

## Is There a Theory of Population in *Capital*?

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### *People and Population in Capital and Marx's Engagement with Malthus*

Marx's *Capital* (volume one), as everyone knows, is about capital: capital as relation, capital as commodity, capital as the progenitor of wage labour, capital as the crystallization of labour, and capital as realization of surplus labour. Capital also indicates several borders that capital in its own present history must cross in the forms of several exchanges to remain functional as capital, always suggesting thereby the borders labour would have to cross in order to become capital. *Capital* is thus a double story – of labour and capital – in which we shall find the story of transition to a capitalist mode of production, of how labour in order to be socially relevant has become wage labour, and finally the social and political struggles that have marked this transition. All these make the book also an account of how capital turns the society into one of working population subject to laws of capital.

Now if we recall, when *Capital* was being written, it was the high noon of republicanism, popular sovereignty, colonial liberalism, and the age of excitement about electoral democracy. Yet the picture of the world that *Capital* was drawing was not only the other scene of democracy, but as if it had pulled to one side the cover over what is known as society, and shown the readers the way the society survived and functioned on the basis of class divisions, class exploitation, private property regimes, and how social structures were reproduced in a particular dynamics, which required the subject's conversion to the logic of capital. Even today it astonishes us when we see how *Capital* sidestepped the philosophical themes of subject and subjectivity, and had removed the individual as the *subject* and brought forward the question of class as the subject of history. Yet, we must not quickly draw a conclusion. *Capital* did not foreground people or any specific class as a condition of the subject's preparation for access to truth. It conceived the subject not in terms of sovereignty but in social terms, in terms of organization, by which we mean organization of a mode of production, organization of labour, organization of the state, organization of money as medium, and organization of circulation. Till then, the subject had been associated with one or the other kind of spirituality. It had not been thought of in terms of the historical thrust of existence as an embodiment of conflict, struggle, and its requirements.

Hence the ambiguous position the two categories - people and population - occupy in the book, because the book does not share the given postulates of these two terms. "The Machiavellian moment" rejoices the rise of the "people's" moment.<sup>1</sup> But the "Machiavellian moment" was possible because

governments also learnt to govern people by turning them into administrative categories. Yet how were these categorizations and this double operation become possible? We have to go back to Marx to get an idea of this transformation. Yet, as indicated, Marx does not engage with these two categories independently – as if they are simply matters of rule, sovereignty, and management. What causes division of people into fundamental categories? What remains of the people then? Again, what is labour when defined as an element of production, social subsistence, and social reproduction? What do we mean when we say that a section of society is rent seeking aristocrat? Or, that a capitalist is an agent of capital? What causes division of workers in various categories, or categories of production units, or say the division of artisans, mill hands, the wandering band of construction labour, or idle labour dependant on social subsidies, and the employed labour? In other words, what is the dynamics of social relation that will make categorization of people into population groups possible?

In this context, Marx's battle with Malthus was no less acute than it was with Smith or Ricardo. Probably, because with Malthus the war was over the entire idea of *production*: hence how labour had to be productive, or only when labour could be considered as productive, how to view the question of shortage of food, how to view "over production", etc., indeed on the way Malthus had inscribed a certain kind of biological fundamentalism in the notion of production. Malthus had written,

No limits whatever are placed to the productions of the earth; they may increase for ever and be greater than any assignable quantity. Yet still the power of population being a power of a superior order, the increase of the human species can only be kept commensurate to the increase of the means of subsistence by the constant operation of the strong law of necessity acting as a check upon the greater power.<sup>2</sup>

This was the Malthusian moment as opposed to the Machiavellian moment, when Marx started thinking of population that has to be a working population. Before writing *Capital* (Volume One), he noted down this remark,

"Malthus's theory of value gives rise to the whole doctrine of the necessity for continually rising unproductive consumption which this exponent of over-population (because of shortage of food) preaches so energetically. The value of a commodity is equal to the value of the materials, machinery, etc., advanced plus the quantity of direct labour which the commodity contains; this, according to Malthus, is equal to the *value* of the wages contained in the commodity, plus a profit increment on these advances according to the general rate of profit. This nominal price increment represents the profit and is a condition of supply, and therefore of the reproduction of the commodity. These elements constitute the *price for the purchaser* as distinct from the *price for the producer*, and the price for the purchaser is the real value of the commodity. The question now arises—how is this price to be realised? Who is to pay it? And from what funds is it to be paid? In dealing with Malthus we must make a distinction (which he has neglected to make). One section of capitalists produce goods which are *directly* consumed by the workers; another section produce either goods which are *only indirectly* consumed by them, insofar, for example, as they are part of the capital required for the production of necessities, as raw materials, machinery, etc., or commodities which *are not consumed* by the workers *at all*, entering only into the revenue of the non-workers."<sup>3</sup>

He had also noted what Malthus considered as productive labour and accumulation. Marx noted that Malthus had written, "Revenue...is expended with a view to immediate support and enjoyment,

and...capital...is expended with a view to profit...A labourer and a menial servant are ‘two instruments used for purposes distinctly different, one to assist in obtaining wealth, the other to assist in consuming it’...The productive labourer *directly* “increases[s] his master’s wealth”...The only productive consumption, properly so called, is the consumption or destruction of wealth by capitalists with a view to reproduction... The workman whom the capitalist employs certainly consumes that part of his wages which he does not save, as revenue, with a view to subsistence and enjoyment; and not as capital, with a view to production. *He is a productive consumer to the person who employs him and to the state, but not, strictly speaking to himself*” (Citations from Malthus’ *Definitions in Political Economy etc.*, edited and published by John Cazenove, London, 1853, with Cazenove’s “Notes and Supplementary Remarks”, Italics by Marx).. Marx thus noted Malthus’ views on productive and unproductive labour.

Continuing through to Volume Three of *Capital* Marx noted how the ever-changing but always present, boundaries of commodity production, money, circulation, and again commodity production, ordained the dynamics of reproduction of capital, and the necessary reproduction of labour – a process enacting out today on a global scale. Yet it was through this analysis that Marx brought out from the obscurity of biologism the question of population and pointed towards the need to study the way capitalism created laws of population in different epochs. From the preparatory manuscripts of the *Grundrisse*, one of his main targets of critique was Malthus’ claim to have formulated a general law of population and overpopulation for mankind based on a simple relation between natural re-production of men and women and social reproduction of means of subsistence. For Marx as we know the natural reproduction of men and women was always a social reproduction of a population predicated by the historical process of a particular social formation. The two central concepts crucial for him in this task were *production* and *surplus*. On the basis of these two concepts Marx read Malthus and built his own arguments of peasant dispossession and primitive accumulation, relative surplus population, industrial reserve army, and the wandering army of labour, whom Marx called the foot soldiers migrating from site to site. If this is the way in which the society would become a society of working population, today this is also the process of appearance and reappearance of destitution and the emergence of ecologically marginal population groups (ravaged by wars, famines, and floods). Policies of managing and stabilising destitute population groups such as setting up the Africa Fund (1966-2001) in the previous century<sup>4</sup> or the UN Millennium Goals (2015-2030) this century<sup>5</sup> emerged in this context.

This is broadly the context in which we need to re-engage with and re-frame the question of relation between capitalism and population. Capitalism is once again producing a new law of population spread on a global scale, creating once more the “human masses” that capital will exploit for its reproduction, the “relative surplus” population on a global scale with clearly discernible but fluctuating boundaries between the *necessary* working population and the *relative* surplus population.

Marx had noted that Malthus had banked on the distinction between “productive” and “unproductive”, “leisure” and “work”, and “servant and labourer”. This distinction was important for

Malthus in suggesting how wealth was created, how wealth could be augmented, and therefore the all-important poser for him, namely, who among the *people* were crucial for the production of the surplus so that wealth was augmented? And, who being irrelevant for production as well as consumption would become surplus? Making distinctions among population groups and among property forms was crucial to Malthus' population-centric outlook. Others were speaking of labour. Malthus was pointing towards population, which would supply labour, which could be productive or non-productive. In this way production was predicated on population that supplied labour.

Malthus thus in a way was arguing that life (its nature, structure, dynamics) was crucial to understand what was labour. Marx engaged him with the question of life of labour, more exactly life as labour, what life as labour meant, how it was the key to production of wealth, and therefore what was living labour, what was congealed labour, what was the life cycle of labour, and therefore, what did reproduction of life mean under specific conditions?<sup>6</sup> The engagement with Malthus cleared the ground for his analyses of the conditions of populations under capitalism.

### *Labour, Life, and Population*

As we know, one century after Marx had developed the theory of labour power, labour as the power to produce value, as the power to produce life, hence reproduce the power of labour, another European philosopher Michel Foucault engaged with the same problematic of the relation between life and labour, and developed the idea of technologies of life, hence bio-power, bio-politics. The theory of productive power thus has its antecedent in the theory of productive labour. There is no doubt that after centuries of struggle by the labouring people to escape, defy, and destroy conditions of servitude the importance of linking the arguments of life with arguments of labour is significant more than ever. In one sense, on the correct handling of the relation between the two rests the historical task of emancipation of the labouring classes in the postcolonial countries. And in this sense the postcolonial condition symbolises the link between these two aspects of capitalist accumulation: life and labour.

Conceptually how can we link these two sets of questions? How can we bring back the issue of labour process in the inquiry of conditions of life as labour?

As an initial response to the question, we can begin by reflecting on the way a new type of power emerged in the wake of what Marx termed as primitive accumulation, the condition of dispossession, the condition of bare life, to which labour is reduced, and which provides the ground for capital to begin accumulation. We cannot but appreciate the absolute relevance of Marx's formulations on conditions of life when it has been reduced to the minimum, when the labourer has been stripped of all assets save his/her own labour power so that s/he can produce capital, in order to show, let us say, the original conditions of the emergence of a distinct type of power over life. We must note, in vast areas of the post-colonial world

primitive and the most advanced forms of accumulation have combined in installing and deepening the capitalist mode of production. The needs of accumulation have made management of populations an imperative of our age. Marx had noted also the emergence of relative surplus population as accumulation proceeded apace. He wrote,

We have seen that the development of the capitalist mode of production and of the productive power of labour – at once the cause and effect of accumulation – enables the capitalist, with the same outlay of variable capital, to set in action more labour by greater exploitation (extensive or intensive) of each individual labour power. We have further seen that the capitalist buys with the same capital a greater mass of labour power, as he progressively replaces skilled labourers by less skilled, mature labour power by immature, male by female, that of adults by that of young persons or children.

On the one hand, therefore, with the progress of accumulation, a larger variable capital sets more labour in action without enlisting more labourers; on the other, a variable capital of the same magnitude sets in action more labour with the same mass of labour power; and, finally, a greater number of inferior labour powers by displacement of higher.

The production of a relative surplus population, or the setting free of labourers, goes on therefore yet more rapidly than the technical revolution of the process of production that accompanies, and is accelerated by, the advance of accumulation; and more rapidly than the corresponding diminution of the variable part of capital as compared with the constant. If the means of production, as they increase in extent and effective power, become to a less extent means of employment of labourers, this state of things is again modified by the fact that in proportion as the productiveness of labour increases, capital increases its supply of labour more quickly than its demand for labourers. The overwork of the employed part of the working class swells the ranks of the reserve, whilst conversely the greater pressure that the latter by its competition exerts on the former, forces these to submit to overwork and to subjugation under the dictates of capital. The condemnation of one part of the working class to enforced idleness by the overwork of the other part, and the converse, becomes a means of enriching the individual capitalists, and accelerates at the same time the production of the industrial reserve army on a scale corresponding with the advance of social accumulation.<sup>7</sup>

Social governance emerged in this context of population management in a society that would have to reproduce labouring life as value producing power. As a technology of rule social governance would therefore ensure:

- (a) The management of labouring population;
- (b) Turning non-productive into productive labour;
- (c) Pacifying the restless, non-productive, idle labour;
- (d) Managing labour market needs and uncertainties;
- (e) Producing skills, which the capitalist production requires on an increasing scale, among the productive population; and
- (f) Generally maintaining conditions of reproduction by regulating the atmosphere of social war.

This situation links more than ever the art of governing and managing people's lives with economy, though we must not ignore the vast amount of force – still required at various stages to set the process of accumulation – often clothed in developmental discourse. This force is employed by the state, private corporate bodies, and all those who enjoy powers of impunity, immunity, in short sovereign power.

We are here faced with a problem – historical as well as in terms of logic. The problem is: if the business of governing or governmentality is defined as a ratio where coercion is going down and non-coercive form of power is gaining ascendancy, in other words primitive form of accumulation is declining and more and more advanced and virtual form of accumulation is correspondingly becoming dominant, what are

we to make of the pattern of bio-politics of our age when population management shows marks of deployment of both brutal power and advanced governmental techniques? In other words, the return of primitive accumulation as a capitalist phenomenon in large parts of the non-western world makes the naturally assumed relation between governmentality, bio-power, and modern economy based on advanced forms of accumulation a problem.

There are of course many ways to address this problematic, for instance as Michel Foucault did by way of focusing on the concepts of bio-politics and bio-power along with a radical critique of sovereignty and law. Foucault had remarked,

This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes... what occurred in the eighteenth century in some Western countries, an event bound up with the development of capitalism... was nothing less than the entry of life into history, that is, the entry of phenomena peculiar to the life of the human species into the order of knowledge and power, into the sphere of political techniques... If one can apply the term bio-history to the pressures through which the movements of life and the processes of history interfere with one another, one would have to speak of bio-power to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life...<sup>8</sup>

The crisis of sovereignty as “modality or organizing schema” of power<sup>9</sup> was discussed by Foucault from the point of view of the contradictions arising from the commoditization and socialization of labour power: while the technologies of discipline address the problem of the “fabrication” of individuals, of docile and useful bodies, through the “system of subjection” to a new political economy and political anatomy, bio-politics addresses through its “regulatory” devices the entire life of man-as-species, as it is represented in populations (“a new body, a multiple body, a body with so many heads that, while they may not be infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted”). The main problem at stake in Foucault’s analysis was precisely the modality of the intertwining and articulation of disciplinary “individualizing” and bio-political “massifying” power devices. This reminds us of the way Marx had analysed the factory form of production with mass of labouring bodies as the subject.

In the postcolonial condition however we have besides the factory form other forms – dispersed, informal, and unorganised – with labouring subjects moving from one site to another. We need to study as to how this dispersed labouring population is managed under postcolonial capitalism. And in this, we have still to learn from Marx to make sense of this transitory state of labour, and the combination of a dispersed state of power and centralised state power, in other words, a new form of bio power.

As already pointed out, Marx foresaw the capitalist task of population management. In Sections 3-4 of Chapter 25 in *Capital* (Volume one) he discussed the phenomenon of relative surplus population and its different forms. In Section 5 he discussed the nomad population, whom he described as a class of people whose origin is agricultural, but whose occupation is in great part industrial. They are the light infantry of capital, thrown by it, according to its needs, now to this point, now to that. When they are not on the march, they camp. These sections suggest the ways in which the formulation of bio-power and bio-politics can

profitably proceed, namely by identifying its foundational elements – primitive accumulation, laws of population, violence, and government of market economy.

It is true that a forcible dissolution of the preceding phase of society is necessary for the modern forms of population management to emerge, and modern form of bio-power can emerge only in the wake of violence. But it will be important to remember that violence is constantly required to reinforce such power. On one hand, the bourgeoisie needs violence to constantly extract every ounce of power of the labouring body (and therefore the violent conditions of production), and on the other hand it wants to perfect a form of social governance that will make reproduction of economy almost automatic, self-regulated, so that the conditions of reproduction are resilient enough to withstand periodic shocks and possibilities of break downs, and thus appropriate modes of governing the society including the labouring bodies, transforming them into resilient subjects will have to be ensured. What will be the appropriate way to ensure such paradoxical combination? How is the bourgeoisie to combine the primitive and the virtual modes of accumulation, the postcolonial and the neo-liberal, the global conditions for reproduction and the local forms only which will enable accumulation of capital possible? To put the matter bluntly, how to make labour disappear in the economic process so that production of wealth appears as a function of capital only? Is it not already on the horizon of possibility when postcolonial labour appears as dispersed, immaterial to higher forms of accumulation and growth, need-centric in place of being market-centric, and amenable to complete deregulation? Labour's presence here is subject to the vagaries of time: the divergent, yet intersecting times of production and circulation. In the same way the co-existence of the primitive form of accumulation and virtual accumulation by high financial modes is also an illustration of double time, or more accurately heterogeneous time, which compels living labour to become fragmented, differentiated, and heterogeneous.

Marx's discussion on primitive accumulation in many ways therefore remains a classic text not only on the emergence of bio-power, but also on the simultaneity of various circuits of capital (the coordination and management of which requires governance – though as we know such governance periodically collapses). This is not only because the famous last part of *Capital* (volume one) discusses the life of labour, more accurately life of physical labour at a particular historical conjuncture - which he termed as the epoch of primitive accumulation - as the crucial component of an emerging mode of power (the power of capital), but also because of several other things, which reflect on the problematic of time in capitalist production. Primary among them are the points he made, namely, how does labour as power emerge in history? How does the owner of this power become aware of it with which from now on s/he has to survive in this world? What is the historical moment when two modes of power confront each other – power of capital and power of labour? What is the complex of circumstances under which labour as producer of value exhausts all other meanings and dimensions of life? Marx wanted to speak of capital, but here he was speaking of the process when labour is reduced to its bareness. The particular ways in which surplus value is realised as profit, average profit emerges as a crucial category in the functioning of capitalist economy, and profit is distributed among

revenue consuming classes, ensure that labour will have only a spectral presence in the formal accounts of production and circulation. Thus labour's presence is only spectral in volumes two and three of *Capital*, where Marx discussed different moments of circulation of capital. In the composition of labour, therefore, we must attend to the specific transient forms in as much as in the composition of capital we must attend to the specific forms in which capital can produce profit. These two inquiries allow us to situate the entire discussion on bio-politics in the context of accumulation. We can venture a little more and suggest, nothing is more pertinent than a discussion of post-colonial capitalism in order to bring out fully the significance of bio-politics in our time, thus the simultaneity of both coercive and non-coercive forms of power, varying modes of population management, and the way life appears as nothing but the site of labour in place of labour appearing as a site in life.

In short, then, bio-power, the equivalent of the function of modern market in terms of social governance, can thus never be fully scientifically exercised. Bio-power as the power to manage populations is severely circumscribed. Recall Foucault's arguments in *Birth of Bio-politics*, where he indicated the dilemma of modern governance, namely how to rule scientifically, least arbitrarily, that is govern least so that the society is governed best, in other words, govern best so that society has to be governed least. This is of course the classic liberal dream, somewhat dimmed in the decades of the high noon of welfare state, and now brought back to the centre stage of politics by neo-liberalism, which will now argue that through governmental promotion of market mechanisms the poorest can enter the market, and through governance of the market the governance of society can be ensured.<sup>10</sup> Yet as we know through these decades bodies never became completely docile. Physicality was not erased from life. Breadlines did not vanish. Wars did not cease. The power over life became overwhelming through a mix of violence (national, class, social, gender, race, etc.) and economy, rational governance and arbitrariness, and of the ideological hold of a myth of honesty, frugality, reward of industriousness, and dispossession of increasingly large numbers of people.

A dialectical understanding thus allows us to understand the interplay of the insecurity of labour with the way security has functioned as the major rationale of liberal rule and the subjection of population groups to liberal governmental order. Insecure labour (that is insecurity of labour) will be made not only secure for reproduction of capital (that is security of capital), but to borrow a phrase from Julian Reid and others, biopolitically "resilient" amidst conditions of insecurity to face those conditions of insecurity.<sup>11</sup>

Labour cannot be secured without completely destroying it – that is to say by minimising it to the vanishing point in the production process. The only alternative then, at least it seems so, remains that the capacity of labour will be made ready to use through reduction of human labour to a condition of dependency on state's welfare functions. Labour is thus reduced as a pathological disposition of life. This is at the core of what can be termed as the global predicament of post-colonialism. The more we witness the return of primitive accumulation in this era of globalization, the more we see the mode of social governance



in operation. The history of the *labour of life* is thus coming back, but only in a particular way. This particular way depends on the *life of labour* and the mode of reproduction of that life.

### *The Problematic of Surplus*

We all know that with the notion of socially necessary labour time, Marx interrogated how capital was formed, and how labour was needed for capital formation in a concrete way (and not as an absolutely fixed element and for all time). Yet we seldom take note how Marx used the notion of socially necessary labour time to historically explain how a population marked with all kinds of singularities and fault lines could be tuned by capitalism into a deployable mass of labourers. With the concept of socially necessary labour time, Marx was able to question the given categories of employment and unemployment, and thus the notion of “human masses” to be fed and clothed by society as a yet non-employed but employable element for capital’s reproduction. Indeed with all the characteristics of global capitalism today, labour time is increasingly socially determined – perhaps more in the postcolony. The socially necessary aspect of labour tells us of the conditions of labour under postcolonial capitalism. We do not have time here to discuss this cardinal concept. Briefly speaking, to understand what socially necessary means we have get back to the difference Marx made between abstract and concrete labour. While concrete labour would indicate activities towards producing some use value, that is to say concrete labour could be important for the creation of value, but this had to be a social use-value, in other words under capitalism necessary labour has to be exchangeable qua commodities, so that the use value was realized. In other words, labour that conveyed value was to be carried out in a manner that was *socially* defined. The implications of this argument are manifold, particularly in the discussion of population under capitalism. We shall not have any more a notion of *human* labour irrespective of time, place, and history, but labour conditioned by historical forces. With social determination of necessary labour, wages would fluctuate according to all manner of things, according to struggles between labourers and capitalists, and value tied to labour time now would fluctuate with them. For the capitalist expropriation of surplus-value, there must be now mediating devices, including structured population groups; otherwise there will be no possibility of wages, markets, or accumulation.

Indeed, with the interface of neo-liberalism and postcolonial dynamics of accumulation, the insights of Marx are now clearer than ever. It is important therefore that we treat the question of population under capitalism dialectically – as abstracts of labouring groups as well as historically possible or enabled abstractions in the light of capital’s accumulation. This takes us directly to the issue of economic management of society and the notion of national economy.

In the first two decades of decolonization of India, with emphasis on planning and industrialization massive displacements and dispossession took place. Yet with state drive for industrialization, strengthening of the big bourgeoisie, and expansion of public sector (steel, coal, railways, and banking being four important

industries), the number of workers grew, while the state from the third decade of independence started giving attention to the stability of peasant economy so that agrarian crisis and peasant revolts would not jeopardize national stability and the drive for industrialization.<sup>12</sup> It was in this way that the peasant economy was formally subsumed in the capitalist economy of India. Today with uncertain market of food grains products and on the other hand spiralling commodity markets in land and minerals such as iron ore, uranium, or sand mining, plus spurt in financial investment, rental growth, care services, infrastructural growth, and waste recycling, and the destruction of self-subsistence economy, we find dispossession of peasant labour proceeding at a furious pace. The question is: What kind of labour market is being produced as consequence? We cannot simply say labour, dispossessed as a consequence of primitive accumulation, now inhabits the need economy. We have to see if this is indeed actually happening, also the ways in which the disparate forms of labour are contributing to accumulation and circulation process. Else, the argument would be a kind of Malthusian division of labour. The stake in the concept of surplus labour is therefore strategic. We have to examine the concept of *surplus* - mainly surplus labour, and associated with other forms of surplus, such as surplus population, surplus humanity, surplus time, surplus stock, surplus money, surplus credit, surplus land, etc. - because in calculations of profit the surplus if not realised as profit is waste, surplus is idle, surplus is non-productive unless this surplus will be ready at hand to be redeployed in production. Any analysis of capitalism, or for that matter wealth, wrestles with the notion of surplus. The economy has to wrestle with how to situate the *surplus*, which will otherwise appear to the economy as *superfluous*.

The process of production, considered on one hand as the unity of the process of labour (known as labour process) and the process of creating value, is production of commodities; considered on the other hand as the unity of the labour-process and the process of producing surplus-value, it is the capitalist process of production. Therefore, in the creation of surplus-value it does not in the least matter, whether the labour appropriated by the capitalist is simple unskilled labour of average quality or more complicated skilled labour. On the other hand, in every process of creating value, the reduction of skilled labour to average social labour, *e.g.*, one day of skilled to six days of unskilled labour, is unavoidable.<sup>13</sup> In this analysis by Marx the crucial issue is how this labour regardless of its quality produces surplus. Few things are important here:

- (a) The fact that labour in need economy is simple, etc., does not alter the fact that through the capitalist process of production and circulation a certain amount of surplus labour is realized in the economy in terms of profit.
- (b) Capital does not invent surplus labour. Wherever a part of society possesses the monopoly of the means of production, the labourer, free or not free, has to add to the working-time necessary for his/her own maintenance an extra working-time in order to produce the means of subsistence for the owners of the means of production. What is crucial is that in capitalism the surplus is hidden in the essential. Indeed thus one can argue that in postcolonial capitalism the surplus labour is socially realized in an even more enigmatic form, where apparently the labour producing the surplus is even

more naturalized as existing in form of “need enclosure”, and where the products of the labour of this surplus humanity is realized through long circulation channel in a different way beyond the contractual and standardized wage form.

- (c) In elaborating the idea of a relative surplus population under capitalist production system, Marx said, “it is capitalistic accumulation itself that constantly produces, and produces indeed in direct relation with its own energy and extent, a relatively redundant working population, *i.e.*, a population which is superfluous to capital’s average requirements for its own valorisation and is therefore a surplus population.”<sup>14</sup>

Now these famous words:

Owing to the magnitude of already functioning social capital, and the degree of its increase, owing to the extension of the scale of production, and the great mass of the workers set in motion, owing to the development of the productivity of their labour, and the greater breadth and richness of the stream springing from all the sources of wealth, there is also an extension of the scale on which greater attraction of workers by capital is accompanied by their greater repulsion; an increase takes place in the rapidity of the change in the organic composition of capital and in its technical form, and an increasing number of spheres of production become involved in this change, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes alternately. The working population therefore produces both the accumulation of capital and the means by which it is itself made relatively superfluous; and it does this to an extent, which is always increasing. This is a law of population peculiar to the capitalist mode of production...<sup>15</sup>

In short, concepts of want, need, necessity, subsistence, and surplus – all having their basis in reality - also create a fetish in the form of a binary of employment and non-employment, and accumulation and need. Even in the midst of the Second World War, or because it was war time, the Beveridge Report in United Kingdom busted the phoney debate on “full employment”, and identified five factors as five giant evils in society: squalor, ignorance, want, idleness, and disease, and suggested the institution of what later came to be known as the social welfare state that would guarantee “full employment” (unemployment at not more than 3 per cent).<sup>16</sup> There could not be any natural surplus population.

In order to make the society the site of working population unemployment had to be governed. Factory legislations and recognition of trade unions were already parts of the task of governing unemployment, more so because socialist appeals increasingly found audience in a new form of collective identity called the “unemployed”. People without work or needing more work, though having a long history, now became crucial in the context of governing the labour market. For a long time the unemployed was treated in abstract terms as a quantity of surplus labour produced by the industrial system – a normal feature of economic life under capitalism. However capitalism now needed public organization of the labour market. Unemployment was a risk that needed to be attended to, governed. The risk was not only of social unrest but also one of large sections of working population becoming unemployable (due to diseases, poverty, ill health, lack of training and education, absence of mobility and infrastructure, etc.). Social insurance developed in this context. The worker and the potential worker had to be a social citizen. Unemployment was not an individual guilt. If at all, it was a burden of the entire society and not of industries and the particular families and

localities only. Society had to ensure that the population could be a working population that is ready to work under capitalist economy. The concept of making population resilient emerged in this context. Social assistance was now dependable on hard, quantifiable, and a standardized notion of unemployment as poverty and need. We have to remember that assistance could never be presented as alms or charity in an age of democracy. Work was now a “right”. Getting work was a right - a public right consequential to making the population “working”

Ironically, in this way, managing population has gradually become linked to the idea of national economy, and more fundamentally to the idea of the nation as economy. The nation is a natural ground of employment policies under the garb of population policies. Neoliberalism has only reinforced this phenomenon. Thus, today there are strategies of transforming a population from an idle one to a working one through improving specially earmarked localities, groups of people, institutions, training modes, etc. Offering a new deal is thus a permanent feature of the capitalist management of population.<sup>17</sup>

We do not have much scope here to present this process in details, but at least we should examine little more the concept of surplus lurking behind the problematic of full employment.

When will surplus become “surplus capital” that is waste, and in the same measure “surplus labour” as “human waste”? Again, we do not have the scope here to discuss the point in detail, save by saying that we have to note how Marx deals with fixed capital and circulating capital. Marx says, “The elements of fluid capital are just as permanently fixed in the production process - if this is to be continuous - as are elements of fixed capital.”<sup>18</sup> In other words, we have to judge the labour of the repair mechanic of a scooter, car, bicycle, transistor or television set, or of one engaged in e-waste recycling as precisely the one who is effecting the turnover time of capital represented by the machine, scooter, car, etc., etc., because these exactly like the classic machine or the railway tracks influence its capacity to produce the surplus. Labour as a permanent element of capital has to be kept in right shape and right size. Marx made this clearer and we have to listen to him attentively,

The fixed capital also requires positive outlays of labour if it is to be kept in good condition. The machinery must be cleaned from time to time. This involves additional labour without which it becomes unfit for use, of merely warding off the noxious influences of the elements, which are inseparable from the process of production; hence it is a question of keeping the machinery literally in working order. The normal life span of fixed capital is naturally reckoned on the assumption that the conditions under which it can function normally during that time are fulfilled, just as it is assumed, in if the average life of a man is taken as thirty years, that he washes himself. What is involved here is not the replacement of the labour contained in the machine, but the additional labour that is constantly necessary for it to be used. This is not a matter of labour performed by the machine, but of labour performed on the machine; here it is not an agent of production but rather raw material. The capital spent on this labour is part of the fluid capital, even though it does not properly enter into the actual labour-process to which the product owes its origin. This labour must be constantly performed in the course of production, and so its value must be constantly replaced by the value of the product. The capital spent on it belongs to that part of the fluid capital that has to cover the general overheads, and is distributed over the value of the product according to an average annual calculation.<sup>19</sup>

In these extremely dense lines Marx lays bare the provisional nature of the temporalities of two types of capital, their mutually transforming nature, and tells us exactly in what way labour involved in the life span

of a machine (a productive commodity or any other productive commodity) produces the surplus, so that the mutually constituting relation between the productive and waste is laid bare. We can also why Foucault in spite of his life long effort to theorise power could not get to the crux of the relation between life and labour, and what made labour productive of life. Perhaps one reason is that he did not pay enough attention to the way Marx waged battle against Malthus and the extreme biologism of late eighteenth and nineteenth century and the social Darwinism of that time.

### *Population and the Question of Primitive Accumulation*

Marx wrote in *Capital* (Volume One),

The lowest sediment of the relative surplus population finally dwells in the sphere of pauperism. Exclusive of vagabonds, criminals, prostitutes, in a word, the “dangerous” classes, this layer of society consists of three categories. First, those able to work... Second, orphans and pauper children... These are candidates for the industrial reserve army, and are, in times of great prosperity, as 1860, e.g., speedily and in large numbers enrolled in the active army of labourers. Third, the demoralised and ragged, and those unable to work, chiefly people who succumb to their incapacity for adaptation, due to the division of labour; people who have passed the normal age of the labourer; the victims of industry, whose number increases with the increase of dangerous machinery, of mines, chemical works, &c., the mutilated, the sickly, the widows, &c. Pauperism is the hospital of the active labour-army and the dead weight of the industrial reserve army. Its production is included in that of the relative surplus population, its necessity in theirs; along with the surplus population, pauperism forms a condition of capitalist production, and of the capitalist development of wealth. It enters into the *faux frais* of capitalist production; but capital knows how to throw these, for the most part, from its own shoulders on to those of the working class and the lower middle class. The greater the social wealth, the functioning capital, the extent and energy of its growth, and, therefore, also the absolute mass of the proletariat and the productiveness of its labour, the greater is the industrial reserve army... This is the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation. Like all other laws it is modified in its working by many circumstances, the analysis of which does not concern us here.<sup>20</sup>

And, then in less noticed note, he wrote on Malthus in the same book,

“Corn and labour rarely march quite abreast; but there is an obvious limit, beyond which they cannot be separated. With regard to the unusual exertions made by the labouring classes in periods of dearth, which produce the fall of wages noticed in the evidence” (namely, before the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry, 1814-15), “they are most meritorious in the individuals, and certainly favour the growth of capital. But no man of humanity could wish to see them constant and unremitted. They are most admirable as a temporary relief; but if they were constantly in action, effects of a similar kind would result from them, as from the population of a country being pushed to the very extreme limits of its food.” (Malthus: “Inquiry into the Nature and Progress of Rent,” Lond., 1815, p. 48, note) All honour to Malthus that he lays stress on the lengthening of the hours of labour, a fact to which he elsewhere in his pamphlet draws attention, while Ricardo and others, in face of the most notorious facts, make invariability in the length of the working day the groundwork of all their investigations. *But the conservative interests, which Malthus served, prevented him from seeing that an unlimited prolongation of the working day, combined with an extraordinary development of machinery, and the exploitation of women and children, must inevitably have made a great portion of the working-class “superfluous,” particularly whenever the war should have ceased, and the monopoly of England in the markets of the world should have come to an end. It was, of course, far more convenient, and much more in conformity with the interests of the ruling classes, whom Malthus adored like a true priest, to explain this “over-population” by the eternal laws of Nature, rather than by the historical laws of capitalist production.*<sup>21</sup> (Italics mine)

In short the production of relative surplus has an absolute dimension, in other words, the absolute must be seen as contingent on certain factors. In this way Marx get to terms with the holy distinctions of categories bourgeois political economy was producing. Once again on Malthus he wrote some pages later,

Malthus, about the year 1820, advocated a division of labour, which assigns to the capitalist actually engaged in production, the business of accumulating, and to the other sharers in surplus-value, to the landlords, the placemen, the beneficed clergy, &c., the business of spending. It is of the highest importance, he says, "to keep separate the passion for expenditure and the passion for accumulation." The capitalists having long been good livers and men of the world, uttered loud cries. What, exclaimed one of their spokesmen, a disciple of Ricardo, Mr. Malthus preaches high rents, heavy taxes, &c., so that the pressure of the spur may constantly be kept on the industrious by unproductive consumers! By all means, production, production on a constantly increasing scale, runs the shibboleth; but "production will, by such a process, be far more curbed in than spurred on. Nor is it quite fair thus to maintain in idleness a number of persons, only to pinch others, who are likely, from their characters, if you can force them to work, to work with success." Unfair as he finds it to spur on the industrial capitalist, by depriving him of his bread, yet he thinks it necessary to reduce the labourer's wages to a minimum "to keep him industrious." Nor does he for a moment conceal the fact, that the appropriation of unpaid labour is the secret of surplus-value. "Increased demand on the part of the labourers means nothing more than their willingness to take less of their own product for themselves, and leave a greater part of it to their employers; and if it be said, that this begets glut, by lessening consumption" (on the part of the labourers), "I can only reply that glut is synonymous with large profits." The learned disputation, how the booty pumped out of the labourer may be divided, with most advantage to accumulation, between the industrial capitalist and the rich idler, was hushed in face of the revolution of July. Shortly afterwards, the town proletariat at Lyons sounded the tocsin of revolution, and the country proletariat in England began to set fire to farm-yards and corn-stacks. On this side of the Channel Owenism began to spread; on the other side, St. Simonism and Fourierism. The hour of vulgar economy had struck. Exactly a year before Nassau W. Senior discovered at Manchester, that the profit (including interest) of capital is the product of the last hour of the twelve, he had announced to the world another discovery. "I substitute," he proudly says, "for the word capital, considered as an instrument of production, the word abstinence."<sup>22</sup>

While these comments by Marx are self-explanatory in terms of understanding the relation of capital with population, they suggest that the working *class* is not a "given" of capital. Capital puts to its mill the working population. But the class is produced from a complex dynamics, which would include politics and struggle besides the economy of production. Yet there is something more to note in this: Marx's arguments against Malthus and his own analysis of the law of population under capitalism (in the form of a reserve army of labour or a relative surplus population) appears as part of his larger analysis of what he called "general law of capitalist accumulation" (*Capital*, Part VII, Chapter 25, Sections 3-4), and before Marx introduces his analysis of primitive accumulation (Part VIII). The historical tendency of primitive accumulation acts as a constant reminder of the background against which population becomes relatively surplus – globally or in a specific country. Commentaries on *Capital* have often ignored the organic link between the two crucial aspects of Marx's analysis of accumulation of capital. Yet we have to be cautious in theorising the link. While there is no doubt that increasing peasant dispossession and devastation of some sections of the middle classes and self-employed groups of population is a secular feature of global economy today, as many have pointed out, the resilience of peasant, small holding based, primary crop dominated economy is not over.<sup>23</sup> It will for long provide partial sustenance to the vast majority of population in ex-colonial countries. This feature not only reflects on the question of transition, it also tells us how the disposition of entire population groups will be negotiated by neo-liberal capitalism.

Before we end this paper, five observations reflecting on this are in order, and they all point to the contradictory nature of the population question under capitalism:

First, in the background of globalisation where neoliberalism has combined with postcolonial capitalism, “population” is no longer seen as an unmixed burden. While four decades ago, population was seen as a burden in postcolonial countries, today as we are told “mass” of young, educated to some extent, employable population is a gift. Given that migrant workers are needed throughout the globe as farm workers, contract labour in construction industry, service workers in education, care, and entertainment industry, IT workers, and labour in several other sectors of economy, migration has become today an inbuilt factor in the population question. The fate of capitalism in the West and globally will depend on the flow of labour. Much of the disposition of this labour will be in the form of informal arrangements with roving bands of labour reminding one of nineteenth century. Capitalists of a postcolonial country now look forward to inward remittances to augment the country’s total profit stock couched in the language of GDP. Population hence today is a global question. Indeed, migration management becomes the core of population management and population control. It becomes the key to have politics with right kind of population, the right size and right shape. But this also brings out a great paradox of our time: On one hand, population management is increasingly securitised with the military forces deployed to contain population mobility, on the other hand capitalism in its neoliberal form is dependant more than ever on migrant labour. Migration is the theatre of the mimesis of capitalism.

Second neoliberalism has taught the society that the latter has to be market enabled. Thus everyone – the poor, disabled, the refugee, the child – literally everyone can become a market enabled actor in one way or another. It will begin from home, which can become a site of production for the market. This is the education by social governance. Technology is an intrinsic part of the social management of population, it now shapes population. Yet in this case too, the globalisation of access to market runs along with a contradictory phenomenon of capitalism, namely the increasingly skewed nature of the market of commodities, such as foodstuff and other essentials of life. If the emergence of a country, say China, betoken a redistribution of the cake among its eaters, not without reason bourgeois politicians and crown kings are worried today over the total availability of food and a consequent rise in food prices. We cannot be surprised then when we hear a bourgeois politician like Hillary Clinton concerned with finding right policy solutions on issues like biotechnology and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) like food, climate change, animal rights, use of antibiotics for farm animals for non-therapeutic reasons, guaranteeing farm subsidies, food safety, and enacting immigration reforms towards ensuring a steady supply of agricultural labour in the United States.<sup>24</sup> They all reflect on the vexed relation between technology and population. They also collectively act as the other scene of a similarly vexed relation between climate change and population management. In the late nineteenth century, Mike Davis showed how *El Nino* famines and large scale peasant dispossessions combined to produce what he called the “late Victorian holocausts”.<sup>25</sup> With the disasters of past ages inscribed in the historical memory of bourgeois society, capitalism is now engaged with shaping its population policy regarding mass diseases and climatic disorders like sustained draughts and floods.

Unsurprisingly, the solution is not new. It is geared towards earmarking, containing, confining, and isolating the “carrier groups”(of diseases or draughts).

Third, with the re-emergence of primitive accumulation (through various forms and regimes of dispossession<sup>26</sup>) and a large army of labour, the breakdown of subsistence agriculture does not lead to any Malthusian scenario. From plough to pick – from tilling to artisanal mining - there is now a range of labour forms serving the dynamics of capital accumulation. Entire life is now subject to labouring needs of capital. And, this transformation is taking place under democratic functioning, which means the democratic right to join the labour market. Democracy had never been so capital-friendly. A mix of social governance, welfarism, and state role in expanding the market and weathering adverse effects of market contraction has become now crucial in making the population capital-friendly.<sup>27</sup> Yet populations cannot be capital-friendly across the range in the same manner, because population control technologies produce racial divisions in the form of identifying groups as targets of these technologies.

Fourth, as hereditary and accumulated wealth becomes crucial for the expansion of capital (there is never a pure aristocrat!!) in form of rent, interest, social capital, etc., capital’s expansion tries to avoid the albatross of a population hanging around its neck. Idle bourgeoisie, idle towns, idle assets, and idle countries may become a big feature of global capitalism.<sup>28</sup> Coupled with the re-emergence of a bourgeoisie wallowing in interest and rent produced wealth, there is a rise in penal populations everywhere sought to be confined to islands, penal colonies, and at times entire countries marked as penal lands such as parts of Africa, Central America, and the Middle East. Again they remind us of a nineteenth century history of penal colonies such as Penang, Malacca, or the Andaman. These penal lands are also lands whose millions of people have been punished through war (Libya, Iraq, or Afghanistan). In fact war reappearing as the other side of wealth periodically rearranges population groups for global labour market – a fact underplayed by demographers and economists.<sup>29</sup> The consequent re-ordering of space in its relation to population results in distinct spaces of war, deluge, and exclusion, and other spaces of production, consumption, and wealth. How will the expansion of the democratic right of all population groups to market succeed in this context?

Finally, the rise of a corporate class marked by opulence (and philanthropy) has been possible because commodities are being produced and supplied in the global market by the new factories of the world, for instance China or India, which results in massive expansion of the global working force. It provokes what Immanuel Ness calls “Southern Insurgency”. It also brings back to our analysis of Marx’s argument about relative surplus population and a reserve army of labour. The global reserve army of labour of course today has among its ranks refugees, internally displaced, dispossessed peasants, convicts, child labour, workers under new forms of servitude, ecologically marginal groups, and all those who are at the receiving end of what Michel Foucault would have perhaps called “just measure of punishment” – punishment according to the requirements of the bourgeois society. And yet, and by the same token, it is not only the punitive policy



under capitalism that contributes to the growth in penal populations, it is machines and technologies that work to an increasing extent as the “measure of men”.

So to the question - is there any theory of population in *Capital* - the short answer will be that capital needs its law of population contingent of course on its specific form and time. Producing a relative surplus population is an absolute law of capital. But there is a long answer, and this too comes out of Marx's writings, namely that, how life is processed in the dynamics of capital will shape the form of working population. Remember, for capitalism life is working life; population is working population. From research in life sciences, food stuff, agriculture, robotics, and several other things – the idea is to produce life (we call it artificial life, artificial intelligence, strong, sturdy, yet “docile bodies” capable of flexible tasks) so that capitalism can escape the triangulation of life, labour, and capital. Recall also our earlier discussion on the fixed and variable. Capitalism would increasingly like everything as fixed and least variable. Yet in reducing the uncertainties of life and labour, capitalism attempts to create a system which cannot be “fixed as real life”. In the floating dynamics marked by flexible arrangements of labour supply, raw material supply, and commodity supply – a kind of flexible arrangement that is enabled by logistical finesse and constant policy shifts<sup>30</sup> – we have the biggest irony. The irony lies in the attempt by capitalism to make labour fixed and capital, which now takes various life forms, variable. It is as an unbearable tension that often breaks out in crises forms and can result in a strategic break down in near foreseeable future. Neoliberalism is trying desperately to defuse the possibilities of such breakdown with its new found arsenal of making populations resilient. At the same time, it is an evidence of a false dichotomy. We should by now realise why Marx refused to categorise “people” and “population” as distinctly separate entities in his study of capitalism.

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<sup>1</sup> J.G.A Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975); also Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the Modern State*, trans. Maurizio Boscagli (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999)

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population: An Essay on the Principle of Population, as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and Other Writers*. (London, 1798), p. 8 - <http://www.esp.org/books/malthus/population/malthus.pdf> (accessed on 1 November 2017)

<sup>3</sup> Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Chapter 19, Section 11, “Over-Production, ‘Unproductive Consumers’, etc”

<sup>4</sup> The purpose is to encourage investment in Africa, the second largest continent with several languages spoken by its 1.1 billion population strength. Commonwealth Funds has developed the Africa Fund, designed to benefit from the emerging African economies and growing consumer strength. The Fund aims to access companies involved in enterprises in financial products, healthcare initiatives, transportation, tourism, and power generation facilities. Towards this aim it studies inter-government networks and other private networks, particular marketplaces where the financial instruments of the companies are traded, legal frameworks and governance modes and procedures, and financial systems for providing information for the investors.

<sup>5</sup> On this - <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> (accessed on 1 October 2017)

<sup>6</sup> For after all life and labour still remain organically connected under postcolonial condition, while elsewhere capitalism succeeded to a considerable extent separating the two, where life denotes leisure, creativity, and culture, and labour seems to signify routine, draining, obligatory things of life. The social world of labour has been disconnected from the productive world of labour, whereas in the postcolonial world the two worlds seem to connect to each other more and more. In some way a shoe worker's son, Harry Braverman anticipated this contradiction in *Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, Twenty-fifth anniversary edition (1974, New York: Monthly Review Press,

1998). Braverman noted the contradiction between “descriptions of scientific-technical revolution and increasing division of work into petty operations” (p.3). Braverman set his findings in the context of contemporary euphoria over capitalism enabling greater leisure for the working people because of industrial advance. New technology had raised levels of skill and responsibility. New wealth and leisure meant increased well-being rather than increased misery, and industrialism was pluralistic and power was diffuse (pp. x-xi). But, importantly, Braverman did not argue that the average level of skill in society would decline as a result of further division of labour under capitalism but with new machines the gap between “the scientific and educated content of labour” and the average worker would increase; thus it was not a “question of averaging but polarising” between scientific knowledge and skill embodied in the new machines and the routine, fragmentary operations embodied in labour needed for the former. (p. 294-295)

<sup>7</sup>Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1990), chapter 25, section 3, : “Progressive Production of a Relative Surplus Population or Industrial Reserve Army”, p. 446

<sup>8</sup>Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1, An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), pp. 141-142

<sup>9</sup>Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, Lectures at College de France, 1975-76, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 249

<sup>10</sup>Yet these decades were also of neo-colonial wars and plunder. Precisely at this time when neo-liberal thought was taking shape, Paul Sweezy and Paul A. Baran wrote *Monopoly Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966), and Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff wrote, *The End of Prosperity* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977)

<sup>11</sup>Brad Evans and Julian Reid, *Resilient Life: The Art of Living Dangerously* (London: Polity Press, 2014); also David Chandler and Julian Reid, *The Neoliberal Subject: Resilience, Adaptation, and Vulnerability* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016)

<sup>12</sup>This is a well-documented history. Interested readers may see, Wolf Ladejinsky, *Agrarian Reforms as Unfinished Business: The Selected Papers of Wolf Ladejinsky*, ed. Louis J. Walinsky (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Francine R. Frankel, *India's Political Economy: The Gradual Revolution, 1947-1975* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979); also *India's Green Revolution: Economic Gains and Political Costs*, 1971 (reprint, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015). On bank nationalization in India in the same period, Suhit K. Sen, “The Politics of Bank Nationalisation in India” in Iman Kumar Mitra, Ranabir Samaddar, and Samita Sen, *Accumulation in Post-Colonial Capitalism* (Singapore: Springer, 2017), chapter 7, pp. 125-145. Reservation for the small-scale sector was first introduced in 1967, and gradually the number of reserved items was increased. Besides bank nationalization and reforms in setting agricultural prices, during the same period Clause 5B in the Industrial Disputes Act was introduced in 1976 making difficult for larger firms to close down. During this era coal mines were nationalised. Finally in 1985 the Sick Industrial Companies Act came and the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) was set up. Attempts to stabilize the small holdings are to be seen in this background.

<sup>13</sup>*Capital*, Volume 1 (Penguin edition), p. 306

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 782

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 783-784

<sup>16</sup>William Beveridge's book, *Full Employment in a Free Society* (1944) argued that because individual employers were incapable of ensuring full employment, the state must come forward to make it possible. Full employment meant a condition where there were slightly more vacant jobs than there are available workers, so people who lost jobs could find new ones immediately. He argued that the upward pressure on wages, due to the increased bargaining strength of labour, would be eased by rising productivity, and kept in check by a system of wage arbitration. The cooperation of workers would be secured by the common interest in the ideal of full employment. Pre-war unemployment, beginning with the Great Depression, was due to ineffective demand for industrial products, imperfect labour mobility and general labour market disorganisation. Instead, the economy should be planned, so that demand is socialised, and supply is maintained at all times. Fiscal policies should be accordingly framed, and the budget should encourage increased spending. The Social Security proposals known as the Beveridge Report reflected these ideas. One could see, how on one hand war and pre-war unemployment with attending misery, were ghosts stalking the capitalist order, on the other hand the bourgeois experts refused to admit that unemployment was a natural state of things, and it was a condition which could be and had to be rectified.

<sup>17</sup>On this one of the insightful discussions, William Walters, *Unemployment and Government: Genealogies of the Social* (Cambridge University Press, 2000)

<sup>18</sup>*Capital* (Volume One, Moscow edition), p. 248

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 253

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 450-451

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, Chapter 17, n 7, p. 374

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 419

<sup>23</sup>On the historical significance of this feature, Ravi Palat, *The Making of an Indian Ocean World-Economy, 1250-1650: Princes, Paddy Fields, and Bazaars* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015)

<sup>24</sup>“Election 2016: Hillary Clinton could continue food policy progress” - <https://www.fooddive.com/news/election-clinton-food-policy/428930/> (accessed on 1 November 2017); see also, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=115944> (accessed on 1 November 2017)

<sup>25</sup>Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Nino Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2002)

<sup>26</sup>On regimes of dispossession, see Michael Levien, “From Primitive Accumulation to Regimes of Dispossession: Six Theses on India’s Land Question”, 2015 - <http://krieger.jhu.edu/arrighi/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2015/03/Theses-on-Indias-Land-Question-3.4.pdf> (accessed on 12 October 2017)

<sup>27</sup>The idea of basic income flows from this. It brings back the idea of full employment by another door. The assumption that basic income can be an improvement on the status quo is contingent on several factors. As has been pointed out, income support was provided to keep the dangerous classes in check, and income support was provided from time to time at levels low enough to maintain a supply of the worst paid workers. Neoliberalism intensifies the effort to ensure a plentiful supply of low paid and precarious workers. Basic income not only avoids struggle for better wages, it is a regressive model at one level for the poor people outside of the workforce, and at another level, for the lowest paid workers. In effect it may become a subsidy to employers paid for out of the tax revenues and financed by cuts to broader public services. See on this - <http://socialistproject.ca/bullet/1494.php#continue>

<sup>28</sup>This is the context in which one has to read Marx’s analysis in Section 3 of Chapter 24 of *Capital*, titled, “Separation of Surplus-Value into Capital and Revenue: The Abstinence Theory”

<sup>29</sup>The question of war in this context is brought out by among others Partha Chatterjee, “Land and the Political Management of Primitive Accumulation” in Anthony P. D’Costa and Achin Chakraborty (eds.), *The Land Question in India: State, Dispossession, and Capitalist Transition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 1-15 (19?)

<sup>30</sup>On the background of the emergence of policy regimes enabling this flexibility in postcolonial economy, see Itty Abraham, “From the Commission to the Mission Model: Technology Czars and the Indian Middle Class”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Volume 76 (3), 2017, pp. 675-696