The Social Relations of Violence and Genocide in Imperial Systems

Draft Paper for Research In Progress Seminar, University of Sussex, 25th February 2008

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The post-9/11 "War on Terror" has brought with it a resurgence in the concept of "empire" and "imperialism" in International Relations theory. As Joseph Nye (2003, 60) commented two months after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003: "Respected analysts on both the left and the right are beginning to refer to 'American empire' as the dominant narrative of the twenty-first century."

Indeed, the 2003 Iraq War and the debates in IR that have arisen in attempting to theorize it, point to a number of salient questions in relation to the theorization of empire and imperialism in general. How should the new imperial turn of American foreign policy after 9/11 be understood in relation to the pre-9/11 era? What precisely is distinctive here? Is it the imperial dynamic of Anglo-American foreign policy? If so, then is the concept of imperialism relevant to understanding the pre-9/11 era, and in what way? Underlying these questions, of course, is the central question of how imperialism is to be understood as an IR category.

Another prominent question is that of violence. As we are well aware, the 2003 invasion of Iraq was hardly the first instance of Anglo-American military intervention in that country. Britain has conducted overt and covert military interventions in Iraq on and off for 90 years or so, continuing to do so under the leadership of the United States since the 1960s covertly, and more overtly since the 1991 Gulf War. But the continuity of this imperial relationship, does not obviate its differential nature through time, consisting of British mandate rule administered by a British-installed monarch, King Faysal, in 1917, formal independence in 1932 with British rule receding behind the scenes, British military intervention in 1941 to re-install King Faysal after he was toppled by Iraqi nationalist forces; a series of joint CIA-MI6 sponsored military coups

through the 1960s which brought the Ba'athists, and eventually Saddam Hussein, to power, the 1991 Gulf War, the UN sanctions regime from 1991 to 2002, and finally the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq.

So the West's relationship with Iraq illustrates that the continuity of imperial relations over 90 years included fundamentally distinctive forms of engagement, at the centre of which were diverse forms of direct and indirect violence, some of which consisted of genocidal episodes. I am thinking of the liquidation of the educated classes in the 1963 coup, where 5,000 Iraqi doctors, lawyers, teachers and professors were targeted in lists drawn up the CIA, with Saddam's assistance, and killed; of Western culpability in Saddam's genocidal campaigns against the Shi'ites and Kurds, particularly his infamous Anfal campaign which killed 100,000 Kurds; of the degenerate forms of warfare, to use Martin Shaw's term, applied in the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 invasion and occupation; as well as the devastating humanitarian catastrophe imposed by the UN sanctions regime. The variations in these forms of imperial engagement, the distinctive strategies of imperial violence, arose directly out of both differential strategies of geopolitical control pursued by Anglo-American power, and differential strategies of self-mobilization and resistance implemented by Iraqi social and political forces – in other words, in the fundamentally contested nature of these imperial social relations.

Due to time consideration, I will not dwell on my critique of orthodox approaches to these issues. Rather, I will elaborate my own preferred historical sociological approach to the question of imperialism, based on a critical engagement with political Marxism and the associated theory of social-property relations. Following this, I will discuss my approach to the theorization of violence and genocide in relation to imperial systems; I will then outline a sketch of how this theoretical argument plays out in my historical comparison of Spanish and British forms of imperialism in the Americas, and conclude with an even briefer sketch of how it might be applied to the new imperial turn.

Social Relations of Empire

In my attempt to interrogate imperium, I have attempted to develop a historically-sensitive theoretical framework that is capable of explaining historical variations in the way distinctive imperial power confront distinctive imperial peripheries – in other

words, a theory of the *social relations* of imperial geopolitical orders. I argue that social-property relations theory is able to conceptualize imperial violence as the outcome of contested relations between politically-constituted social groups in their conflictual strategies for reproduction in imperial encounters. A strong example of the efficacy of this approach is in Ellen Meiksins Wood's seminal *Empire of Capital* (2003), a persuasive effort to examine the dynamics of multiple empires from the perspective of relations of production, class and social property.

The imperialism associated with pre-capitalist social forms entailed the symbiosis of military-political and economic interests. Just as domestic processes of surplus extraction were premised on the feudal class' monopolization of extra-economic forms of political and juridical power premised on the means of violence, the imperial project of political command was supported by the use of military force in order to directly administer far-flung processes of surplus extraction. As Wood (2003) concludes: "Precapitalist imperialism, to put it simply, was the direct exercise of coercive force to capture territory, to extract labor or resources from subject peoples, or to gain control of trade routes". However, the form of imperialism associated with capitalism is sustained through the projection of command via mobile borderless exchange relations, where the use of military-political force is relegated purely to enforcing the transfer to market dependence and protecting market principles thereafter established. In Wood's (2003) words, the "capitalist form of imperialism relies not so much on direct coercion as on the market dependence of economic actors and the capacity of imperial power to manipulate markets".

Pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of modern imperial violence are therefore not only distinctive, they are so due to the character of the distinctive social relations which underlie them. However, oversimplifications arise in relation to Wood's theory of capitalist imperialism – oversimplifications which are, indeed, in tension with Wood's most compelling work in political Marxism.

Once exploitation took capitalist forms, imperial objectives could be reconciled with the formal independence of colonies, as direct coercion was no longer required for surplus extraction, and indeed was no longer efficient compared to the costs of sustaining politically subservient colonies:

"What is most unique about the capitalist relation between the economic and the political, then, is not capital's need for endless accumulation of political power, but, rather, the unique capacity of economic power to detach itself from direct political

coercion. The economic sphere in capitalism has its own forms of coercion, which enable exploitation and capital accumulation without directly relying on extra-economic force. On the global level, in the arena of the global market, this economic sphere can expand on its own without extending the territorial reach of political power or of an imperial state. There may be occasions when capitalist states will seek to extend their political control for various geopolitical reasons, but the process of globalising capitalist economic power does not depend on the reach of political domination. This means not only that capitalism has created a new form of domination but also that economic hegemony can reach far beyond the scope of direct political power or territorial control. In fact, capital's capacity for relentless self-expansion depends on this detachment." ["Logics of Power: A Conversation with David Harvey", Historical Materialism (vol. 14.4, 2006) p. 13, 18-19]

Despite defining the dynamic of capitalist imperialism as purely economic and thus being capable of a detachment from the extra-economic realm that lends it unprecedented expansionist mobility, she simultaneously acknowledges that capitalist expansion remains fundamentally dependent on extra-economic factors: "The boundless expansion of capital is possible because of its unique ability to detach itself from 'extra-economic' power, while that same detachment makes it both possible and necessary for capital to rely on the support of 'extra-economic' powers external to itself, in the form of territorially-limited legal, political and military organisations." [Wood, "Logics of Power", 2006 p. 12]

If capitalist imperialism is uniquely defined by its very "detachment" from extra-economic power, why does capitalism still require "extra-economic" power to sustain itself in its "boundless expansion"? This tension extends into Wood's historical analyses. For instance, in examining the trajectory of the harbinger of capitalist imperialism, England, Wood skirts over the issue of why it took so long for capitalist England to dispense with earlier, more direct pre-capitalist forms of imperial domination. Her main argument is that the advent of capitalism in England entailed historically novel forms of surplus-extraction generating pressures for a *new* type of imperialism which did not require the formal annexations of traditional pre-capitalist imperialism. But despite the full onset of capitalism in England by the late seventeenth century, the propensity for British territorial conquests did not only fail to desist, it *accelerated* at a hitherto unprecedented pace for another three hundred years. The seizure of India began with the conquest of Bengal in 1757, and continued under

the East India Company for more than five decades. Once the Company was displaced by the British state, expansion continued, if more slowly, especially into Northwest India. This was soon followed by the scramble for Africa, and penetration of the Middle East. (Chibber, Vivek, "Capital Outbound", New Left Review, No. 36, November-December 2005, p. 154-6)

This appears to contradict the idea that capitalist imperatives entail a form of economic imperialism premised solely on market forces. Ultimately, Wood is unable to explain the correlation between the emergence of capitalist development in Britain and the intensification, rather than recession, of colonial expansion, for several centuries. Of course, one possible explanation is within the non-European periphery itself, and its own social-property regime, which may have conditioned the arsenal of techniques available to extract surplus. Further, decolonization occurred not because capitalist imperialism was strong enough to shed pre-capitalist techniques; but largely because internal developments within the imperial periphery such as the rise of resistance movements, made formal rule impossible to sustain. (Chibber, 2005, p. 155)

But even when the critical role of the periphery is accounted for, the question remains as to why the use of force involving the control of territories continues to play such a prolonged and significant role in imperial relations despite the onset of capitalism. These reservations apply not only to the record of British territorial empire into the early twentieth century, but even to the post-Second World War period. In the early and mid-twentieth century, Britain not only failed to move willingly toward a non-territorial modality of informal economic imperialism, but to the contrary was actively embroiled in multiple military conflicts in Africa and Asia designed to do the opposite -- attempting to suppress indigenous resistance movements to protect and perpetuate British colonial structures of direct rule (Curtis, 1995; 2002). Even in the post-colonial period since WWII until today, the United States, often with British support, has conducted over 75 military interventions in the periphery, many of them with a strong territorial component involving long-term military occupations in the form of peacekeeping operations aimed at 'nation'- or 'state'–building. (Blum, 1995). In particular, the post-Cold War period has witnessed an increasing return to territorially-centred interventions, including multiple long-term and short-term military occupations of the Balkans (e.g. Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia), Central Asia (e.g. Afghanistan) and the Middle East (e.g. Iraq).

If market imperatives *continue* to require extra-economic power for the conditions of their enforcement, then the notion that economic hegemony under capitalist imperialism can function by purely economic means becomes less than helpful. It should be stressed that Wood has departed somewhat from her own earlier work on the political and economic under capitalism. In her seminal paper, "The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism" (New Left Review, 1/127, May-June 1981), Wood argues that "relations of production" should be "presented in their *political* aspect, that aspect in which they are actually *contested*: as relations of domination, as rights of property, as the power to organize and govern production and appropriation." (77) A mode of production is not simply a "technology but a social organization of productive activity", a "mode of exploitation" which is therefore "a relationship of power" constituted of political organization within and between contending classes that in turn conditions the "nature and extent of exploitation." (79) Therefore, relations of production "are historically constituted by the configuration of political power that determines the outcome of class conflict." (80) Thus, even under capitalist social-property relations, Wood is unequivocal that the differentiation of the "economic" and "political" is in fact more precisely a differentiation in the political functions which under pre-capitalist social-property relations were fundamentally unified. Under feudalism, the extraction of surplus was itself a "political" process premised on "extra-economic" power, and therefore "bound up with the performance of military, juridical, and administrative functions." "Economic" exploitation was simultaneously a "political" function. Capitalism, in contrast, entailed "a differentiation of political functions themselves and their separate allocation to the private economic sphere and the public sphere of the state." (82) The capitalist organization of production is therefore a condition "in which certain political powers were gradually transformed into economic powers and transferred to a separate 'sphere.'" (86) In her earlier formulations, then, Wood, unambiguously posits relations of production as politically constituted, even under capitalism – the differentiation between "economic" and "extra-economic" spheres under capitalism does not in this context represent a genuine "detachment" of economic from extra-economic power as in her more recent articulation, but rather a *transformation* in the function of extra-economic power to the reproduction of social, political and juridical conditions necessary for capitalist relations to subsist.

I argue that Marx's concept of "primitive accumulation" provides a crucial analytical device by which this dynamic interconnection between the economic and extra-economic under capitalism can be interrogated. Marx is clear that "primitive accumulation" refers to the historical origin of capitalism. He says: "primitive accumulation... is the historic basis, instead of the historic result of specifically capitalist production. How it itself originates, we need not here inquire as yet. It is enough that it forms the starting-point." (Marx, Capital, Vol. 1, 1867, p. 585) Yet a careful reading suggests that Marx also recognized that the substantive content of primitive accumulation is the production of a relationship between capital and labour that is not simply a fact of capitalism's historical origination, but continues to define and sustain its structure as an ongoing process integral to the very functioning of capitalism. Indeed, Marx frequently refers to the fundamental *effect* of primitive accumulation -- separation -- as the constitutive basis of capital accumulation. The separation of labour from the conditions of production "is the foundation of [capitalist] production...[and] is given in capitalist production" (Marx, 1972, p. 272) The logic of separation is the "real process of capital" which is therefore constituted of "the separation of the conditions of production from the labourer" (Marx, 1972, p. 422). This separation "begins with primitive accumulation, appears as a permanent process in the accumulation and concentration of capital, and expresses itself finally as centralisation of existing capitals in a few hands and a deprivation of many of their capital (to which expropriation is now changed)" (Marx, 1966, p. 246). Indeed, capitalist accumulation depends on the reproduction of labour as "object-less free labour" (Marx, 1973, p. 507), and thus capitalist "accumulation merely presents as a continuous process what in primitive accumulation, appears as a distinct historical process, as the process of the emergence of capital." (Marx, 1972 p. 272; see also Marx, 1983, p. 688). As Bonefeld thus argues, "The result of primitive accumulation, that is the separation of labour from its means, has to be posed continuously in capitalist accumulation, rendering separation the premise and result of accumulation proper." Primitive accumulation therefore "refers to a beginning which is not the result of what comes afterwards but, instead, its presupposition, its constitutive basis." [Bonefeld, "History and Social Constitution: Primitive Accumulation is not Primitive", The Commoner (March 2002) p. 3-4] In other words, the relation of separation by which capitalism is constituted, needs not only to be produced through

extra-economic processes of primitive accumulation at its origin, but through ongoing extra-economic processes.

For Marx the primitive accumulation of capital involved massive violence within the arena of the original formation of capitalist classes through forceful appropriation of the means of production via dispossession of direct producers. But he also argued that the *continuing reproduction of the capitalist relation* also required extra-economic measures for its enforcement; while the *internationalization of capital* further required extra-economic measures to expand this sphere of dispossession necessary for capitalist relations of production to be extended. In his Grundrisse (p. 651), Marx writes that: "The bourgeoisie at its rise, wants and uses the power of the state to 'regulate' wages, i.e. to force them within the limits suitable for surplus value making, to lengthen the working day and to keep the labourer himself in the normal degree of dependence. This is an essential element of the so-called primitive accumulation." Thus primitive accumulation designates extra-economic processes that serve to reproduce the capitalist relation in the centre.

In another passage, Marx explicitly equates European imperial violence to the primitive accumulation by which capital expansion proceeded, incorporating a wide diversity of different extra-economic techniques and strategies:

"The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalised the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the *chief momenta of primitive accumulation*... In England at the end of the 17th century, they arrive at a systematical combination, embracing the colonies, the national debt, the modern mode of taxation, and the protectionist system. These methods depend in part on brute force, e.g., the colonial system." [italics added]

In other words, the emergence and internationalization of capitalism could *never* be a purely economic process -- it *required* extra-economic means of mobilization. But the specific forms of these extra-economic means are not pre-determined by a prior capitalist logic. Marx included a wide diversity of agent-centred economic, political and military extra-economic measures in primitive accumulation, including colonization; slavery; inter-state war; debt; modern taxation; and protectionism; among others. He thus further implied that capitalism in a specific social space, for

instance an imperial centre, was perfectly capable of co-existing with and appropriating a formally non-capitalist mode of social organization (such as slave labour) in the periphery – so long as doing so is compatible with its subordination to the consolidation of capitalist social relations of separation in the imperial metropolis.

How then, does Marx connect up such a diverse set of techniques and strategies with his core definition of primitive accumulation as the separation of producers from their means of subsistence? He does so by theorizing the capitalist relation of separation as a fundamentally *contingent* condition that requires not merely a single originating act of historical violence, but further *a continual reproduction through the generation and convergence of new "extra-economic" means of mobilization*.

This has critical implications for the relationship between economic and extra-economic factors in the internationalization of capital. For if capital accumulation is constituted fundamentally of a relation of separation between labour and the conditions of production in a specific social centre, originated in violent extra-economic processes of primitive accumulation; this means that the continual reproduction of this relation of separation requires the continuation of such processes to sustain the capital relation. I am not decided on whether primitive accumulation is the best term to delineate these *ongoing* processes, but the real point is that although capitalism entails the differentiation of the "economic" and "extra-economic", and thus the mobility of the economic beyond politically-constituted national boundaries, nevertheless the continual functioning of mobile capital depends fundamentally on extra-economic factors by which the relation of labour's separation from its conditions is reproduced. Capitalist expansion at every stage of its geographical outward movement from a given capitalist centre cannot be sustained without the perpetuation of the processes by which the capital relation is constituted and thus continually reproduced, processes which include not only factors such as market regulation, the policing of laws of private property and contract, but also diverse practices of geopolitical violence required to create and sustain the presupposing conditions of these factors -- depending on conditions in imperial peripheries.

What makes capitalism distinctive, then, is not the detachment of "economic" from "extra-economic" power, but rather the structure of their mutually interdependent relationship. But which extra-economic means of mobilization may be deployed cannot be theoretically determined from any prior logic of capital. As Teschke argues: "The reality is that capitalist states have adopted different 'strategies

of territorialization', ranging from the grant of full juridical independence to subaltern states, via semi-hegemonic projects like the eu, to systems of outright territorial control in the pursuit of *Lebensraum* or 'formal Empire'. What an understanding of these diverse strategies of spatialization requires is an agency-centred perspective that emphasizes the variable politics of territorialization, rather than a logic of empire or a logic of capital." ["Imperial Doxa from the Berlin Republic" New Left Review 40 July/August 2006]

Therefore, although we can accept a tendency within capitalism toward fostering diverse forms of political violence by which the capitalist class can reproduce itself by protecting and expanding its interests, precisely how this happens depends entirely on the historically-specific geopolitically-mediated trajectory of contested class-relations. This perspective emphasises the centrality of political violence to any project of capitalist expansion. Yet to understand why capitalist expansion has adopted so many different forms of political violence and extra-economic means of mobilization in different historical periods, it is necessary to inspect the geopolitical configurations specific to those periods, and how contested class-relations in this context generated social crises that invited new strategies of reproduction.

Imperialism and Genocide

How then, should strategies of violence and genocide be understood in the context of the social relations of empire? To answer this, I draw from the original conceptualization of genocide elaborated by Polish Jewish jurist Raphael Lemkin (1900-1959) Lemkin's best known definition of genocide was published in his paper, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944: 79-95), wherein he defined it as "a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves." Genocidal violence may consist of diverse political, social, legal, intellectual, spiritual, economic, biological, physiological, religious, and moral methods directed at the "foundations of life" of a collectivity. (Lemkin, 1944, pp.79-95) Thus, the "annihilation of groups themselves" does not necessarily mean their total biological extermination, but their dissolution through the liquidation of the distinctive social relations that constitute the groups' "foundations of life". The partial physical destruction of the group is nevertheless a fundamental dimension of this.

Most significantly, Lemkin explicitly delineates an irrevocable linkage between the dynamic of genocide and the logic of colonization: “Genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor. This imposition, in turn, may be made upon the oppressed population which is allowed to remain or upon the territory alone, after removal of the population and the colonization by the oppressor’s own nationals.”

The first phase of genocide thus consists of the “destruction of the *national pattern* of the oppressed group”; and the second consists of “the *imposition* of the national pattern of the oppressor”. [emphasis added] Thus, physical slaughter -- or in Lemkin’s words “the destruction of the biological structure” -- is only one possible methodology of genocide, which is not necessarily concerned pre-eminently with the total physical extermination of members of a group. For Lemkin, genocide consists of two intimately connected dynamics, one concerning the destruction of a group by the dissolution of its “foundations of life” and its “national pattern”, and the other concerning the replacement of the “national pattern” of a group with the “national pattern” of the perpetrator. He illustrates this theme with the example of the Nazi colonization of western Poland, whereby the Nazis “organized a system of colonization” in order to secure the imposition of its own national pattern to the detriment of that of the Poles. (Ibid., pp. 82-83)

In this context, while genocide includes the intent to effect the biological extermination of a target group at least in *part*, it inherently involves other diverse forms of structural and cultural violence by which effective group annihilation is achieved by the group’s *life-pattern* being dissolved in place of that of the perpetrator. Lemkin’s theory of genocide therefore rests on a multi-dimensional conceptualization of violence, and intrinsically allows room for the concept of *genocidal massacre* [Kuper (1981)] -- small-scale mass killings targeted against an identified collectivity in the context of a genocidal programme aimed at the dissolution of the group’s distinctive life-pattern.

These themes are elaborated in Lemkin’s unpublished writings, archived at the American Jewish Historical Society and the New York Public Library. A recurrent theme of Lemkin’s unpublished writings is genocide as a phenomenon associated with European imperialism generally, and settler-colonialism specifically. (Docker, 2004). As McDonnell and Moses (2005, pp. 501-502) observe, Lemkin’s manuscripts

show that he saw the concept of genocide as “colonial in nature”, as it intrinsically “entails occupation and settlement.” Lemkin was acutely aware that Spanish imperial violence in the Americas was not a centrally controlled process of extermination, but rather a “diffuse and uncoordinated” multiplicity of process and actions, committed by a decentralized diversity of colonial actors. For pre-modern colonial contexts, Lemkin did not believe a pre-conceived plan was necessary to invoke genocide, as the comprehensive destruction of the life-pattern of indigenous groups still occurred in the absence of such a coordinated plan. Rather, Lemkin locates the genocidal intention to destroy “in particular situations at the local and regional level. Genocide could be said to have occurred there and then, perpetrated by identifiable Spaniards.” (ibid., pp. 515).

Lemkin’s political activism ultimately culminated in the recognition of genocide as an international legal category. The 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention delimited the definition of genocide as a number of acts “committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such.”

Anthropological research, however, demonstrates problems with this narrow focus on these specific group categories above other potential classifications of group identity. Constructivist arguments concord with the general instrumentalist position, that national and ethnic identity constitutes “a strategic instrument” of a social collectivity mobilizing in the pursuit of its perceived interests, although constructivists emphasise that individuals tend to have a more limited ability to choose their national or ethnic identity. Nevertheless, such identity is often “invented” or socially constructed for an aim which may not “objectively” exist, except in the conceptions of a particular group of individuals (Bacal, 1990; Brass, 1991). A prime example of this is provided by how the cosmopolitan national Yugoslav identity that joined Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and other republics into a single federation in the 1980s, fragmented as the state collapsed under a variety of economic and other pressures, leading individuals to mobilize more particularistic national and ethnic identities (Kaldor, 2001: 32-44, 69-89).

As Hinton (Alexander Laban Hinton, “The Dark Side of Modernity: Toward an Anthropology of Genocide”, in Hinton (ed.) Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide, University of California, Berkeley, 2002, p. 4) thus summarizes, other salient social classifications include “totemistic groups, clans, phratries, lineages, castes, classes, tribes, and categories based on sexual orientation,

mental or physical disability, urban or rural origin, and, of course, economic and political groups." Categories like race, ethnicity and nationality that are traditionally considered to be primordial are in fact "historically constructed groupings that have shifting edges and fuzzy boundaries." Simultaneously, groups and classes often described as too malleable can be shown to be otherwise; for instance, "it is often extremely difficult to stop being an Untouchable." In contrast, conversion to a different religion is comparatively much easier. On this basis, it is difficult to see how the UN Convention's restriction of target groups of genocide solely to national, ethnic, racial and religious identities can be justified, given that such categories are ultimately no more immutable than other possible group categories. This leads to two further questions in the context of understanding genocide: 1) Given that group categories are not immutable, then their existence as conflictual identities in which one group is targeted by another in genocidal violence must derive from a prior process in which those conflictual identities were socially constructed; 2) On what social or political grounds did this process of social construction of conflictual group identities occur, leading to genocide? This analysis, in other words, shifts our analytical focus to the very sufficient conditions of genocide, that is, the social processes by which conflictual group identities are constructed in such a manner as to render genocide a viable and/or desirable group strategy.

The question then becomes not why a particular set of primordial groups has become the target of genocidal violence, but rather in *what social context certain target groups are socially constructed in the first place*. Rather than taking for granted the pre-existence of distinctive group identities, we need precisely to interrogate the wider social processes underlying the social construction of bifurcated group identities in which an "included" imagined community of social legitimacy becomes contrasted against an "excluded" existentially-illegitimate community targeted by genocidal violence. This brings us to the central question of the social relations of genocide, for it is only in understanding *the specificity of the social relations in which group identities are conflictually constructed that genocidal violence can become truly explicable*. As Hinton argues:

"Genocides are distinguished by a process of 'othering' in which the boundaries of an imagined community are reshaped in such a manner that a previously 'included' group (albeit often included only tangentially) is ideologically recast (almost always in dehumanizing rhetoric) as being outside the community, as a threatening and

dangerous ‘other’ -- whether racial, political, ethnic, religious, economic, and so on -- that must be annihilated.” (Hinton, 2002, pp. 4-6)

In other words, genocidal violence is inherently rooted in a prior and ongoing ideological process, whereby particular group categories are identified, constructed and ‘otherized’ in accordance with specific social and political interests. These interests themselves are only explicable in relation to the interaction between *two sets of social relations*: those of the *perpetrator* and those of the *victim*. This socio-political background is therefore not accidental, but fundamental to the perpetration of genocide. This insight leads to the recognition that genocidal intent -- the intent to destroy or cripple a group -- does not subsist in a vacuum, or for its own sake, but is always tied to the logic of a particular political programme. It is only by interrogating the dynamic and origins of this programme, and thus by understanding *the social relations from which that programme derives*, that we can understand the reasons for the emergence of genocidal intent.

Imperial Spain and England in the Americas

I argue that in the context of their distinctive social-property regimes, English imperial violence against the Native Americans was far more intense, directed and sustained than anything perpetrated by Spanish colonists, who had never wanted to exterminate the Indians wholesale, but preferred to work them to death, only deploying violent policies of “pacification” to guarantee indigenous subjection to colonial rule. Moreover, even in absorbing native labour into deadly colonial social configurations, Spanish colonists were surprised and dismayed by the rapid depopulation of the natives toward near extinction due to disease, which created a labour vacuum that could only be filled by increasing numbers of African slaves.

On the other hand, as soon as the improving imperatives of agrarian capitalism began to dominate the New English landscape in the early seventeenth century, and once it became clear that natives were generally unsuited to the heavy demands for competitive production of English commercial agriculture, English colonists aimed explicitly to 1) expropriate land by native dispossession and 2) eliminate native resistance to land-expropriation by outright extermination.

The new British imperialism was thus quite different to its Spanish counterpart. Although frequently subject to violent liquidation particularly to put down resistance,

the natives were nevertheless ordained as subjects and vassals of the Spanish Crown in 1542, albeit in a subordinate status. Despite the formal difference in the legal classification of the natives, the Crown explicitly permitted intermarriage, and thus with time New Spain soon became a multi-racial society in which surviving natives entered society as cultural and biological mestizos. Similarly, many of the Africans and Asians brought by the Iberian powers into the New World were culturally and biologically integrated into a New Spanish society that, although characterized by a racial hierarchy of castes retained a degree of racial and social mobility by the late eighteenth century. [Jaime E. Rodriguez O, The Independence of Spanish America (Cambridge, 1998) pp. 7-11]

English colonization in the age of an emerging agrarian capitalism was markedly more racialized and intentionally destructive. The conquest of North America did not result in any integration or inclusion of native cultures and peoples, but rather effected their total cultural and biological exclusion, and in the face of resistance, outright extermination. Native Americans were viewed as wild savages who simply could not be incorporated into "civilized society." [Nicholas P. Canny, "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America", William and Mary Quarterly (1973 No. 30 pp. 575-98] The Anglo-American colonies evolved into highly racialized and racially-segregated societies in which non-whites -- debilitated natives, the African slave-population, and free people of colour -- inhabited the margins of society, legally barred from equal participation or racial mixing. [Reginald Horsman, Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism (Cambridge, Mass. 1981) p. 104] Ward Churchill argues these were precursors to apartheid. As Hans Konig observes:

"From the beginning, the Spaniards saw the native Americans as natural slaves, beasts of burden, part of the loot. When working them to death was more economical than treating them somewhat humanely, they worked them to death. The English, on the other hand, had no use for the native peoples. They saw them as devil worshippers, savages who were beyond salvation by the church, and exterminating them increasingly became accepted policy" [The Conquest of America: How the Indians lost their continent, Monthly Review Press (1993)]

But this distinction was a direct consequence of capitalist pressures, rationalized by Puritan ideology, in the context of which colonists saw the dispossession and exclusion of the largely untameable heathen natives from lands which they failed to

"improve" as an ideal solution; along with the permanent subordination of what quickly became a predominantly African slave-labour force required to fill the subsequent labour-vacuum. [Robert Johnson, The New Life Of Virginea: Declaring the former successe and present estate of that plantation. London, 1612. (Virtual Jamestown Archive. 3 Mar. 2006.) <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/jamestown-browse?id=J1052>; Wilcomb E. Washburn "The Moral and Legal Justifications for Dispossessing the Indians", in James Morton Smith (ed.) Seventeenth-Century America: Essays in Colonial History. (New York: W.W. Norton 1972) 15-32.]

Native resistance provided the perceived conditions of existential crisis afflicting the colonies, and thus the basis of legitimacy if not perceived strategic necessity for adopting policies of genocide against the 'Other,' in the name of colonial survival. Following Dirk Moses, I argue these crucial *moments* of crisis surfaced when the consolidation or expansion of the colonies appeared to be under challenge by various indigenous groups. Such moments became *genocidal* precisely when colonists responded to the former indigenous reactions by choosing strategies of exterminatory warfare, with the aim of permanently removing the source of the challenge. [A. Dirk Moses; also see Levene's use of Moses] Unlike in Spanish America where wholesale massacres occurred in the much wider context of a wholly unintended population collapse, English acts of genocide characterized the overarching trajectory of the entire colonial project, developing increasingly exterminatory strategies as a means of annihilating altogether the threat to colonial social formations posed by the viable independent existence of native groups. Spanish pre-capitalist imperialism had never gone this far, but was relegated to destroying native groups "in part" in order to effectively *absorb them economically, politically and culturally into the Spanish colonial formation*. As Christopher Schmidt-Nowara observes: "In opposition to the Spanish colonial tradition of assimilation (especially religious and linguistic) and miscegenation, the Anglo-Saxon empires have been characterized by racial and religious segregation and a ruthless concern for economic efficiency and rationality." [*The Conquest of History: Spanish Colonialism and National Histories in the Nineteenth Century.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007]

Thus, even when pursuing policies of partial extermination, the Spaniards did so not to *completely* annihilate the natives, but to absorb the surviving remnants into the Spanish imperial life-pattern. English imperialists, in contrast, tended toward the *exclusion of native communities from new colonial formations*. In both cases,

indigenous resistance accelerated the dynamic of imperial violence, but in different directions: the Spanish case tended toward *forcible native absorption into* the colonial formation; the English case tended toward *forcible native exclusion from* the colonial formation.

The distinctive exclusionary dynamic of English settler-colonialism was directly related to the manner in which colonists were both constrained and enabled by the pressures of an emerging agrarian capitalism. From the very outset, the new capitalist imperialism enabled the objectification of human beings and permitted their evaluation from the perspective of their use-value in relation to capitalist surplus appropriation. It became possible to judge the value of land and of human beings by a single measure, their productive capacities. In this way, emerging agrarian capitalism had already begun to reconfigure the English moral universe, legitimizing the commodification and manipulation of human life on the basis of the extent to which it could be subjected to capital accumulation.

Although it would be a serious error to see capitalism as having fully emerged in these periods, the consolidation of capitalism in the English countryside and the key involvement of English capitalists in financing the English conquest of the Americas were instrumental factors in enabling colonists to view indigenous people merely as obstacles to the acquirement of land that could be "improved" in a specifically capitalist way. Social crises triggered by increased native resistance to English removal policies led to genocide developing increasingly into a kind of 'final solution', pursued to secure colonial consolidation and expansion.

There remains the question, of course, that if these were cases of capitalist genocide, why was genuine free wage labour not permitted to proliferate in such a way as to consolidate truly capitalist social property relations? The answer to this is that it would be a mistake to categorize the English genocide against the North American natives as occurring within a purely capitalist social context. Indeed, this period of emerging capitalism did not belong to capitalism per se, but to that period described by Marx as "primitive accumulation".

Up to the early eighteenth century, North America lacked a landless proletariat class capable of being employed for wages by the new colonial landed gentry in productive agriculture. With natives either too difficult to control or simply unable to engage in such labour, and the domestic market restricting the export of indentured servants, colonists decided to invest in the import of African slaves whose labour

could be purchased for life. In this way, through the settling activities of colonial agents, capitalist pressures in the metropolis were compelled to negotiate with concrete realities in the periphery. While British imperial expansion continued to be driven by capitalist social-property relations at home which constrained and enabled colonial strategies in unprecedented ways, the manner in which these colonial agents navigated the distinctive strategic contours of imperial peripheries invariably affected their strategies, giving rise to what should be understood as distinctive *hybrid colonial formations* in their own right.

Hence, the distinctive form of genocidal capitalist settler-colonialism being spearheaded by England since the seventeenth century was intrinsically and dynamically capable of interacting with, influencing and even appropriating non-capitalist property and production relations, in the course of capitalist expansion. British imperial expansion was thus integrally conjoined to practices of primitive accumulation designed to increasingly absorb imperial peripheries characterized by non-capitalist property and production relations into the orbit of an ascendant internationalizing capitalist system.

England's transformation firstly from partial to full-scale agrarian capitalism between the early to late seventeenth century, and secondly from agrarian to full-scale industrial capitalism by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, altered its relationship with, and within, the peripheries in order to feed the demands of capitalist actors operating in the context of new social property relations at home. These radical social transformations in both the English centre and its imperial peripheries were linked systematically to the deployment of massive direct and indirect violence, including diverse forms of genocide. Vastly diverse geographical regions such as North America, Australia, India and Ireland were organized and stratified as part of an international division of labour designed to meet the requirements of growing British industrial capitalism. As the industrial revolution transformed the British domestic landscape and in some cases overtook agricultural activities, British imperialists relegated India and Ireland as chief exporters of food and raw materials to the UK home market. Simultaneously, North America and Australia were relegated as suppliers of cotton and wool for British textile production, which was the driving force of the industrial revolution. In India and Ireland, the emphasis on exporting food led to genocidal artificial famines in which local producers were deliberately denied access to millions of tonnes of grain being transported away via railway and ship.

That British officials were cognizant of this led Mike Davis to describe these events as “late Victorian holocausts.” Yet further, in North American and Australia, the intensifying demand for raw material supplies of cotton and wool led English settler-colonists into increasingly genocidal confrontations with indigenous populations, in an effort to expand their control of productive and/or pastoral land. Native resistance culminated in the English launching exterminatory wars to eliminate local opposition to these setter-colonial projects. The trans-atlantive slave-trade also escalated almost in direct correlation with the period of industrialisation, as the escalating productivity of British industries required increased labour inputs in the North American cotton plantations to sustain growth. In all these cases, indigenous populations who stood in the way of accumulatory objectives were invariably dehumanized and variably problematized by colonists, depending on specific local conditions. We thus find under England, an emerging world capitalist system in which forms of direct and indirect violence in multiple imperial peripheries, some of which were clearly genocidal, were systematized according to the diverse demands of capital accumulation.

The New Imperialism: A Concluding Sketch

My research leads me to posit several core conceptual insights by which to render modern imperial violence intelligible, in particular: 1) genocide tends toward a colonial form across international borders 2) modern imperial systems constituted *hybrid colonial formations* in which colonists acting on pressures from the social property relations of the imperial metropolis had to navigate the terrain of indigenous social configurations, creating distinctive forms of imperial domination 3) modern imperial violence tended toward either *absorptive* (pre-capitalist) or *exclusionary* (capitalist) variations of imperial violence, which in the latter was more likely to be genocidal 4) the emergence of capitalism in England accelerated and transformed the dynamic of *exclusionary* imperial violence in multiple peripheries into a world system under English domination with distinctively genocidal features 5) imperial violence and genocide facilitated English colonial-capitalist interests, serving as vehicles of the primitive accumulation by which the territorial domain subordinated to capital accumulation in the English metropolis could be expanded, and capitalist relations thus reproduced.

Moreover, the historical examples of the Spanish and English empires suggest a concrete model of the stages these imperial social configurations went through in colonial encounters with indigenous communities on the path to concerted genocidal violence 1) *encounter* and *imposition*: upon encountering native social configurations colonists attempted in different ways to impose their own social configurations and interests 2) *resistance*: local populations resisted attempts at colonial imposition 3) *crisis*: as a consequence of resistance, the viability of colonial social formations was threatened 4) *otherization -- construction of bifurcated group identities*: crisis created by resistance prompted colonists to construct new ideological discourses by which to render such crises explicable in the context of their own interests – invariably these discourses involved new "included" (colonial), and less- or sub-human "excluded" (native) identities 5) *genocide*: this construction of bifurcated group identities precipitated and legitimized intensified strategies of genocidal violence to impose colonial social formations by eliminating "excluded" natives as a viable group identity capable of resistance. The question, then, is whether this model of imperial violence and genocide provides some insight into the new imperialism?

About a century after the height of the British empire, the contemporary age of capitalism is characterized by the ownership of most of the world's productive resources (about 80 per cent) by corporations registered in the North, that is, the US, Japan, the UK, Western Europe etc. Thus, the means of production on a world scale are controlled by a minority of Northern capitalist agents, systematically marginalizing and dispossessing labour across multiple Southern peripheries, arising out of a long historical process of primitive accumulation itself premised on massive military violence, now geopolitically suspended in a system of sovereign states regulated by a transnational institutional regime. It is against this backdrop that the "new" imperial hubris should be addressed, not as a sudden novel departure from the United States' entirely non-imperialist record as some canonical IR theories tend to ahistorically suggest, but rather as a *regressive intensification* of the postwar imperial expansion of Northern, predominantly Anglo-American, capital. This *regressive intensification* of postwar imperial expansion is explicable precisely as a strategic response to unprecedented crises in the world system thus established, crises that threaten its very economic and geopolitical viability in the near future. The new imperial hubris, I would suggest, is grounded in a series of global systemic crises afflicting the core underpinning of the US-dominated capitalist order.

Neither realists nor liberals are able to fully grasp the implications of these crises as they concern the empirical realities of the contemporary world system, for they relate fundamentally to humankind's relationship to nature in the world system – the relations of production by which natural resources are exploited and converted into energy for consumption primarily by the Northern metropolis – which are mediated by the internationalization of capitalist property relations secured through a violence in turn suspended in the national-transnational regulatory framework constituted of the sovereign states system and the global governance institutions. These fundamental social relations are obscured by orthodox IR's theoretical categories.

Social power is an organic constitution grounded in an exploitative relationship with nature by which energy is extracted from natural resources, transformed into a commodity (through production) and eventually consumed. Energy is thus the very condition of production. The given social property relations of a society provide an analytical window into the social form that this process of extraction, transformation and consumption of energy adopts through labour. The primary forms of energy on which the productive relations of the contemporary capitalist world system are conditional, are non-renewable hydrocarbon resources, in the form of oil, gas and coal – predominantly oil. The re-invigoration of imperial occupation is a strategy of response to multiple escalating crises that strike at the heart of the US-dominated world system and its social relations. The most significant of these for our purposes is, indeed, the question of energy.

Since the late 1990s, US government and intelligence agencies have signalled growing alarm at what they believe to be an inevitable energy crisis. Several reports commissioned by Vice President Dick Cheney in 2000 and 2001 before 9/11, as well as documents from Cheney's Energy Task Force, reveal that US officials increasingly feared the imminence in the early 21st century of the peak of world oil production, a pivotal event that would herald the inexorable and irreversible decline of world oil production in ensuing years. Iraq was pinpointed as a particularly difficult problem due to its demonstrated unwillingness to sell its oil to the US on US terms. [Edward L Morse et al (2001); Matthew Simmons (2005); Robert L Hirsch (2005)] Despite the 1991 Gulf War and UN sanctions regime which devastated Iraq without removing its then erstwhile dictator Saddam Hussein, after 2000 Iraq not only proved its ability to disrupt favourable oil prices by entering and removing its oil from the market at will, it had also signed oil contracts with America's geopolitical rivals, Russia, China, and

Europe, and had switched to the Euro – all the while showing no sign of capitulation to US demands or requirements. [William Clark (2005)] In the context of the US perception of an unstoppable global energy calamity beginning early in the new century, increasingly corroborated by independent oil industry experts, geologists and other analysts [Campbell and Laherrere (1995); Richard Heinberg (2003); Colin Campbell (2004); Kenneth Deffeyes (2005)] the elevation of Middle East energy reserves in their entirety – with focus on obvious candidates for regional geopolitical instability (namely Iraq and Iran, with eyes also on Saudi Arabia) -- to an urgent question of immediate national security becomes explicable.

For such a global energy crisis would threaten the absolute basis of US imperial power in the international system, by undermining the social relations of an oil-dependent world capitalist system. While Russia, China, Europe and indeed other powers patently cannot come near challenging American power from a purely military perspective (the central preoccupation of realist analyses of war and power in the international system), given that the central determinant of social power in the international system is not military power per se, but ultimately control of the energy that enables the very production and reproduction of social life (including of course military power), the looming energy crisis heralded a potential decline in American power which rivals could indeed take advantage of. [US Army -- Eileen Westervelt and Donald Fournier (2005)]

The crisis thus shifted the focus of geopolitical competition in the international system on the world's remaining energy reserves in the Middle East, as well as in Central Asia, Northwest Africa, South Asia and Latin America, as well as on key potential transhipment routes for the transport of energy to the US, Russia, China and Europe. In the post-9/11 period, the US has, indeed, sought not merely to establish occupying forces in diverse strategic regions by which energy reserves can be physically controlled, but also to dominate all possible transhipment routes in order to prevent its major rivals from challenging its energy hegemony. Russia and China have in response accelerated efforts to outmanoeuvre the US, by attempting to force US troops out of key Central Asian republics and secure control over critical pipeline routes and regional energy reserves – particularly in relation to Iran. [Michael T Klare (2002, 2005); Stephen Blank (2006, 2007)]

But the energy crisis accompanies several other global systemic crises, of which Western government agencies have long been aware. Leading US financial analysts

for the last several years have warned of growing instabilities in both the American economy, and the world economy as a whole. An overarching theme of these warnings has been the recognition that the Washington Consensus is responsible for accelerating the probability of increasingly dangerous financial crises, and that international financial institutions lack mechanisms to prevent or even resolve these very crises. [Kern Alexander et al (2005); David Martin (2005); Stephen Roach (2006); Garry Schinasi (2006)] Agencies have also warned of impending crises in food security and ecological integrity in the 21st century. Both, of course, are indelibly linked to the question of energy – for neither large-scale corporate food production nor ecological balance can be sustained if hydrocarbon energies continue to be exploited at current rates in the context of a crisis in world energy production. On their own terms, however, independent and government experts have acknowledged the problems posed by US dominated global agribusiness, which has already exhausted most of the earth's fertile land; exacerbated by growing pressures of resource scarcity and climate change that threaten to undermine agricultural production. [UN; FAO; Richard Heinberg (2006)] Finally, the Pentagon has already elevated climate change – which UN scientists now warn has likely already passed a tipping point resulting in irreversible disasters that could unpredictably disrupt societies and economies around the world – to a question of national security. [Peter Schwartz and Doug Randall (2003)]

These are not, therefore, accidental small-scale crises; on the contrary, each is potentially fatal for the continuing functioning of the contemporary capitalist world system, and together the potential consequences of their cumulative impact could well be immeasurable [Heinberg (2006)] Moreover, they spring directly from the social relations of the global imperial system -- its overdependence on petroleum, mediated through capitalist property relations, as a source of energy to enable production. In other words, the conceptual core of all these crises is no less than a crisis in global capital's concurrent relations of production.

Using my model of imperial genocide, I suggest that the imperial trajectory of the "War on Terror" is explicable as a strategic response to these crises. These crises spring forth not purely from the resistance of peripheries, but further from the inability of the prevailing geopolitical configuration of the capitalist world system to sustain itself on its own terms. The scale of these crises is potentially so huge that they threaten the viability of the entire world system over the coming decades. It is in

this context that Western governments and social institutions through the "War on Terror" have constructed on a global scale bifurcated civilizational group identities in which an "excluded" uncivilized "Other" is problematized as a sub-human aggressor labelled as the fundamental cause of Western insecurities. [Chris Hedges (2003); Seiduddin Adem (2003); Christina Archetti (2005); Robert L Ivie (2005); M Shahid Alam (2006) Francois Debrix (2007)]

It is no accident that this tendency toward the construction of an "excluded" uncivilized "Other" focuses overwhelmingly on the problematization of Islam both inside and outside the West. Within the US, Britain and Western Europe – and indeed even in Russia and China – Islam and Muslims are increasingly constructed and re-presented as a dangerous fifth column inclined to a terrorism that aims to destroy civilization. Outside the West, this problematization is paralleled in the US military's systematic engagements in predominantly Muslim theatres of war – both overt and covert – in Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Somalia, Algeria, to name a few. In all these cases, the problematization of these regions as dangerous failed zones harbouring potential Islamist terrorists planning to inflict apocalyptic forms of mass destruction on Western civilization correlates invariably with their strategic location vis-à-vis contested energy reserves in the Middle East, Central Asia and Northwest Africa. It is thus clear that the massive military violence that has been inflicted on the predominantly Muslim civilian populations of these regions is only possible by their having been "Islamophobically" constructed as less civilized, potentially dangerous, and whose lives are therefore of less value compared to those of Western citizens – a conclusion of particular salience in relation to Iraq, where approximately 3 million people have died since the 1991 Gulf War, as a consequence of both Western interventions and Saddam's intransigence. [Diana Ralph (2005) Tatah Mentan (2007)]

The form of this strategic response then, in terms of a reversion to direct methods of military control and occupation, is due ultimately to the failure of the traditional geopolitical vehicles of imperial domination represented by the establishment of formally sovereign client states policed by transnational institutions. The latter geopolitical extra-economic pillars of the capitalist world system have not only failed to forestall the multiple global systemic crises discussed here, but have themselves been complicit in their escalation by being integral to the very functioning of the system from which these crises are erupting. Thus, the Anglo-American reversion to increasingly territorialized modes of imperial control, the intensified proliferation of

military bases, the propensity for permanent military occupation, the insistence on long-term nation-building, the drive to extend unilateral domination of international institutions, are alternative strategies adopted as new extra-economic vehicles of a revamped primitive accumulation by which an increasingly strained US-centred global capitalist regime is attempting to reproduce if not reconstitute itself anew. Of course, these are not entirely new methods, drawing liberally if erratically on both traditional postwar methods of imperial power projection to install friendly client regimes, as well as familiar British methods of direct occupation; however, they are novel in the sense that they are an attempt at applying a corrective in the context of failures of prevalent regimes and institutions, whose multilateralism is now considered excessive in the face of the scale of projected crises; and they are also novel in the comprehensive way that they are being applied in a single, systematic programme of war that is beyond geographical borders and temporal limits.

This does leave us, of course, with the question of genocide. While the disparate but obviously interconnected episodes of Anglo-American imperial violence in predominantly Muslim peripheries may well be theorized as a single continuum of imperial violence, whether they amount to a continuum of genocide is a deeper matter which we cannot give sufficient attention to here. It is a question for which there is no easy answer. Anglo-American officials are indeed not merely targeting multiple groups across predominantly Muslim peripheries, they are targeting a single religious group spread across different national borders. Given the increasing propensity toward media and government problematization of Islam and Muslims as a potential fifth column [Saied R Ameli et al (2007)], it is difficult to deny that this is a result of a process of group-dehumanization rooted in a deeper politico-ideological process responding to global systemic crises that threaten to unravel imperial social relations rooted in domination of predominantly Muslim peripheries. [Richard Koenigsburg (1986)] Whether or not we choose to recognize genocidal features in these processes, the overwhelming danger is that present conditions in the international system combined with the West's (but mostly Anglo-American) ideological response, if left unchecked may well mean worse to come.