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Accumulation under Post-Colonial Capitalism - I

An Overview

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Accumulation under Post-Colonial Capitalism – I

An Overview

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A Post-Colonial Critique of Capital Accumulation Today

Ranabir Samaddar *

“The conditions for the accumulation of capital are precisely those which rule its original production and reproduction in general: these conditions being that one part of the money buys labour and the other commodities (raw materials, machinery, etc.)... Accumulation of new capital can only proceed therefore under the same conditions under which already existing capital is reproduced” (italics by Marx, cited by Luxemburg 1915a [2014]).

“In fact, he (Marx) made the solution even more difficult by assuming the capitalist mode of production to prevail universally” (Luxemburg 1915a [2014]).

I seek to view here the debates and discussions on the question of accumulation from a post-colonial angle by which I mean the angle of a critical theory of post-colonial capitalism. I do not however directly comment on the historical debates on the question of accumulation, because much of this debate will today appear as primarily of scholarly interest unless we situate the question of accumulation against the perspective of imperialism, or what can be called its *other scene*, the post-colonial capitalist reality of today’s world. From this standpoint I attempt to elucidate its features because such an attempt will help us to develop new insights relating to the enigma of accumulation. Such attempt will also mean locating if you like an absolute other of capital functioning as a determinant of latter’s accumulation in today’s context. I have also another goal – more ambitious and thus my vacillation and possible ineffectiveness in articulating it. May be at the end of this paper we can ask: What are the philosophical implications of a post-colonial critique of the contemporary dynamics of accumulation, given the fact that such a critique can originate only from within – that is within the post-colonial regime of accumulation? If so, what are the inside and the outside of the dynamics of capitalist accumulation? How do we negotiate the perennial duality of the inside and outside? This question will impel us to recall the classic tradition of revolutionary dialectics, and that will be a fitting tribute to the legacy of Rosa Luxemburg.

Boundaries of Accumulation

The process of separation of labourers from the means of production so that they become free wage-labourers for the purposes of capitalist exploitation is not a natural development, but rather the result of violent confrontations. This process not only speaks of a past (the process of initial transition from the pre-capitalist to the capitalist mode of production), it continues to this day on a great scale in the post-colonial world. In developed capitalist countries as in the post-colonial capitalist countries

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the workers erect social and political barriers to the extension of the length of the working day, and therefore capital introduces machinery as a counter-element against the working class. Yet, while capital tries to reduce the number of workers, it also seeks to bring in new workers under its command as an exploitable human resource. The so-called human factor of production is thus always present, and capitalist accumulation must depend on the continuous separation of labourer from the means of production.

We can then say that primitive accumulation is the separation we have referred to whenever it occurs, and accumulation of capital proper includes besides this separation expansion through the mode of economy. This may be taken as a historical companion, symbolizing the separation happening continuously, of proper accumulation when the latter is the order of the capitalist economy. At yet another level we can say that accumulation is transition (transiting the borders of production and circulation), while primitive accumulation is the specific mark of this transition, reminding us that the transition from say feudalism to capitalism did not happen as a natural process. We cannot take transition for granted, merely because history happened that way. The 'extra-economic' factors are always present in the economic and only in this way an adequate understanding of capitalism becomes possible. It is not without reason that war has been always the occasion for discussion on accumulation. Think of the two wars and the colonial and neo-colonial wars continuing up to our time of neo-liberal restructuring of global economy. Massive post-colonial experiences only reinforce this point.

A post-colonial critique of the accumulation process is built on a fundamental understanding that capitalism demands that all geographical limits to capital accumulation have to be overcome though in different ways, which leads to the characteristic penchant for space. At the same time while production entails geographical concentration of money, means of production (thus proximity to means of production including natural resources), labour power, and consumer markets (all these for higher profits and lower costs), the circulation of capital requires circumventing various boundaries – of space, institutions, forms, financial regimes, labour processes, economic segments, etc., thus requiring the construction of different zones and corridors. Capital accumulation begins in this contradictory mode - whenever and wherever some money is deployed to make more money by exploiting wage labour – with the important proviso that this will require specific conditions to make money in this way and in a sustainable manner. This makes border perhaps the most important institution for capital to circumvent – national political borders, natural boundaries, borders of markets, boundaries of production sites and circulation, boundaries of cities, borders of norms and violence, and most importantly the border between necessary labour and surplus labour, and thus necessary work hours and surplus work hours. We can see how a post-colonial critique of the capitalist accumulation process requires treating border as method, because a border-centric study necessitates a dialectical handling of a situation.

Sometimes one can take this to an extreme extent (the danger of all logic) and say that that the idea of accumulation of capital is enough, there is no need for an adjective 'primitive', since capital has always included force and violence in achieving the aim of separation of labourers from their means of production, and that capital has always presupposed transition, and thus there is no need to invoke a "primitive" to acknowledge the reality of accumulation. This kind of logic is absurd because it is non-dialectical. It forgets the duality of the inside and the outside of a process.

Lenin always a practical revolutionary was cautious on this point. He said:

New and important in the highest degree is Marx's analysis of the accumulation of capital, i.e. the transformation of a part of surplus value into capital, and its use, not for satisfying

the personal needs or whims of the capitalist, but for new production... From the accumulation of capital under capitalism we should distinguish what is known as primitive accumulation: the forcible divorcement of the worker from the means of production, the driving of the peasants off the land, the stealing of communal land, the system of colonies and national debts, protective tariffs, and the like. 'Primitive accumulation' creates the 'free' proletariat at one pole, and the owner of money, the capitalist, at the other (Lenin 1915 [1964], 64).

Many of today's Marxists take Lenin to task for being 'doctrinaire' and sticking to the letters of Marx. In my understanding Rosa Luxemburg also notwithstanding her complicated expositions on this issue was careful in final formulations, while she debated with Marx's writings on the origins of accumulation and stressed what can be called 'the ground outside' in understanding the process of accumulation.

It also means that we cannot do away with logic and think that historical narrations will give us a clear analysis of capitalism. While determining the reproduction of aggregate social (total) capital we have to keep aside the issue of singularities. In the *Grundrisse* Marx says that the concrete is 'the concentration of many determinations.' This is the way in which we can define singularity. Singularity is the concrete. Yet, as Marx tells us the concrete is the point of departure in reality, not in thought. Thus, we arrive at the concrete through a process of abstraction, which means starting from the abstract. In its immediacy, the concrete gives us only what Marx calls a "chaotic conception." And when Marx adds that the concrete is the "unity of the diverse", what is significant is not the words "unity" and "diverse", but the indication by Marx of the dialectical relation of the two: the unity and the diverse. We can approach the issue of accumulation in that spirit without getting bogged down into the endless and sterile debate whether while pursuing a logic Marx is right in clearing the analysis of historical impurities that mark any analysis of the concrete. We shall then see that the unity of the process of reproduction of capital through the process of reproduction of surplus value is the abstraction of many concrete determinations of the process of realisation (including the violent process). Furthermore, this unity yields also to a mode of production of an essential difference. To continue: unity, if we come to think of it deeply, is a transition of singularities to an abstraction. We have now reached the link between transition and accumulation.

Marx in the second and third volumes of *Capital* showed how markets become crucial for accumulation. Thus global and local capitalist as well as non-capitalist enterprises are interconnected today through global (that is, where exchange happens between entities across national boundaries) and local (that is, where exchange happens between intra-national entities) markets. This is the materialization of a value chain. Neoliberal capitalism through the supply chains (consisting of various modes such as outsourcing, subcontracting, and off-shoring) gives rise to new circuits of global capital. Connected to these circuits are new practices and relationships that produce new subjectivities and a new hegemonic social reality that aims to foreclose the language of class precisely by retaining and underscoring the presence of the so-called informal, agricultural, and the household sectors. Yet Marx showed at the same time how capitalist crisis becomes one of accumulation through the reinforcement of the social in the productive process – thus the resistance of the worker (and the society) does not allow beyond a point the operation of the so-called remorseless laws of accumulation. The State whose singular importance in the accumulation process was brought out by Lenin again and again becomes the crucial site where politics negotiates the inevitable binds that accumulation as a process continuously throws up. There is thus perhaps as some have called 'an elective affinity between capitalism and passive revolution: the decentralised nature of the

accumulation process, driven by competition among capitals, is evidently compatible with a wide range of political forms, giving scope for individual states to restructure the process' (Callinicos 2010, 491)

Accumulation and Transition

The theme of the state in a post-colonial study of accumulation is not accidental. Also it is not strange that in western capitalism theoretical critiques of capitalist accumulation process have almost done way with the state, as if capitalism unfolded in the long twentieth century without the state machinery and the imperialist order. Politics was once more taken out of political economy. In globally positioned views the state always appears as a minor factor, while in local revolutionary views the state appears always as a crucial factor facilitating globalisation and capitalism. The state facilitates restructuring of capitalist order. It is the site of passive revolution. Most importantly because of all these, the theme of state allows us a sustained engagement with the issue of transition and thus to the specific form of post-colonial capitalism. A salient aspect of the post-colonial situation is the near permanent condition of primitive accumulation as the other of the most modern form of capital, which one may term as virtual capital. Developmental and conflict-induced migration (known as forced migration) within the country and to other countries takes place under primitive and precarious conditions, and female labour forms a substantial chunk of this scenario. Keeping this in mind two perceptive observers describe migration as the 'multiplication of labour' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). As more and more virtual capital in form of offshore funds, venture business, hedge funds, sovereign wealth funds, internet based investment and banking, forward trading based wealth, etc. reach the post-colonial shores and result in massive property boom, skyrocketing land prices, construction upsurge, and a new surge in the prices of raw material like iron ore, etc., and at times foodstuff, the more people are pushed towards accepting precarious and unorganized work condition, and as consequence there is more de-peasantization, and appearance of unorganised labour, which can be best described as 'immaterial labour'. Flexibilization here appears not so much in the form of what is called in the West as "post-fordism", which is based on micro-computerisation, flexible technologies, and the domination of process industries, but much more in the shape of uncertain work profile, uncertain conditions of reproduction of labour, catering to the backward linkages of new capital which is based on various automated technologies and flows.

We can ask two questions here:

First, does this scenario in any way contradict Marx's analysis? The answer is no, because once again this scenario shows how the social is inserted in an economic process and the economic and the extra-economic are intertwined. The domination of finance over industry and the production process not only needs political and administrative restructuring of supply, investment, banking, and credit norms, it also signals something more fundamental. It points to the dialectical way in which the limits to capital's expansion function in its life as a continuous process of aggrandizement. Probably Rosa Luxemburg got Marx wrong when she commented, 'In fact, he [Marx] made the solution even more difficult by assuming the capitalist mode of production to prevail universally' (Luxemburg 1913). This is because we often disregard how Marx inserted the social in the economic. He not only thought that the definite social relation between men becomes the fantastic form of relation between things through the domination of the commodity form, he also added that each commodity represented a 'phantom-like objectivity' when a congealed quantity of homogenous human labour has been abstracted from any concrete determination. 'As crystals of this social substance which is

common to them all' capitalism foregrounds money as the 'universal equivalent', 'the social action of all commodities'. The unity of the world is made possible precisely because money is the sovereign. As the philosopher will say, money rewrites the social contract as it emerges as a universal and representative power from a process of mutual recognition of various commodities (Marx 1867 [2014]). Money has evolved today into virtual forms such as of finance, credit, and promise. In this virtual form it will now link the two ends of accumulation. Primitive accumulation will be spurred by construction boom, land grab, urban expansion, and rampant mining and other kinds of virulent extraction of underground and surface, while virtual accumulation will be spurred by trading in money and finance as commodity in an unbridled manner.

Second, in what way does this condition constitute a predicament for the post-colony? On one hand the post-colony must depend on the State to come out of this scissors attack taking place in the form of a combined appearance of primitive accumulation and virtual accumulation. On the other hand the State is in a bad state today and we do not have yet any other substantive form of national autonomy. Therefore we must work our way through carefully. This sense of caution will help the post-colony retain flexibility and prise its way through the bind of primitive work conditions and the reproduction of the advanced form of accumulation – a bind that leaves almost nothing as social surplus for the post-colony to develop. Precisely for this reason the post-colony will need the most advanced form of politics, whose core will be formed by immaterial labour, signifying the appearance of multitude (workers, peasants, and mass of petty producers) on the political scene. The significance of these two terms, *immaterial labour* and *multitude* goes far beyond their current expositions. Immaterial labour and multitude do not work towards realisation of any potential of capital. They create a new reality out of their own existence.

The heterogeneity of labour produced out of the specifics of the accumulation process forces us to grapple with the dialectical significance of transition. The post-colonial dilemma is around the issue of transition – transition from semi-colonialism and neo-colonial conditions to new democracy, retarded agriculture to agricultural reforms, land reforms, and further on to cooperatives, foreign and corporate-led industrialisation to a balanced industrial growth and the transition of rule from compradors and corporate class to a national popular alliances. However, as Mao Tse Tung on the basis of the experiences of socialist construction in the Soviet Union had argued in *On the Ten Major Relationships*, this transition is not towards a pre-determined socialism; it does not lead to any pre-charted socialist path; the transition will lead to its own future, to its socialism, the sketches of whose future can be seen only by those engaged in a patient search for that (Mao 1956). This is what is meant by the word *praxis*.

Accumulation and the Re-ordering of Space

The reality of contradiction is of course greater than the science of it. As of now, the science is developed in the North, while the reality of contradictions in the South surpasses its scientific analysis. The reality of this situation reconstitutes the respective worlds of theory and reality, universal and the determination of historical developments, the continuous search for the realisation of potential and the knowledge that reality makes new grounds, where reality becomes its own constitutive experience. Just like in the West where in the last fifty years there were desperate attempts among the Left intellectuals to escape the world of contradictions, in the post-colony too there have been attempts to argue that the post-colony forms an outside to the world of capital, that the post-colony can escape the features of modern capitalism, such as financial crises, crises of overproduction, existence of a reserve army of the labour consisting of unemployed human

resources, and various forms of bourgeois wealth – features that are integral to production and accumulation of surplus-value. Here too attempts have been made to discredit Marx's method. Yet precisely these attempts show that material relations are clue to ideological understanding - from the branch of political economy to say politics.

The post-colonial predicament is thus in terms of knowledge production, global logistics, economic specifics, and political subjectivity. The angle of predicament also gives us the advantage of looking at the global scenario of transformation in a new way. Let us recall in this context the decades of the fifties to the seventies in the last century when the word 'ex-colony' was used by anti-colonial Left movement all over Asia and Africa in place of today's 'post-colony'. There were fierce debates in the communist parties and among communists as to the path of transformation. Questions were asked: What is new democracy? What is national democracy? What is people's democracy? Perhaps this change of name is a minor question. But in any case, debates like these more than the theoretical quarrels on transition have to be revisited. I referred to Mao's lecture on ten major relationships in that context.

The experiences of India, South Africa, Brazil, Chile, and several other countries demonstrate how post-colonial capitalism through this combination of the low and the high forms of accumulation reorders the spaces of accumulation. Reordering of spaces becomes crucial in phenomena such as the return of the land question, resurgence of commodity prices, the reinforcement of the extractive nature of capital (extraction of biological power, nature, sub-soil resources, or cognitive abilities of human beings), etc. It results in new practices of zoning and creating corridors as circulating modes through which accumulation will take place. There are thus continuities as well as discontinuities and new features in the working of the logic of the re-ordering of space. These continuities and discontinuities show how old forms or configurations of space are re-moulded under the conditions of post-colonial capitalism. There are great stakes in this game of zoning and spacing. These stakes concern the bio-political organisation of post-colonial societies (for instance in India there are coastal regulation zones to save the coast and some say to save the fishermen besides the coast, disaster zones and flood prone zones wherefrom human beings are removed to save them and to put in place protection measures such as dykes, earthquake zones where new norms of construction of buildings are introduced, there are even suicide zones which are often dry areas and where farmers, it is said, habitually commit suicide to end miseries of life and debt). All these compel new legislations, policies, and regulations marking the particularities of respective zones and the protective measures for endangered life. These zones thus show how features of nature and of life are getting intermeshed more than ever; and the two separate registers – of nature (with all its vagaries) and life – are getting tied into a new form of existence, which borrowing Michel Foucault's phrase we may call a distinct *bio-political mode of existence*. This life is marked by new regulations for zoning and spacing. At its heart is the logic of economy.

The practice of zoning has assumed heightened importance in the background of post-colonial developmental urges. Highways are to be constructed; mines are to be opened up tearing the secrecy of the forests; airports are to be built; new economic zones like the free trade zones to be set up, agro-industries including fruit-processing units to be established in special areas; likewise power grids are to be set up, and marine product processing units are to dot the coastal regions, besides the ports commanding once again distinct zones. The country looks like an ensemble of zones representing different logics – at times complimentary, but often overlapping and conflicting. All these zones require corridors to function – corridors of information, freight or cargo, money, credit, oil, gas, etc., the medium being somewhere the cable, the ship, intermodal train service, the pipeline, van, truck, highway, or as in today's time containers as the most long-haul cargo transport,

and finally financial corridors. These corridors can be in the form of certain forms of labour linking the zones, or certain forms of transmission of information and finance, or even certain forms of circulation and processing of commodities like roads, pipelines, optical fibres, information highways, or special freight corridors. While analysts often concentrate on the social life of a commodity (which is indeed one of the entry points in understanding the emergence of zones, thus plantation zones, tea zones, life of tea as a commodity, etc.), the need now is to look into the life of labour in its transit forms to make sense of what makes a zone and what links one zone with another. Clearly we are looking here beyond the factory form and trying to understand the newer forms of assembly and chain. This is also the way to make sense of the bio-political organisation of capital and its logistical form.

How will these emerging zones be spaced? The citizen-worker may be a minor figure to populate such a zone, and whole populations may have to be trained to become the denizens of such an anomalous universe. Dispossessed peasants, construction workers from villages, tea shop owners and other street vendors from nearby districts, snooty IT workers – all become parts of a heterogeneous scenario of labour. They all will demand rights, some couched in the language of citizenship, some in bare life terms, and again some couched in gross economic terms of flexibility and money. While we know that these heterogeneous forms of labour will be evened out in the form of a commodity, we cannot say immediately how the new subjectivity of these newly zoned spaces will develop. But it is very much of a possibility that labour in this heterogeneous form may not want to behave like the massed or garrisoned foot soldiers of a disciplined imperial army stationed in a zone waiting for the final battle. We must be ready for a messy picture. Therefore, zoning exercise today may be a precarious one. Because while the governmental and administrative history of zoning may be a long one, the more capital becomes virtual, the more zoning exercise can be subject to the unpredictable nature of fluctuations of capital (primarily capital in form of money and credit) and thus zoning exercise may be self-defeating. It will be as precarious and self-defeating as has been the creation of a euro-zone, as unpredictable as the crash of 2008-09, or the fall of Greece. Within capital there is this immanent contradiction – zoning and flow. Finance capital requires both governmental strategies – zoning and flow – functioning at their utmost efficiency, and thus its insoluble paradox and dilemma, namely, how to return to a balance of the two, how to sanctify and protect the corridor that links the zones and makes flows possible. Is the corridor then *the weakest link in the chain*? Obviously we have the task of re-imagining the Leninist idea. We can now see how the post-colonial experiences of reordering of spaces (think of the special economic zones in India in the last two decades) enrich the Marxist understanding of circuits of capital. The circuits of capital are always overdetermined.

Given the fragility of the neo-liberal reconstruction of economy and society in the post-colonial world, the question then will be: Does the strategy of creating zones, corridors, and circuits make the neo-liberal programme of making capital fluid and resilient to shocks? One of the lessons of Marx's analysis of capital is its attention to circulation, which has now become the ordering principle of life under neo-liberal economy. When corridors meant to ensure the circulation of commodities and capital, particularly in their final form, *money*, fail in their tasks, the purpose of zoning fails. In capitalist production while zoning is resorted to as part of division of labour, the productive nature of zoning depends on a successful strategy of maintaining corridors. Corridors guarantee circulation, and the quality of commodity including its organic composition determines the nature of a corridor in question.

Of course we can notice to an unprecedented degree the fact that labour engaged in circulation and in production are getting intermeshed more than ever, so that the hidden process of

producing surplus value is becoming more mysterious. Labour is assuming more than ever transit forms due to this reason, and in this situation money begetting more money (which Marx pointed out as the feature of merchants' capital) is determining the fate of corridors, including financial corridors. We must remember that zones in the last quarter of the twentieth century have been created less for production of ordinary commodities or even means of production as commodities, but more for production of money as commodity (typical of these spaces would be Hong Kong, Shanghai, Dubai, Doha, Singapore, Mumbai) – that is to say an environ where production and circulation of a commodity like money merge. Thus we are not dealing with a situation where there is an over production of goods requiring new channels of circulation via public reforms programmes including fiscal reforms to widen the base of consumption (famously the New Deal and various Keynesian programmes), but the consequences of the expansion of the credit system resulting in accumulation of money capital in increasingly abstract, surreal, and virtual or fictitious forms. The basic principle of all such forms has been capitalisation of revenue based on future production of surplus value as well as capitalisation of various forms of credit, such as banking capital or stock transactions in public debt.

The “real” and “financial” spheres remain different, yet they become virtually one. Capital in form of goods and capital in form of money are different, yet they become inseparable in economy. The difficulties in realising profit in the industrial sector is sought to be allayed in the financial sector through emphasis on profits through credit operations, which finally tell back on the economy itself. We are thus facing here the question of several competing circuits endangering the corridors of supply and circulation, impacting especially on zones. Even though one is the virtual and the other real, yet in a sense both are real; also to be true, one is working as the virtual to the other. Therefore the collapse of the virtual creates new wastelands of capital in the wake of its departure.

Given this background of financial insecurity that has gripped the world, the question then to be asked is, how will it affect the pattern of zoning and linking them? If true to its origin the strategy of zones, corridors, and circuits must have the dimension of security, how would the present development (the crash of 2008) upset the efficiency and maximisation calculus? What will happen to the large insurance infrastructure against sudden losses of all kinds? What will secure the zones against volatile capital flows and the sudden emergence of wastelands, breakdown of circuits due to conflicts, competition, and war, and the neo-liberal way of organising the economy, which is precisely the way of combining the virtual mode and the primitive mode of accumulation? All these inquiries require two changes in our pattern of thinking. First, it means that we increasingly view circuit as a chain (with its weak links). Second, it means viewing more than ever economic relationships as essentially social relationships on which productivity (in other words the productive power of the present economy and its accumulation capacity) depends. These relationships variously mentioned in this paper are between agriculture and industry, industry and services, capital goods and consumer goods, the overall economy and the unorganised or informal or the ‘need’ (a concept used extensively by the late Indian economist Kalyan Sanyal, *Rethinking Capitalist Development: Primitive Accumulation, Governmentality, and Post-Colonial Capitalism*, Delhi: Routledge, 2013) sector, growth and infrastructure, economic infrastructure and social infrastructure (such as education and health and skill formation), state and its sub-regions, river basins and dry areas, valley and the hill, capital region and the distant regions, and finally zones of capital investment and the zones of social investment. Transit labour emerges in this context.

Let us review our arguments made till now on the theme of a post-colonial analytic of the accumulation process before we proceed further:

First, Marx's method of analysing accumulation is both historical as well as trans-historical, sticking to historical singularities as well as pursuing a logical argument in dissecting the category of capital. We are aware of the theoretical and academic controversies around this question. Yet we cannot escape the fact that Marx brings in the issue of primitive accumulation, and calls this the story of 'original sin' in theology that is political economy. In other words, political economy does not become science after this. Political economy remains theology. The theology continues, along with the science, as an account of the original sin. It is original, not because from this capitalism as a system originated and then the narrative of the birth of capital becomes a matter of the past, but because it is a theological story, where in the interest of the structure of the story we need an account of the original sin. This then is a double critique: critique of theology, also critique of the argument of self-reproduction of capital without the overall social mechanism that will facilitate this reproduction.

Second, in the account of the economic life of the capital the State is important as a category. Is budget an economic instrument to dispossess people, to pauperise them, or an administrative method? The budget and the legislations (Marx calls them 'bloody') connect to the State and speak of sovereign power needed to create the space by continuously clearing it up for the dynamics of capital to operate. Therefore the agency and the figure of the State that facilitates and effects 'expropriation' are the great shadows hovering over the entire account of capital. I am referring here to Part 8 of Marx's *Capital* (Volume 1). People speak of the role of the state in accounting for reforms. In this account we must include the myriad of coercive ways deployed by the state in order for capital to function as a mechanism, as a process, and as a machine. We must include the State also as the facilitator of the social conditions of accumulation (by laying down policies, guiding principles, and the legal framework, providing incentives and disincentives, facilitating internal and international trade etc.). The significance of this point is that once we bring in the question of sovereignty, much of the quarrels over interpretation of the theory of primitive accumulation pale into insignificance and irrelevance. Where a national state is absent, the role is played by colonial state or the international political sovereign in form of imperialism. Repeated robbery of Africa is a case in point. Include colonialism in this account, we shall see, the ostensibly free floating account of primitive accumulation undergoes a process of displacement. Consequently we shall have a post-colonial view of capitalism, to wit post-colonial capitalism, which will help us in viewing primitive accumulation as something not of hoary past, but of our time.

Third, to understand all these we have to make the issue of post-colonial capitalism the essential gradient in any analysis of the dynamics of accumulation today. Not surprisingly Lenin stresses the question of colonies and the birth of finance capital; Rosa Luxemburg too situates her analysis of accumulation in the context of imperialism. The angle of post-colonial capitalism implies: (i) a combination of the virtual and the most primitive forms of accumulation, (ii) return of the land and other resources question to the central place in political economy as the role of extraction assumes increasing significance in the expansion of capitalism suffering from its own internal contradiction, (iii) new but precarious strategy of zoning and creating corridors for a reconfiguration of the spaces of capital, (iv) the salience of transit labour (simplistically called the migrant labour), and (v) the persisting significance of the state as the facilitator of the conditions of accumulation. For all these reasons, post-colonial capitalism will be the stake on which the life of capital as accumulation will depend.

Fourth, from this angle any discussion on accumulation of capital must involve then the significant question of the *other* of the category of capital (recall Lenin's emphasis on colonies or Rosa Luxemburg's emphasis on what Marx called the 'others' in the capitalist society, that is, population groups besides the workers and the capitalists, such as hangers on, parasites, bureaucracy, petty

producers, etc.). The *other* stares at the process of accumulation, which must now subjugate the former to complete its own life. Circulation increasingly becomes the stake on which the continuity of accumulation will depend.

Implications

The accumulation debate raging for more than a century raises certain curiosities. We can take note how issues of colonialism, imperialism, production of super profit, competition and monopolies, reorganisation of space, different forms of capital, and above all wars, etc. had their long shadows over the debate, and there was perhaps no way it could be anything else. And it was not the case that all these intervening issues were properly integrated in the accumulation arguments. Thus one may ask, in what way does a scientific question become an ideological one? Clearly a scientific question does not remain “scientific” in the sense that contemporary social and political milieu interjects in our discussion. Or one can say, only by negotiating rigorously with the contemporary social and political milieu a scientific question can remain scientific.

In this context we can take note of one discussion. It is a sensitive point, but perhaps not out of context. Amidst the war Rosa Luxemburg wrote in the *Junius Pamphlet*:

The modern proletariat comes out of historical tests differently. Its tasks and its errors are both gigantic: no prescription, no schema valid for every case, no infallible leader to show it the path to follow. Historical experience is its only school mistress. Its thorny way to self-emancipation is paved not only with immeasurable suffering but also with countless errors. The aim of its journey – its emancipation depends on this – is whether the proletariat can learn from its own errors. Self-criticism, remorseless, cruel, and going to the core of things is the life’s breath and light of the proletarian movement. The fall of the socialist proletariat in the present (first) world war is unprecedented. It is a misfortune for humanity. But socialism will be lost only if the international proletariat fails to measure the depth of this fall (and) if it refuses to learn from it’ (Luxemburg 1915b [2014]).

She mentioned in this context the mistakes of the German working class movement. While appreciating and admiring the internationalist character of the pamphlet, Lenin wrote:

The first of Junius's erroneous propositions is embodied in the fifth thesis of the *Internationale* group, ‘National wars are no longer possible in the epoch (era) of this unbridled imperialism. National interests serve only as an instrument of deception, in order to place the working masses at the service of their mortal enemy, imperialism.’ The beginning of the fifth thesis, which concludes with the above statement, discusses the nature of the *present* war as an imperialist war. It may be that this negation of national wars generally is either an oversight, or an accidental overstatement in emphasising the perfectly correct idea that the *present* war is an imperialist war, not a national war. This is a mistake that must be examined, for various Social-Democrats, in view of the false assertions that the *present war* is a national war, have likewise mistakenly denied the possibility of *any* national war (Lenin, 1916 [1964], 308).

Lenin then went onto a discussion on the dialectical relation between national war and imperialist war, and critiqued Rosa’s treatment of the chronology of the national wars, as if the national wars collectively formed the preceding stage of imperialist war, and now with the advent of the inter-imperialist war national wars had become impossible. Lenin’s observation is significant because in Lenin’s analysis of the dynamics of accumulation under imperialist condition colonial plunders and therefore national wars become inevitable in as much as inter-imperialist wars are. The

acute awareness to contemporary situation led Lenin to mention the possibility of national wars even in an era of inter-imperialist wars.

Lenin further wrote in his commentary on the *Junius Pamphlet*,

We have dwelt in detail on the erroneous proposition that “national wars are no longer possible” not only because it is patently erroneous from the theoretical point of view – it would certainly be very lamentable if the “Left” were to reveal a light-hearted attitude to Marxist theory at a time when the establishment of the Third International is possible only on the basis of un-vulgarised Marxism. But the mistake is very harmful also from the standpoint of practical politics, for it gives rise to the absurd propaganda of “disarmament”, since it is alleged that there can be no wars except reactionary wars. It also gives rise to the even more ludicrous and downright reactionary attitude of indifference to national movements. And such an attitude becomes chauvinism when members of the “great” European nations, that is, the nations which oppress the mass of small and colonial peoples, declare with a pseudo-scientific air: “national wars are no longer possible”! National wars *against* the imperialist powers are not only possible and probable; they are inevitable, *progressive* and *revolutionary* though of course, to be *successful*, they require either the concerted effort of huge numbers of people in the oppressed countries (hundreds of millions in our example of India and China), or a *particularly* favourable conjuncture of international conditions (e.g., the fact that the imperialist powers cannot interfere, being paralysed by exhaustion, by war, by their antagonism, etc.), or the *simultaneous* uprising of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie in one of the big powers (this latter eventuality holds first place as the most desirable and favourable for the victory of the proletariat). It would be unfair, however, to accuse Junius of indifference to national movements. At any rate, (s)he remarks that among the sins of the Social-Democratic parliamentary group was its silence on the death sentence passed on a native leader in the Cameroons on charges of “treason” (evidently he attempted to organise an uprising against the war) (Lenin 1916 [1964], p. 310).

The war brought to the revolutionary leaders of the European working class movements new awareness of the need for dialectical judgement. Like Lenin Rosa also attempted to treat the national question dialectically, even though Lenin found her short of the exacting standards that he set for theoretical argument. We have to remember that this was also the moment when Lenin immersed himself in the library in Zurich in daily study of Hegel’s writings, particularly *Science of Logic*, the time when he developed the theory of revolutionary defeatism as the policy of Marxists towards their respective belligerent states and governments. This was also the time when he broke with the type of “scientific materialism” with which the Second International had framed its national-chauvinist policies.

The Lenin-Rosa debate was not over political tactics only. It involved as we know broader questions involving their respective views of imperialism, national revolutionary wars, etc.

Moving on to other phases in the debate over the accumulation question, we can recall how the connection between war and accumulation became a thorny issue, just as the notion of crisis became integrally linked to the debate. This also raised the question, how do we perceive the crisis? Was war a crisis? Were social welfare and recovery measures, planned in war time, such as the William Beveridge Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services (1942) and the post-war European Recovery Plan known as the Marshall Plan (1948) linked to the accumulation question? When the war in Iraq began many Marxists in the post-colonial world spoke of a crisis of the finance driven late twentieth century and early twenty first century capitalism, though Marxist writings in the western capitalist countries were playing with completely different issues, such as of culture, citizenship, democracy, and European Union. War never figured in these writings. We also know that in the Marxist writings security and the development of the capitalist economy have been seen less as

intertwined factors. Thus in Giovanni Arrighi's mirror of the long twentieth century, the story of money, power, and the origins of our time is one of continuous accumulation and expansion of the capitalist economy with wars occasionally disturbing the path. *The Long Twentieth Century* traces the relationship between capital accumulation and state formation (over a 700-year period) and argues that capitalism unfolds as a succession of "long centuries," (long trends) each of which has produced a new world power that has secured control over an expanding world-economic space. Examining the changing fortunes of Florentine, Venetian, Genoese, Dutch, English and finally American capitalism, the book concludes with an examination of the forces that have shaped and are now poised to undermine America's world dominance (Arrighi 2010). This is the view from the top. The period of 'long peace' (phrase used by John Lewis Gaddis [Gaddis 1989]) is also the period of long accumulation. Yet this picture cannot explain the self working of the accumulation process. Indeed both civil and national wars have cleared the grounds for fresh accumulation in various parts of the world. A view from below, which also informs to a great measure the post-colonial argument, tells us to take wars and conflicts seriously, as they clear the grounds for accumulation, exactly as the Marshall Plan had done more than sixty five years back.

To put all these briefly then, the accumulation question which is at centre of capitalism is never at the centre. The centre is always to one side. Capitalism is real, but also the theatre of the world of politics, religion, morality, and of course economic theories – in short of myths and opiates that make capitalism decentred because our own consciousness of the world is framed with illusion, and that is wherefrom our journey begins. Therefore the complete demystification of the accumulation question is always deferred, always beyond, always advancing from illusion towards the real. Philosophical battles are therefore parts of the perpetual war that the bourgeoisie has always wanted to put an end to. Yet no philosophy, least of all materialist philosophy, can exist without this theoretical relationship to force. They bear the marks of a generalised state of war.

We may ask: Is a turn towards the national question justified in a discussion on the accumulation question? Apart from whatever has said till now in this essay, there is one more thing in defence of this turn. In *Capital* (Volume 2) Marx moves from production to circulation – and once again in its most abstract form (reminding us of the first volume of *Capital*), as if in a dialectical play of logical forms. Circulation becomes an abstract process through which capital will shed its old form (the industrial form) and assume new one as it will seek to secure its realisation and self-expansion. Thus, as Marx demonstrated, money capital will undergo metamorphosis within this sphere of circulation. Thus the movement from money to commodity and then increased commodity production to increased money earning is a not a result of buying cheap and selling dear, but a consequence of surplus production. Production becomes the mediating moment – the moment of producing surplus value, more accurately the moment of realising surplus value. Production of surplus value becomes the dynamic means, at the same time logically a disjunctive leap, to move into the sphere of circulation and back to the exploitative world of industrial production. In the accumulation question then we are continuously crossing borders and boundaries, phases and dynamics, to find that we are witnessing an interrupted series of crises. That is what the post-colonial method suggests. Remember what Marx wrote while concluding "Illustrations of the General Law of Capitalist Accumulation":

Like all good things in this bad world, this profitable method has its drawbacks. With the accumulation of rents in Ireland, the accumulation of the Irish in America keeps pace. The Irishman, banished by sheep and ox, re-appears on the other side of the ocean as a Fenian, and face to face with the old queen of the seas rises, threatening and more threatening, the young giant Republic:

A cruel fate torments the Romans,

And the crime of the fratricide (Marx 1867 [2014])

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Securing Capitalism: Postcolonial Accumulation and Securitisation

Ilia Antenucci *

This paper advances a set of hypotheses for understanding the connections between postcolonial capitalism and the global process of securitisation. The term ‘securitisation’ will be used in a somewhat flexible manner¹, to indicate the simultaneous occurrence of different phenomena – the privatisation of security, the expansion of the private security industry, and the emergence of security as a hegemonic issue on a global scale. In particular, I will examine how these aspects of securitisation are embedded in the processes of accumulation under postcolonial conditions. To better frame these relations, the different perspectives of security studies, postcolonial studies and theories of global capitalism will be combined in this paper.

Postcolonial Capitalism and the Centrality of Accumulation

My research draws on the work of Ranabir Samaddar and Sandro Mezzadra, among others (Samaddar 2009; Mezzadra 2011), regarding the globalisation of the postcolonial predicament. In this perspective, the postcolonial features of contemporary capitalism are not assumed in a narrow, regional sense, but applied to the contemporary modes of production on a global scale. However, this does not mean that precisely what constitutes the postcolonial character of capitalism can be ‘watered-down’ in a generic global landscape. On the contrary, it is purely from the ‘relevance of diverse scales, places and histories within the contemporary structure of capitalism’² that my analysis can proceed, drawing connections between postcolonial capitalism and securitisation. Indeed, the very structural condition of postcolonial capitalism – a conflicting heterogeneity of modalities of production, labour and power relations – entails effects of violence and disorder. In such a context, the dynamics of accumulation play a crucial role. The incessant repetition of the dynamic of accumulation has, of course, been identified as a distinctive feature of postcolonial capitalism (Sanyal 2007). This ‘repetition compulsion’ continuously breaks down the economic, social and political mediations between capital and labour, as well as their relative homogeneity in time and space. Massive displacement, land grabbing and wars as well as financial debts and environmental damages create a miserable map of the globalised landscape. ‘Dispossession’ (Harvey 2003; 2006) and, more recently, ‘expulsion’ (Sassen 2013) are two categories which have been forged to grasp the brutality at the core of the global capitalistic machine. In essence, postcolonial capitalism, especially through the process of accumulation, generates conditions of constant crisis, wherein guarantees of economic subsistence, identities and rights are fractured and threatened. Crisis ushers in confusion and unrest, which must be suitably managed and transformed into profitable circumstance. In this paper, I

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consider securitisation as a crucial modality of this management. Nonetheless, it is not my intention here to convey a one-dimensional, Orwellian view, with global capitalism positioned as an overarching entity, making and unmaking the fate of the world. Conversely, I maintain that the management of crisis and unrest through securitisation is primarily a response to the struggles – of the poor, the dispossessed, the migrants, and so on – that incessantly challenge capitalist command on a global scale.

My argument, specifically, is that in the peculiar character of globalised postcolonial capitalism – which privileges disruption, fragmentation and persistent violence over life – exist the material conditions for securitisation and the expansion of the security industry. I will elucidate these terms in detail in the next section. To frame this, let me propose schematically how the connections between postcolonial capitalism and securitisation are observable on at least three levels, substantiated in the ensuing argument.

First, these connections are situated in practices of violence required by the dynamics of accumulation. Often, the seizing of collective resources and the expulsion of people from their livelihoods are publicly presented as security operations by both state-run and private security forces. Numerous examples of this phenomenon exist worldwide, from Amazonia to the Niger Delta, from rural regions to metropolitan areas. The 2003 Iraqi invasion, which involved a substantial number of private security contractors, may be regarded as an extreme case of accumulation (Neocleous 2008). But such processes are by no means unique to ‘developing’ countries: in fact, mass evictions, widespread insolvency and debt collection procedures are increasingly creating new mass poverty in the US and Europe, which represent the western heart of advanced capitalism.

A second level on which the connection between postcolonial capitalism and securitisation is apparent involves the centrality of security in governing the effects of accumulation. As Sanyal observes, the masses of dispossessed people not integrated in the new capitalistic production, far from representing a transitory condition within the development process, instead embody a distinctive, structural feature of the repeating primitive accumulation in a postcolonial context (Sanyal 2007). Hence, the governance of the dispossessed – urban poor, slum-dwellers, displaced peasants, low-skill migrants – becomes a crucial political task for the postcolonial state (Chatterjee 2004; Sanyal 2007; Chatterjee 2008). This is also a terrain, however, where original new partnerships concerning security provision between public institutions and private agencies (NGOs, civil associations and private security companies) are displayed. In fact, the notion of security encompasses spacing and ‘behaviouring’ capabilities which are essential for processes of accumulation. Famously, Aihwa Ong has shown how space is re-organised and shaped through specific ‘zoning technologies’, including normative, military and cultural tools, in order to establish high-intensity capitalist sites (Ong 2006). Also, in a wider perspective, the hierarchisation of circulation through the proliferation of borders – and their securitisation – can be seen as a peculiar and meaningful phenomenon of global capitalism (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013).

At a third level, security occupies the core of the mainstream narratives and political options which legitimise capitalist operations worldwide. For this reason, I refer to security as a hegemonic³ concept: something that is, both deeply embedded in common sense, emotions and social habits, and also a crucial issue for local and global politics. The claim for security simultaneously dominates the most diverse circumstances, ranging, for instance, from logistical procedures to neighbourhood administration, from financial operations to gender policies. In fact, while capturing so many different meanings, and turning them into an absolute priority, security is a ‘magic word’ through which capitalist orders are neutralised, naturalised and even celebrated.

Securitisation

The process of securitisation and the expansion of private security are often conceived as two different layers– the cultural one and the economic one –connected by a kind of mirror-logic. Instead, I suggest that securitisation is a unitary and global process, pertaining to the increasing relevance of security as a cultural, normative and capitalistic matter. Its political, economic and social effectiveness is such that I go so far as to define it as hegemonic. Unitary and hegemonic do not, however, mean homogeneous. It is clear that the outcomes of securitisation are nuanced by a number of local factors which shape situated configurations of power.

In the following paragraphs, I will examine the intertwined dynamics – or better, the articulation – of the privatisation of security with its cultural hegemony, within the general context of postcolonial capitalism.

The Privatisation of Security and the Rise of the Private Security Industry

The increasing privatisation of security and the impressive growth of the private security industry in recent years are two closely related, but not coincident phenomena. In fact, with the phrase ‘privatisation of security’ describes a substantial shift in the modalities of security provision as compared to the modern state-run pattern: today, security is no longer exclusively managed by the state, and its prime target is no longer the population of the state. More precisely, the privatisation of security displays a twofold character. On the one hand, the private security industry is increasingly involved in operations once under the exclusive control of the state, such as border and city patrol. It is a growing trend, for instance, for the patrolling of cities downtowns and business districts to be contracted out to private security companies (Abrahamsen and Williams 2007; Didier, Peyroux et al. 2012). On the other hand, to a lesser extent, state police and military increasingly are employed for the purpose of enforcing and securing private business, instead of for public service (Ayling and Shearing 2008). This might include charging fees for policing corporate events, but it is also exemplified by state police’s involvement in forcibly transferring lands from farmers to capitalists in India (Levien 2012, Dey 2013). In the existing literature, the privatisation of security is usually understood within the broader trend of neoliberal policies and privatisation of traditional public sectors (security/military, health, education etc.) adopted by most governments (with very few exceptions) during the past two decades on a global scale. Studies focusing on domestic policing point out how a proactive, risk-based approach shapes contemporary security provision, in association with the development of public/private partnerships in the governance of cities and territories (Johnston 1999, Crawford 2006). Security studies typically focus on the role of the state and sovereignty in the face of such transformations. In two of the more significant studies, security management in a neoliberal context is understood either in terms of security nodes and networks (Shearing and Johnston 2010; Martin 2013) or as assemblages of authority (Sassen 2006; Abrahamsen 2011) between private and public actors. According to these perspectives, the privatisation of security and the expansion of private security produce new arrangements of power, wherein public and private security providers closely cooperate. Rather than speculating about the weakening or supplanting of the state *per se*, I propose focusing on the junction between state and capital in shaping public life, which security provision clearly displays. By this perspective, the often-abused category of neoliberalism becomes meaningful. In fact, just as private security and public police compose assemblages of authority in policing a given territory, so the state and local governments create partnerships with investors in order to re-organize the space, the circulation and whatever belongs to

the domain of security. A capitalist machine is operating here, with the business of private security at its very core.

The prodigious expansion of the private security industry in recent years is most certainly a global phenomenon.⁴ Both the numbers – only the US is estimated to be a 350-billion-dollar market⁵ – and the pervasiveness of the business are striking. The range of services offered by private security companies encompasses everything from intelligence to military training, armed intervention to logistics. Both private customers – mostly multinational corporations – and governments employ these companies for tasks such as securing energy resources and infrastructure, personal protection, border patrolling and prison management. All sizes of private security companies exist, from the global corporations listed in the stock exchange, such as G4S and DynCorp, to various medium and small firms which often operate in informal or semi-informal conditions. Not only has the private security business resisted the global crisis but its turnover has even increased over the past ten years. According to market analysts, the yearly rate of growth is expected to exceed 4.5%, with countries such as China, India, South Africa and Brazil forecasted to record upward of 10% growth over the next few years.⁶ Clearly, the private security business is one of the most economically prosperous and politically influent industries today.

Some authors consider the private security and military industry as keyplayers in neoliberal imperialism, deeply involved in practices of capitalist accumulation and exploitation on a global scale (Chwastiak 2007; Banerjee 2008; Godfrey 2014). In fact, the employment of private contractors in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars is very considerable, accounting for more than 50% of the total military force and totalling 160 billion dollars in the U.S. from 2010 onward.⁷ Importantly, these companies do not limit themselves to supporting, and often replacing, the state military; they also take advantage of their frontline expertise in order to foster capitalist initiatives in the war, or post-war, context. Aegis, a major U.S. government contractor, for example, advertises its ‘path finding’ services to help companies investing in ‘emerging markets’, such as post-Saddam-Hussein Iraq, with its abundance of oil and gas resources⁸. James Ferguson also points out how the establishment and maintenance of the mining and oil extractive sites in the African continent, owned by multinational corporations, rely on private security forces (Ferguson 2005). A prime example is that of the Niger Delta, where some of the largest security companies (G4S, Control Risk, Erynis) operate permanently. In the case of India, the private security industry has been growing unremittingly for the past two decades, reaching a record 15,000 companies and more than 5 million employees, the largest in the world (Nagaraj 2012, Kular 2013). This development has occurred in tandem with intense processes of neoliberal reform and accumulation – the establishment of Special Economic Zones, privatisation of many infrastructures, and massive urban renewal of main cities such as Delhi and Mumbai –pursued by the Indian governments and private investors together.

Furthermore, the rise of private security has been related to the growth of ‘mass private property’, intended as a distinctive feature of the postmodern cities and the organisation of spaces (Newburn 2001). This concerns the spread of private business districts and residential suburbs, gated communities, and leisure and touristic enclosures over metropolitan areas. The city as a strategic site of capitalist accumulation and resource extraction has been widely studied over the past twenty years (Lefebvre 2003; Harvey 2008; Wacquant 2008). The making of the so-called ‘global’ or ‘world-class cities’, as described by Saskia Sassen, clearly display such dynamics (Sassen 1991; 2000), including the demolition of suburbs, displacement of inhabitants, privatisation of public spaces, and struggles between the people and the urban authorities. In conjunction with the ‘dark side’ of urban development and ‘beautification’ programs, private security thrives. Case studies of the South African cities of Johannesburg and Cape Town show how massive capital investments in the touristic and

high-tech sectors over the past ten years have involved the employment of private guards in the surveillance of public spaces (Abrahamsen and Williams 2007; Clarno and Murray 2013). Similarly, recent studies show how the development of finance, ICT and middle class residential districts in the metropolitan areas of Kolkata, Delhi and Mumbai has boosted the local private security market (Anjaria 2009; Gooptu 2013; Schindler 2014). Drawing on her research in Kolkata, Gooptu highlights several interesting aspects of the Indian security market. First, she demonstrates, private security is only partially employed for the protection of property or for repressive tasks: it also has an aesthetic purpose, to keep pace with global corporate standards of order and efficiency. Furthermore, the expansion of the Indian private security sector is explicitly encouraged by the state. Government agencies directly recruit security workers among the low-skill labour pool formed by rural migrants and displaced peasants. In this sense, the development of the Indian security market also seems to match a precise strategy of 'governance of the dispossessed' that is distinctive of postcolonial capitalism (Gooptu 2013).

The relationship between securitisation and accumulation within the postcolonial condition now begins to emerge. What is relevant about the expansion of private security is its simultaneity with the intense global processes of accumulation and resource extraction at all levels – from wars to urban gentrification. In traditional accounts of accumulation, from Marx, to Rosa Luxembourgh, to David Harvey, the use of violence and extra-economic coercive means is associated with the state, understood in its modern sense of territorial sovereignty and monopoly over force. In this sense, the moment of accumulation was one of the crucial junctions between state and capital, between the relations of production and their political and juridical superstructure. Today, evidence points to a slightly different scenario. Once again, as was formerly the case before the rise of the national state, force can easily be sold and purchased.⁹ The private security industry is involved at every stage of the process of accumulation: creating the conditions, managing the effects, sharing the revenues and then starting again. Yet, far from being marginalized in this process, the state emerges instead as an essential vehicle of it. Accumulation is still a crucial junction of state and capital, although with different balances and modalities. By providing a compatible normative frame, by creating partnerships with capitalist actors, and especially by producing suitable social conditions, the state enables accumulation through and within securitisation. I will attempt to unpack and clarify this point in the next section.

First, I will forward a hypothesis for interpreting the elements presented so far: securitisation, including the linked phenomena of the privatisation of security and growth of the security industry, should not be regarded merely as a side-effect or instrument of the dynamics of accumulation, but as a field of accumulation in itself. Thus, the commodification of force and security may account for a broad range of dramatic cultural and social issues. To put it schematically: if capitalist accumulation originally consists of separating people from their means of living, and forcing them into capitalist relations of life and labour – the market – how can we adapt the concept of accumulation to the field of security? In other words, how do we frame the hypothesis that the conditions for a market of security – which means *insecurity* – are deliberately produced? Also, what if almost everything in the mainstream perception becomes a matter of security?

The Hegemony of Security

As I have shown so far, the privatisation of security emerges as an outstanding phenomenon, both in quantitative and qualitative terms: not only because of the numbers that the private security business displays, but also for its political implications. Yet, this must be placed within a broader cultural and

social trend. In fact, security is a word that saturates the public discourses and policies of today's world. Every day, in the name of security, military operations are undertaken, borders are opened and closed, the agency and rights of groups and individuals are protected or contested, enormous amounts of money are gained or disappear in the stock exchanges. Ranging from finance to urban policing, from the war on 'terror' to climate issues, the call for security mobilizes people, drive the flow of capital and organizes spaces.

In recent years, different analytical formulations have accounted for this security boost. In a constructivist perspective, the process of securitisation is considered essentially as a 'speech act' (Buzan 1998): that is, a specific rhetorical structure, in which things are staged purely in terms of threats and risks. Through this kind of representation, all sorts of political options based on security consequently become legitimate. While this approach illuminates the cultural ascendancy of security – the way it is presented and recognized as a mainstream priority – the material aspects of this process remain obscured. Conversely, according to Mark Neocleous, security today is to be understood firstly as a commodity, as a component of capitalist dynamics. Drawing on Marx's concept of the fetish, he describes the cultural relevance of security within a classical structure-superstructure scheme. The cultural emphasis on security is nothing but the projection of the development of a security industry. The very purpose of selling security commodities generates an ideology of security, and through the combined pressure of different factors – media, politics, academics – the security commodity achieves a mystical value, an outstanding social role which compels customers to purchase it (Neocleous 2008).

Both of these accounts underscore crucial features of the issue of security, but they also display a reductionist tendency, whether toward the cognitive or the economic side. In my view, a more comprehensive approach is needed, one which enables us to capture the complexity of security simultaneously as a business, an individual and collective feeling, and a political strategy.

My argument here is that securitisation is more than a linguistic process: it is instead an overall experience of reshaping every aspect of life through the lens of the risk/security binary opposition. It is closely associated with a neoliberal set of values and policies, but is also, in Foucauldian terms, generated and reproduced from below, within the multiple common practices and representations of everyday life. In this perspective, securitisation provides a suitable framework for understanding security as a field of accumulation.

To better address this concept, I will draw on the notions of hegemony and articulation. Famously, in the rich 'tradition' extending from Antonio Gramsci to cultural, subaltern and postcolonial studies, connections between modes of production, cultural forms and power have been explored in a non-reductionist and versatile way. An approach based on the notions of hegemony and articulation emphasises the role of subjectivity, the performativity of cultural forms and the contingent relations between the latter and the modes of production. It enables three important analytical steps: first, to embrace the entanglement of material and immaterial components – the growth of a security industry as well as a security culture; second, to grasp the performative character of security in terms of social effects – its capability to shape both individual and collective behaviours; third, to conceive the emergence of a security claim as an inter-subjective dynamics, as well as the crucial role of security in the production of subjectivity. Still, it is important to stress that the theory of hegemony is here used in a very broad sense. Rather than restricting hegemony to a specific class or modality of dominance, I put the concept to work as a general theory of the relations between culture, economics and political power.

In light of these considerations, then, what makes security a hegemonic concept?

Stuart Hall analysed the rise of Thatcherism and neoliberal revolution over the past thirty years as a hegemonic formation, which succeeded in transforming the common sense and social habits on a molecular basis (Hall 2011). Although he warned that any definition of neoliberalism was provisional, he intricately identified the cultural penetration of some key neoliberal points: the individual risk, competition and supremacy of the market forces over all. As a result of this, life in common was torn by the incessant conflicts between individual interests. It was made radically insecure. Interestingly, however, in the first and most famous interpretation of the development of neoliberalism, security was central. Foucault described it as a *technique* – a set of procedures and calculations aimed to manage the uncertainties and possibilities that might occur in a given space, in the near future, among multiple bodies (Foucault 2007). Security is meant to ensure, and regulate at the same time, the freedom of circulation on which the liberal economy and society are based. Security is, therefore, about movement and uncertainty. Its task is neither to establish rules, nor to reproduce a given order, but to adjust to mutable conditions and to keep them viable. It is a contingent assemblage of practices in response to a contingent context. But what kind of context? How do we account for this apparent neoliberal contradiction, between the emphasis of security and the production of insecurity?

According to Ulrich Beck (Beck 1999; 2013), the contemporary world can be defined through the category of risk. The ultimate outcome of western modernization, with the triumph of industrialization and technique, results in a general condition of uncertainty, anxiety and catastrophic threats. The neoliberal project of society and neoliberal operations on society – reforms, policies, accumulation and so on – are based on risk and insecurity. Most people are exposed to risks every day, through several mechanisms – cuts on welfare, debts, unemployment, displacement, migrations, etc. Consequently, the entire existence of individuals and groups must be based on risk calculation and anticipation. By this perspective, security, intended as the opposite of risk, achieves the highest value in the ordinary perception of life. Security is, at the same time, a political claim, a precious but purchasable commodity, a measurable requirement. Such an emphasis on security seems to mark the pervasive condition of tension and violence that we experience every day. At this point, the Foucauldian reversion of the Clausewitzian formula – politics is the continuation of war – and its view of an ever-conflicting society come to mind. It is meaningful in this respect that the major public discourses and principles of organisation for both transnational and internal policies are based on a security claim. Not only are states and people hierarchised according to their levels of security in the global scene of the ‘war on terror’, but security increasingly emerges as a defining terrain for urban policies worldwide. To summarize: whether or not we accept general categories such as neoliberalism or risk society, by considering ‘security as a hegemonic concept’, security can be positioned at the very core of contemporary forms of domination. Capitalistic relations based on the production of risk and insecurity factors, global politics and common sense, in fact, converge on the claim for security.

Further support for my argument comes from the field of security studies. For instance, Jef Huysmans characterizes security as a powerful term of identification, through which a political community can recognise itself and define its own practices (Huysmans 1998). Furthermore, to Neocleous, ‘the ‘aura’ of security is almost limitless, embracing both the tangible and the less than tangible’¹⁰; the production of this cultural obsession allows both the state *and* the capital to enforce their domination over society. Against the mainstream interpretations of this topic, Neocleous maintains that, through the privatisation of security, the state and the capital do not clash, but strengthen and support each other. Despite a certain extent of determinism, Neocleous’ idea of security, as an articulation of capitalistic processes, cultural forms and political power, is very close to

a hegemonic theory. It would be difficult here not to recall the influential account of hegemony by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. The limitless character of security and its power of identification are precisely the two main features of what they call the ‘logic of hegemony’, through which collective agencies are produced and power struggles are fought (Laclau and Mouffe 2001; Laclau 2005).

However, my aim here is not to build a general theory of hegemony, but to assemble elements regarding the hegemonic character of security. Through its sedimentation in the common sense, security directs political choices, collective behaviours and social practices to the greatest extent. The call for security has the capability to remove objects and decisions from the political debate, translating them into a life-or-death framework. Thus, what is supposed to be a matter of rights is neutralised and naturalised in purely emotional terms: fear and safety. When represented in terms of security, anything becomes an unquestionable priority. This mechanism enables the management of the most crucial elements of the globalised world in the name of security: logistics and mobility (airports, above all), migration and borders, health and social care. I suggest that assuming the hegemonic character of security is a viable research option for explaining the link between securitisation and capitalism today – or better, why capitalist accumulation works both *by* and *within* securitisation. While an overarching view of the world based on risk and threats is shaped – and, I insist, this is a two-way process, made of vertical politics as well as common sense ‘from below’ – security becomes the most important resource to draw on. The vigorous industry of private security is right there, ready for delivery.

Significantly, the concept of securitisation also collocates the two ‘levels’ of accumulation, commonly understood as the ‘high’– referring to the virtual, financial or high-tech ways of accumulation – and the ‘primitive’– concerning land grab, material enclosures, displacement, war, slave labour and other brutalities. As a matter of fact, securitisation is first of all a financial term, which means *‘the process of taking an illiquid asset, or group of assets, and through financial engineering, transforming them into a security that is, ‘a fungible, negotiable financial instrument that represents some type of financial value’.*¹¹ Roughly speaking, financial securitisation is the mechanism through which an illiquid asset – for example, a number of mortgages – is turned by dedicated agencies, such as the (in)famous Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, into a new financial product (a security) which can be sold to small investors, thus creating new liquidity. This kind of securitisation is precisely one of those practices which have been inculcated from the 2008 subprime crisis, with its devastating effects on the American and global economies forcing millions to relinquish their own homes. Saskia Sassen has recently described such an event in terms of accumulation by expulsion (Sassen 2013). That said, the scope of this paper does not allow for in-depth examination of the relations between the virtual and primitive modes of accumulation, or commentary upon the logical link between the two. I would stress, however, that the versatile semantic of ‘security’ and ‘securitisation’ illuminates both the cultural relevance of these concepts – so (paradoxically) powerful that they brought millions of people to squander their savings in most hazardous financial operations – and its structural complicity with the practices of accumulation, at every level.

Conclusions

Since this paper is based on an early stage of my research, my conclusions are offered more as hypotheses and open questions than as proper statements. A further collection of empirical data is expected to support and clarify the conceptual issues presented here.

In this paper I have contended that between the two global processes of securitisation and postcolonial capitalism there lies a crucial connection – or better, articulation – of our time. In sum, the juxtaposition of the neoliberal political framework and postcolonial capitalism generates a condition of incessant risk and crisis. Securitisation and the security market thrive accordingly. But what is also important is that, instead of extinguishing or reducing risks, the security market expands itself *in parallel* with the multiplication of risks. One way of understanding this is to say, in the heart of global advanced capitalism, we find ourselves again in a Hobbesian condition in which peace is never guaranteed, and in which the state, instead of securing people, becomes itself a producer of risk. Thus, security and risk in the present world seem to compose an aporia: non-dialectic, self-reproducing contradiction, which is neither resolved nor mediated by the state. Conversely, the parallel provision of risk and security occurs through complex assemblages of power including state, private security agencies and advisors, corporations and civil associations. The organisation of these assemblages does not respond to a homogeneous pattern, but adjusts and recombines itself in response to changing conditions. This is a contingent way to manage risk and security factors in unstable contexts. Nonetheless, the aporetic relationship between risk and security, which nourish and reproduce each other, implies, in material terms, the expansion of the security market. This is how securitisation becomes not only an accessory of the practices of accumulation, but a field of accumulation itself, based on the incessant production of fear, poverty and social unrest.

Notes

¹The term ‘securitisation’ was introduced by Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan, scholars of the Copenhagen School, to signify a rhetorical representation based on the exclusive opposition between threats and security. I will return to this later in the paper.

² Mezzadra 2011, 166.

³It will be apparent that I draw here upon Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, although noting a philological sense. In fact, I deliberately elide many of the correspondences – with the state, the class, the party –to which the concept is bound. Still, I believe that a ‘laical’ use of hegemony allows for a productive framing of the issues of security and securitisation. The next paragraph offers further justification of this choice.

⁴ There is an extensive recent literature on this topic. Here, I refer, among others, to the following:

Singer, P. (2004). *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; Avant, D. (2005). "Private Security Companies." *New Political Economy* 10 (1): 121-131; Kinsey, C. (2006). *Corporate Soldiers and International Security: The Rise of Private Military Companies*. London: Routledge; Policante, A. (2012). *I nuovi mercenari: mercato mondiale e privatizzazione della guerra*, Ombre corte.

⁵ <https://www.asisonline.org/News/Press-Room/Press-Releases/2013/Pages/>

⁶ <http://www.reportlinker.com/ci02408/Security-Services.html>

⁷*Department of Defense's Use of Contractors to Support Military Operations: Background, Analysis, and Issues for Congress*, May 17, 2013 Congressional Research Service <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R43074.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.aegisworld.com>

⁹ Private security is nothing new: force was managed by private armies and mercenaries for centuries before the rise of the nation state and nation armies. See Policante, A. (2012). *I nuovi mercenari: mercato mondiale e privatizzazione della guerra*, Ombre corte.

¹⁰ Critique of Security, 155

¹¹ <http://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/07/securitisation.asp>

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