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Chapter 1

Framework of Analysis

Over the last few years it has come to be apparent to many of the more astute observers of contemporary international affairs that the most important line of division within the world order at the beginning of the twenty-first century is that which, broadly speaking, pitches the interests of the 'richer' countries against those of the 'poorer' countries. Indeed, there are those who would say that this has long been the case and that for the best part of the last half-century it was only the Cold War between the capitalist and communist countries which obscured this reality. The potentially enormous destructiveness of the Cold War conflict for all of humanity certainly meant that it overlaid even the many real dramas of the international politics of development during these years. The Cold War can of course be said to have fed off 'rich-poor' tensions in many parts of the world, but it is obvious that its core dynamic was something different. Nevertheless, it is now the case that, apart from a small number of outposts still mired in anachronistic disputes, the Cold War has passed into the history of the twentieth century. Since then the 'clash of civilizations' between the Christian and Muslim worlds has been widely touted as its natural successor as the key division in contemporary international politics, a claim to which the awful events of 11 September 2001 gave immediate and dramatic support. Yet it was not long before deeper reflection upon the provenance and significance of the terrorist attacks upon the United States (US) – above all, the realization that in several countries shock and outrage were accompanied by a widespread sense, almost of satisfaction, that the US had at last experienced something of the human horror that has become commonplace in many, less fortunate societies – brought to light the suggestion that underpinning September 11 was in fact this other, even more fundamental, divide: namely, that between the 'richer' and the 'poorer' parts of the world (again, as very broadly understood). This was seen as having the effect of exacerbating Christian-Muslim conflicts in much the same way as it had previously inflamed capitalist-communist tensions during the Cold War. It was commonly asserted, moreover, that *all* countries were now wrapped up together more closely than ever before within something called 'globalization', a phenomenon which, it should be said, many have found easier to applaud or condemn than analyse and understand. In short, it has not

been difficult of late to find commentators who assert that the continuing question of relations between 'richer' and 'poorer' countries is *the* issue, above all others, which goes to the heart of contemporary international politics.

As suggested, this is in many ways an old and familiar fissure within the history of modern international politics. After all, it manifestly ran through every facet of the politics of colonialism; it fuelled much of the resentment which underpinned movements of decolonization; it underpinned the seminal Asian–African conference held in Bandung in Indonesia in 1955 from which grew the Non-Aligned Movement; and it gave rise generally to what has come in the era of independent statehood for most former colonies to be thought of as the development issue in international politics. Even more dramatically, it drove forward in the 1970s a powerful protest movement, led by many disaffected ex-colonial states, calling for the enactment of a so-called 'New International Economic Order' (NIEO) designed to bring about fairer economic relations between the countries of the world. This demand was first voiced in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1974 and was subsequently prosecuted within a series of major international gatherings, most notably the Conference on International Economic Cooperation, which took place intermittently in Paris between 1975 and 1977, and the fourth UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which was held in Nairobi in 1976. For a period during these years the NIEO campaign occupied the centre of the stage in international politics. It acquired salience from, and of course itself contributed to, the general mood of uncertainty pervading the international political economy in the mid-1970s, and there is no doubt that it briefly commanded the attention of the richest and most powerful states in the world. However, in the final analysis the NIEO demand failed to shift the inherited hierarchies of the world order and the summit of selected heads of state held in Cancún in Mexico in 1981 explicitly to discuss international development could not even agree upon a final communiqué and can be said to mark the end of this particular phase of history. For quite a substantial period thereafter such questions were marginalized politically and attracted relatively little attention in most analyses of international affairs.

Needless to say, the core moral issues that have always lain at the root of 'rich–poor' tensions in international politics – matters such as poverty, inequality and injustice – did not disappear so easily. Indeed, as already argued, they have come back into focus much more starkly since the ending of the Cold War and the occurrence of events such as September 11. It can now again be said that, since at least the mid-1990s, there exists a range of arenas in contemporary international politics within which

conflicts between 'richer' and 'poorer' countries are being pursued. The agenda is spread across several issues, including most prominently perhaps aid, debt, tax, trade and a number of environmental matters. These various points of pressure have yet to cohere into a collective demand for fundamental change in the world order along the lines of the old NIEO campaign and it is quite possible, indeed likely, that they will not. Yet they all derive from the same core dynamic and form part of the same big picture, and it is vital that they are not overlooked or treated as special and separate situations just because they reside in different institutional parts of the international system. In this book we have set ourselves the task of describing and analysing these various manifestations of the international politics that still divides 'richer' countries from 'poorer' countries. Above all, we seek to make sense of them as a whole, as aspects of a single theme, and to discern what sort of a portrait of international politics we can paint by so doing. We are only too aware that the range of both countries and issues which need to be covered is enormous and hope that all that can reasonably be expected by the reader is an initial remapping of this terrain. We also have no doubt that the map which will eventually emerge will be full of complexity and will be unlikely to sustain any simple notion of a single 'rich-poor' divide. It is important to stress that we deploy this notion cautiously and sensitively and have deliberately placed inverted commas around the two ostensibly defining terms in order to highlight the imprecision of these categories. We do not presume for a moment that such a sharp dichotomy can be said to exist in the real world. The language is designed simply to open up the problem that we want to address in this book.

Where, then, to begin? The initial problem that we face in embarking upon a study of the contemporary international politics of development is that we need to reassess the terms of the academic debate. This is necessary, even though many of the main features of this politics have *apparently* come to be well understood. Much of Asia, it has frequently been said, was developing, but has lately been hit by 'crisis'. Latin America has experienced a 'lost decade' of development. Africa has been 'marginalized'. The Middle East remains in 'turmoil'. Russia and Eastern Europe have been living through the travails of 'transition'. By contrast, the 'West' has continued to grow in wealth and has pushed even further ahead of other parts of the world. The terms used in the discussion may well be somewhat loose, but the overarching contours of the map nevertheless purport to be clear. All of this, moreover, is generally understood to have been taking place in the context of 'globalization'. In fact, everything is, unsurprisingly, rather murkier than these various clichés suggest. First, the debate about globalization, with which much of this is necessarily linked, is itself a vibrant one, with different schools

of thought emerging and different phases in the process being detected even amongst those who believe in the significance of the concept – and there are still many who do not. Second, although it is the case that the many contributors to this debate do have views about the impact of globalization on the pattern of stratification of countries in the world, this part of their analysis – which is of the greatest interest here given the focus of this book – has not generally been probed as fully as it might and accordingly the literature on the development dimension of globalization is disappointingly sparse. Third, such discussion as there has been on the international politics of ‘who wins’ and ‘who loses’ from globalization has tended to be conducted in a vocabulary that originated in an earlier era and may be thought to be inappropriate, or at least not precisely designed, to comprehend the contemporary world order. As Bahgat Korany (1994: 7) noted several years ago, ‘boundaries are not only territorial; they are also mental and conceptual ... Our global “conceptual geography” now needs reordering. Are basic categories such as the Third World or Nonalignment still relevant in the new global equation?’

This opening chapter seeks to initiate a response to that question and proceeds to explore ways of discussing the international politics of development in the context of Korany’s new global equation. The first section briefly reconsiders the dominant conceptual frameworks deployed in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s and finds them wanting as tools of analysis for the present era. The second section identifies two current and prominent paradigms in the field of political economy – liberal and sociological political economy respectively – and sets out the diverging interpretations of international development issues derived from them. As Jean-Philippe Thérien (1999: 723) has noted, these ‘two tales of world poverty’ were widely advanced in the real world of politics during the 1990s. Again, however, it is argued that these approaches are not adequate to the task at hand. Accordingly, the third section sets out a preferred method of analysis, grounded in what is known as critical political economy, which permits us to get to grips with the politics and the international relations of development in a more meaningful way than other available approaches.

The dominant concepts of the past

What is immediately striking in looking back at old ways of framing the international politics of development is the extent to which all approaches were grounded upon a very basic and rather crude categorization of the countries involved: if not a simple bifurcation, then generally not anything

much more sophisticated. Several such formulations of this type can be easily identified in the compendious literature of four decades of analysis.

Central was, of course, the notion of the 'Third World'. Ironically, this was not itself, in origin, an indigenous 'Third World' conceptualization, but a European concept first deployed in 1952 by a French demographer, Alfred Sauvy, to refer to the 'third estate', the common people, before the French Revolution (Lewellen 1995). Because this usage implied poverty, powerlessness and marginalization, it was picked up by a number of scholars in the 1960s to refer to that whole category of emerging ex-colonial countries whose economic, social and political conditions, relatively speaking, replicated those of the French 'third estate' in pre-revolutionary times (Wolf-Phillips 1987). In other words, as Shu-Yin Ma (1998: 344) has observed, the original notion of the 'Third World' was 'not based upon the prior existence of the First and Second World'. However, given the numerical connotation of the term, it was hardly surprising that two other worlds were swiftly discerned: the 'First World' of the capitalist 'West' and the 'Second World' of the communist 'East', thereby implanting Cold War considerations at the very centre of the international development debate and keeping them there for the best part of three decades. In such an antagonistic geopolitical context the concept of the 'Third World' inevitably became political, expressing the attractions of keeping a neutral position, or finding a third way, between the capitalist and communist camps and, in so doing, adding the notion of non-alignment to the definition of 'Third World' (Willetts 1978).

As indicated, this whole literature could not but put politics in the foreground. The alternative starting-point was economics, which also again led in virtually all formulations, whether from the right or the left, to extraordinarily simple dichotomies. From a modernization perspective, the world was divided between 'developing countries' (viewed optimistically) or 'less developed countries' (viewed only a little less optimistically), on the one hand, and 'developed' countries, on the other. The latter were deemed to have offered a model of development to the former: all that the rest had to do within the modernization mind-set was follow in their path as closely and as quickly as possible (Hoselitz *et al.* 1960; Rostow 1960). From a dependency perspective, although the causal thrust of the argument as a whole was sharply divergent, the difference of categorization was only slight: it was 'underdeveloped' countries that were the antithesis of 'developed countries'. They were underdeveloped in this view because historically others had developed at a prior stage, and had done so by exploiting their resources and rendering them dependent (Baran 1967; Frank 1967). The world-systems approach used a different vocabulary – that of the 'core' and the 'periphery' – and sought to moderate the starkness of the bifurcation by introducing,

albeit somewhat uneasily, the category of 'semi-periphery' to catch the possibility of countries playing an intermediate role in the system and even moving over time between 'core' and 'periphery' (Wallerstein 1974). Nevertheless, the fundamental thinking here was part and parcel of the dependency debate and the overall approach was still based on a bipolar analysis organized around the presumed existence of something that could be called a 'core' and something that equally could be called a 'periphery'.

A final, very popular way of setting out the issues characteristic of this period was the notion of a 'North-South' divide. This conceptualization drew a wavy line across the world broadly between the Northern and Southern hemispheres, thus separating North from South America, Europe from Africa, North Asia from South Asia and so on, deviating only to draw Australia and New Zealand into the economic and political 'North'. As classically formulated by the first report of the Brandt Commission (1980), which brought together in the late 1970s a group of eminent social democratic politicians to examine international development priorities, the idea expressed both the conflict which obviously was deemed to lie at the root of 'North-South' relations, but at the same time, and perhaps even more importantly, the essential linkage which bound the fates of 'North' and 'South' together in a world economy seen as increasingly interdependent in its functioning. Although this argument was fiercely criticized from a dependency position, which always saw 'North-South' conflict as fundamental rather than negotiable, this way of formulating the problem lent its name to the short-lived era of so-called 'North-South' dialogue (briefly mentioned earlier), during which governments from the two sides of the divide met in various conferences ostensibly to discuss ways of creating a 'new (and more equal) international economic order' (Jones 1983). However, as we noted, these political opportunities came to an end in the early 1980s, which meant that over the course of the next 10–15 years a 'North-South' dialogue was marked more by its absence than its vitality.

The point is that all of these various terms *remain* in widespread use within contemporary social science analyses of these issues. Some writers continue to make a positive case for particular formulations; others somewhat lazily inherit and do not question traditional ways of posing these problems. Only relatively rarely are the concepts still debated in an intensive and meaningful way (Berger 2004). The position taken up here, however, is that all of these conceptualizations are at best dated and at worst flawed, at least in part. As a consequence they should be largely abandoned. Take, first, the notion of the 'Third World'. At the beginning of the 1990s Hans-Henrik Holm (1990) was still prepared to suggest that the 'Third World' continued to be a powerful international

actor in a number of arenas, whilst Marc Williams (1993) specifically identified the emerging global environmental agenda as something that could re-articulate the 'Third World' coalition. Others have argued that 'Third World' countries continue to constitute a distinct group identifiable by their 'tenuous, impermanent, fragmented' political culture (Kamrava 1995: 700). Against these points, it can be countered that the relevance of the 'Third World' as a collective actor needs to be demonstrated by reference to specific states and specific issues, and that the possession of an impermanent culture is not the firmest base on which to build a category of analysis. Indeed, as long ago as 1992 in reviewing two books, both of which claimed to be 'rethinking' aspects of the 'Third World', Vicky Randall (1992: 727, 730) noted somewhat sceptically that each held back from 'any explicit or sustained questioning of the validity of talking about a "Third World" as such'. She ended by asking directly: 'can we justify still holding on to the term?' As suggested earlier, a lack of clarity has always attached to the term. Given the manifest disappearance of a 'Second World' following the ending of the Cold War and the dramatic variations of development trajectory which different key parts of the 'Third World' experienced during the 1980s and 1990s, the answer to Randall's question offered by this book is firmly in the negative (see also Berger 1994 and several of the contributions to Berger 2004).

Turning to the various formulations deployed in the modernization and dependency discourses, the problem is not so much the concept of development itself (of which more in the next chapter), but the dichotomous way in which all countries have been assigned (usually) to one of only two groups. There are also political subtexts from which it cannot but be helpful to escape. The category of 'developing countries' now embraces countries in respect of which it is no longer apparent that they are developing at all. Perhaps we ought at least to ask if some countries, for various reasons, cannot ever develop satisfactorily. Others (predominantly in Asia) which many thought were developing are perhaps no longer doing so or at least doing so as effectively. If so, what does this mean? Equally, the phrase 'underdeveloped countries', if used precisely, can, and always could, refer only to countries whose 'underdevelopment' is thought to have been predominantly caused by their exploitation by the 'developed countries', and this is a position now held only by a few dependency zealots. As for the 'developed countries' themselves, one has to ask if it makes sense, in the light of all the social and economic problems which continue to beset the parts of the world embraced by this term, to categorize them still by reference to an apparently completed (for that is what the word developed implies) process of development. For its part, the world-systems approach also has its difficulties, which

again have been well recognized over the years. Grugel and Hout have lately used the spectrum of 'core', 'semi-peripheral' and 'peripheral' countries in an ingenious way to probe the regionalist strategies now followed by many states, especially in the intermediate 'semi-peripheral' category. But even they rebel against the economic determinism for which all world-systems approaches have frequently and rightly been criticized and concede that they need to make these terms 'less theoretically rigid' (Grugel and Hout 1999: 8) to get analytical value out of them. Notions of 'core', 'semi-periphery' and 'periphery' still perhaps constitute useful metaphors to highlight the stratification at the heart of the global political economy, but they manifestly do not capture the full extent of the unevenness of the development actually experienced within the world. In other words, many of the categories of classification used in these various traditional literatures are surely too deeply loaded or too crude, or both, to be carried forward into continued unthinking usage.

The same can unfortunately be said for the terminology of 'North-South'. It is unfortunate because a commitment to recognition of a 'North-South' dimension to international affairs has generally been taken to indicate a genuine concern about unequal levels of development in the world. Nevertheless, for all the term's merit as a symbol of faith, it does not travel well into the post-Cold War, globalizing world. In the first place, there is more than one 'North'. It is too glib just to locate Japan automatically in the same camp as the US and the leading countries of Western Europe. Japan may have been trained to become a part of the 'West' in the Cold-War sense of that term; but it represents a different view of development and therefore stands for a different 'North' from that of the US. Given, too, the differences that are widely said to exist between Anglo-American and continental European forms of capitalism, with the former generally seen as a purer, free-market system and the latter as more trust-based and welfare-oriented, that fissure within the 'North' also differentiates the political economies of the two sides of the Atlantic alliance. In the second place, for reasons already noted, there are now many different 'Souths', whereas one of the principles which underpinned traditional 'North-South' politics was that the 'South' did constitute a relatively well identified and homogeneous group of countries (Ravenhill 1990). If there are several 'Norths' and multiple 'Souths', the case for working with a fundamentalist 'North-South' view of the world is much weakened. No purpose is served by aggregating too aggressively if one has instantly to disaggregate.

So where does that leave us? As we have said, the most fundamental questions raised by these debates have not gone away. Everyone knows that intuitively and the reality can be easily demonstrated by reference to a whole range of statistical material about different standards of living

in different parts of the world. To put it at its simplest, there remain huge and unacceptable gaps in welfare between the ‘richer’ and the ‘poorer’ countries of the world. The task being embarked upon here is to make analytical sense of these gaps and, above all, the politics that is generated by them. The argument therefore moves on to consider the two accounts, or interpretations, of this divide most commonly advanced within official development circles over the last few years. As will be seen, they draw eclectically, and not always consistently, on the terminology discussed above, but nevertheless constitute new and important readings of the situation, not least because of the institutional locations from which they have originated.

Conventional contemporary interpretations and their problems

In a useful article published at the end of the 1990s Thérien pointed to the emergence during that decade of two competing official interpretations of international poverty which he dubbed the ‘Bretton Woods paradigm’ and the ‘United Nations paradigm’. The former was associated with the discourse and practices of the international organizations initially conceived at Bretton Woods in 1944 – the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank – and those subsequently established to work alongside them, namely, the secretariat of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its successor, the World Trade Organization (WTO). The latter corresponded to the discourse and practices of the United Nations and, in particular, those of its specialized agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Economic and Social Council and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), whose mandates have always been related to economic and social issues. Thérien noted that both paradigms explicitly sought to incorporate globalization into their thinking, thereby offering the prospect of greater contemporary resonance, although, as he also pointed out, they differed significantly in their analysis of the impact that it has had upon international inequality and development.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given their function as the main international agencies of liberal capitalism, the Bretton Woods institutions have tended to take a broadly optimistic view of the historical achievements of post-1945 development. In a statement published in the middle of the 1990s the World Bank (1995b: 10) observed that:

Over the last five decades, average per capita incomes in developing countries have more than doubled. The GDPs [Gross Domestic

Products] of some economies have more than quintupled ... There has been a 'green revolution' in South Asia, an 'economic miracle' in East Asia, Latin America has largely overcome its debt crisis, and substantial gains in health and literacy have taken place in Africa.

Prospects were also deemed to be good, provided that the countries either adopted or maintained the 'market-friendly' package of policies recommended by the institutions since the beginning of the 1980s. As is well known, these constitute principally the pursuit of 'sound' macroeconomic conditions, openness to world trade, the development of private enterprise and the attraction of foreign capital inflows. In effect, 'structural adjustment', initially presented as a drastic reorientation required to rebalance struggling 'Third World' economies, has come to be seen, and presented, as a necessary, permanent discipline.

Yet, as Thérien and indeed others have observed, the institutions did also concede in the 1990s that 'zones of extreme poverty' still existed in the world economy and they moved accordingly to make 'poverty alleviation' one of their new watchwords. Much of the World Bank's investment lending and the majority of its latest adjustment programmes were given an explicit poverty focus. In similar vein, the IMF made the financing of social safety nets a standard part of its macroeconomic programmes. However, it is important to stress that the attention paid to such matters by the Bretton Woods institutions during the 1990s emanated from a distinctively different worldview from that which drove the development debate and the 'North-South' dialogue in the 1970s and 1980s. For these institutions poverty did not derive from asymmetrical inequalities in the structure of the global political economy, but was 'more the result of a temporary misadaptation of markets' (Thérien 1999: 732). The causation was perceived to be domestic, not external. Thus poverty came to be treated by the Bank as a consequence of 'country-specific imbalances, policy errors, or political difficulties' (World Bank 1995a: 5). It had therefore to be countered with selective measures addressed to particular states and situations, not with global reforms that might challenge the core principles of a liberal international economic order. In sum, the vision, although superficially progressive, has also been deliberately restrictive and clearly political in its attempt to limit the range of possible, acceptable actions.

By comparison, the UN paradigm remained closer in spirit to the radicalism that drove much old thinking on international development questions, although it too moved on during the 1990s from the framework of these discourses to embrace and promote as its central idea the notion of 'global poverty'. While recognizing the extent of the social and economic progress generated by post-1945 development policies, the

UN position emphasized the unequal distribution of the fruits of development. As stated in the declaration adopted by the UN Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, 'we are witnessing in countries throughout the world the expansion of prosperity for some, unfortunately accompanied by an expansion of unspeakable poverty for others' (United Nations 1995: 6). In other words, globalization was openly recognized to be generating losers as well as winners. The extended liberalization of trade and finance was understood to have reduced the capacities of national governments to shape the social order within the countries over which they presided, producing 'states of disarray', the telling phrase by which the UN Research Institute for Social Development (1995) described the social effects of globalization.

As Thérien once again pointed out, this analysis had elements of both continuity and change in relation to the conventional 'North-South' approach. The UN paradigm still suggested that Asian, Latin American and African countries faced particular difficulties reacting to globalization because their economies tended to be more vulnerable to shocks emanating from global commodity and financial markets. For all that, it was the case that UN agencies no longer routinely treated these countries as a homogeneous group, instead fully acknowledging the differentiation that had taken place amongst them over the past 20 or more years. More importantly, however, the UN view also asserted that the broadening of the gap between 'rich' and 'poor' was genuinely global in impact and that poverty, although more severe in the 'South', also plagued the 'North'. The UNDP (1997: 3) thus reported in 1997 that there were 100 million people living below the poverty line in the countries that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Indeed, from this conceptual perspective, poverty was more appropriately seen as a problem that affected individual human beings, rather than national states and societies. This was a shift of thinking of significance because it established a parallel between the poor of Asia or Africa, on the one hand, and the poor of North America or Western Europe, on the other. The lines of causation might be differently drawn between the two types of case and possible remedies might also diverge, but from the humanist position broadly adopted within the UN there was no intrinsic distinction to be made between the similar fate of a human being in one geographic location and that of another in a different location.

As can be seen, then, both the so-called Bretton Woods and UN paradigms offered strong, divergent accounts of the problem of international poverty and development. They emerged from different institutional complexes and have been sustained by different power blocs of markedly uneven weight within the current world order. The former remains very

much the orthodoxy of our time; the latter still constitutes something of the critical opposition. As interpretations of events they are undoubtedly of great interest, but in the final analysis largely because of who it was that first articulated them. From our perspective the problem is that they do not lead us forward theoretically. It is not that they are *not* grounded theoretically, because they do connect to intellectual positions within the field of political economy that purport to be able to offer the very approach to the researching of the question of the international politics of development which this chapter explicitly seeks to elucidate. The difficulty is that the positions opened up, although very much focused upon the new global equation at the turn of the century and therefore not outdated, do not adequately serve our specific needs in this book.

Why is that so? The Bretton Woods paradigm can be quickly and easily dealt with in this respect. It is based directly upon the classic economic liberal position within political economy, the origins of which, as is well known, go back to the writings of John Locke, Adam Smith, David Ricardo and John Stuart Mill. This position derives from the founding premise that free individuals are best equipped to make social choices, and builds from this basic assumption a worldview which favours market solutions to development needs, tempered only by the establishment of a minimal state to secure the operation of the market. From the beginning of the 1980s onwards these classic ideas underpinned what John Toye (1987) described as a 'counter-revolution' (at least as seen from a broadly dependency perspective) in thinking about international development matters. This not only swept through the Bretton Woods institutions, as we have seen, but also had a forceful impact upon the academy, especially amongst economists. Although it could be said that these new neoliberal thinkers did not have much more to offer than a revitalization of some elements of modernization theory, they did seek to bury the notion of the situational peculiarity of the 'Third World' within a universalist liberal discourse which asserted that development was a process attainable all over the world, provided that the market was allowed to assert itself over the state. As such, they not only place at the centre of their analysis, but also welcome largely unreservedly, the increased liberalization of trade and financial flows that has been one of the key features of the reshaping of the world economy over the last 30 years.

The UN paradigm also has its associated political economy in a less prominent but still distinctive sociological strand within that field well represented by the recent work of such writers as Ankie Hoogvelt and William I. Robinson. Hoogvelt (1997: xii), for example, has argued that the fact that the new political economy was 'global from the very beginning' has had 'consequences for our understanding of the locational

distribution of wealth and poverty, of development and underdevelopment'. Specifically, for her 'the familiar pyramid of the core-periphery hierarchy is no longer a geographic but a social division of the world economy'. In similar fashion, Robinson (1998, 2004) has called for a break with all analyses that put nation-states at their centre, a consequent reconsideration of the relationship between space and development and a rebuilding based not on the study of territory but of social groups, particularly classes. To use old concepts, in this vision the 'Third World' has come home to the 'First World', while the 'South' has got inside the 'North'. All nestle together, for sure, inside the world's major cities. The exemplar here is Los Angeles where, as Mike Davis (1990) vividly demonstrated, life in urban southern California for many African-Americans and other more recent immigrants from Latin America has turned out to be little different from that experienced by, say, Mexicans living south of the Rio Grande in the 'Third World' proper. Viewed more broadly, the concept of a global social structure is the necessary point of departure for this perspective. It can either be envisaged, in Hoogvelt's preferred terms, as composed of essentially three concentric circles, representing respectively the elites, the contented and the marginalized, each cutting across *all* national boundaries, or represented alternatively in the more classical Marxist categories of analysis deployed by Robinson in his work. Either way, it is the sociological dimension of a newly transnationalized world which is given primary emphasis.

The basic problem with both of these political economies is that they underplay international politics, most of which still goes on in and between states, globalization notwithstanding. Each makes the mistake of assuming that somehow the global restructuring of the last decade or so has led to traditional interstate political conflicts about development being superseded. Liberal political economy has long been criticized for presuming that political differences can be managed away amidst the interdependence and mutual advantage generated by economic contact and concomitant growth; it certainly makes that mistake in its approach to the analysis of globalization and development. But radical sociological political economy also takes us too far and too fast towards global class analysis, given that states, and all the vested interests (not to mention popular loyalties) which they generate, have scarcely yet disappeared. Although transnational class interests and alliances may well have formed and be in the process of strengthening, they are still required to assert their political influence mainly via pressure upon state actors. The focus of the discussion in this book on international politics certainly does not allow us to be as dismissive of the analysis of state action as sociological political economy generally allows. In sum, then, although both the intellectual perspectives within which Thérien's Bretton Woods and

UN paradigms are grounded have genuinely served to widen the debate about international development and take it beyond some of the simplistic dichotomies of the modernization versus dependency era, it remains the case that neither can provide the necessary theoretical foundation for the study of the politics underlying relations between the 'richer' and the 'poorer' states of the world which is being sought here.

The politics of critical political economy

So how, then, do we set about analysing what we have called the new international politics of development? It may seem as if the thrust of the argument being presented here is that all approaches are flawed and unsatisfactory, yet that is not ultimately the conclusion that we want to draw. It is the case that mainstream liberal political economy dominates this field of study and that a powerful, radical critique of this way of seeing the world has lately been made by an emergent sociological political economy. But the fact is that these approaches do not exhaust the field. This is not the place to set out a comprehensive review of the academic discipline of political economy. Other studies over the years have done that very well (Staniland 1985; Gill and Law 1988; Frieden and Lake 1991; Caporaso and Levine 1992; Balaam and Veseth 1996). The point to highlight and build upon is that there has lately advanced to prominence within political economy much 'critical' (or new, or heterodox, or counter-hegemonic) thinking. Drawing inspiration in the broadest sense from the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and within the field of political economy from the founding work of Robert Cox, as set out initially in a remarkable and pioneering article in the journal *Millennium* in 1981, this approach self-consciously set out to be 'critical in the sense that it stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about' (Cox 1981: 129). In Cox's particular formulation, it was a theory of history concerned not just with the past but with a continuing process of change; it was directed to the social and political complex as a whole rather than to its separate parts; and it contained within its ambit the possibility of identifying the outlines of alternative distributions of power from those prevailing at any given time. In short, critical political economy was hitched from the outset to a different epistemology from most of the previously dominant frameworks of social science, both mainstream and radical. It favoured a reflectivist position that stressed the unavoidable relationship of subject and object in all forms of social analysis, rather than the conventional positivist insistence upon their separation.

On this basis Cox (1981: 137) proceeded to unfold his version of a critical theory appropriate to the study of the global political economy. He proposed a 'method of historical structures', with the latter conceived as configurations of forces (material capabilities, ideas and institutions) that do not determine actions but nevertheless create opportunities and impose constraints. Material capabilities were defined as natural resources transformed by technology and organization. Ideas were divided into two kinds: one connoted intersubjective meanings, or 'shared notions of the nature of social relations' (Cox 1981: 136), held broadly in common throughout a particular historical structure; the other consisted of contested ideologies about alternative social orders. Institutions reflected the particular amalgamations of ideas and material power in existence at the time of their formation, but nevertheless subsequently took on their own life. In an important ontological move, there is, for Cox (1981: 136) and those who think like him, presumed to be 'no one-way determinism' between these three forces. The question of which way the lines of influence run is always conceived as a research question likely to be answered in different ways in different historical circumstances. It is also important to stress that in this view of the world care is taken to make sure that structures are not reified: people are not just bearers of structures, they create them. For Coxian political economy, historical structures mean no more – *but no less* – than persistent social practices, made by collective human activity and transformed through collective human activity.

Within the global political economy, interaction between material capabilities, ideas and institutions was seen by Cox to take place across three interrelated levels: the social forces engendered by different and changing production processes; the varying forms of state derived from different state/society complexes, which, rather than states alone, were considered to be the basic entities of international politics; and types of world order. Again, the three levels were perceived to be interrelated, each bearing on the other, with the appropriate point of entry for analysts being a matter of preference *provided* that all levels are studied in connected fashion. That said, the last concept highlighted, that of world order, is an especially important feature of Cox's lexicon. He acknowledged the world-systems approach as a valuable radical alternative to conventional international relations theory, but argued that the notion of world order was preferable to that of world-systems because it indicated a structure which may only have a limited duration and which does not have the inevitable equilibrium connotation of system. The notion of order, Cox (1981: 152) suggested, should be 'used in the sense of the way things usually happen', not to imply 'orderliness' or lack of turbulence in international affairs.

What has been particularly appealing about Cox's formulation of a critical theory for political economy is the way he has consciously drawn upon the best insights of other preceding social science perspectives (see Cox 2002). For example, he argued in broadly conventional international politics terms that the varying forms of state which derive from different state/society complexes remained a crucial level of analysis, although it should quickly be added that the very fact that highly varied state/society complexes, rather than simple, self-interested states (as defined within so much conventional international relations theory), were seen as the actors in question makes his approach notably more subtle. In addition, however, he incorporated into his thinking the wide reach of world-systems theory, the traditional historical materialist concern with social forces and the particular Gramscian concern with ideas and ideologies as sources of power. This last aspect of the package, which was developed more fully by Cox in a later article which served to introduce Gramsci's ideas to the international studies community, was especially important because political economy has historically had a tendency to be preoccupied with materialist definitions of power. Yet, as Cox (1983: 168) himself put it, 'ideas and material conditions are always bound together, mutually influencing one another, and not reducible one to the other'. This insertion of an ideational dimension into the standard framework of analysis thus anticipated and took on board significant elements of the recent, fashionable application of social constructivism to issues of international politics (Wendt 1999).

Cox's work has been variously understood and received. In his assessment Sinclair (1996: 13) drew attention to an important difference of opinion. He noted that, for some, Cox offers no more than a 'watery Marxism', built upon concepts such as surplus, class forces and ideology which 'we have all seen before' (Adams 1989: 224). Yet others discern in Cox just the opposite: they criticize the absence of a notion of 'overall structure', lament the lack of genuinely 'determining' variables and end up condemning his approach as constituting an inadequate 'pluralist empiricism' (Burnham 1991: 78). We actually accept the validity of both charges, but are not in the least worried by their supposed force. In effect, we prefer our Marxism to be 'watery', rather than excessively dry; and we have no problem with 'pluralist empiricism'. Cox's wide-ranging and eclectic methods of analysis offer in our view a richness of resource unmatched by other perspectives in political economy. This is not to say that Cox's work is not without problems – as with all academic work it should be engaged, criticized and moved forward, not just admired – but it is to suggest that his innovativeness has been crucial in opening up the whole field of critical political economy. He has served to legitimize both a wider and a deeper range of thinking than was previously possible and,

in so doing, to inspire a loose college of scholars working with a diverse range of critical political economy approaches. In short, the essence of the appeal of Cox's work is its very breadth, for what he offers is not so much a body of driven theory but rather an overarching framework of analysis.

For these reasons we suggest that this framework provides the most appropriate *starting point* for the generation of the particular method of analysis required to deliver the ambitions of this book. But we stress that it offers only our point of entry. We put it this way because we recognize that great care must be taken with all conceptualizations of political economy to ensure that an explicitly agency-oriented body of theory is inserted into the overall framework and excessive determinism thereby avoided. The latter is the great danger of any mode of analysis which foregrounds structures and there have been those who have argued that some of Cox's own substantive, empirical work has fallen prey to exactly this deficiency (Laffey 1992). However, critical political economy can, and should, be deployed in a way which avoids the tendency to overdetermine outcomes. Specifically, it must carry through into practice its commitment to give due weight to both structure *and* agency in its explanations, rather than privileging one to the exclusion of the other. This is very important and has been openly recognized by Cox himself. In one of his reflections on the development of his own thinking he draws an explicit distinction between the methodology of political science (including by implication international relations) and economics, on the one hand, and political economy, on the other. The former, he suggests, are actor-oriented studies which take off from fixed assumptions about the parameters within which actions take place; the latter, as we have seen, concerns itself primarily with the very historical structures within which political and economic activity occurs. For him, and for us, the two methodologies must be held in balance: 'the structural approach is not so much an alternative to the actor-interactions approach as a logical priority to it' (Cox 1989: 38).

In other words, the key notion with which we should be working is what might best be called 'structural context'. This is emphatically not to be understood as a cage, as with, say, much structuralist thinking within the dependency or world-systems schools. It is properly conceived as the source of both opportunities *and* constraints, as being both enabling *and* binding, as permitting agency *within* bounds. In a nutshell, what we are stressing is that agency-oriented concepts (which in our case will primarily be political or international relations concepts) must of necessity be embedded within structural (or political economy) concepts. In another statement made several years ago, a group of us suggested that the defining features of a critical (or, as we preferred to call it, 'new') political

economy approach should be that it would reject 'the old dichotomy between agency and structure' and recognize the need to 'develop an integrated analysis, by combining parsimonious theories which analyse agency in terms of a conception of rationality with contextual theories which analyse structures institutionally and historically' (Gamble *et al.* 1996: 5–6). We stand by that prospectus and hope to live up to it in this study. Put directly and colloquially, therefore, what we seek to do is *the politics of critical political economy*, with the two methodologies wrapped up together, each mutually dependent on the other for their overall analytical purchase.

This chapter has thus worked its way towards an elaboration of the framework of analysis within which we propose to ground the ensuing elaboration of the new international politics of development at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. As will be seen shortly, the ensuing parts of the book are organized in a way that is designed to reflect this broad approach. Part II considers the 'structural context' within which this politics unfolds; Part III examines the activities of the various agents that then prosecute this politics in some of the major 'diplomatic arenas' within which development is presently pursued. However, there is one more stage in the argument that needs to be made before we can turn to the study proper. We need in a fuller way to orient the framework of analysis proposed here to the particular subject-matter of this book. This involves reviewing, and then taking up positions on, some of the most important debates about politics and international relations that have been generated within critical political economy over the past few years. In particular, we need to establish more precisely what we think about key concepts such as hegemony, globalization, states themselves and of course development. It is to this task that we turn in the next chapter.

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