

Gramsci's Integral State and the Relational Nature of World Order: Shifting Institutional Dynamics within the IMF

Introduction

A point of controversy with respect to the application of Antonio Gramsci's concepts in International Relations (IR) and International Political Economy (IPE) theory has pertained to whether they are applicable to historical circumstances very different from his epoch (Bellamy 1990, Germain and Kenny 2001, Bieler and Morton 2001: 7-12; Schwartzmantel 2009: 9). One particular conceptual controversy, which will be the focus of this paper, was initially brought forward by Germain and Kenny and focused on the applicability of Gramsci's concept of the 'integral state' (ie. civil society + political society) to an increasingly globalized world. Notably, they disputed the possibility of a truly global civil society put forward by the 'new Gramscians' without the existence of a global or international state in the specific sense given to it by Gramsci (2001: 385). However, the re-examination of the concept of 'integral state' in this paper will not be done to argue the inapplicability of Gramsci's concepts to contemporary historical 'global' forms, but will be done as an act of "de-sedimentation" in the Derridean sense of the term to remove accumulated meanings so as to perhaps open up them up different "possibilities of arrangement or assembling" (Rajan 2000: 216). Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that the controversy regarding the applicability of the concept of civil society to a global scale has recently been worked on extensively and convincingly by other authors (see Morton 2007: chapters 3 to 6, and Worth 2009). Therefore, in view of these factors, this paper will re-examine the concept of the 'integral state' not with the goal of elaborating a more correct or authentic interpretation of the concept, but rather to open it to different 'possibilities of arrangement' in view of recent developments with regard to shifting power dynamics within the world's global governance structures. Specifically, with a modified conception of the 'integral state', I will demonstrate how changes in power dynamics within global governance structures – with a focus on the growing assertiveness of the so-called BRIC (Brazil-Russia-India-China) countries within the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – can be accounted for within a Gramscian theoretical framework without reference to problematic notions global or transnational civil society, and without having to rely on 'state-centric' approaches to international politics.

At the heart of the issue is that the concept of the state, as in the national state apparatus, is often used interchangeably with political society among the multiple neo-Gramscian perspectives. Additionally, that one of Gramsci's three formulations of the 'integral state', which conceptualizes political society and civil society as being 'co-extensive' rather than two different 'regions' has unfortunately been neglected within those perspectives. In view of these factors, one can generalize that there have been two broad approaches to the 'integral state' within that broad tradition in IR and IPE. The first broad approach, associated with the work of Robert Cox and Stephen Gill, conceives of the emergence of a global or transnational civil society that has contributed to the formation of a 'transnational historical bloc' that seeks to promote its interests through the coordination of international, regional, and national institutions. As Mark Rupert argues from this perspective, the emergence of a "global civil society" has not been hampered in the absence of a matching "global political state" (Rupert 1998: 433). Therefore, in a sense, the 'internationalisation' of production led to the emergence of global social forces that arise within and beyond national states, and other institutions of 'embedded

liberalism', and fall back upon them so as to create an institutional 'synthesis' through the coordination of different national, regional, and global institutions. The second broad approach goes as far as to claim that due to diverse phenomena associated with the process of globalization that there is the creation of two sets of 'integral states'; one at the national level and the other at the global level (Robinson 2006). In view of these different and sometimes unclear conceptions of the 'integral state', a re-examination of the concept will be done with reference to Peter Thomas' recent monograph on the subject (2010).

By reviewing the articulation of the 'integral state' that conceptualizes civil society and political society as being 'co-extensive', one can avoid the necessity of creating separate sets of civil society and political society when analyzing multi-scalar world orders. Notably, because the 'co-extensive' 'integral state' is not understood to be constituted by two distinct 'regions', but rather as a dialectical unity of civil society and political society whereby the former constitutes an 'abstraction' from the latter that is ideological as well as material; there is no need replicate 'integral states' across spatial scales. With this particular articulation of the 'integral state', Gramsci conceptualized political society as being a 'speculative juridical resolution' of civil society's divisions that seeks to 'enwrap' and shape it with the goal of unity as part of broader class projects. Conversely, because it is dialectically linked to civil society, unity must also be constructed within political society (Thomas 2010: 190). This paper will argue that it can be theoretically fruitful to conceptualize governance mechanisms situated beyond the state as being situated within political society in a way that continues to be dialectically linked to the civil societies of national social formations. In other words, governance structures situated beyond the state could be conceptualized as further abstractions of political society driven through and beyond national state structures. From the point of view of the totality of social relations, such governance structures could be understood as being situated within the same political society as national states, and therefore dialectically linked to social forces that are either national or transnational in outlook and that are situated, but not limited to the civil societies of national states.

Nevertheless, situating both national state structures, as well as sub-state ones, and global governance structures in a same political society does not need to imply that they constitute an undifferentiated mass of institutions devoid of space, hierarchy, or power relations. In order to avoid what Morton calls the 'flattened ontologies' of certain neo-Gramscian analyses of globalization, such as the one put forward by Robinson (Morton 2007: 147), this paper will demonstrate that a relational approach to scale articulated by Robert Brenner and Bob Jessop, which views institutional matrixes such as the national state as social relations, is quite compatible with the application of the 'co-extensive' 'integral state' to a global scale. Notably, the 'co-extensive' 'integral state', with its emphasis on 'enwrapping' civil society so as to unite it, is quite consistent with a relational approach as unity within both conceptual frameworks is an ultimate driving force. Importantly, however, unity is never assumed *a priori*, and never entirely achieved, and can only be approximated through 'hegemonic projects' carried out by social forces. Specifically, they are carried out in institutional 'matrixes' or 'strategic fields' shaped by the presence of social relations (Brenner 2004: 86). As such, the national state, and therefore other institutional entities, should all be understood as interconnected social relations. By approaching all institutions in this manner, it becomes easier to apprehend how shifting power relations within global governance structures such as the IMF are linked to shifts in other

institutional scales such as the national state, and relate dialectically to development in civil society rooted in national state spaces.

Neo-Gramscian Perspectives and the Integral State

This section of the paper will provide a brief review of the two principal, and in no way exclusive manners, in which the concept of the ‘integral state’ is conceptualized within the neo-Gramscian perspectives as a launching point for re-examining the concept. To begin, it is important to note that the concept of the ‘integral state’ has not necessarily been at the centre of many neo-Gramscian approaches to IR/IPE. Even when discussing the moving parts of world orders, beyond the sphere of production or economic base, at the superstructural level there is much more focus on social forces and states than civil society and political society. For example, see Cox’s important foundational essay “Social Forces, States, and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory” in which there is but a brief discussion of the ‘integral state’ (1981). In so doing, the neo-Gramscian approach has not garnered the full conceptual power of an important tool in Gramsci’s theoretical repertoire. This may have contributed to some conceptual confusion as to the relation between civil society and institutions at different scalar levels whether they be regional, national, or global.

The first, and more common, approach expounded by authors like Cox and Gill has much in common with the one proposed by William I. Robinson, but nonetheless does not make the proposition that there is a such a thing as a ‘transnational state.’ Instead, there is more of an emphasis on world orders and historical blocks. Cox argues that the growing internationalisation of production contributed to the creation of a ‘transnational managerial class’ that increasingly managed the growing transnationalization of production and finance (Cox 1981: 147). Furthermore, this ‘transnational managerial class’, depending on the state, tends to lead classes that are more internationally-oriented and oppose more nationally-oriented classes (1981: 147-146). In terms of a hegemonic world order, Cox argues that they are based not only on inter-state conflict, but also “upon a globally-conceived civil society, ie., a mode of production of global extent which brings about links among social classes of the countries that accompany it” (Cox 1993: 63). However, contrary to Robinson, Cox does not put forward the concept of a globally-conceived state to match the globally conceived civil society, but rather, he argues: “There is, in effect, no explicit political or authority structure for the global economy. There is, nevertheless...something that could be described by the French word ‘nebuleuse’ or by the notion of ‘governance without government’” (Cox 1992: 30). The ‘nebuleuse’ is, in fact, made up of national state institutions close to the global economy as well as other institutions and actors in the global economy. With such a formulation, the national state acts as a ‘transmission belt’ for the interests of global capital (Panitch 2004: 21). Instead of talking of a ‘nebuleuse’, Gill talks of a ‘transnational historical bloc’, which operates in and across nations to ‘embed’ politically neo-liberal hegemony. However, national states are less passive agents within his framework as dominant states often work to provide greater protection for capital through the construction of institutions such as the European Monetary Union (EMU) (Gill 2001: 49-51). Within this approach, there is a doubling of civil society although there is no explicit creation of a transnational or global state *per se*, but rather the creation of informal and formal policy networks and governance mechanisms aligned with the global capitalist economy. Additionally, in some iterations of this perspective, the state is presented as an externality to the process of economic globalization (Morton 2007: 131).

The second broad approach is typified by Robinson's work on the emergence of a transnational capitalist class. Specifically, Robinson argues that the transnationalization of production and networks of capital has engendered the creation of a 'transnational capitalist class.' Robinson claims that contrary to Cox's and Gill's neo-Gramscian accounts of globalization, which he criticizes for being 'state-centric', globalization was driven by transnational social forces without the participation of national states. Rather, national states, according to Robinson, have been "captured" by transnational social forces and, in some cases, integrated within an emerging 'transnational state' with formal supra-national institutions such as the World Bank (Robinson 2006: 170-171). Implicit within Robinson's conceptualization of a 'transnational state' and classes is a doubling of the 'integral state.' There is the ascendant, mobile, and de-territorialized transnational 'integral state', and there is the passive, fixed, and territorialized one. As with the first approach, Morton points out that this approach presents the national state as being exterior to the process of globalization (Morton 2007: 142). In any case, what differentiates both approaches is that Robinson directly posits the existence of a 'transnational state', which gives rise to the possibility that there are two integral states within his framework.

There have been several critiques pertaining to both approaches that highlight the absence of a satisfactory theory of the capitalist state with respect to the passive and fixed nature of the national state. For example, Peter Burnham argues that within the neo-Gramscian approach, the relationship between politics and economics is presented as one of externality and that with respect to globalization "class relations (and by implication, struggle) are viewed as external to the process of restructuring, and labour and the state itself are depicted as powerless" (Burnham 2000: 14). Panitch (2004) and Morton (2007) argue that a more robust theoretical conception of the capitalist state would have demonstrated that far from being passive actors in the process of globalization, that they were active participants. They posit a Poulantzian approach to the capitalist state as a possible conceptual solution to this lacunae in neo-Gramscian theory by presenting the state as a social relation. Poulantzas' conceptual framework is useful, they maintain, because approaching the state as a social relation permits an analysis of globalization through the prism of internal state dynamics. Notably, Poulantzas argued that the growing presence of foreign capital, particularly more internationalized fractions, within national social formations is what drove the process that came to be known as globalization. Therefore, globalization occurred through a process of "internalisation" and "internationalization" within the capitalist state (Morton 2003: 487-488). The idea of approaching the capitalist state as a social relation certainly has its advantages; however, the Poulantzian approach does not address whether institutions and governance mechanisms situated beyond the state can also be identified as social relations.

More closely related to the matter of the 'integral state', another critique that could be levelled at the broad neo-Gramscian approaches outlined above is that alluding to a doubling of 'integral states' reifies the discourse that 'there is no alternative' to globalization. Notably, by positing the existence of global civil society vis-à-vis more national fixed ones, and 'transnational states' or the 'nebuleuse' vis-à-vis territorial and fixed national states ones, the conceptual framework presented in many neo-Gramscian theories separate or perhaps obfuscate the continued dialectical unity that exists between, say, nationally-oriented elements of civil society located within national states and organizations such as the World Trade Organization

(WTO). In fact, it can be argued that the division between the global and the national is something that is quite consistent with the manner in which these institutions wish to present themselves, that is as neutral a-national institutions. The sense that there is a global civil society to keep global governance structures accountable serves to legitimate their decision-making structures. On this point, André Drainville explains that international institutions as well as imperial states have attempted to “invent a functional, civil and perfectly a-political global subject that could serve as an ideal social companion to global neoliberalism” (Drainville 2005: 884). The argument that the ‘internationalisation’ of the state for certain neo-Gramscians reviewed above leads to the ascendancy of agencies close to global economy vis-à-vis more national ones points to a gap in the theory in terms of their relationship. For example, to what extent can nationally-based state agencies shape the politics of global ones in such a framework? And if they do have a relationship, does it mean that nationally-based social forces can have an impact on the shapes of the global ‘nebuleuse.’ These types of issues point to, as others have argued, the need for a more robust theory of the capitalist state, as well as a more robust conceptualization of the ‘integral state.’

The treatment of the concept of the ‘integral state’ by neo-Gramscians has previously been brought up by Randall Germain and Michael Kenny. Notably, they were concerned that concepts that were developed specifically for the realities of the ‘nation state’ were being used to theorize the existence of global civil society ‘disembedded’ from the nation state. They argued that the main contribution of the ‘Gramscian turn’ in IR was to conceptualize a global world order without the conceptual constraints of state-centric approaches. Notably, neo-Gramscian’s created a theoretical framework from which to understand how hegemony came not as a result of inter-state conflict, but from the ‘battleground’ of global civil society (Germain and Kenny 2001: 377). That being said, Germain and Kenny indicated that the concept of civil society loses much of its value without reference to a state. Specifically, in reference Anne Showstack Sassoon’s work on Gramsci, they argued that the meaning of civil society as it is used by neo-Gramscians was developed specifically with reference to the emergence of the 20th Century state. Civil society, from this perspective, is a sphere organically tied to the state through a wide range of functions that range from the creation of collective identities to the repartition of coercion and consent essential to the concept of hegemony. These are functions that Cox’s global ‘nebuleuse’ cannot fulfill vis-à-vis a global civil society. Furthermore, they argue that supra-national institutional entities of any kind do not genuine international or global states, as nation-states with their legal entitlement of sovereignty have the ultimate decision-making capacity and authority in relation to supra-national entities. Therefore, global civil society gains its meaning not in relation to an international state, but rather in relation to the ‘nation states’ through which the world market operates (Gemain and Kenny 2001: 385-388). Consequently, according to them, the ‘nation state’ remained a central category in world politics, and Gramscian theory remained better suited to theorize politics within the national state.

Nevertheless, as Morton and Bieler argue convincingly in response to the type of critique put forth by Germain and Kenny, the fact that a particular concept was developed in relation to a specific historical period, should not pre-emptively discount its applicability to a different historical context as there are certain concepts that may have a resonance that transcends the socio-historical context in which they were originally deployed (Bieler and Morton 2001: 6). Nonetheless, the problem with respect to the ‘integral state’ highlighted by Germain and Kenny

is quite prescient, and was never entirely addressed in the neo-Gramscian responses to their article (Rupert 1998, Murphy 2001). For example, Craig N. Murphy responded to Germain and Kenny that global civil society emerged without a global state, and that this did not represent a major break from Gramsci's theoretical framework. According to Murphy, what is important in Gramsci is not the institutional correspondence between state and civil society, but rather their functions of coercion and consent (Murphy 2001: 433). What is clear from Murphy's response is that the 'integral state', as he understands it, consists of the distribution of consent and hegemony across its two 'regions.' Furthermore, because the two 'regions' fit awkwardly within the spatial realm of the global, he opted to forego them in favour of their functions. However, as we will see below, one does not have to forego the 'integral state' in favour of its functions to be able take into account the possibility of civil society operating in spaces located beyond the national state.

Gramsci and the Concept of the Integral State

To be fair many of Gramsci's concepts are often stated in different and sometimes inconsistent manners, which open them up to different legitimate interpretations (Germain and Kenny 2001). The concept of the 'integral state' with its civil society and political society elements are no exception as Gramsci himself posed the concept in several ways. The manner in which the concept of the 'integral state' is typically addressed is in terms of the repartition between hegemony (consent) and coercion across political society and civil society. Perry Anderson came up with at least three formulations of the relationship between political society and civil society: (a) that coercion is located within the 'region' of political society and that hegemony is organized within civil society, (b) that elements of coercion and hegemony are situated in both 'regions', but accordingly take on different forms, and (c) that hegemony melds into both as the political and civil society are actually 'co-extensive' (Thomas 2010: 68). Although (c) has sometimes been criticized by authors, notably by Anderson himself, for melding important conceptual categories and reducing their explanatory power, a more in depth examination of that particular variation via Peter Thomas' work can produce important conceptual insights that might be of value for a Gramscian analysis of international relations, and of governance structures situated beyond it.

According to Thomas, for Gramsci the 'integral state' could be understood as constituting a "dialectical unity" of civil society and political society. This dialectical unity means that one can only fully conceive of each entity in relation to each other. Accordingly, Thomas explains that one needs to get away from "tectonic metaphors" when examining the relationship between civil society and political society, or economic structure and superstructure. Rather, explains Thomas, Gramsci saw elements of the superstructure, where political and civil societies are located, as not only being constituted by the material reality of production, but also different ideological "forms" through which human beings understand the social reality in which they live. The dialectical relationship between the economic base and the superstructure, referred to previously, implies that the different 'forms', whether they be legal or religious, are rife with contradictions and contingencies. Consequently, civil society and political society are not fixed levels set in a hierarchical manner within the superstructure in relation to a social formation's economic structure; rather, they constitute "two major superstructural levels" set within a dialectical unity (Thomas 2010: 97-101) Thus because the 'integral state' cannot be reduced to its material elements, but also disparate ideological ones, distances both civil society and

political society from metaphors that would seek to establish their meaning and relationship through a sort of hierarchical institutional flow chart.

In order to apprehend the nature of political society and the state, in relation to civil society, Gramsci posited that political society is a modern ‘form’ characteristic of the capitalist mode of production. Thomas explains that, for Gramsci: “The history of political society hitherto...has consisted in its conscious separation from civil society, as the speculative juridical resolution of civil society’s contradictions” (Thomas 2010: 190). Governance and decision-making mechanisms are abstracted from civil society into this level. As such, political society serves as a “container” for civil society, which is itself divided between competing social classes. Therefore, by “enwrapping” civil society, political society tries to give it shape and a semblance of unity. Within this formulation, the “state apparatus”, or what is typically understood to be the state, represents concrete “moments of universality” of political society, and disseminates the interests of the bourgeoisie as they try to unify the divisions of civil society. Therefore, this abstraction gives rise to concrete political and legal ‘forms’, such as state institutions, but it is also an ideological ‘form’ in terms of legitimizing the abstraction of decision-making out of civil society and presenting it as being in the ‘universal’ interest of a divided civil society. Nevertheless, Thomas explains that political society exceeds the state apparatus that attempts to organize it, just as “civil society exceeds the political society that attempts to impose meaning upon it” (Thomas 2010: 190). This excess means that both political society and civil society are never locked into equilibrium with one another, nor are they mechanistic reflections of one another. Instead, political society is a “mediated reflection” of civil society; civil society gives political society its content in terms of what classes need to be united, and what issues need to be resolved. In return, political society tries to shape and subordinate civil society according to the interests of a particular class (Thomas 2010: 193). This dialectical relationship means that hegemony traverses both civil and political society as it represents an attempt to “organize” and “condense” social forces located in civil society into political power. Consequently, any attempt to organize hegemony in civil society will always have implications for political society (Thomas 2010: 194). In this ‘co-extensive’ articulation of the ‘integral state’, one cannot separate political society from civil society as one always implies the other, and as political society is always striving to advantage the interests of one class or another located in civil society.

This particular reading of the concept of the ‘integral state’ may seem to reinforce the argument that one can only transpose Gramsci’s concepts with difficulty to the global scale in relation to civil society due to the absence of a truly global political society. Nonetheless, if one focuses on both the ideological and material functions of political society in relation to civil society, notably its function to ‘enwrap’ and unify it, then it becomes possible to begin to reflect upon its applicability to governance mechanisms located beyond the state. Additionally, because the state apparatus, ie. the national state, is not synonymous with the concept of political society, yet rather represents but a ‘concrete’ moment within broader class projects in capitalism there is the conceptual space to begin thinking about other institutional apparatuses as well as the state as being situated within political society. Because political society can be understood as an ideological ‘form’, among other things, one can begin to think of institutional apparatuses, both statal and otherwise, as being located within political society. At first glance, this may seem to be an approximation of Robinson’s concept of a singular global ‘transnational state’ dialectically

linked to a global civil society. However, it might be possible to avoid the ‘flattening out’ of the spatial and temporal elements of contemporary global capitalism and its institutions, by conceptualizing global governance structures as further abstractions, in bottom-up manner, from civil society generated by national state apparatuses. Markedly, not all governance structures situated beyond the state are global in scope as there are a plethora of regional ones and they often affect states in a highly uneven manner. Hence, one should not presuppose the existence a truly global political society, rather the contours of political society beyond the national state should be investigated in a historical manner as part of a broader network of social relations that include national state apparatuses, civil society, and, of course, the economy. Thus governance structures situated beyond the state should be conceptualized as being in dialectical unity with civil society located within national state formations through the intermediary of national states and other institutions.

The seeming distinctiveness and autonomy of governance structures from national states can be understood as being part of the ideological form of global governance structures, much in the same way that the ideological forms of nation states are seemingly autonomous from civil society so as to better shape and organize it in view of its class divisions. In other words, global governance structures can be seen as an additional element within political society that enwraps the civil societies of national social formation by enveloping national state apparatuses. For example, as Erik Swyngedouw explains, global governance structures are inherently authoritarian as they were elaborated as part of a process carried through by particular national states to move decision-making structures, discursively and in some cases in practice, away from centers of democratic accountability within the nation state (Swyngedouw 2000: 70). In other words, they can be understood as being part of hegemonic projects to move decision-making structures away from the inherent divisions of civil society located within national states, and the semblance of national interest within such projects. This dissimulation of interest functions, of course, much in the same way that Cox argues that in constructing and maintaining world orders, hegemonic states dissimulate their immediate interests by putting in place institutions or policies that dispense seemingly ‘universal’ values so as to integrate other states into a particular world order (Cox 1993: 61-63). The specific links between national states and governance mechanisms located beyond the state as part of a single political society can best be complemented with a strategic relational approach to the state, in a way that emphasizes the continued link between ‘internationalised’ institutions and more nationally-oriented ones within the national state, as well as a relational approach to scale.

Governance as a Social Relation

The approach to political society and the ‘integral state’ outlined above may, at first glance, seem to have little to do with Brenner and Jessop’s work on scale and the capitalist state. Importantly, the image of political society outlined above as an entity that seeks to unify and enwrap civil society is in no way totalizing or presumed. Rather, in its dialectical unity with civil society, political society is always exceeded by it and never locked into equilibrium (Thomas 2010: 194). Therefore, the construction of unity, or hegemony, within political society cannot be presumed, it is constructed, and must continually react to changes in civil society. Conveniently, in terms of Jessop’s strategic relational approach to the state, the capitalist state is understood as a social relation, and not as a unified subject or the instrument of particular interest. To begin, Brenner explains that in capitalism there is a formal separation between the economic and the

political. Although the state is formally separated from the circuit of capital, its “inchoate” nature requires the state to intervene through the implementation of “accumulation strategies” so as to ensure the “realization of value.” Therefore, although there is a formal separation between both spheres, the political is very much present in the economic. Nevertheless, the implementation of a particular ‘accumulation strategies’ is not structurally determined, but open to different class struggle over different “state projects” (Brenner 2001: 85-87). This relationship between the circuit of capital and ‘accumulation strategies’ sets the stage for strategic interactions between social forces on the terrain of civil society and the state. Jessop argues that the state needs to be conceived as an asymmetrical institutional terrain on which different political forces struggle for control of its apparatus and capacities. Importantly, the strategic relational approach to the state comes from Poulantzas’ work on the state, whose theoretical innovation was to situate class struggle within the terrain of the state itself. Specifically, Poulantzas saw the capitalist state not as a reflection of class struggle, but as the ‘condensation’ of changing balance of forces. By imbricating uneven social relations within the materiality of the state itself, the strategic relational approach goes beyond a straightforward pluralist approach to the state. That being said, the institutional structure of the state puts forth a ‘strategic selectivity’, which means that certain state institutions favour certain policies over others and are more accessible to certain social forces than others. Where the issue of state unity comes to the fore, is that coherence and unity only come about through ‘state projects’ within the state as part of competing hegemonic projects championed by particular social classes. The success that such social classes may have in unifying the state, Jessop argues, depends, on the strategic institutional selectivity of the stabilized material ‘condensations’ of previous hegemonic projects, and the constraints imposed on social forces “by existing forms of class determination” and balances of forces. Conversely, as reflexive agents, social forces located within civil society may conversely adapt their strategies according to the selectivity of the institutions in which they are engaged (Jessop 2007: 31-37). Therefore, in terms of a strategic relational approach to the state, state unity is never assumed, but is constructed as a result of shifting dynamics within the state and civil society as part of the wider relations of production.

Panitch and Morton’s work on Poulantzas indicates that there is nothing inherently innovative in applying a strategic relational approach in order to address the shortcomings of neo-Gramscian theory with respect to an adequate theory of the capitalist state. However, as previously mentioned, the Poulantzian approach is quite useful for understanding the process of globalization from within the capitalist state, but says little of institutions located below and beyond it. Specifically, it does address whether global governance, among other institutions, are social relations as well. Indeed, Brenner argues that even the national state apparatus itself is arrayed across different scales, and often that the very geographic unevenness of state apparatuses in terms of their functions and jurisdictions is part of the selectivity of the state’s overall terrain (Brenner 2004: 78) What is particularly useful in terms of locating both national states and global governance structures within a same political society, is that it matches well the strategic relational approach to the state that emphasizes that state apparatuses are “intrinsically interdependent” with other institutional orders (Jessop 2007: 5).

A scale according to Anssi Paasi, can be defined as (a) an ‘areal’ concept in relation to the spatial delineation of different territories and (b) a hierarchical concept in terms different vertical levels, which both contribute to bounded economic, political and social processes (Paasi 2004:

538). Brenner explains that a relational conception of scale is constituted by the following elements. Firstly, scales are social processes, and not fixed spatial containers, that are traversed by social relations. Specifically, scales constitute different moments of social relations within uneven vertical hierarchies. Secondly, scales are relational as they can only be understood in relation to other scales that may be situated above them, below them, or transversally from them. Consequently, a particular scale can be situated within ‘the broader scalar order in which it is embedded.’ Thirdly, scalar orders do not fit within symmetrical institutional orders; rather they need to be seen as “mosaics of scalar organization.” Processes of capitalist accumulation and related institutional forms are highly uneven, and therefore produce “superimposed and interpenetrating scalar hierarchies.” Fourthly, consistent with David Harvey’s concept of ‘spatio-temporal’ fixes, certain scalar hierarchies are fixed into place in order to facilitate processes of capitalist accumulation. Lastly, scalar hierarchies are never entirely permanently fixed into place. They are continually evolving and faced with ‘projects’ to transform them by competing social forces although they are never wholly replaced as emerging ‘projects’ continually interact and confront previously constituted existing scalar hierarchies (Brenner 2004: 9-11).

In terms of a relational approach to scale, the process of globalization understood as the acceleration and expansion of capitalist relations across space and time, has not led to the creation of qualitatively different global state or ‘nebuleuse.’ Rather it has contributed to the “de-territorialization” and “re-territorialization” of economic, social, and political processes across different scales subject to alteration through conflict between different social forces (Brenner 2004: 34-36). Now this re-articulation of space and social relations does not imply the eclipse of the state for Brenner, rather the state remains an essential site for the “territorialisation” of economic, social, and political relations (Brenner 2004: 47). What has been altered, however, are the particular condensations, or ‘crystallizations’, of state apparatuses as well as their relationship with other institutional scales, which also have been altered.

Beyond national states, other ‘nodal’ or scalar agglomerations are arrayed in a hierarchical manner and are subject to broader changes in terms of the relations of production and developments in other scales.¹ Therefore, the form and positionality of particular nodes of institutions are never arbitrary. Just as particular ‘crystallizations’ of the state are subject to particular state or hegemonic projects; hegemonic projects can be launched so as to “coordinate” activities across different scales (Jessop 2007: 180). This coordination is part of an effort to create unity in view of growing scalar complexity. Therefore, although contemporary iterations of world order were very different and much more complex than the one which Gramsci sought to analyze with his analytical framework, the notion of the ‘integral state’ presented above is still quite relevant if the notion political society is appreciated in terms of its ‘co-extensive’ form. Notably, that the re-articulation as well as the creation of institutions situated beyond the state can be conceptualized as being part of a broader project to ‘enwrap’ and shape divisions within civil society. Owen Worth calls on IR scholars to look to the manner in which hegemony is articulated differentially across multiple ‘levels’ – whether they be local, national, regional, or

¹ To be clear, in his book *Unravelling Gramsci: Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Economy* (2007), Morton used a scalar framework within a broader Gramscian theoretical approach to critique Robinson’s ‘flattened ontology.’ However, Morton’s focus was to utilize scale so as to demonstrate the evolution of the uneven development of capitalism with a focus on Gramsci’s notion of ‘passive revolution’, and not on inter-institutional interactions across scales.

global (Worth 2009: 28-29). Approaching the integral state in a relation scalar manner provides the conceptual means from which to begin to appreciate hegemonic projects that may include institutions located beyond the state without rupturing the dialectical unity of political society and civil society.

In terms of civil society acknowledging that particular actors are able to function at different scales does not mean that there is inherently a global civil society or even regional ones. From a strategic relational framework, social forces, as reflexive agents are able to operate at different scales. Additionally, they may shift their strategies according to the institutional scale in which they are interacting just as they would within particular national state institutions. However, just as national state apparatuses have a strategic selectivity, so do institutions at different scales. Just as different social forces have different resources and capabilities to engage national state institutions, the same is true of the capacity of social forces to engage different scales (Jessop 2007: 42). For example, in her Massicotte argues that although social movements in the Americas were able to organize themselves at a regional level into the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA) during the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations, it did not constitute a single, unified, and transnational social movement. Massicotte argues that the HSA was able to put in motion important connections at a regional level, but that it's different coalition members were still very much rooted in their local/national contexts and were centered on resisting the FTAA on the grounds of defending the "national dignity" of their respective countries from what they perceived to be American imperialism (Massicotte 2004: 2-3). Additionally, the FTAA negotiation framework was much more responsive to the hemisphere's business interests, which was also divided along national lines, and even organized a formal Business Forum. Social movement mobilization against the FTAA at a national level in Latin America were much more successful and the election of leftist governments, who were at best ambivalent towards the FTAA, had much more of a determinative effect on the negotiation's outcome (Nelson 2012). Therefore, social actors operating on different scales do not necessarily imply the creation of civil societies at those scales. Although hegemony can be constructed at multiple scales, it is still done in view of civil society at the national scale. Notably, it is still at the national scale that civil society needs to be united in view of its inherent divisions. For example, the WTO cannot ensure that its policies are adhered to by seeking to unite a global civil society, rather it must be assured by national states. It is still at the national level that capitalist accumulation is ensured, and it is at that scale that capitalist contradictions need to be resolved (Panitch and Gindin 2003: 41). Therefore, national sovereignty with respect to regional and global governance mechanisms still matters, but sovereignty should not be considered merely a presupposed legal reality as in Germain and Kenny's formulation, rather its application should be approached from the point of view of competing projects of over state power (Jessop 2007: 189).

The IMF and Shifting Power Relations

In viewing the relationship between national state institutions and governance structures as being part of a multilayered political society, it becomes possible to reconstitute inter-institutional dynamics across scales. In other words, with the dialectical unity of civil society and political society in mind, it becomes possible to see how shifting political dynamics within the civil societies of national states, with a view to changes in economic relations can have repercussions on institutions located on supra-national scales. Therefore, to utilize Poulantzas' concept of 'crystallization', which refers to specific iterations in form and content of national

apparatuses, one can begin to think these developments as double or triple ‘crystallizations’ depending on the specific amounts of scales involved in changes located at different scales. As such, as an exercise, it may be useful to begin to think of shifting power dynamics within the governance of the IMF as a result of shifting crystallizations at the national level of the BRIC countries, as part of competing ‘accumulation strategy’ projects within the institutional terrain of the IMF.

One of the more important developments in recent history has been the shift in power in the world economy towards the BRIC economies (Wang 2011: 437). However, two important institutions established to regulate and manage the global economy in the wake of Second World War, the World Bank and the IMF, have not changed sufficiently to reflect this shift thus creating a ‘democratic deficit’ within those institutions (Stiglitz 2006). The tradition of nominating a European as head of the IMF, from a strategic relational point of view, can be understood as the persistence of structural ‘crystallizations’ of a previous hegemonic project headed by the United States in conjunction with European powers as part of what Panitch and Gindin call ‘informal empire’ (Panitch and Gindin 2004: 28). The 2007-2008 financial crisis opened a breach for growing assertiveness from developing countries as it put into question the neo-liberal or ‘money manager capitalism’ ‘accumulation strategies’ promoted by the United States and certain European states through institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF (Petro and Kovriga 2011: 27-28). This led to developing countries for a greater voice in existing international organizations such as the IMF as well growing cooperation in between developing countries in forums such as the G20. Consequently, there was growing cooperation between national state institutions from developing countries that began to articulate visions of economic management very different from the United States and other core countries (Cooper 2011: 15).

Dominiques Strauss Kahn’s resignation as Managing Director of the IMF in 2011 provided an opportunity for BRIC and other developing countries to signal a shift in power within the institutional field of the IMF. In a joint statement, the BRIC countries explained: “The recent financial crisis which erupted in developed countries, underscored the urgency of reforming international financial institutions so as to reflect the growing role of developing countries in the world economy” (IMF 2011). This statement, therefore, amounted to more than a demand for symbolic inclusion into existing structures, rather it indicated a desire to transform them to reflect changing power dynamics between developed and developing countries. However, despite an explicitly stated desire to cooperate, internal differences and geopolitical rivalries hampered the BRIC’s ability to cohere around a common candidate from a non-core state (Cooper 2011: 23). This inability to cohere demonstrates the possible contradictions that exist around articulating projects across different scales. Specifically, imperatives and structural constraints at one scale may hamper the formulation of favourable ‘projects’, hegemonic or otherwise, on other institutional scales.

Despite the failure of the BRIC countries to unite around a common candidate for the position of IMF Managing Director in 2011, Strauss-Kahn’s replacement, Christiane Lagarde, has had to shift the organization’s policies so as to accommodate the power shift towards the BRIC countries. For example, the BRIC countries have recently decided to delay an announcement for their contribution to the Euro-zone bailout until a G20 Summit in June 2012. This is widely perceived as a strategy to pressure the United States and the EU to accept modifications to the

IMF's voting structure. This pressure has been perceived to be more prescient for the BRIC countries as they have grown frustrated that the United States has not passed previously agreed upon reforms, which would have put into place initial voting restructuring and increased U.S. financial contributions to the IMF. The perceived reason for the delay by the United States is that its president, Barack Obama, does not want to pass such legislation through Republican-controlled Congress before an election (Wroughton 2012). These recent developments demonstrate the multi-scalar nature of strategic interactions within institutions such as the IMF as they involve the United States' domestic politics, but also the influence of other governance mechanisms located beyond the state such as the G20. In the least, these changes reflect the confrontation of different strategies to coordinate institutional policies within a multi-scalar political society.

Conclusion

By employing a particular conception of the integral state that often confounded the state as an institutional apparatus with political society, and which focused on the repartition between hegemony and coercion across the state and civil society, neo-Gramscians have generally not exploited the full potential of the concept of the 'integral state' within Gramsci's theoretical repertoire, and led to some conceptual controversy pertaining to scale in global politics. Notably, the growing activity of different actors across and beyond state led to a tendency to theorize the existence of a global civil society distinct from national civil societies has led to authors such as Robinson have gone as far as to argue the existence of a 'transnational state.' By returning to a particular articulation of the 'integral state', which emphasizes its ideological component and approaches it as an 'abstraction' from civil society set in dialectical unity with it, one can begin to approach institutions situated beyond the state, as well as within the state that are global in scope, as further abstractions from civil society that try to unify it in view of its inherent divisions. Consequently, from this particular iteration of the 'integral state', it becomes possible to insist on the dialectical unity of civil society and political society situated at different scales.

Insisting upon the importance of situating institutions at different levels as being part of political society does not necessarily 'flatten out' the hierarchical and geographically specific nature of those institutions within political society. By applying a relational approach to scale, with a 'bottom-up' gaze that begins its analysis with respect to the direct institutional interventions in the circuit of capital and proceeds upward, it becomes possible to conceive of the uneven nature of not only inter-state relations, but also of governance structure situated below and beyond the national state. Therefore, approaching not only the capitalist state as a social relation, but also all institutional nodes located at different scales, allows us to conceive of hegemonic projects involving several scales as attempts to unify civil societies located across national states.

Recent shifts in power relations within the institutional arena of the IMF, demonstrates the multi-scalar nature of political society. Notably, the effort by BRIC countries to re-organize the institutional processes within the IMF, as well as their failure to nominate a non-European Managing Director, demonstrates the applicability of a conceptualization of the integral state that insists on its dialectical unity across different scales and the contradictions involved in such processes. The recent shifts within the IMF can be understood as the result of the interplay of competing projects with respect to different 'accumulation strategies' across different scales.

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