Empire: a new notion of right or, rather, a new inscription of authority and a new design of the production of norms and legal instruments of coercion that guarantee contracts and resolve conflicts.? (p9)

The book was written in the aftermath of the Gulf War and essentially completed before the final stages of the Balkan wars of the 1990s. It is heavily influenced by George Bush Snr's proclamation of the new world order in 1990 and the ideological 'humanitarian' spin put on Clinton's intervention into Somalia.

But Negri and Hardt seek to set these US foreign policy ideologies of the early 1990s in something altogether more substantial - the origin and evolution of the political and juridical constitution of the United States from the American revolution onwards. In this way, they hope to prove that the ideology of the New World Order, together with the far-reaching changes in the world market since the 1970s, is the evolved outcome of a unique concept of politics, democracy and state embedded in North American society, that makes the USA uniquely fitted to oversee the transition from imperialism to Empire.

Negri and Hardt spend a large part of Empire tracing the emergence and evolution of the concept of 'sovereignty' in bourgeois (ie modernist) political thought. They argue that, from the Renaissance on, two conflicting forms of sovereignty can be identified. The first sees sovereignty residing in a transcendent power that preserves peace over a warring society (Hobbes) or keeps order as a result of a social contract within civil society on the basis of which power is devolved upwards (Rousseau).

The second tradition, found in the French revolutionary democrats before Thermidor and passed on to the American founding fathers after their defeat, broke with 'the tradition of modern sovereignty' and instead derived sovereignty from the republican form of democracy. In this arrangement, order does not flow from the people who transfer power to a sovereign but from 'an arrangement internal to the multitude, from a democratic interaction of powers lined together in networks.' This is embodied in a constitution which ensures a division of powers and a system of checks and balances that 'maintains power in the hands of the multitude' (161). Hence, sovereignty does not reside in any one place all the time but is 'exercised in a vast horizon of activities.'

'The American Declaration of Independence celebrates this new idea of power in the clearest terms. The emancipation of humanity from every transcendent power is grounded in the multitude's power to construct its own political institutions and constitute society.' (164)

Moreover, this US-style sovereignty is expansive, inclusive and open-ended, which distinguishes it from 'other, purely expansionist and imperialist forms of expansion,' which are exclusive and destroy other powers that they face.

'This imperial expansion has nothing to do with imperialism, nor with those state organisms designed for conquest, pillage, genocide, colonialism and slavery. Against such imperialisms, Empire extends and consolidates the model of network power.' (p.167)

Finally, peace is at the core of Empire's expansion, not peace imposed on a warring society but peace that is immanent in society.

What this account reveals very clearly is the inability of its authors to distinguish between the emancipatory terminology of the American liberal revolutionaries with its emphasis on human equality, universal rights and individual freedom and the practical realities of the politics of a nascent bourgeoisie, as yet still fragmented, asserting its right to lead the newly formed nation as the representatives of the 'people'. In

short, they have no concept of liberalism as an ideology. Far from being the expression of a second and more 'horizontal' concept of sovereignty than that of the social contract theorists, the US Constitution is a systematic application of the social contract based theory of limited government devised by John Locke as a justification of England's 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. However, where Locke had to theorise the compromise between Crown and Parliament, in essence a compromise between the new ruling class and the still significant social weight of the old ruling class, Jefferson and company had to grapple with the tensions between the need for a unified authority and the varying internal social structures of the different states. The specific novelty of the resulting constitution, its federalism, was the outcome.

If we take together the Declaration of Independence (1776) the original Articles of Confederation, the Constitution of 1787 which replaced them and the Bill of Rights 1789 which amended it, we necessarily see differences of emphasis and priority as between egalitarian aspirations, local autonomy, degrees of representation and the imperatives of unified governance. Lacking the concept not only of ideology but of dialectic, Negri and Hardt see here two distinct constitutional models, rather than one model which embodies contradictions flowing from the political and social structures of the time.

Their subsequent tracing of the evolution of these two supposedly different models is a testimony to their ingenuity in explaining away the awkward realities of US history. Their technique is, basically, to treat all examples of evidence that contradicts their characterisation of the 'horizontal' and 'inclusive' nature of the Constitution as simply aberrations.

Thus, the authors are not unaware of the real history of US genocide against Native Americans, the foul record of slavery of Afro-Americans, nor of the bloody wars carried out by US governments abroad. So how to reconcile history with the idea?

First, the Native Americans had to be excluded from the original constitution because they could not be absorbed within the concept of the constitution and had to be eliminated to make the space open; they were the 'negative foundation of the constitution'. (p.170)

And, while Afro-Americans were within the constitution, they were deemed to be worth less than whites (as seen in the number of blacks per elected representative compared to whites). This, Negri and Hardt acknowledge, was a contradiction 'which deflated the ideological pretence to open spaces?', not to mention 'intermixing and fluidity'.? (p.172)

The ferocious state repression of the working class, the political left and the trade unions in the period 1890-1918 was another closure of the 'open inclusive space' of the constitution.

As a result of this inner conflict, the USA faced a choice of two paths early in the 20th century. Either to take the path advocated by Theodore Roosevelt towards a completely traditional European-style imperialism; or to adopt the approach of Woodrow Wilson, President during and just after the First World War, which the book describes as 'an internationalist ideology of peace as an expansion of the constitutional conception of network power'.? (p.174)

Both Presidents realised that raging class war and the power of the big US trusts prevented an internal solution to the narrowing down of democratic space so 'the progressivism of American ideology had to be realised with reference to the outside'. (p.174)

But, whereas Theodore Roosevelt wanted to 'civilise the barbarians?', Wilson wanted a new world order based on the extension of the US constitutional project, 'the idea of peace as a product of a new world network of powers'.? (p.175) Negri and Hardt recognise that this was a utopian project at the time.

Faced with the ongoing collision between real history and their idealisation of the US constitution and the fact that the government's treatment of Native Americans, blacks, the espousal of the Monroe Doctrine and US actions in the Cold War in Vietnam became indistinguishable from dominating and exploiting them with imperialist techniques? (p.178) Negri and Hardt retreat somewhat: "Perhaps what we have presented as exceptions to the development of imperial sovereignty should instead be linked together as a real tendency, an alternative within the history of the US Constitution." (p.177)

Perhaps indeed!

However, undeterred, they continue, "the Vietnam War might be seen as the final moment of the imperialist tendency and thus a point of passage to a new regime of the Constitution. The path of European-style imperialism had become once and for all impossible, and henceforth the United States would have to both turn back and leap forward to a properly imperial rule." (pp.178-179)

And the force for this change is to be found in the resistance of the people both in Vietnam and in USA which powerfully affirmed "the principle of constituent power".

This transition from the 1970s opens up the fourth phase of US constitutional history: "the global project of network power." (pp.180-81) which culminated in the end of the cold war and the Gulf war.

"The importance of the Gulf War derives from the fact ... that it presented the United States as the only power able to manage international justice, not as a function of its own national motives but in the name of global right." (180)

Woodrow Wilson's time had come, if in the unlikely guise of George Bush Snr. A critical facet of the rule of Empire became embedded in US foreign policy in the 1990s.

"The legitimisation of the imperial order, however, cannot be based on the mere effectiveness of legal sanction and the military might it can impose. It must be developed through the production of international juridical norms that raise up the power of the hegemonic actor in a durable and legal way" (p.180)

George Bush inherited an awesome task: "With the end of the Cold War, the United States was called to serve the role of guaranteeing and adding juridical efficacy to the complex process of the formation of a new supranational right....The US Constitution is imperial and not imperialist. It is imperial because (in contrast to imperialism's project always to spread its power linearly in closed space and invade, destroy and subsume subject countries within its sovereignty) the US constitutional project is constructed on the model of rearticulating an open space and reinventing incessantly diverse and singular relations in networks across an unbounded terrain." (pp.181-182)

So at the "end of history" the battle between the essentially open, boundaryless, inclusive and global notion of political sovereignty embedded in the US constitution, and the ugly, violent, national and imperialistic practice of the US governments, was finally won by the ghosts of America's Founding Fathers!

Unconvincing as this argumentation is, the real refutation of Empire lies not so much in the history of US foreign policy as in its present. The humanitarian rhetoric and the recourse to UN legitimisation for US actions was short-lived. The use of supranational bodies to manage US imperialist interests proved too problematic and constraining in the mid-1990s and was finally overthrown post-September 11th as the USA returned to a more nakedly unilateral, national-interest basis for its foreign policy.

Far from old-style, nation-state based imperialist claims on the external world being made redundant, they have returned with a vengeance. The US does not seek colonial re-possession, ("nation-building" in White

House rhetoric) but it does eschew all attempts to establish a global quasi-judicial concept or institutions to legitimate its actions, any notion of the 'global right' which Negri and Hardt say is at the heart of the imperial project.

In its global 'war against terrorism', the White House does indeed refuse to recognise the sovereignty of nation-states 'except for itself! It does not transcend the notion of nation-state sovereignty for a set of global rights, but merely reserves to itself the right to decide which sovereignty, of which states, it accepts as legitimate. It then declares its own freedom of action to intervene into the affairs of all other states on the grounds of protecting its own 'national' interests.

Frances Fukuyama has a better appreciation of US constitutional history than Empire's authors:

'Americans tend not to see any source of democratic legitimacy higher than the constitutional democratic nation-state' (Los Angeles Times). For any international organisation to gain legitimacy in US eyes, the powers have to be negotiated upwards and always be capable of unilateral rescinding.

In fact, if any imperialist powers have an organic tendency to pass sovereignty upwards from the nation state it is the continental European ones. Ironically, Negri and Hardt see Europe as having the mark of Cain branded on its forehead as a result of its record of aggressive colonisation. But, in fact, the experience of the Second World War left the German and French ruling classes desperate to avoid another inter-imperialist war arising out of 'the unbridled exercise of national sovereignty'. Hence the pan-European project of these nation-states, which is actually an attempt to enlarge the nation state to a regional level. But this has led the European powers to be much more pro-active than the USA in appealing to 'the international community' for legitimacy for diplomatic or military actions and in seeking to build an international juridical framework within which to pursue them.

Negri and Hardt take the US rhetoric of the 'new world order' for reality. But as the 1990s progressed so too did the gap between US economic and political might and those of its rivals. Over time, this gave it the capacity to wave aside the need for multilateral responses to the post Cold war problems.

Increasingly, the United Nations has been by-passed, even ridiculed and other imperialist powers have been bullied or ignored. Conflicts over trade and environmental regulation have multiplied, not lessened. Even if some institutions for resolving conflict remain intact (WTO) they are the sites of increasing antagonism while others are sidelined (e.g. UN) or new ones, such as the International Criminal Court, are rejected.

These latter snubs are especially important since they refute a central idea of the constitution of Empire; a transition 'from traditional international law, which was defined by contracts and treaties, to the definition and constitution of a new sovereign, supranational world power.'

Negri and Hardt believe that the juridical legitimisation for this imperial power cannot simply reside with the global multilateral institutions such as the United Nations or, if, at present, it does, this is only as a part of a transition toward a new imperial notion of right. This must be so since these organisations are themselves treaty-based mechanisms grounded in the system of nation-states, whereas:

'The source of imperial normativity is born of a new machine, a new economic-industrial-communicative machine ' in short a globalized biopolitical machine.' (p.40)

Hence, social production and juridical legitimisation will not be separate things, one base and the other superstructure but rather both will be intermixed; economics and politics combined. Empire is not clear what the specific ideological or legal components of imperial right will look like. But it is clear that the

direction is towards supranational ideologies. Since globalised capitalism is 'seamless', the distinctions between First and Third World redundant, and the nation-state meaningless, then there can be no question of legitimising force or intervention by reference to particular, selfish, or narrow interests. To do so would be to fail to recognise that under Empire there is no 'external' world into which another entity can project itself.

Yet, even before September 11th, it was clear that US imperialism was increasingly renouncing a world based on multilateral treaties and refusing to accept a global quasi-judicial framework for its actions and those of other states. On taking office, Bush renounced the Kyoto Treaty which aimed at global regulation of pollution. His administration continued to hold the UN to ransom by refusing to pay its bills. The White House manoeuvred successfully to oust the head of the international commission on the inspection of chemical weapons.

After September 11th, the Bush administration broke even more resolutely with multilateralism. A new doctrine of 'pre-emption' was announced which declared that the United States has the right to invade sovereign countries and overthrow their governments if they are seen as hostile to U.S. interests.

All previous large-scale interventions by American forces abroad were rationalised on the principle of 'collective self-defence', such as through regional organisations like the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) or the Organisation of American States (OAS). The planned invasion of Iraq constituted an unprecedented repudiation of the international legal conventions that such American presidents as Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt and others signed up to and which are cited by Negri and Hardt as examples of the doctrine of Empire.

Over the summer of 2002, the Bush administration pressured dozens of governments to oppose Article 98 agreements against surrendering any U.S. suspect to the International Criminal Court. Newly passed legislation, the American Servicemembers' Protection Act, authorises the use of military force to free U.S. and allied suspects from detention by the court which is based in The Hague in the Netherlands!

In fact, this refusal by a hegemonic power to allow its citizens to be subject to the laws of other countries was also a feature of the Roman Empire and the British Empire.

Most recently, the U.S. announced that it intended to reopen negotiations on the UN's plan to enforce a convention on torture. International observers are fine in Iraq or China, but the protocol under consideration might allow an international commission to look at U.S. practices. Its prisons might be subject to international inspection.

Also, the Pentagon is alarmed that the terrorist suspects being held without trial or rights at Guantanamo Naval Base and in Afghanistan might be visited by an international human rights commission. As Tom Berry observed:

'Not only would this protocol infringe on our sovereign right to abuse or torture prisoners but on the right of our 50 state systems to do the same. When America frames a new foreign policy initiative, the God-given, U.S.-protected rights of freedom and liberty are routinely invoked, but no one, no how, will be permitted to hold us accountable.'

Berry has recently and aptly summed up the Bush set of doctrines as 'America Firstism'. This credo is simultaneously isolationist and internationalist - isolationist in the sense of keeping USA free of entangling treaties and obligations, and internationalist in that the administration necessarily must wield its big stick and big wallet abroad because its national corporate interests now span the globe.

?America Firstism means exercising power unconstrained by laws or norms. America is the self-deputized enforcer, the final arbiter of good and bad, the Lone Ranger. As the supreme power, we don't ensure that laws are upheld. Rather we hold ourselves above the law.?3

Unfortunately for Negri and Hardt, the transition towards and beyond a world order based on supranational institutions has come to a halt and gone into reverse. The US is increasingly projecting itself into an external world on the basis that it must impose its own narrow set of priorities and interests on a world that is very different from itself.

Concretely, what we are witnessing is the universalisation of the specific relationship that the USA has had for most of the last 150 years with Latin America. Since President Monroe declared that the region was the USA's ?backyard?, Washington has felt it had the right to tell other imperialist powers to keep out, to brush aside the sovereignty of nations through invasions (e.g Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti, Granada) and to undermine or overthrow elected governments in concert with reactionary domestic forces (eg Guatamala, Chile).

Today, the USA feels that what is good for Latin America is good for the whole planet. The White House has no need to respect other imperialist powers' spheres of influence, or the sovereignty of any nation on earth. The rationale for this is ?national (ie corporate) interest?. If, immediately after the Cold War, the USA saw itself as ?first among equals?, it now considers itself better than all the rest.

Negri and Hardt's method prevents them grasping how the particular interests of one nation-state can be generalised for the world. For them, the nation-state is made irrelevant by ?the completion of the world market?, when, in fact, one nation-state above all others was the driving force behind this ?completion? of the world market. Armed with dialectics we can understand how the world market can be both more than the sum of its individual nation-state parts and, at the same time, a function of competition and conflict between nation-states within which some prosper more than others.

Hardt and Negri should, in short, have used the fruitful concept of uneven and combined development in their approach to the study of international relations.

Imperialism as world economy

If Negri and Hardt fail to prove the existence of a post-imperialist model of global political sovereignty, what of their attempt to establish a post-imperialist political economy?

It is here that they borrow most profusely from Marxism, but they unfortunately choose the wrong Marxist to borrow from ? Rosa Luxemburg.

They approve of Marx's theory of capitalism because it correctly stresses the inner relationship between capital and its incessant tendency to expand and overflow borders. They then wrongly argue that Marx saw the impulse to this expansion being the inability to realise all surplus value produced within the circuit of capital itself. They say that he believed, ?the only effective solution is for capital to look outside itself and discover non-capitalist markets in which to exchange the commodities and realize their value. ? (p.224)

In their opinion, Rosa Luxemburg provided the theoretical framework for this in her theory of imperialism. Luxemburg started by criticising Marx's reproduction schemes in Volume II of Capital, which she claimed fostered the dangerous illusion that stable equilibrium growth was possible in a closed capitalist economy. The remarkable thing about their presentation of Luxemburg is that Negri and Hardt do not acknowledge the critiques of this theory which have been made by Bukharin, Grossman and many others since, which pointed out her theoretical errors.

To her credit, Luxemburg sought to refute the revisionists' claim after 1902, that Marx's Volume II proved that capitalism could go on reproducing endlessly as long as correct proportions were observed between the different departments of capitalist production; in short, that there was no inner tendency for capitalism to breakdown.

She insisted that capitalism was doomed, that imperialism represented the last stage of capitalism but, in order to 'prove' this, she began by agreeing with her revisionist foes that Marx's Volume Two did indeed show what they suggested. Unlike them, however, she concluded that Marx's schemes of reproduction were wrong and rejected them as 'bloodless fictions' and 'lifeless abstractions' that were shot through with logical errors.

She began her critique of Marx by asking the same question Marx asked himself in Volume Two:

How is the total produced surplus value realised; in short, where is the market for the commodities which embody this total surplus value, which is accumulated and enters into expanded accumulation?

She argued that in Marx's schemes where there are only workers and capitalists there can exist no market for, no consumers of, those commodities which embody the portion of surplus value destined not for individual consumption of the capitalist class but for capital accumulation (that is, employing more workers and machines in the next round of production). For this reason, she accused Marx's schemes of being a 'bloodless theoretical fiction' since, if capitalism could not provide the market adequate for its own expanded reproduction (which is the essence of capitalism) then there needed to be a non-capitalist market, which is the provenance of imperialism and its expansion.

But Luxemburg was plainly wrong. Marx did design his schemes to show the possibility of the capitalists and the workers providing a sufficient market for the realisation of the total surplus value, including the portion destined for accumulation. Marx's answer to Luxemburg's questions was simple: The capitalist class provided the market directly and indirectly for the additional means of production and consumption produced in Department One (means of production) and Department Two (means of consumption) respectively.

The capitalists of Department Two need and buy additional means of production produced by Department One; the capitalists of Department One utilise the additional surplus value realised in this way partly to purchase more labour power. The workers in this sector use their wages to buy additional means of consumption produced by Department Two.

All that is required for this to work is that the correct proportions between the outputs of Departments One and Two are maintained. Luxemburg acknowledged Marx's answer but rejected it because she said it just postponed the problem into the future and suggested that capitalism could go on and on. She failed to grasp Marx's dialectical method and what he was doing in Volume Two. Luxemburg and the revisionists conflated Marx's schemes with concrete existing capitalism. The revisionists thought they were accurate; Luxemburg that they were lifeless fictions which failed to account for the development of imperialism.

However, in reality, they were indispensable theoretical stages in his analysis of concrete capitalism, stages which he never imagined were an accurate representation of capital in the totality of its concrete movement; Marx wanted to demonstrate the possibility of expanded reproduction under all concrete circumstances, but not its inevitability.

Marx abstracted in his schemes from all those concrete features which led to the inevitable collapse of accumulation ? and particularly the rise in the organic composition of capital and the tendency for the rate

of profit to fall, which he did not consider until Volume Three.

In fact, Luxemburg's own explanation for capitalist expansion was no answer at all, as Bukharin pointed out. She said that the non-capitalist producers must first sell their goods to the capitalists in order that they may buy in turn goods from the capitalists which embody that portion of the surplus value which is destined for accumulation; in short, there must be an exchange between non-capitalists and the capitalists. But, in this case, the non-capitalist nature of these 'third persons' does not change anything for she posed the question at the level of realisation and there the capitalist or other character of the buyer was irrelevant. She ended up proving too much. Since the existence of a non-capitalist market did not solve the problem she set up, her conclusion would have had to be that capitalist accumulation was a priori impossible!

Why then do Negri and Hardt drag out a long discredited (within Marxism) theory of imperialism to establish the foundation of their argument? Not because it has a shred of logical or empirical consistency but because it fits in with their schema: that imperialism externalises itself but eventually swallows up all the available 'other' it needs for its own survival by turning the non-capitalist world into capitalist countries too. At that point, imperialism must metamorphose into something else.

For Luxemburg, that something else would be either socialism or barbarism, a progressive overcoming of the contradictions on the basis of the abolition of private property in the means of production, or a relapse.

For Negri and Hardt, the contradictions of the imperialist stage are overcome on the foundation of private property and, therefore, lead to a more progressive, post-imperialist, form of capitalism. '... the construction of Empire is a step forward... we claim that Empire is better in the same way that Marx insists that capitalism is better than the forms of society and modes of production that came before it. ... Empire does away with the cruel regimes of modern power' (p.43-44)

As a result, Negri and Hardt reject defence of the nation even when it is a 'mechanism of defence against the domination of foreign and/or global capital.' (p44) They see the defence of the local as meaningless since the global penetrates it so much as to make the distinction irrelevant. It is clear that they are 'Luxemburgists' on this point as well. One can only resist Empire from within and from a totalising resistance. Hence, the distinction between oppressed and oppressor states is obliterated as a qualitative line.

The distinct interest of different capitals also fades away. A truly global power is formed, in contrast to the old imperialism that was founded on the sovereignty of the national state. Lenin's dictum that imperialism leads to world war, bringing the world to the brink of barbarism, has ceased to operate under Empire which can accomplish a more peaceful existence between the old imperialist powers. Even though violence and minor wars play a continued role in subjugating the oppressed to the rule of Empire, these are police actions rather than wars between comparably strong powers.

This whole scenario, however, is dependent on Luxemburg's erroneous argument. Without that, our theorists are left with nothing to 'explain' the inner nature and contradiction of the imperialist stage of capitalism, there is nothing which points to a post-imperialist stage of global capitalism. They fail to prove that capitalism has to go beyond imperialism in order to preserve itself because they alight with Luxemburg on a non-problem. At least Luxemburg wished to preserve the idea of breakdown theory (final stage of capitalism) against the revisionist attempts to prove that capitalism could go on indefinitely. Negri and Hardt simply agree with the revisionists that capitalism can reproduce itself endlessly.

What has happened for them is that the 'outside' has been conquered. Everything is today the 'inside' of capitalism. Capitalism solves the contradiction caused by swallowing up the world by accumulating on a

more intensive level. Here, they draw (p.255) a distinction between formal and real subsumption of labour, a terminology taken from Marx. The formal subsumption of labour consists in drawing in an ever-larger amount of labour, a process primarily taking the form of expanding the borders of the capitalist market, i.e. a form of extensive accumulation. Real subsumption of labour by contrast, results from an intensification of capital accumulation. For Negri and Hardt, what marks the transition from imperialism to Empire is when real subsumption starts to play the dominant role. However, they do not explain exactly how this enables Empire to overcome the crisis they suppose to be associated with imperialism ? the lack of a non-capitalist sector.

In Lenin's theory, or five-point definition, of imperialism, the non-capitalist sector is not a necessary precondition either of capitalism or imperialism. Capitalism can exist as a closed system. Imperialism can be a relation between capitalism and a non-capitalist economic system, but it can also manifest itself through an interplay between a stronger capitalism and a weaker one. Imperialism is not a way to solve the problem of realising surplus value, but of finding new fields for capital accumulation, primarily taking the form of capital export.

Capital can expand at the expense of non-capitalist organisation, but also at the expense of other capitals or by simply buying up other capitals; hence the tendency to concentration and centralisation runs parallel to the process of destruction of non-capitalist forms. Imperialism is a combination of these two phenomena. Whether or not it achieves its aims by military conquest or is able to exploit formally independent countries, what Lenin referred to as 'semi-colonies', is entirely dependent on circumstances and the balance of power.

The argument that capitalism has gone over to a stage of a more intensive accumulation because it has conquered the whole world, is also doubtful. The collapse of Stalinism opened up one third of the world for further extensive accumulation, and forced many capitalist countries in the Third World to open up for imperialist capital. The total level of capital export from imperialist countries to non-imperialist areas has increased dramatically during the 1990's, precisely when Empire is supposed to have been born. In this respect, it would be more accurate to talk about a period of a less extensive capital accumulation in the 1930s or in the 1950s and 1960's, but not in the 1990s!

There is no need to go down the path suggested by Empire to explain the shifts and changes in imperialism over the last 100 years. Negri and Hardt's conclusion that imperialism had to transform itself into Empire, which rules on the basis of multilateral agencies of proto-global governance that suppress inter-imperialist contradictions, flows from their simplistic equation of imperialism with old-style European colonialism.

To reject their argument, however, is not to deny that important changes have occurred within imperialism. Under the impact of two world wars and a deep depression in the first half of the last century, certain features of imperialism were undoubtedly attenuated. There was a certain lessening in the hegemony of finance capital over trade and industry, inter-imperialist rivalries were reduced and a long boom erupted. These were the outcomes of struggles and the need for change if the capitalist system were to survive. During this period, US imperialism clearly achieved pre-eminence over the declining European imperialisms but still found it necessary to pursue its aims through the construction of global agencies for supervising the world market and world politics; GATT, IMF, the World Bank and the UN and its agencies. If Empire ever came close to being realised, it was in this period between 1945 and 1973.

What we have witnessed since then, under the name of globalisation, is not the passage into a post-imperialist age but the re-assertion of a number of the key features of imperialism which emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries but were subordinated or offset in the post Second World War period.

Globalisation is a phase within, and an intensification of, imperialism. It is the latest phase of the imperialist epoch and dates from the 1980s when the United States launched a political and economic offensive aimed at restoring its hegemony over the Third World and its imperialist rivals. It has been characterised by a broadening and deepening of the rule of finance capital across the planet. It was a broadening because the non-capitalist territories, the USSR, Eastern Europe and China, which were previously beyond its reach, finally gave way, dramatically so after 1989.

It was a deepening in that restrictions on the mobility and forms of finance capital, inherited from the 1928-45 period, were gradually and totally removed; the barriers to trade and investment in the South by the North's MNCs were torn down; existing international economic agencies (IMF, World Bank) were utterly transformed into debt-payment enforcers and new ones (WTO) were formed to allow the aggressive pursuit of their property rights by the MNCs; the penetration of government by big business was greatly strengthened; finally, stock market expansion and debt creation became the axis of 'wealth creation' and the motor driving a feverish round of concentration and centralisation of capital.

It is a legitimate question to ask how best to designate this new phase of imperialism. One possibility would be to describe the earlier phase of imperialism, the one Lenin analysed, as a national-state based imperialism, and the new phase as a globalised imperialism. Of course, as with any brief description, this would have weaknesses since the national state continues to play a crucial role, and globalisation itself is not a new phenomenon. Yet, it must be recognised that, while the earlier phase of imperialism was more of an extension of the national state, today, there is a clear tendency to surpass the national state, for example in the form of the European Union, without meaning that a global state is in formation. The key role that US imperialism plays is partly connected to the fact that the USA is, in itself, a more modern state formation that was never really based on a nationality, and one whose growth to encompass a whole continent only involved episodic conflicts with other pre-existing states.

The phase of globalised imperialism can be characterised by the following points, which are partly an elaboration of Lenin's five-point definition of imperialism:

? A move towards deepening the capitalisation and industrialisation of the reproduction of human life ? social reproduction, circulation, gathering and handling of information, reproduction of individual human lives and skills, etc ? driven by a revolution in the information and communication technologies (ICT). This is the so-called Third Industrial Revolution among whose principal effects have been a significant increase in the rate of female participation in the workforce and a consequent erosion of patriarchy, and privatisation of the public sector. The industrial sector continues, however, to be the motor of the economy, as capitalism is unable to fully capitalise the productive forces pertaining to human life ? knowledge and human capabilities.

? A tendency towards deepened globalisation of the productive forces and a blurring of borders. This 'second wave of globalisation', the first being when imperialism was formed, is made possible socially by greater deregulation of capital flows and technologically by the ICT-revolution which allows the global economy to function in real time, as a de facto production unit. The collapse of the Soviet Union, and the opening up of Third World countries for imperialist capital, are consequences of the failure of strategies based on development outside the world economy which have, in turn, allowed imperialist capital to dominate the whole globe. Globalisation, however, is only a tendency. A fully globalised capitalist economy will never be achieved because of antagonisms within capitalism, one consequence of this is that there is also a process of regionalisation running parallel to, and partly undermining, globalisation.

? A move from Fordism, dominant under the national state based imperialism, to a more flexible form of organisation, of lean production, and of both giving more autonomy to workers and developing more

sophisticated forms of control over them. Fordism does not disappear completely, especially not in the newly industrialised sectors, but it gradually fades away with the ever-greater automation of routine labour. The tendency towards ever-greater material concentration of capital in one workplace and the deskilling of workers is offset, at least in the developed parts of the world economy. Outsourcing and greater emphasis on the special qualifications of the work force are two of the consequences. However, this is matched by a deepened centralisation of capital on a global level, a fusion mania, as ICT allows control of the labour process to be exercised from anywhere and cuts the costs of forming such global units. In the end, these processes come into contradiction due to the anarchy of the market, which undermines the potential of flexibility and delegation of power to the workers, and the impossibility of fully capitalising human capabilities.

? Monopoly capital develops from a phase in which it based itself mainly on the monopolisation of national markets to one in which the monopolisation of whole continental, and even global, markets becomes essential. The large global companies partly de-link themselves from national markets because they are able to play one state off against another, thereby undermining the old form of ?monopoly state capitalism? in its Keynesian form, at least during periods when inter-imperialist rivalries are not escalated.

? Banking capital, capital export, stock exchange markets, insurance, bond markets, pension funds and other forms of financial capital of the different national economies are fused into one globalised financial market, which blurs the different forms and origins of capital. Here too, deregulation of capital flows and the advances in ICT were crucial. Such a financial market allows the mobilisation of capital on a global level, and a deepening penetration of imperialist capital into the non-imperialist world. Yet, these markets also increase the instability of the whole world economy and pose the spectre of a globalised financial melt-down.

? A weakening of the national state, and a tendency towards the formation of continental and global organs to monitor the world market, in contrast to the old form of imperialism mainly based on the extension of the national states of the dominant powers. Inter-imperialist rivalry, however, while undermining the possibility of forming a global state, is taken to a higher level; from conflict between national states to conflict between continental blocks or supranational states. Because of the much more advanced means of mass destruction, a modern ?global war?, in contrast to the two ?world wars?, poses the threat of the total extinction of mankind.

Labour and the nature of the proletariat in Empire

As we have seen, under Empire, co-operative, affective, immaterial labour predominates. The boundaries between life and production dissolve. All labour dominated by capital ? in work or not ? is equal; this is the new proletariat.

?The composition of the proletariat has been transformed and thus our understanding of it must be too. In conceptual terms, we understand proletariat as a broad category that includes all those whose labour is directly or indirectly exploited by and subjected to capitalist norms of production and reproduction.? (p.52)

According to Negri and Hardt, the productive industrial working class was only a moment in the evolution of the proletariat. Its pre-eminence lasted until just after the second world war. A transformation occurred as a response to the capitalist crises of the late 1960s and 1970s. When the long boom ended, the repression of the mass trade unions and other struggles had limited effectiveness and anyway merely reaffirming the old Taylorist and Fordist methods of mass industrial production would have stifled the development of the productive forces and the dynamism of labour. Hence, what occurred was a technological transformation aimed ?at changing the very composition of the proletariat?(p.268).

This is the argumentation upon which they base their assertion that, today, the industrial working class has all but disappeared from view? (p.53) This is simply nonsense. While the proportion of workers involved in the production of goods has declined over the last 100 years as a result of the rising productivity of labour in this sector, the number of industrial workers in the world has remained stable or even increased. In addition, the proportion of total output produced by industrial workers has increased in the last 50 years.

Something much more is at stake here than the size and centrality of the industrial working class. At the heart of their errors on the nature of the working class in global capitalism, is their very understanding of the nature of labour itself. In Empire they say, 'the production of capital converges more and more with the production and reproduction of social life itself; it thus becomes ever more difficult to maintain distinctions among productive, reproductive, and unproductive labor. Labor - material or immaterial, intellectual or corporeal - produces and reproduces social life, and in the process is exploited by capital.'

So labour is here defined as practical, purposeful activity within society which is nothing other than Marx's concept of 'labour in general'. Marx argues that labour, in this sense, constitutes the essence of our humanity, our species-being, whether before or within class society. Used in this way, the term loses all historic specificity making it impossible to draw distinctions between the ways in which such 'labour in general' has been carried out in different societies throughout human history. The distinction between concrete and abstract labour disappears, naturally. But so, too, does any meaningful concept of wage labour and hence capital itself.

This must be so since wage-labour and capital form a unity of opposites; each is a meaningless concept without the other. What Negri and Hardt have arrived at is an ahistorical abstraction. In their own way, they are quite clear about this, '...when immaterial labour and cooperation become the dominant productive force. . . the distinctions that define the central categories of political economy tend to blur. Production becomes indistinguishable from reproduction; productive forces merge with relations of production, constant capital tends to be constituted and represented within variable capital, in the brains, bodies, and cooperation of productive subjects.' (p.385)

In short, the boundaries between variable capital and constant capital dissolve, as do those between different types of concrete labour.

It never occurs to Negri and Hardt that capital can only exist as congealed past labour, embodied in money and used to set other labour to work. You cannot have 'capital' exploiting 'labour in general' but only wage labour. In concrete terms, capital can only make a profit from employing someone to do some specific task.

But if there can be no capital without wage labour then what is the nature of the society of Empire? They began their analysis in the belief that in laying bare the mechanisms of globalised capital based on immaterial labour they were 'only' presenting a new post-Fordist mode of accumulation of capital. They were driven in this direction by the need to add some Marxism to post-modernism because of the latter's inability to relate language and communication to production. But the result is totally incoherent. Despite all their talk of a struggle against 'the domination of capital' and their belief that they are analysing the latest (last?) stage of global capitalism, their argumentation leads to the conclusion that capital does not exist. Consequently, the passage from imperialist capitalism to Empire is, in fact, the transition to a form of 'bureaucratic collectivism'.

Early in the book they say, 'The great industrial and financial powers thus produce not only commodities but also subjectivities. They produce agentic subjectivities within the biopolitical context: they produce

needs, social relations, bodies and minds ? which is to say they produce producers.? This can only mean that there is no independent class of wage labourers who enter into a free exchange with employers; the producers are, in essence, slaves.

Such theories, first developed in the inter-war period under the impact of fascism and Stalinism on the working class, were generally deeply pessimistic and posited the existence of a slave class struggling against a totalitarian dictatorship. Hardt and Negri describe a more benign, optimistic society, but this is entirely secondary. The ?multitude? may be happy slaves, but conceptually that is what they are, trapped within a world of cooperative labour under the domination of a global ruling class. This class does not derive its wealth from the extraction of surplus value. The authors are quite clear that there can be no measure of value in Empire.

Even if we generously allow that the ruling class in Empire somehow appropriates a surplus product (after all, where does the surplus begin and necessary labour end if there can be no measure of value?) then this merely suggests a (novel) form of class society exists ? but it is not capitalist.

The crisis of capitalism under Empire

Hardt and Negri?s theory of capitalist crisis is entirely different from the Marxist one. It is founded not on an objective, but on an entirely subjective, basis, where crisis is not viewed as a necessary result of the inner workings of the economic system, independently of the actions of the exploited, but as a function of ?corruption?.

Marxism could be said to identify two fundamental objective contradictions within capitalism. First, capitalism has a tendency towards infinite expansion, derived from its obsessive drive to accumulate, but the world is finite. This contradiction shows the impossibility of capitalism existing eternally. The other basic contradiction is between the tendency to socialise production and a system of appropriation that remains private. This contradiction points to the material development of a higher productive mode within capitalism, i.e. communism.

The expansionist tendency inevitably creates contradictions within the system on different levels. The constant drive to accumulate within capitalism causes the value of the capital stock to rise in relation to added value, which lowers the profit ratio, as profit comes from the value added ? the so-called tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

The constant drive to expand investments and production leads to crises of over-accumulation and overproduction. These crises are solved by a massive destruction of capital, both in the form of fixed capital and stocks of unsold goods, which again allows a new phase of expansion, but in the very long term the system cannot survive on such a basis.

In a similar way, the socialising tendency manifests itself in several different forms of contradiction within the system. Marx, for example, argues against Say?s law, which assumes that supply is always matched by demand. Say?s view is still advocated by neo-liberals who assume perfect competition, saying that, when left to its own workings, capitalism does not develop crisis syndromes. In reality, supply is not matched by demand, as the seller is not necessarily a buyer, but can, for instance, put money aside instead of spending it immediately. This opens up the possibility of under-consumption, which can be aggravated if capitalists start to sack workers and lower their wages, as the workers are also consumers. Different sectors can grow in disproportion to other sectors, and create different bottlenecks. This is a consequence of capitalism not being a rational and planned system on an aggregate level.

Imperialism tries to get around some of the inner contradictions of capitalism but only by taking the existing contradictions to a new level, recreating them on a global scale. The expansion of financial capital partly solves the problem of realisation as credit can expand demand even when current incomes are stagnant or falling. As Marx puts it, the credit system allows the abolition of capitalism within the mode of capitalism itself. But this rebounds as a crisis in production is transformed into a financial crisis, when debtors cannot pay their creditors.

Through the process of mergers and acquisitions, large-scale industry can link suppliers and producers in a form of intra-firm planning, avoiding some of the anarchic character of capitalism. The export of capital escalates, thus creating demand for commodities from the capital exporting countries. But, in the end, the contradictions are only displaced. The anarchy of market relations between the fewer great private monopolies intensifies (e.g. computer manufacturers and silicon chip makers). Competition between existing oligopolies intensifies with destructive results (e.g. world telecoms sector after 2000). All these clashes flow from the basic problem of a growing over-accumulation of capital and excess capacity in most lines of industry.

These purely economic conflicts between sectors of industry become, in time, conflicts between states as the key MNCs in each country successfully lobby for pre-emptive or retaliatory action against rivals in other countries. The steel war between Europe and the USA is one example. The ambition of the USA to wage war on Iraq is in large part an attempt by big business either to control oil reserves or destroy OPEC and hence ensure the supply of cheap oil for US MNCs. Inter-imperialist war represents the escalation of all of these contradictions to their highest level.

Hardt and Negri do not recognise these fundamental contradictions of capitalism, or where they do, they believe they have been overcome under Empire, 'where the world market has become complete.' For them, Empire has transformed capitalism into a universalistic, socialised and globalised phase, and so overcome the antagonisms between different imperialist states and different capitals. The accumulation of capital has turned from being extensive to intensive, from formal subsumption to real subsumption, from expanding into a physical world to penetrating a virtual reality as the 'outside' is 'internalised', or as they write (p.255), 'The process of real subsumption under capital does not rely on the outside and does not involve the same process of expansion.'

Exactly why this does not involve 'the same process of expansion' is not clear from the book. The authors have no explanation of what, if any, internal limits there are on the expansion of capital. One possible reading of this is that there are unlimited possibilities for expanded accumulation, as virtuality does not possess any limits. Another reading could be that the new field of accumulation and exploitation, the abstract co-operation between labourers, cannot be quantified or valued since, 'it is now impossible to measure labour, either by convention or by calculation'. (p.401)

Consequently, the old contradictions based on a quantitative relation between expansion and limits on that expansion do not operate any more, as they insist that measurement of labour time and, hence, value and surplus value, is not possible any more. In place of a model of an objective, structural crisis of capitalism in the imperialist era, Negri and Hardt substitute a purely subjectivist one. As they write: 'One might even say that the construction of Empire and its global networks is a response to the various struggles against the modern machines of power, and specifically to class struggle driven by the multitude's desire for liberation. The multitude called Empire into being.' (p.43) 'The process of globalisation would not exist or would come to a halt if they were not continually both frustrated and driven by these explosions of the multitude' (p.59)

They are critical of the view 'that the crisis of the 1970s was simply part of the objective and inevitable

cycles of capitalist accumulation, rather than the result of proletarian and anti-capitalist attack both in the dominant and in the subordinated countries. The accumulation of these struggles was the motor of the crisis, and they determined the terms and nature of capitalist restructuring.? (p. 239)

Such a theory has serious implications. First, capitalism is not doomed objectively by its inner contradictions and hence the case for socialism is not scientifically derived but a moral choice derived from some philosophical standpoint. Second, it is, at best, neutral as between reform of the present system of oppression or revolution to overthrow it. It also suggests that if the working class does not struggle, capitalism is not thrown into crisis. If we leave capitalism alone it tends to solve its own problems automatically. Is that not exactly what the neo-liberals say? And if struggle is a matter of choice, why not choose not to struggle? At least we could then avoid the crises created by our struggle. This is not the conclusion Negri and Hardt draw, but the logic of their ideas is open to such conclusions.

If resistance to capitalism created both the crisis in the imperialist era and Empire itself, then crisis under Empire is, according to Negri and Hardt, ever present (immanent). Crisis is a natural part of Empire?s attempt to reproduce itself. The nature of globalised capitalism based on co-operative and immaterial labour ? on language and communication as the central core of capitalism ? makes it so since the multitude are constantly challenging Empire?s attempt to monopolise communication and its attempt to divide the multitude to prevent it becoming a collective, autonomous subject. Such crises are always breaking out along all points in the system.

The motor force of the crisis then is the capacity of the multitude to continually reproduce itself, to assert its creativity and autonomy in a world in which politics, economics and the social intermingle and cannot be separated. Negri and Hardt call this process ?generation?. Opposed to generation is ?corruption?. Corruption seeks to negate and disrupt generation and is the ?cornerstone and keystone of domination? (p.389). Whether in the actions of political lobbies, mafias of rising social groups or churches, it is everywhere. This much is familiar from the traditional concept.

But corruption is more than this. When they write, ?capitalism is by definition a system of corruption? (p.391) this is not poetic licence. What they mean is that, since labour has no measure any more, ?nothing essential remains of capitalism but corruption?. Since exploitation is no longer the extraction of surplus value, but only appropriating the co-operative labour of the multitude, corruption is what allows this to take place since it aims to segment the masses

Resistance to Empire (or the ?irrepressible lightness and joy of being communist?)

The ultimate test of any political analysis is its ability to generate a programme that can be used to achieve its goals and realise its values. Predictably, it is in Empire?s last section, dealing with today?s struggles and the way forward, that the contrast between the pretentiousness of its claims to theoretical radicalism stand in sharpest contrast to the sheer banality of its proposals.

According to Empire, the struggles of the modern proletariat are very different from those ?that stretched from 1968 to the fall of the Berlin Wall?. (53) In those two decades, the crisis of capitalism gave rise to ?an international cycle of struggles based on the communication and translation of the common desires of labor revolt?. (p.54)

A new militancy has arisen in its place, according to Negri and Hardt, and examples in the 1990s include Los Angeles (1992), Chiapas (1994), France (1995), and South Korea (1996). They claim that what sets these struggles apart from the earlier generation is that ?Each of these struggles was specific and based on immediate regional concerns in such a way that they could in no respect be linked together as a

globally expanding chain or revolt. None of these events inspired a cycle of struggles, because the desires and needs they expressed could not be translated into different contexts . . . revolutionaries in other parts of the world did not hear of these events . . . and immediately recognise them as their own struggles? (p.54)

In short, 'struggles have become all but incommunicable'. (p.54) But why? This strange claim flows from the authors' view that modern capitalism, based not on industrial production but immaterial labour, has lost its cyclical character based on internally generated crises of accumulation and overproduction. The objective foundation for proletarian internationalism has gone because it was rooted in the existence of nation-state based working class movements. Today's struggles, like bad wine, do not travel well.

But all is not lost! What these struggles lose in communicability they gain in intensity since these struggles, seemingly isolated and unconnected, all 'leap vertically and touch immediately on the global level'. So, for example, although the grievance of the peasants in Chiapas starts out from a history of local exclusion from the Mexican state and society, in fact, they are immediately connected to the nature and functioning of Nafta. (p.55) Moreover, all the struggles mentioned 'are at once economic, political and cultural' (i.e. biopolitical).

Again, the best refutation of this view of the post Cold War struggles lies in recent developments in the real world. There is no mention or hint of the anti-globalisation or anti-capitalist movement in Empire. The book was no doubt put to press shortly before the momentous events in Seattle at the end of the twentieth century etched the arrival of this global movement into every progressive's mind.

Although embryonically present in various struggles from the mid-1990s, the anti-capitalist movement came of age in the Seattle demonstrations against the WTO ministerial and announced the arrival o

Ironically, given the book's reference to Chiapas, one whole strand of the anti-capitalist movement traces its roots back to the first mass international assemblies organised by the EZLN in Mexico to co-ordinate an international movement of resistance inspired by the Zapatistas. This fact alone refutes the claim by Negri and Hardt that the main obstacle to the communication of these post-modern struggles 'is the absence of a recognition of a common enemy against which the struggles are directed.' (p.56)

The anti-capitalist movement is 'founded' on the recognition that what the landless peasants of Chiapas, the workers of the French public sector, and the workers of South Korea struggling against IMF austerity plans have in common is a fight against the interlinked web of big corporations and their guardians in the IMF, World Bank and WTO, as well as a myriad of subaltern pacts and agencies.

More, as the movement matures 'i.e. its subjectivity becomes more revolutionary' many see the interconnection between corporate globalisation and the new wave of imperialist militarism and aggression, and the fight of the Palestinians against Zionist oppression.

But, if Negri and Hardt underestimate the degree to which recent struggles are connected to each other, they also overestimate the degree to which each on its own presents an 'immediate' and direct challenge to 'the virtual center of Empire'. (p.58) This flows naturally from their wrong belief that, in the world of Empire, there is no mediation of struggles; local economic grievances and global political concerns are immediately combined and there are no social mechanisms that can act to dissipate the resistance 'after all, the trade union bureaucracy has withered and parties have degenerated. Hence the philosophical standpoint of 'immanence' leads to a worship of the spontaneous and a wilful blindness to the real social apparatuses that block, derail and smother resistance.

The record of the global anti-capitalist movement refutes Empire's claims completely. It underlines just how sterile is their distinction between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' struggles and proves that their obituary for 'proletarian internationalism' is premature. The fact is that the impact of global capitalist crises on different nation-states continues to be the prime generator of working class and peasant struggles and that these are linked up by a network of unions, parties and anti-capitalist groups.

A further, even more reactionary, error that the book falls into is its opposition to 'false and damaging' strategies of resistance that seek to resist the effects of global capital movements in the name of preserving the local, regional or national. They argue that the local is, in fact, entrenched, particularist and backward and that global is not always about imposing homogeneity and eliminating differences. This shows all too clearly how their method blinds them to what is at stake.

Are the struggles of Colombian communities against the operations of the oil giant BP in their area not progressive? They fight the destruction of their land and despoliation of their environment; they may also seek jobs in the plants but they want them with trade union rights and decent pay. It may be true that their worst enemies are the local and national agents of the Colombian government and their best allies are the workers in the petroleum industry abroad, but this does not prove a necessary counterposition between local and international struggles. 'Globalisation from below' (i.e. a network of internationally co-ordinated resistance to global capital) and defence of local rights, even to the extent of making the operation of global capital in the localities conditional on respecting democratic and trade union rights and indigenous cultures, are not mutually exclusive. Only prejudiced post-modernists like Negri and Hardt could see in the existence of nation-states and local identities a reactionary obstacle to progress simply because they constitute 'boundaries'.

The last chapters of the book are concerned with how Empire can be forced to give way to another society. Because political conflicts confront each other without mediation, Empire has greater potential for revolution; the multitude stands directly opposed to Empire. But what is the multitude? It is a singularity, not an aggregation of sections; it arises as a result of co-operative, immanent labour, producing autonomously. The multitude is constituted first by migrations of labour. 'Through circulation, the multitude reappropriates space and constitutes itself as an active subject' (p.397)

However, this movement is not yet political organisation. While Empire needs mass migration it has to try to stop migrants gaining political legitimacy; so it criminalises them and seeks to isolate them. Nationalism can be used against them; repression is used. 'The action of the multitude becomes political primarily when it begins to confront directly and with an adequate consciousness the central repressive operations of Empire.' (p.399)

While the authors insist that 'we cannot say at this point' what concrete practices this will entail, (p.400) they do feel that they have a basic political programme that sums up the challenge to Empire.

The book ends by suggesting three demands, which supposedly both link present struggles and confront capitalism. They are demands designed to challenge the ability of Empire to segment the multitude. Hence, the need to assert the right of all to migrate and not to be divided spatially; or the right of each person to a common wage and hence refusal to be segmented along economic lines; and finally, the right of the multitude to common control over production/communication and not to have their co-operative labour harnessed and put to work for capital.

The first demand, therefore, is for 'global citizenship' which means, 'all workers be given the full rights of citizenship' which they call 'a fundamental modern constitutional principle that links right to labour.' (p.400) More specifically, this turns out to be a demand 'that each state recognise juridically that

migrations are necessary to capital?. (p.400) So, this 'global' citizenship turns out, in fact, to be something altogether more mundane and yet revealing - the demand for national citizenship.

The authors seem oblivious to the irony. That postmodernity should only be able to think up a 'modernist' demand of the bourgeois revolution, a broadening of the concept of citizenship, is surely rather destructive of their case. That they should be obliged to make a demand upon the nation-state, which they have taken 400 pages to prove has been made redundant by Empire and the world market, is to invite ridicule.

They argue that 'full' global citizenship, however, is only meaningful when individuals acquire the right to stay or move on to another place as they wish. But this does not mean or imply a global state, in fact, it is nothing more than the traditional demand of modern Marxist revolutionaries - an end to immigration controls in each state - a demand, it has to be said, which still presupposes the existence of the nation state.

Their second demand is for a 'social wage'. This is justified by reference to the postmodern concept of time; there being no objective measure of time in the postmodern world, a 'before' and an 'after', time is the property of the multitude's collective experience. The past and future are dissolved into an eternal present, which is the experience of the multitude. As a result, there is no measure of labour time; nor are the distinctions between types of labour meaningful (inside or outside the factory, productive or unproductive). All that remains is a collective, cooperative labour under the domination of Empire. 'As labour moves outside the factory walls, it is increasingly difficult to maintain the fiction of any measure of the working day and thus separate the time of production from the time of reproduction, or work time from leisure time. . . the proletariat produces in all its generality everywhere all day long.' (pp.402-403)

On this basis arises the slogan 'social wage and guaranteed income for all'.

The potential range of reactionary conclusions that could be drawn from this absurd sophistry is as unlimited as Empire's supposed constitution. No difference between work and leisure time? Well, a couple of extra hours in the factory or mine is fine then? No differences between any kinds of concrete labour? Equal pay for everyone then - but who, in the existing world, is going to decide on its level? How is it to be calculated if there is no measure of value? Does it mean a wage cut for skilled workers? Does it apply to parasitic shareholders as equally as to everyone else? This would all be laughable if it were not for the fact that people need to eat.

Which brings us to the third demand - the right to reappropriation. This means 'free access and control over' the means of production. It is 'autonomous self-production'. (p.407) Negri and Hardt do not tell us how this autonomy from those who presently control (and own) the means of production is to be achieved and then defended from attack. They are aware of the existence and record of the repressive forces but are silent on how the multitude is to confront them, much less defeat them.

Later, they tell us that 'the multitude reappropriates wealth from capital...cooperation annuls the title of property'. (p.410) Is this meant to suggest expropriation? But control over the production process does not, in itself, 'annul the title of property'. For this an alternative power is required, a state that can forcibly overthrow the existing state which recognises, and enforces, the right to private property in the means of production. At the very end of the book the authors observe, 'Certainly, there must be a moment when reappropriation and self-organisation reach a threshold and configure a real event' and 'This is the point when the modern republic ceases to exist. . .' (p.411) They cannot, however, tell us what this 'real event' will look like or, indeed, how in a 'seamless world', where civil society and state are already intermixed, there can be one at all!

In the end, none of these demands can question the capitalist system. Marxists support the right of free movement of labour and the right to citizenship but neither undermines the foundations of capitalism, indeed, both have their supporters in sections of the capitalist class. Only the right to control production processes challenges a vital aspect of capitalism and even this is posed inadequately.

Finally, Negri and Hardt consider how the multitude develops a collective consciousness so that it becomes aware of its mission to destroy Empire. At one point they pose the question thus: 'How can productive labor dispersed in various networks find a center? How can the material and immaterial production of the brains and bodies construct a common sense and direction..?' (p.65) Their answer is: 'the form in which the political should be expressed as subjectivity today is not at all clear.' (p.65)

Apparently unembarrassed by this declaration of the sterility of their whole analysis, they are, nonetheless sure of one thing: what form this subjectivity must not take:

'The demonstration of this becoming cannot consist in anything but the experience and experimentation of the multitude. Therefore the power of the dialectic, which imagines the collective formed through mediation rather than through constitution, has been definitively dissolved.' (p.405) In short, there can be no political party of the multitude, or within the multitude, that represents it or sections of it (e.g.vanguards).

In place of the soviet, party, and the mass unions of the working class in different eras of capitalism, we have the 'posse' which is the 'mode of production and political power of the multitude.' They go on, '.. the new militancy does not repeat the organisational formulas of the old revolutionary working class. Today the militant cannot even pretend to be a representative, even of the fundamental needs of the exploited. Revolutionary political militancy today, on the contrary, must rediscover what has always been its proper form: not representational but constituent activity.' (p.405)

There is no outside today only an inside; the world 'knows only an inside, a vital and ineluctable participation in the set of social structures, with no possibility of transcending them.' (p.413)

Rather 'The only event we are still awaiting is the construction, or rather the insurgence, of a powerful organisation...we await only the maturation of the political development of the posse. We do not have any models to offer for this event. Only the multitude through its practical experimentation will offer the models and determine when and how the possible becomes real.' (p.411)

At least they are consistent on this point. The whole thrust of their book is precisely to show that there can be no general strategy within which to conduct struggle. This would be to 'transcend' themselves over the masses, in effect oppressing them virtually, failing to see that the struggle must be conducted on an immanent level within the masses themselves.

Consistency, however, is not a virtue in this case since Negri and Hardt leave us with nothing but spontaneism and adventurism. Under modern globalised capitalism, contrary to the authors, the working class is divided, along national, political, ethnic and other lines. This 'striation' has not disappeared with 'the completion of the world market'. The purpose of an international party of revolution is to distil out a scientific programme that represents the genuine interests of the whole working class, embodies the memory of the class and draws the lessons of its struggles. It codifies this into a manual of action for power. It is a gross slander by anarchists and others to suggest that a revolutionary party sets itself up against the working class, that it is 'an outside'. Parties are made up of the working class, their militants are a part of the working class and exist within its communities.

Again, Negri and Hardt can only see individual identities or formal oppositions and hatred of boundaries,

which are inherently oppressive. They cannot envisage how a revolutionary party's members can be at one and the same time both part of the working class community they live in and a representative of its revolutionary minority. They cannot see how a party can make a creative contribution to ongoing struggles and yet, at the same time, embody the lessons of the past and outline the key signposts for bringing about a revolutionary future.

Marxists are not afraid of boundaries because unlike postmodernists they do not see them as immutable, fixed. For the same reason, they do not see them as oppressive. There is a boundary between the vanguard and the masses, but it is one of creative tension. All Negri and Hardt have to offer by contrast is flat, seamless, immanence.

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