The Paradox of Power:
Nuclear Weapons in a Changed World

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The decision to resume nuclear testing by China and France in the summer of 1995, despite intense international opposition, has been motivated to a great extent by their desire to maintain power and status in international politics through the possession of a modernized nuclear weapons force. These decisions came on the heels of an unprecedented agreement by over 185 countries in New York in May 1995 to extend the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in perpetuity. This conference outcome reflected a belief among a large number of nonnuclear states that the possession of atomic weapons would not add much to their power status. Yet the five declared nuclear states and a handful of undeclared states hold on to their nuclear weaponry on the assumption that these capabilities provide them with not only a deterrent against external attacks but a source of power and influence in international politics.

It is not only the officials of these states but many international relations theorists, especially so-called realists, who tend to believe that nuclear weapons endow a state with a great amount of power and influence.[1] Understanding the assumed linkage between nuclear weapons and power has major policy and theoretical importance:

- Does the possession of nuclear weapons substantially increase a nation's power capability?
- What are the military and political uses of nuclear weapons, especially in a changed international system?
- What does the experience of the last five decades show nation-states about the usefulness or lack of usefulness of nuclear weapons?

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This article first looks at some key definitions of power and then links them to nuclear weapon capability. It argues that much of the commonly held assumptions about the power generating capacity of nuclear weapons are exaggerated. The fifty years of the existence of nuclear weapons prove that only under severely restricted conditions can a nuclear-weapon state transform its destructive capability into power, largely because of the political, normative, and environmental considerations that constrain the effective use of nuclear weapons.

The article then addresses the question of the role of nuclear weapons in the post–Cold War era and concludes that these weapons may be useful in preventing the outbreak of large-scale wars among enduring rivals where nuclear deterrence could be one of the several necessary conditions for the absence of military hostilities. However, in regions of low conflict, nuclear weapons serve negative functions, especially if regional states develop interdependent economic and political relationships.

This article, by looking more closely at the concept of power, attempts to amplify the position of analysts who argue that nuclear weapons are obsolescent in the changed context of international politics.[2] It also makes an effort to use the analytical literature on power in order to understand the question: To what extent do weapons of mass destruction provide their possessors with power and influence in international affairs?

Defining Power

Many traditional approaches treat power a equivalent to the possession of resources. More nuanced definitions suggest that power is salient only with the ability of actors to convert their resources into influencing the choices of other actors. Thus, three major approaches can be found in the literature on power. They are: power as control over resources, control over actors, and control over outcomes.[3]

In the first, the assumption is that actors with tangible resources, such as military forces, economic capability, territory, and population, can convert their assets into control over the behavior of other actors. The second approach assumes that power is manifest only when A has the ability to get B to do something that the latter will not do otherwise. The third approach is predicated on the assumption that power is evident only when an actor is able to influence outcomes that "produce a net increase in the actor's utility, where utility is simply a function of the actor's preferences over the sort of outcomes."[4] Although definitional problems remain, most analysts agree

that the second kind of power (i.e., the ability to convert resources into influencing other actors' behavior) is the most important dimension in assessing a nation's power in international politics. This is because there is no guarantee that actors with resources can automatically control the behavior of others or that outcomes will invariably result in the net increase of utility to the influencing state, as envisaged in the first and the third approaches. Power conversion is defined as "the capacity to convert potential power as measured by resources, to realized power, as measured by the changed behavior of others."[5]

Traditionally, military capability has been viewed as the most important ingredient of a nation's overall power resources, since historically a state's power and influence in international politics depended largely on its ability to engage successfully in war. These resources have been presumed to enable the holder to threaten coercive sanctions vis-à-vis another state. As Schelling puts it, in international politics "the power to hurt—the sheer unacquisitive, unproductive power to destroy things that somebody treasures, to inflict pain and grief" has been characterized as a source of bargaining power.[6] Other analysts, such as Cline, argue that the "study of national power, in the final analysis, is a study of the capacity to wage war."[7] Besides, military capability can produce what Knorr terms "putative military power," which has three components: military strength, military potential, and military reputation. Putative military power is actualized through the mechanisms of war, military threats, and other state's expectations that the involved nation may resort to its military strength if a serious conflict of interest arises.[8] Putative power is a means to the end of actualized power, measured in terms of visible changes in the behavior patterns of the object.[9]

Nuclear Weapons as a Source of Power

Nuclear weapons are perceived by many statesmen and scholars as the ultimate source of coercive power in international politics. Coercive power is evident when an actor adopts a particular behavior in compliance with, or in anticipation of, another actor's demands or wishes largely due to fear of sanctions, or threat of force.[10]

Deterrence is presumed to be a significant outcome of the coercive power of nuclear weapons. In addition, nuclear weapons also are claimed to provide diplomatic power to the possessor. For instance, R. J. Art argues that the nuclear deterrent capability endowed three potentially useful political advantages to the superpowers. First, a

wide margin of safety for diplomatic maneuvering; second, a capacity to trade nuclear protection for different things they valued from other states; and third, the freeing up of resources for other pursuits, since security is efficiently provided by nuclear weapons.[11] To some theorists, in addition to deterrence and diplomatic power, nuclear weapons also provide the holder an ultimate guaranty of independence and physical integrity.[12] To Gilpin, the possession of nuclear weapons determines to a great extent a nation's rank in the hierarchy of international prestige, and, as a consequence, more and more states covet them as status symbols.[13] To Gaddis, nuclear capability provided a power gradient to the United States and the Soviet Union that distinguished them from the rest of the world.[14]

To elaborate these points further, nuclear weapons have been presumed to have provided the following sources of power-capability to their possessors, especially the superpowers.

First, they bestowed structural power, a power that was accorded to the two leading actors in international politics owing to their possession of overwhelming military, economic, and political capability that made possible the creation and maintenance of a bipolar structure. The superpowers' structural power resulted from a combination of sources, especially through the possession of economic and military power resources larger than those of any other single actor in the international arena. The structural power was also derived from asymmetries in resources that enabled the superpowers to affect others' policies by depriving them of the desired exchanged goods.[15] These goods included, among others, extended deterrence, security assistance, arms, market access, and economic assistance.[16] During the Cold War, this type of power was largely a product of the structural conflict in which the superpowers were engaged and the fact that a large number of smaller actors were allies or were under the nuclear umbrellas of these dominant actors. An important element of this structural power, evident during the Cold War, was the influence that nuclear-capable superpowers could exert on their allies. Since the allies depended on the superpowers for protection, the latter could develop patron-client relationships with the former. During this period of intense structural conflict, several smaller states joined the leading actors because participation in the conflict brought them side-payments and a free ride under the security umbrella.

Second, nuclear weapons are perceived to provide their possessors with deterrent power over their adversaries. The possession of awesome retaliatory capability and the willingness to use such a capability could deter any potential adversaries who might be tempted to make use of a military vulnerability for the deterring state. The

costs of attack are so high that there would be little incentive on the part of the challenging state to engage in military aggrandizement. The US-Soviet mutual deterrence relationship was based on the expectation that nuclear weapons helped create deterrence through the superpowers' ability to inflict damage on each other's cities and military installations. The putative aspect of military power was dominant in this dimension to the effect that potential challengers believed in the limits of their challenge to the established states. This was said to have reduced the environmental uncertainty with respect to the extent up to which a contender could proceed in international affairs.

A third dimension of power derived from nuclear weapons during the Cold War (and still persisting to a certain extent) was the general expectation that they were a currency of great power status.[17] The five nuclear states, especially the United States and the Soviet Union, assiduously worked to make this club exclusive so that the aura of nuclear status would be confined to great powers. The nuclear nonproliferation regime, especially its chief component, the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), was aimed at arresting the spread of nuclear weapons to additional states and preventing the rise of any new nuclear states other than the established five.

Limitations of Nuclear Weapons as Instruments of Power

Having discussed the multifaceted power with which nuclear weapons were said to have provided their possessors during the Cold War, it is worth asking how effective an instrument they in fact were in producing outcomes reflective of their destructiveness and lethality? What role do they have in a nation's power capability in the post–Cold War era?

To start with, nuclear weapons present several puzzles for an analyst assessing power and influence in international politics. Theoretically, in terms of raw destructive power nuclear weapons should increase the possessors' putative military capability, since a nuclear-armed state can destroy an opponent's population and industrial sites if it wishes to do so. But if influence is the goal of possessing power capability, the wanton destruction of an enemy may not achieve that objective. Behavior modification that may occur as a result of a devastating attack may not reflect the desired outcome for the attacker. In that sense, transforming the putative into actualized power seems a formidable task.

This difficulty arises because the costs of attack for the attacker may be higher than the benefits that he might derive from such an

action. The costs could be human suffering, radioactive fallout to the environment, adverse impact on reputation, international and domestic condemnation, and, above all, the normative and moral questions involved in using weapons of mass destruction that do not discriminate combatants from noncombatants, and thereby blatantly violate two key principles of just-war theory: proportionality and minimal civil damage.[18] Arguments made by the advocates of options for limited nuclear war (in order to make nuclear weapons more usable) have so far not been very convincing.[19]

As Knorr contends: "The extent to which power will be employed clearly depends on the sensitivity of the power holder to the costs of its use," and asymmetries in putative power would matter only to the extent that the holder of the resources has the will to transform basic capabilities into forms for the exercise of power.[20] The costs of nuclear use are so high that the possessor is often constrained from actualizing the putative capability to influence the choices of another state. Thus the compellent use of nuclear capability is extremely limited. Attempts to compel a nuclear-armed adversary could raise the possibility for a devastating response and, therefore, lack credibility. For a nuclear-weapon state even to threaten the use of nuclear-weapons against a nonnuclear state "would open it to enormous opprobrium from the international community and perhaps even from many of its own citizens."[21]

Not surprisingly, defenders and challengers rarely have found nuclear threats for limited objectives credible. During the early stages of the nuclear era, the United States and, to a limited extent, the Soviet Union attempted to use nuclear threats to elicit concessions from adversaries. During the entire Cold War period, twenty-one nuclear threats were made by the superpowers in their attempts to influence bargaining outcomes in crises. These threats were not significantly influential and were never put in terms of a clear-cut ultimatum. Often they were mounted as indicators of more general resolve, support for an ally, or disapproval of an adversary's actions. "They were even used as means of looking tough once the outcome of a crisis was already apparent."[22] The record in this respect has been very poor and, writing in 1984, McGeorge Bundy called it the "unimpressive record of atomic diplomacy."[23]

Thus, during the Cold War, the role of nuclear weapons as coercive instruments for other than mutual deterrence purposes was limited and rather ineffective.[24] The limitations of nuclear coercion were evident even when the United States held nuclear superiority (i.e., until 1949), during which period it could not translate this preponderance into power capable of changing Soviet policies.[25] In fact,

especially from 1945 to 1949, Soviet and Chinese power and influence expanded at an unprecedented rate—and there is no clear evidence that fears of the US nuclear bomb had any restraining effect on this process.[26] Toward the end of the Korean War, the Eisenhower administration attempted to threaten China with nuclear attack, but the US actions did not match the threats that were made.[27] Similarly, in 1969, President Nixon toyed with the idea of nuclear use against Vietnam but resisted the temptation.

The Soviets also refrained from the use of nuclear weapons even when they faced large political setbacks; for example, the losses of Yugoslavia, China, and Egypt.[28] In 1989, the USSR withdrew from Afghanistan after failing to crush the resistance by mujahidin guerrillas, suffering in the process countless casualties and political setbacks. The Soviet behavior during this conflict was as if nuclear weapons had not been invented. What, more than anything else, attests to the limitations of military power, especially nuclear capability, was the inability of the Soviet leadership to use its nuclear and conventional capability to prevent the country's collapse as a single unit. The Soviet possession of enormous nuclear and conventional capability could not deter the breaking away of its republics or the declarations of independence by erstwhile Eastern bloc states from Moscow's control. In the past, empires rarely dismantled themselves without violent struggles. In some respects, the possession of nuclear weapons decreased the Soviet leadership's ability to use force in order to prevent the collapse of the state and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact. This epochal event casts doubt on the claim that nuclear weapons provide the possessor the ultimate guarantee of national survival.

The constraints in using nuclear weapons for achieving limited objectives have been largely based on two nuclear-age norms—the "nuclear taboo" and the "no first use" pledge. The "nuclear taboo," which signifies an unwritten and uncodified prohibitionary norm against nuclear use, has been well entrenched in international politics since 1945.[29] It involves a recognition based on a powerful tradition that these weapons are unique and that they "may not be used in spite of declarations of readiness to use them, even in spite of tactical advantages in their use."[30] The tradition of nonuse grew out of a fear that, once introduced into combat, the effects of nuclear weapons could not be "contained, restrained, confined, limited."[31] A nation that uses nuclear weapons is likely to receive the world's condemnation and could be stigmatized for breaking the taboo.

The "no first use" pledge has been a major political gesture by the nuclear weapon states to each other and to nonnuclear weapon

states, indicating that they would not be the first to initiate a nuclear attack. This was originally a pledge given by China; later it was adopted by the former Soviet Union. The United States, the United Kingdom, and France have made conditional no-first-use pledges against parties to the NPT who would not carry out an attack in alliance with a nuclear-weapon state.[32] During the 1995 NPT renewal conference, nuclear-weapon states reiterated their conditional commitments of no-first-use against nonnuclear NPT signatories.[33]

These two normative factors have been reinforced by the limited international legal prohibitions against nuclear use. A 1961 UN General Assembly declaration prohibited the use of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons by contending that their use would cause unnecessary human suffering and was, therefore, contrary to rule of international law and the laws of humanity. A 1981 General Assembly resolution also proclaimed that

> States and statesmen that resorted first to the use of nuclear weapons would be committing the gravest crime against humanity and that there would [not] be any justification or pardon for statesmen who would take the decision to be the first to use nuclear weapons.[34]

Although the United States voted against these two resolutions, Washington and Moscow had signed two protocols of the Red Cross that prohibited indiscriminate attacks against civilian objects and pledged that they shall direct their military operations only against military targets.[35] The renewed debate among historians on the necessity and morality of nuclear use in Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the fiftieth anniversary in August 1995 showed the passions and soul-searching that nuclear use could arouse, even though the US decisionmakers in 1945 were not fully aware, in advance of dropping the bomb, of the consequences of nuclear attack.

The normative restraints have helped to undermine the coercive value of nuclear weapons, especially vis-à-vis nonnuclear states. A former US military commander in chief of the Pacific stated that he could not find any area under the Pacific Command where it would have made sense to use nuclear weapons in order to achieve US military objectives.[36] Nonnuclear states tend to be aware of the fact that they cannot be easily coerced by nuclear threats and that no nuclear state would use them unless its extreme vital interests such as survival are questioned.[37] Nonnuclear states—pre–1964 China, Egypt, Argentina, and Iraq—went to war against nuclear-armed adversaries, anticipating no nuclear retaliation.[38]

Thus, in compellent and coercive senses, nuclear weapons carry a limited and immediately translatable power-base. They cannot easily be transformed into instrumental forms that would allow the exercise of power and eventually influence. However, the putative aspect was strong during the acute conflict phase of the Cold War, when the superpowers deterred each other with capabilities more than sufficient to destroy each other several times. But when that conflict ended, the logic of mutual assured destruction (MAD) and the power that derived from instruments of devastation declined dramatically. This is mainly because no parties hold such an intense hostility any more and there are increased difficulties in making and implementing an effective threat, or receiving others' compliance due to that threat.

Finally, the growing interdependence in economic, ecological, and security spheres has decreased the usefulness of nuclear weapons, especially given the risk of global radiation. As Nye argues, in an interdependent world "power is less fungible, less coercive and less tangible" and "cooptive behavioral power—getting others to want what you want—and soft power resources—cultural attraction, ideology and international institutions," become more important. In addition, the use of force for gaining economic objectives is too risky for modern great powers. "Even short of aggression, the translation of economic into military power resources may be very costly."[39]

In an economically interdependent world, nations that are disposed to overspend on military capability, including nuclear weapons, tend to decline. The Soviet collapse and the relative economic decline of the United States, especially following the Reagan era overspending on defense and its impact on pressing domestic needs, suggest that although nuclear spending might have provided security against external threats, it negatively affected the internal security of the states engaged in high levels of arms spending. It has been argued that nuclear weapons could provide security cheaper than conventional weapons. But the experience of the superpowers shows that the spending on conventional weapons did not decline as a result of their nuclear overkill capacity. Similarly, there is no convincing evidence to argue that nuclear states such as Britain, France, and China, and opaque nuclear states such as India, Pakistan, and Israel, have reduced their spending on conventional forces, although they possess, or are presumed to possess, nuclear capability.

The maintenance of nuclear forces during the post–Cold War era is based on worst-case assumptions similar to those that formed the basis for nuclear policies during the Cold War. The problem with these assumptions is that, as Baldwin argues, "the lack of fungibility of political power resources means that preparing to deal with the

worst contingencies may hinder one's ability to deal with less severe ones" and

> Policy makers who prepare for the worst and ignore the intentions of other nations may wind up preparing for a very costly but unlikely contingency at the expense of a less devastating but more likely contingency.[40]

Nuclear weapons are built around worst-case assumptions, but often threats seem to come from lower-level challenges and nations appear to be less prepared to deal with them. In that sense, a transition from worst-case contingencies to most probable scenarios could radically alter the need and perceived utility of nuclear weapons.

The Post–Cold War Opportunities

The end of the Cold War provides a unique opportunity to achieve the objective of creating a nonnuclear world.[41] We have already discussed the questionable instrumental value that nuclear weapons possess in situations other than possibly zero-sum conflict. Two major arguments are raised against the delegitimization and eventual abolition of nuclear weapons by the five declared nuclear-weapon states. First, it is argued that Russia might revert to a conflictual posture and a new Cold War could arise in some form in Europe.[42] Second, some developing countries are known to be engaging in nuclear acquisition. In order to deter any future threats from these states, it is maintained, the present five declared nuclear states should keep their nuclear capabilities. Both these arguments are problem-ridden.

With respect to the first, it is highly unlikely that the Cold War can be resurrected in its old form. Unless Russia develops its economic capability rapidly, Moscow does not have sufficient military or economic wherewithal to wage a surprise attack through Eastern Europe and fight an expected long war. Russia's difficulties in crushing the Chechen rebels and its use of less-than-modern war tactics in that conflict suggest that its military prowess is often exaggerated. Moscow does not have enough economic or military strength left to engage with the West even in a credible arms race. If it attempts to resurrect the Cold War, its fragile economy would not be able to sustain it.

The contention here is that the end of the Cold War resulted in the considerable weakening of Russia. It lost its East European allies and, more significantly, its own territory has shrunk rapidly. From the perspective of the West, the major threat Russia carries is its

nuclear weapons and its further disintegration as a state.[43] For Russia, its relations with the West cannot be normalized fully while possessing nuclear weapons—weapons that the latter will always view with suspicion. If economic interdependence with its former enemies is Russia's objective, what would be the goal of possessing nuclear weapons that could be targeted against the West itself? However, it is unlikely that Russia would disarm unilaterally given its weakness in the conventional realm.

The fear of re-emergence of the Cold War also ignores the fact that in the past, peace did break out among erstwhile enemies, suggesting that great rapprochements are possible, provided states make positive efforts to strengthen their friendly relationships.[44] Unless one assumes that Russia is different from all great powers of the past, such fears are misplaced and are based on the persistence of stereotypical images developed during the Cold War. Sustained cooperation and development of multifaceted interdependencies could over time alter these perceptions. Integrating Russia fully into the international order would make it difficult for any future Russian ruler to engage in military aggrandizement. In order to achieve this, both the United States and Russia should make more concrete efforts by downgrading their military preparations and by declaring benign intentions through making nuclear weapons less salient in foreign and defense policy postures, a process that was initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev, but halted by his successors.[45]

The nuclear threat from the developing world is extremely low, despite some commonly held assumptions about emerging threats. Barring a few, an overwhelming number of developing states have foresworn nuclear weapons. Analysts tend to mistake constraints on great powers to project power capability and pursue coercive diplomacy in the developing world as equivalent to direct threats to Western security. Only India and Israel have any chance of achieving ICBM capability in the next decade or two. Both these states are democracies, and to many theorists, democratic states tend to have fewer military conflicts among themselves than do authoritarian states. Moreover, Israel is an ally of the United States. There is also little in the Indian policy to suggest that it will emerge as a military threat to the West. Its main military rivalry is with Pakistan and China. Both these states possess nuclear weapons. Additionally, what could India gain by engaging in military hostility when it is striving to gain Western investments? Moreover, India has agreed to sign a nonproliferation treaty if it is universal and nondiscriminatory.

The other so-called mini threats can really be dealt with by conventional capability and diplomacy.[46] In this respect, the French argument

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that it should possess and modernize nuclear weapons to deter possible nuclear and conventional threat from the Middle East and North Africa is misplaced, because continued French nuclear possession promotes proliferation among, rather than deterrence of, its most likely adversaries. Moreover, nuclear weapons cannot reduce the emerging possible threats to French security, such as large-scale illegal immigration from North Africa.

The West has such an overwhelming preponderance in both military and civilian technology and resources that a limited nuclear or chemical challenge can be met by conventional forces alone. There is no evidence that nuclear weapons can be used in low-intensity or regional conflicts without risking political and environmental disasters. A policy of nuclear deterrence or nuclear threat against nonnuclear countries could jeopardize the nonproliferation regime.[47] Only a thoroughly verifiable nondiscriminatory universal regime could stifle the efforts by more developing states to acquire nuclear weapons.

To start with, the second-tier nuclear states—Britain and France—could declare their nonnuclear intentions at the beginning of a universal regime that could eventually involve the remaining three declared and several undeclared nuclear states. These states have scant reasons to maintain their nuclear forces, except for notions about past glory and fears of undefined future threats. Major power status is no longer based on whether a state holds nuclear weapons or not, but on how effectively it can engage in the competitive international economic arena. These second-tier states acquired nuclear weapons on the belief that these capabilities would provide them with a major say in the security affairs of allies and adversaries alike. Although the declared purpose of nuclear capability was a mini-deterrent against Soviet threats, the concrete reason was political in character. They anticipated that by holding nuclear capability they would gain larger influence in nuclear and security matters with the United States and an insurance in case Washington did not live up to its security promises. Nuclear weapons were also believed to have "provided a measure of distinction between those second-tier states that possessed them, and all other second- and third-tier states."[48]

An assessment of the utility of nuclear weapons for status and power for these states during the Cold War shows how useful they were as instruments of power. McGeorge Bundy argues that, with the exception of nuclear arms control, these weapons did not provide these states a ticket of admission to any top political table. He contends that Britain's diplomatic and political position saw a gradual decline as it accelerated its withdrawal from its erstwhile colonies in Africa and the Middle East. Similarly, France did not achieve a larger

international role due to its possession of nuclear weapons. France's influence was not visibly greater in Moscow, London, Washington, or any of its West European allies. As Bundy puts it:

> What this empty page of history suggests instead is that the nuclear weapons of middle powers like Britain and France simply do not give usable influence in daily international affairs. They are not replacement for the great fleets and armies that these countries had in earlier times. You cannot send a landing party, or garrison a colony, or capture a terrorist with atomic bombs, and everyone knows it. The bomb does not give you the means to undo the impact of Suez, or to reverse the verdict in Algeria, or to reappear in Asia.[49]

The political influence that Britain and France held in NATO was not due to their possession of nuclear weapons. Even without nuclear capability, they would have received more or less the same influence in intra-alliance politics. Regarding major power status, the British or French position did not come directly from the possession of nuclear weapons, but as victors of World War II and as members of the UN Security Council with veto power; the latter was bestowed upon them much earlier than their nuclear acquisition. It is unlikely that they would have lost their Security Council seats had they not been nuclear weapon states.

Secondly, their nuclear capability has not been useful in the crises and wars in which they have engaged since 1945. Both Britain and France backed out of the Suez crisis, allowing Egypt, although weaker, to win—and Britain had possessed nuclear weapons since 1952. France's retreat from Algeria occurred after it became a nuclear power, which shows the limitations of nuclear capability against guerrilla forces. Similarly, the British possession of nuclear weapons had no tangible effect on the Argentine decision to take over the Falklands Islands.

Thirdly, during the Cold War, nonnuclear Japan and Germany held equal or more weight in European and Asian alliance politics respectively. It is assumed that in the alliance relationship with the United States, nuclear weapons gave Britain a higher profile. This is speculative; Britain would still have received attention from the United States given the historical connections and the fact that Washington needed reliable European partners during the Cold War. In fact, it could be argued that by the 1970s, in terms of economic power, Japan and Germany wielded somewhat higher influence in international politics than nuclear-armed France and Britain did.

Finally, it can be argued that possession of nuclear weapons has not endowed the new nuclear nations—India, Israel, and Pakistan—with higher influence in international politics.

The logical question would thus be: Why would Britain and France continue to maintain major power status through their nuclear capability? The answer is that there are a number of other attributes—such as economic power, conventional military capability, alliance with the status-quo power, their major historical and current role in Europe, political cohesion, and language and culture—and the simple fact that they were major players in the world scene until recently that provide them with the key ingredients of major power status.

What is missing in the calculations about great power status is the changing nature of power resources needed to sustain a dominant position in international politics. Nye argues that, during the past five centuries, different power resources played important roles during different periods. The sources of power tend to fluctuate and they continue to change in contemporary world politics.[50]

In the post–Cold War period, therefore, the type of military resources that held supreme during the previous era may not be of much significance. The post–Cold War era has already witnessed the depreciation of nuclear weapons that have a battlefield application. The US and Russian decisions to fully remove and dismantle tactical nuclear weapons from Europe suggest that even for these states the perceived utility of nuclear weapons is currently only at the strategic level, not at the tactical or battlefield level. Both Germany and Japan are holding on to their nonnuclear policies. In addition, a number of technologically capable states (notably Brazil, Argentina, and Ukraine) have declared their intentions to become nonnuclear states. In their calculations, nuclear weapons do not add much to their power or influence in international politics, but are a liability for their economic development. Nuclear possession would magnify the conflict dimension of their external interactions and could result in unwanted attention and military targeting.

A fundamental problem with the British and French deterrent in the post–Cold War period is determining the enemy they are deterring. Both in terms of general and immediate deterrence, the enemy is elusive.[51] The deterrence argument is no longer strong enough, especially since the Soviet threat from Eastern Europe has vanished. It could be argued that Russia could revert to an aggressive posture, and that the United States could withdraw from its commitment in Europe, and therefore, the second-tier states should possess nuclear weapons. Although this is a distant possibility, the biggest deterrent would be a more institutionalized European security system, where

Russia would be a partner for peace rather than a state that is looked upon with lingering suspicion. An economically interdependent Russia would be least likely to revert to military aggrandizement, because the cost of doing so would outweigh the benefits. The logic of potential Russian threat should apply moreso to Germany, given that the Russian threat could be potentially higher toward Germany than it is toward Britain or France, due to its geographical and strategic location and the history of conflict with Russia.

The rationale for continued possession of nuclear weapons by Britain and France—an insurance against future risks and uncertainties, maintenance of stability in Europe, the fears of extreme nationalists assuming control in Russia—all assume worst-case contingencies and scepticism toward alternative arrangements that can reduce the likelihood of war in Europe. They also assume that future threats can be successfully deterred through nuclear weapons.

A problem with these assumptions is that as threats from traditional sources vanish, new justifications have to be developed for maintaining costly nuclear weapons programs. Any rationale intended to use nuclear weapons in regional conflicts could undermine the NPT and increase the possibility that more countries would acquire nuclear weapons. The proposals for integrating the British and French nuclear forces and the creation of a Euro-deterrence force also have problems, given that such a force would violate the spirit, if not the letter, of the NPT. It would also imply that, even after the principal conflict has vanished, Europe still needs nuclear weapons in order to maintain its dominance in the world system, while it encourages the rest of the world to renounce nuclear weapons. Nuclear ownership by an integrated Europe would entail the possession of such weapons by erstwhile nonnuclear states—most notably, Germany. Although concrete measures for the continued control of these weapons by France and the United Kingdom can be made, it is not clear what the German response to giving these countries a dominant say in European security matters would be.[52]

The Need for Nuclear Disarmament

To return to the central question under discussion, the argument of this article is that the end of the principal structural conflict, the Cold War, has simultaneously undermined its central military instrument; i.e., nuclear weapons. Their continued presence could generate potential dangers for international security, principally for two reasons. First, the transition from a bipolar structure to a multipolar structure implies that, although the United States remains dominant

in the international system, a number of actors have emerged as economically and militarily powerful. Nuclear weapons in such an altered power structure are riskier than in a bipolar structure because of the uncertainty surrounding the nuclear intentions of multiple actors and the possibility for inadvertent or accidental nuclear war.

Second, if established nuclear powers value nuclear weapons highly, rising major powers such as Germany, Japan, and India will be tempted to acquire and maintain these weapons of mass destruction, causing their less powerful neighbors to obtain them as well. The current efforts to control the spread of nuclear weapons assume that systemic changes will not occur and that new great powers will not arise, and that the five can maintain nuclear monopoly for a long time to come.[53] The best way to avoid future great powers from becoming nuclear weapon states would be through a global ban rather than a discriminatory regime that freezes the nuclear status quo.

Nuclear depreciation is also necessary to further stifle nuclear weapons modernization programs of both Russia and China. Because the West values nuclear weapons, the moral argument against these states from developing further capability is not very credible. The continued nuclear testing by China suggests that, despite its earlier pronouncements on its willingness to become nonnuclear if other nuclear states agreed to do so, Beijing has rediscovered the supposed value of nuclear weapons in the changing international order. Russia also holds onto nuclear weapons, believing that Moscow's influence in international politics in general, and relations with the West in particular, derive from that source. These beliefs could be altered if and only when all states agree to the apparent nonutility of nuclear weapons in the post–Cold War era and agree to a total nuclear disarmament in a decade or two.

Nuclear deterrence was a product of the intense zero-sum conflict that the superpowers engaged in during the Cold War. The massive destructive potential of these weapons provided the impetus to rely on scenarios of mutual destruction, given that the conflict could otherwise escalate into a global war. The instrument fit well into the high-stakes conflict: adversaries were bent on pursuing their ideological and political agendas and maximization of relative gains mattered significantly. The Cold War system was based on "balance of power" and "balance of terror," and both were perceived to be essential for international stability. However, in an altered system, both become less relevant. Specifically, when the nature of the conflict has changed, the instrument for waging the conflict also has to change. For instance, highly coercive military instruments have little use in a

relationship characterized by economic interdependence. In the dependence relationship of the North-South variety, coercion is still possible, but more feasible with conventional weapons or economic instruments such as sanctions.

Moreover, in an asymmetric great-power configuration, when the power of one of the erstwhile superpowers has declined considerably following the loss of large portions of its territory, nuclear weapons have a limited specific role, unlike in the Cold War conditions of strategic parity. Although it may be assumed that, for the declining superpower, nuclear weapons could help to maintain a certain level of power status, it seems that power is only of short-run value, and that the state will be exposed if it does not gain more usable sources of power capability. For great powers in such an asymmetric relationship to rely on nuclear weapons assumes that the structural conflict could come back at the same level that it held during the Cold War. It has been argued that during a period of transition great powers would want to keep nuclear weapons "as a hedge in the event that international relations should deteriorate and as a means of keeping the major power competition at the political and economic and not the military level."[54] It would be logical to ask: How long is it feasible economically and politically to spend billions of dollars on systems that are expected to provide hedges against possible re-emergence of the structural conflict?

In the post–Cold War era, nuclear weapons could be viewed as having high value by regional states engaged in protracted conflicts or those that have possible conflicts with major powers. It has been argued that regional states such as India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea, Iraq, and Iran could find possession of nuclear weapons as a way to deter their regional adversaries and their major power opponents. However, there are limitations to the power that the regional nuclear state can possess with nuclear weapons. Their nuclear capabilities could deter their adversaries' large-scale attacks, but they are proving to be of no use to deter limited, low-intensity attacks. For instance, the Islamic fundamentalist groups (such as Hamas) that engage in terrorist attacks within Israel or the occupied territories seem to be undeterrable by military means. Similarly, the Pakistani training of militants in the Indian state of Kashmir is continuing, even when both these neighbor nations are reported to possess nuclear arms. It is interesting to note in these cases that security challenges to the regional states, at this point in time, come from subnational groups that engage in guerrilla-type operations in which the efficacy of conventional or nuclear military capability seems to be extremely

low. Additionally, these states are not deterred from engaging in low-intensity warfare against each other, even though they possess nuclear weapons. The risk, however, is that such low-intensity conflicts could escalate into nuclear confrontations if they are not managed and controlled more carefully.[55]

Conclusions

The dramatic changes in the international system at the close of the twentieth century suggest that the sources of power and influence in the future will be different from those in a bipolar system characterized by intense competition; the system is evolving into a multipolar one with diffused challenges and threats. As a source of power and influence, nuclear weapons played only a limited role in international politics during the Cold War era, except in the central Soviet-US deterrent relationship and alliance partnerships. Post–Cold War conflicts are mostly intrastate ethnic conflicts and nuclear weapons have no role to play in containing or deterring these.

The possibility of creating a nonnuclear world, given the inherent contradictions of nuclear weapons as a source of power, needs to be addressed. The end of the Cold War has provided an opportunity to dismantle the weapons of mass destruction—reminiscent of the ambitious objective of proposals during the early stages of the nuclear arms race. The demise of the Cold War is an epochal event, almost similar in significance to the end of a major war. When a war ends, nations tend to reappraise the utility and logic of their military capabilities, as the United States did after World War II and after the Korean and Vietnam wars. New orders are created, with the winners taking leading roles in devising instruments to prevent another war. The Cold War's end provides a similar turning point for examining the utility of the weapon with which the Cold War was conducted—that is, the most lethal weapon that human beings have ever invented: the nuclear weapon.

The proliferation of nuclear weapons could be arrested only if the present five declared states accept that these weapons do not carry much coercive power. It is clear that as long as these states value nuclear weapons, the NPT will not succeed in the long run to stop proliferation. Regional powers and emerging major powers will be tempted to acquire nuclear weapons, because without them they could become targets of military coercion and they would not be given the status they deserve in the international system, leading to further proliferation by their regional antagonists.

Notes

1. For this perspective, see Robert J. Art, "To What Ends Military Power?" *International Security* 4 (spring, 1980): 3–35; Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 215–216; John Lewis Gaddis, "Nuclear Weapons, the End of the Cold War, and the Future of the International System," in Patrick J. Garrity and Steven A. Maaranen, eds., *Nuclear Weapons in the Changing World* (New York: Plenum Press, 1992), p. 24.

2. There is a small but growing literature on the nonutility of nuclear weapons. For example, see Regina Cowen Karp, ed., *Security Without Nuclear Weapons?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). Kenneth E. Boulding, "What Power Do Nuclear Weapons Give Their Possessors?: The Basic Instability of Deterrence," in Charles W. Kegley and Kenneth L. Schwab eds., *After the Cold War: Questioning the Morality of Nuclear Deterrence* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 99–110; John Mueller, "The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons: Stability in the Post-War World," *International Security* 13(fall 1988): 55–79; Michael MccGwire, "Is There a Future for Nuclear Weapons?" *International Affairs* 70(1994): 211–228; Joseph Rotblat, "Towards a Nuclear Weapon-free World: Societal Verification," *Security Dialogue* 23 (December 1992): 51–61.

3. Jeffrey Hart, "Three Approaches to the Measurement of Power in International Relations," *International Organization* 30 (spring 1976): 289–305.

4. Ibid.

5. Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), p. 27. See also Kal Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, 6th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1992), pp. 118–122.

6. Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. v.

7. Ray S. Cline, *World Power Assessment 1977* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1977), p. 7.

8. Klaus Knorr, *The Power of Nations: The Political Economy of International Relations* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), p. 9.

9. Klaus Knorr, *Military Power and Potential* (Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1970). p. 3.

10. Knorr, note 8, p. 4.

11. Art, note 1.

12. Ian Smart, "The Great Engines: The Rise and Decline of a Nuclear Age." *International Affairs* 51(October 1975): 544–553.

13. Gilpin, note 1, pp. 215–216.

14. Gaddis, note 1, p. 24.

15. James A. Caporaso, "Dependence, Dependency, and Power in the Global System: A Structural and Behavioral Analysis," *International Organization* 32 (winter 1978): 13–43.

16. For a case study of arms supply and influence attempts see, T. V. Paul, "Influence through Arms Transfers: Lessons from the U.S.–Pakistani Relationship," *Asian Survey* 32(December 1992): 1078–1092.

17. Patrick J. Garrity, "The Depreciation of Nuclear Weapons in International Politics: Possibilities, Limits and Uncertainties," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 14 (December 1991):463–514.

18. These principles include: just cause, exhaustion of peaceful alternatives, competent authority, effective means, proportionality and minimal civil damage. For a discussion of these principles, see Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

19. Lawrence Freedman, "Whither Nuclear Strategy?" in Ken Booth, ed., *New Thinking about Strategy and International Security* (London: Harper Collins, 1991), pp. 75–89; Robert S. McNamara, "The Military Role of Nuclear Weapons: Perceptions and Misperceptions," *Foreign Affairs* 62 (fall 1983): 59–80.

20. Knorr, note 8, pp. 13, 18.

21. Richard H. Ullman, "Denuclearizing International Politics," *Ethics* 95 (April 1985): 567–588.

22. Eric Herring, "The Decline of Nuclear Diplomacy," in Booth, note 19, pp. 90–109.

23. McGeorge Bundy, "The Unimpressive Record of Atomic Diplomacy," in Gwyn Prins, ed., *The Nuclear Crisis Reader* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), pp. 3–14.

24. Stanley Hoffmann contends that the gap between the supply of power and the achievements of power for the superpowers deepened dramatically during the Cold War. Hoffmann, "Nuclear Proliferation and World Politics," in Alaistar Buchan, ed., *A World of Nuclear Powers?* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1966), p. 94.

25. John Lewis Gaddis, "NSC 68 and the Problem of Ends and Means," *International Security* 4 (spring 1980):164–170.

26. Bundy, note 23, p. 44.

27. McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival* (New York: Random House, 1988), p. 587.

28. Ibid.

29. See T. V. Paul, "Nuclear Taboo and War Initiation: Nuclear Weapons in Regional Conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (forthcoming, December 1995).

30. Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 260.

31. Thomas C. Schelling, "The Role of Nuclear Weapons," in L. Benjamin Ederington and Michael J. Mazarr, eds., *Turning Point: The Gulf War and U.S. Military Strategy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994), p. 110.

32. For these pledges, see Frank Blackaby, Jozef Goldblat, and Sverre Lodgaard, "No-First-Use of Nuclear Weapons," *Bulletin of Peace Proposals* 15 (1984):321–332; Hisakazu Fujita, *International Regulation of the Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Osaka: Kansai University Press, 1988), p. 44. It should be noted that Russia in recent years has retracted from its earlier no-first-use commitment, largely because of domestic political considerations.

33. *New York Times* (May 12, 1995), p. A10.

34. For a discussion of these two resolutions, see John Griffith, "Nuclear Weapons and International Law," in Prins, note 23, pp. 154–171.

35. Ibid.

36. Noel Gayler, "A Commander-in-chief's Perspective on Nuclear," in Prins, note 23,. pp. 15–28.

37. Bundy, note 27, p. 588.

38. For a discussion on the calculations of these states, see T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chs. 5 and 8, and T. V. Paul, note 29.

39. Nye, note 5, pp. 188–189; see also John Mueller, "Power and Order in the New World Order." Paper presented at the 16th World Congress of the International Political Science Association, (Berlin, August 21–25, 1994).

40. David A. Baldwin, "Power Analysis and World Politics: Some Trends versus Old Tendencies," *World Politics* 31 (January 1979): 161–194.

41. For a discussion on the necessity for a rethinking on nuclear weapons, see Allan S. Krass, "The Second Nuclear Era: Nuclear Weapons in a Transformed World," in Michael T. Klare and Daniel C. Thomas, eds., *World Security: Challenges for a New Century*, 2d ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), pp. 85–105. See also Freedman, note 19, p. 86, on the changing strategic environment and the declining utility of nuclear weapons in the aftermath of major changes in Europe.

42. David Goldfischer and Thomas W. Graham, "The Current Debate: An Introduction," in Goldfischer and Graham, eds., *Nuclear Deterrence and Global Security in Transition* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992), p. 21.

43. Three former US officials with long-term involvement in national security planning have argued that the elimination of Soviet conventional superiority from Europe has removed the chief requirement for continued US nuclear presence on the Continent. McGeorge Bundy, William J. Crowe, Jr., and Sydney D. Drell, *Reducing Nuclear Danger: The Road Away from the Brink* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993), p. 5.

44. For how great power rapprochements occur, see Stephen R. Rock, *Why Peace Breaks Out: Great Power Rapprochement in Historical Perspective* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

45. The decision by both these countries not to target each other and the START agreements are positive directions in this regard.

46. On the exaggerated nature of these threats, see John Mueller, "The Catastrophe Quota: Trouble after the Cold War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 38 (September 1994):355–375.

47. Wolfgang Biermann, "Overcoming Nuclear Orthodoxy: A Rejoinder." *Security Dialogue* 24(1993):333–336.

48. Garrity, note 17, p. 477.

49. Bundy, note 27, pp. 499–500.

50. Nye, note 5, p. 33.

51. In general deterrent terms, adversaries keep forces to deter others who might attack if an opportunity arises. In immediate deterrence terms, when an adversary is planning an attack, the nuclear state mounts a retaliatory threat and the adversary backs off. For the distinction between these two types of deterrence, see Patrick Morgan, *Deterrence: A Conceptual Analysis* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977), pp. 30–32.

52. For the British and French post–Cold War nuclear programs, see Nicholas K. J. Witney, "British Nuclear Policy after the Cold War," *Survival* 36(winter 1994–1995):96–112; David S. Yost, "Nuclear Debates in France," *Survival* 36(winter 1994–1995):113–139.

53. For a discussion on this issue, see T. V. Paul, "Will the Systemic Basis of the Non-Proliferation Regime Persist Beyond 1995?" Paper presented at the International Studies Association Annual Convention (Washington D.C., March 1994).

54. Garrity, note 17, p. 465.

55. It could, however, be argued that the absence of large-scale war is due to the nuclear capability of Israel, India, and Pakistan. This needs to be analyzed more carefully because a number of other factors might also have contributed to the relative absence of war—for example, the decisive defeat of weaker adversaries in the 1971 India-Pakistan War and the 1973 Middle East War and the assuming of preponderance in conventional capability by the status-quo states, India and Israel. In addition, in the Middle East, through the Camp David Accords, Egypt, the main rival of Israel, defected from the Arab coalition that has waged war against the Jewish state. This effectively removed the leadership and military wherewithal necessary for a concerted military attack.

A Home for the Brave:
The "Place" of Emancipation in Postcolonial Criticism

Daniel Bertrand Monk*

The essay can calmly and proudly set its fragmentariness against the petty completeness of scientific attitude or impressionistic freshness; but its purest fulfillment, its most vigorous accomplishment becomes powerless once the great aesthetic comes . . . the essay seems truly and completely a mere precursor, and no independent value can be attached to it. . . . Thus the essay seems justified as a necessary means to the ultimate end, the penultimate step in a hierarchy . . . but this longing is more than just something waiting for fulfillment, it is a fact of the soul with a value and existence of its own: an original and deeply-rooted attitude towards the whole of life, a final, irreducible category of possibilities of experience.[1]

—*Georg Lukacs*

I hope it will not seem a self-serving thing to say that all of what I mean by criticism and critical consciousness is directly reflected . . . in the essay form itself. For if I am to be taken seriously as saying that secular criticism deals with local and worldly situations, and that it is constitutively opposed to the production of massive, hermetic systems, then it must follow that the essay—a comparatively short, investigative, radically skeptical form—is the principal way in which to write criticism.[2]

—*Edward Said*

In the space of the seventy-three years that separate these two endorsements of a certain form of emancipatory critical practice, the figuration of the place of emancipation within that same critical

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practice has also been radically altered. Initiating the type of immanent critique that he would himself later incorporate as a significant component of the venture of Western Marxism, Georg Lukacs unites the project of human liberation with an idealist predication of the subject; with what the critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has described as "the subject's irreducible intendedness toward the object."[3] As the record of a critical consciousness that, in Martin Jay's estimation, anticipates "an objective truth . . . yet to become manifest," Lukacs envisions the essay as a necessarily fragmented *form* that, in its manifest lack, both expresses the crisis of a divided present and simultaneously prefigures a moment when subject and object are reunited in human consciousness.[4] Following his turn to Marx in 1918, and upon the completion in 1992 of his classic text, *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukacs would locate that transcendence, situating the agency of redemption in the proletariat itself. In *History and Class Consciousness* Lukacs consequently defines emancipation as an irrevocable cancellation/overcoming/sublation (*Aufhebung*) of a fragmented, reified consciousness; liberation is the necessary erasure of a false consciousness produced within the reified realm of the commodity structure (and its attendant "antinomies of bourgeois thought") in favor of the repossession of lost totality:

> Classical philosophy did, it is true, take all the antinomies of its life-basis to the furthest extreme it was capable of in thought; it conferred on them the highest possible intellectual expression. . . . Hence classical philosophy has nothing but these unresolved antinomies to bequeath to succeeding (bourgeois) generations. The continuation of that course which at least in method started to point the way beyond these limits, namely the dialectical method as the true historical method was reserved for the class which was able to discover within itself on the basis of its life-experience the identical subject-object, the subject of action; the "we" of genesis: namely the proletariat.[5]

While this same idealist predication of subjectivity has influenced many of the subsequent elaborations of the Marxist master narrative of emancipation, it is nevertheless evident that elements within the project of Western Marxism have also come to suspect Lukacs's representation of totality as the image of emancipation proper. For example, in its most radical form, the critique of totality has been realized in Theodor Adorno's relentless pursuit of critical negation. In the practice of Adorno's negative dialectics, the presentation of totality—of a final synthesis of concept and reality—are rejected as attempts to locate transcendence by means of a series of suspect meta-

physical categories that have themselves been created within the realm
of reified consciousness. In this critical context then, emancipation is
preserved in negation; that is to say, only in what Susan Buck-Morss
has described as "the explosion of given forms"[6] of thought in order to
maintain the hope of—or more emphatically, *the space for*—a future
moment/place of deliverance. Buck-Morss also notes that the impera-
tive of the negative dialectic is still partisan. As a form of social praxis,
critical consciousness is necessarily faced with the alternative of either
"perpetuating the myths of the present"[7] or emphatically rejecting syn-
thesis, asserting in its stead the principle of nonidentity.

The force of this negative dialectic is, in part, premised upon a
dismissal of the idealist predication of the subject as a vestigial cate-
gory of bourgeois humanism. It is, in Fredric Jameson's assessment,
a "rebuke of consciousness forced to *reground* itself in a painful
awareness of its social determination."[8] However, in its subsequent
elaboration since the work of Adorno, the materialist reinscription of
the subject as "labor power; as the irreducible possibility that the sub-
ject be adequate to itself,"[9] has not necessarily confirmed the situa-
tion of *emancipation-in-negation*. Nor has it resulted in a final disen-
gagement of the project of liberation from idealist philosophical
speculation. For example, in attempting to project Marx's analysis of
capital to contemporary conditions of economic existence, Ernest
Mandel's *Late Capitalism* opens the prospect for contradicting inter-
pretations of the future of emancipatory criticism. Mandel distin-
guishes the present as an identifiable, and necessarily separate stage
in the development of the logic of capital. This late capitalism is now
a global *spatial* system characterized by the "dynamism with which it
penetrates the surviving enclaves of Nature within older capitalism;
the Third World and the unconscious."[10] Within Mandel's frame-
work, which like Adorno's appears to equate the global logic of cap-
ital with totality, any conception of *emancipation-in-resistance* is itself
presumed to be a structural function of capitalism itself.

At the same time, however, the structure of a global market rests
on the necessary premise of geographically uneven development.[11]
As, perhaps, it creates resistance as a structural function of its own
crises, late capitalism also establishes the *sites* for this resistance as
necessary enclaves outside of its own logic: "The unequal develop-
ment between regions and nations is the very essence of capitalism,
on the same level as the exploitation of labour by capital."[12]

For Fredric Jameson, the phenomenon of this same uneven de-
velopment—"the concrete existence of radically different spaces else-
where in the world"[13]—is what has signaled the promise of counter-
hegemonic practice. In Jameson's synthesis of this new materialism

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with Gramscian enclave theory, emancipation now appears as the prospect of *resistance* within these sites of radical alterity. In this context, and again following Antonio Gramsci's analysis of the function of the intellectual in civil society, Jameson has posited the possibility of the coeval emergence of forms of intellectual praxis that are "organically" allied with those potential forces of resistance residing on late capitalism's periphery, "producing and keeping alive a certain alternate *idea*"[14] of freedom.

This anticipation of liberty in resistance is necessarily contingent upon the possibility of conceptualizing, in spatial terms, an *outside* to the logic of late capitalism. And while Jameson relies on Mandel's materialist predication of the subject in order to posit the existence of this same "outside," Raymond Williams repeats this maneuver by textualizing—or reinscribing in history—the same post-Marxist conception of the cultural logic of capital. Williams effectively turns the principle of nonidentity back upon the view of capitalism as totality—what Edward Said has termed the "bad infinity"—represented in Marxist analyses themselves. The consequence, of course, is a reconceptualization of the same "outside," not only as a necessary periphery to the dominant mode of production, but as a logical correlate to existing forms of consciousness:

> However dominant a social system may be, the very meaning of its domination involves a limitation or selection of the activities it covers, so that by definition it cannot exhaust all social experience, which therefore *always contains space* for alternate acts and alternative intentions which are not yet articulated as a social institution or even a project.[15]

Between Negation and Resistance

Reflecting upon the rhetoric of Said's endorsement of the essay cited at the beginning of this article, it is evident that the elaboration of a theory of emancipatory criticism (an elaboration that may not be reduced solely to the examples just presented) is, in some way, discernible within the passage. By emphatically invoking the "worldly" (or the "concrete") as the object of criticism while presenting criticism as the product of a specific category of "consciousness," Said introduces what may alternatively be read as either a synthesis of, or a balanced contradiction between, materialist and idealist predications of the subject and between the contemporary alternatives of (a place for) *emancipation-in-negation* or *emancipation-in-resistance*.

On the other hand, it would be misleading to suggest that the motives expressed in Said's passage are exhausted solely by the project of Western Marxism. As the critical essay offers an alliance of the local with the worldly, its "radical and skeptical" form is also opposed to "the production of massive, hermetic systems" such as critical theory. What may be discerned in these intentions is a disaffection for closure that is certainly in sympathy with, but appears to extend beyond, the undoing of totality-as-"bad infinity" effected in the work of Raymond Williams. This passage, like so much of Said's work, suggests that the oppositional ambitions of criticism may exist in complex affiliation with a poststructuralist hermeneutic of suspicion.

This position is not without serious consequences for the Marxist project of emancipation, and may initially appear to compromise it in its entirety. Returning to Martin Jay's assessment of Lukacs's vision of the essay (as a "precursor form anticipating an objective truth") it is possible to inscribe this statement within the context of a semiotics that would equate the essay as the signifier of a transcendental signified—as the representation of a reality presently beyond the bounds of reified existence. This constructive act of textualization—of presenting the (posited) actuality of an "objective truth" as a function of language—binds the ambitions of emancipatory criticism to a central problematic of a poststructuralist critique of representation, precisely because that critique disrupts the "phantom objectivity" of the paradigm of meaning—of Saussurian signifier and signified—intimated in Martin Jay's denotative statement. In its stead, the deconstructive practice of Jacques Derrida, for example, asserts an "absence of the transcendental signified as the limitlessness of play, that is to say, as the destruction of onto-theology and the metaphysics of presence."[16] Since the narrative of emancipation is necessarily a part of this same "metaphysics of presence," the affirmation of play may itself be interpreted as a resolute negation of the formulation of liberty elaborated by Western Marxism. *Play* refers to the recognition that a declaration of meaning is itself determined by its function within the chain of signifiers, without actual referents such as Jay's "objective truth" to render them either transparent or transcendent. Consequently, the announced destruction of a metaphysics of presence signals the *perpetual* postponement (within the present constraints of signification) of the same objective reality that both Marxist, and post-Marxist, critical theories would only posit as inaccessible.[17]

For the engaged critic the question must then be: "Who then, or what then, represents?" Where is the authority—if not the agency—that situates subject, consciousness, and beings within their specific locations/functions in the chain of signification? One answer—that

formulated by Michel Foucault—represents this same chain of signi-fication as both the medium and effect of power in "carceral" society. Within this network, the production of knowledge—the official knowledge of the academy, of the sciences, and the disciplines—is it-self organized *within* a series of regulated and regulating discursive practices that necessarily subjugate other forms of thought. However, as this power/knowledge is so general, it may itself only be under-stood as an effect. In what may be seen as a deliberate strategic ma-neuver, Foucault disengages his formulation of power from those *sites* of domination traditionally analyzed and countered in Marxist critical practices:

> Power is not to be taken to be a phenomenon of one individual's consolidated and homogenous domination over others, or that of one group or class over others. What, by contrast, should always be kept in mind is that power, if we do not take too distant a view of it, is not that which makes the difference between those who exclu-sively possess and retain it, and those who do not have it and submit to it. Power must b[e] analyzed as something which circulates, or rather as something which functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never ap-propriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization.[18]

An alternative to this evaluation of poststructuralist thought-work as a kind of epistemic violence to Marx would offer the challenge that, as each of its principal forms are themselves represented as acts of emancipation, both the deconstruction of Derrida, for example, and the archaeologies of Foucault may themselves be allied with the ambitions of oppositional criticism. Significantly, deconstruction's systematic call-to-attention regarding the logocentric bias of Western metaphysics and its demystification of a philosophy of presence have been likened by critics—among them Edward Said[19]—to those criti-cal appeals for *emancipation-in-negation* within post-Marxist criticism that have sought to expose the fetishistic nature of instrumental rea-son. Conversely, Derrida's decisive representation of the *impensé* as the inevitable escape of language from the incarceration of a world that perpetually attempts to refigure meaning-as-presence also sig-nals the prospect for a utopian opening that must, again, be con-ceived of in spatial terms: as a parallel to the "outside" of reified ex-perience posited by Raymond Williams. In this respect one would, cautiously, represent deconstruction as an affirmative practice allied with the type of oppositional criticism that holds a space open for *emancipation-in-resistance*.

Despite its significant differences with Derrida's project of deconstruction, the power/knowledge nexus presented by Michel Foucault has been addressed from a similar perspective. Martin Jay, for example, has noted that in its presentation of power as the coercive and necessarily mystifying sovereignty of instrumental reason, an Archaeology of Knowledge shares significant characteristics with the project of resolute negation presented by Adorno and Horkheimer in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, their monumental study of the European Enlightenment and its mystifying latencies.[20] This conception of power, on the other hand, has been coupled with Antonio Gramsci's definition of hegemony as a superstructural agency of control in civil society;[21]—a union that has led to the reinscription of Foucault's work within what I have been referring to here as a resistance criticism.

Each of these proposed alliances appears to be aporetic. To unite, instrumentally, these two programs of poststructuralism with those of Marxist critical theory, as they have each existed until the present, is seemingly to opt for the negation of one or the other of these projects. To accept free-play and *difference* within any critical practice, even as they offer the prospect of a welcome demystification, is essentially to abandon the imperative of a transcendental signified, and consequently also the hope of emancipation in the revelation of an objective truth beyond the mystified (non)present. Alternatively, for deconstruction to be subsumed within the imperative of emancipation and enjoined as a practice that necessarily points beyond reification is to affirm the presence of a transcendental truth and negate free-play.

The same irreconcilability of purposes may be posited in the case of Foucault's post-Nietzschean conceptions of discourse and power. By aligning a paradigm of power/knowledge with Adorno and Horkheimer's formulation of the situated subject under the commodity structure of capitalism, one essentially *explodes* that same subject of emancipation as no more than an effect of discursive practices. The subject of emancipation may only be restored, at the expense of a diffuse and undifferentiated conception of power, if one employs the concept of *pouvoir/savoir* in the effort to affirm knowledge as ideology or hegemony, (two "grounded" positions of coercion that cannot be reconciled with Foucault's disciplinary 'Chains').

Between Exile and Worldliness

The discursive situation is more usually like the unequal relation between the colonizer and the colonized. . . . No wonder that the

> Fanonist solution to such discourse is violence. Such examples make untenable the opposition between texts and the world, or between texts and speech. Too many exceptions, . . . implicate the text in actuality, even if a text may also be considered a silent printed object with its own unheard melodies.[22]
>
> *—Edward Said*

What then does it signify when one equates discourse, even metaphorically, with a fact of productive geopolitical brutality like colonialism? Recognizing the problematic that is created by aligning the belief in the *fact* of globally organized power with a self-perpetuating, yet unsituated, function of power/knowledge—a function that reduces categories such as colonizer, colonized, and imperialism to effects of its own production—the engaged observer is required to question the imperative that would negate the "opposition between texts and the world."

One must first recognize that this position, though championed and exemplified by Edward Said, defines the space of a particular critical practice. As it attempts to explore the "tensions between political affiliation and post-humanist . . . contemporary theory,"[23] the work of Said, Homi Bhabha, and Spivak, among others, focuses on the legacy and perpetuation of colonial epistemic paradigms in the cultural and theoretical practices of the present. Without intending to blur the important distinctions among each of their respective voices, one may nonetheless note that their varied forms of analysis are directed toward a common *political* end. They also necessarily occupy an aporetic space whose boundaries are marked by a simultaneous adherence to an emancipatory essentialism on the one hand, and to its negation in the dissolution of a transcendental signified.

To occupy this space is to open oneself to charges of ambivalence—or worse, inconsistency. From the perspectives of both a post-structuralist critique of humanism and a Marxist critical theory, the imperatives of a postcolonial criticism are irreducibly compromised. Outlining what might be called a Foucauldian critique—even as he himself has attempted to reintegrate the concept of discourse within the paradigm of ideological closure formulated by Jean Baudrillard —Robert Con Davis cancels Edward Said's conception of "exile" (a position between filiative adherence to a specific culture and an affiliative fidelity to a critical system) as a function of discourse itself: "Said cannot be in cultural exile as a *critic* because no such space as "exile" exists, except as positioned . . . by discourse itself."[24]

Conversely, Catherine Gallagher situates the related concept of worldliness as a theoretical *disengagement* from the ambitions of a philosophy of

emancipation. Overriding the seemingly aporetic space of a postcolonial radical criticism by reasserting the crucial distinction between critical activity and political engagement—that is to say, by negating worldliness as a function somewhere between theory and praxis—Gallagher interprets Said's endeavor as a misdirected conflation of irreducibly separate spheres of action. She necessarily concludes that "no specific politics [of emancipation] can be derived . . . from the category of worldly critical intellectualism as defined by Said."[25]

Within the established logic of opposition—between the belief in the mutually exclusive concepts of a sovereign subject of emancipation, and that of free-play—each of these responses to the radical imperatives of postcolonial criticism is necessarily true. The postcolonial endeavor *appears* to be ambivalent. This is not to say, however, that its contradictions are not in themselves either productive or strategic. It is possible, by tracing the outlines of the space opened up by a postcolonial criticism, to ascertain if its deliberate subjection of Western Marxism to a poststructuralist critique of humanism does not, in some sense, define the field of possibility within which the project of emancipation may now be furthered.

Between Language and Violence

We must now learn to use and erase our language at the same time.[26]

If this statement by Spivak successfully articulates what she refers to as the apparently "irreducible double-binds" of an engaged criticism in a postmodern context, it is important to note that she achieves this definition by attempting to utilize an "affirmative" deconstruction as an ethical check against the closure of the totalizing opposition presented above. By introducing deconstruction as a project that is incapable of positing its own political program—by asserting the element of undecidability that it introduces into *any* equation—Spivak incorporates it within the strategy of postcolonial criticism. Presumably, this is how, for Spivak, one's conditions of impossibility are translated into conditions for maneuver.

To suggest then, that we must erase language even as we use it is necessarily to introduce a practice that in some sense engages the current post-Marxist project of emancipation even as it demystifies its reliance upon what Spivak identifies as a series of "catachretic" transcendental signifieds.[27] Spivak asserts that such apparently paradoxical implementations of critical theory may be understood as the

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means of "negotiating the structures of violence;"[28] employing the
only available language within the closed systems of Western theory
in the cause of a "scrupulously visible political interest."[29] And it is in
this sense—in embracing the double-bind in the cause of its dis-
closed ambition—that a radical criticism may become strategic:

> Crisis is the moment at which you feel that your presuppositions of
> an enterprise are disproved by the enterprise itself. These are not
> necessarily moments of weakness. It seems to me that this is the
> only serious way in which crisis can become productive.[30]

To reiterate, the mandate of a postcolonial criticism—the purpose of
much of its efforts—is to disclose the enduring paradigms of epis-
temic violence in the theoretical and cultural practices of the West,
revealing in those conventions a latent *space* of "neocolonial" repre-
sentation—or effacement—of the Other. As introduced, for exam-
ple, by Edward Said, in his critical genealogy of Orientalism, or by
Spivak, in her own analysis of the historiography of subaltern con-
sciousness, this reading of postcolonial thought-work obliges the en-
gaged observer to understand its uses of Marxist paradigms of knowl-
edge as a means of inciting them to crisis—and, paradoxically, of
furthering the ambitions of such knowledge by relying upon a
hermeneutics of suspicion that would assess even the terms of repre-
sentation employed by an emancipatory criticism as forms of vio-
lence against the subject/object of emancipation. In this context,
then, this radical form of criticism may necessarily appear to endorse
the fundamental alterity of the Orient—acknowledging its marginal-
ization as a function of the global organization of capital—only to
recognize that alterity as an effect of (Marxist) discourse itself.

Between the Subaltern and History

> It is not a matter of throwing away one and keeping the other but of
> bringing the two to productive crisis.[31]

One alternative presented by postcolonial criticism to a resistance
theory of emancipation that would necessarily fall prey to a critique
of its essentialist (lack of) foundations is introduced by Spivak in her
analysis of the work of the Subaltern Studies Group. This collective,
which includes the historians Ranajit Guha and Partha Chatterjee,
has published a series of revisionary analyses of the historiography of
Southeast Asia. Adopting the term *subaltern* from Antonio Gramsci's

original euphemism for the proletariat, the collective now redefines the
identity of a subaltern consciousness negatively, by its difference from
all that which is elite. In this manner, the motives of peasant insurgents
in modern Indian history are distinguished from those of the "bour-
geois nationalist" elites, effectively canceling the accepted historiogra-
phy of Indian nationalism as the exclusive purview of the latter:

> This inadequacy of elitist historiography follows directly from the
> narrow and partial view of politics to which it is committed by virtue
> of its class outlook. In all writings of this kind the parameters of In-
> dian politics are assumed to be enunciated as exclusively or primar-
> ily those of the institutions introduced by the British for the gov-
> ernment of the country. . . . Inevitably, therefore, a historiography
> hamstrung by such a definition can do no more than to equate pol-
> itics with the aggregation of activities and ideas of those who were
> directly involved in operating these institutions, that is, the colonial
> rulers and their *élèves*—the dominant groups in native society.[32]

Positing the existence of these separate domains of politics in
the emerging state—the subaltern and the elite—Guha presents
what he conceives to be the central problematic of a neocolonial his-
toriography. The failure of the Indian bourgeoisie to "speak for the
nation" (to represent it) and to account for subaltern insurgency as
the primary force of modern Indian history has prevented the na-
tion from "coming to its own."[33]

Against this background, Spivak is led to argue that the histori-
ography of the same bourgeois-nationalist elites presents itself as a
politically successful mode of "cognitive failure." Moreover, she of-
fers an alternative reading of the Subaltern Studies Group's own
practices. Her reading presents the collective's attempt to retrieve
the repressed motives of the subaltern as a "strategic" adherence to
an "essentialist notion of consciousness which would fall prey to anti-
humanist critique, within a historiographic practice which draws
many of its strengths from that very critique."[34] This interpretation
relies on a series of observations regarding the collective's radical
historiographic practices: first, that moments of historical change
from colonial dependency to nation-state are no longer represented
in their work as *direct* consequences of the mode of production, but
rather as instances of confrontation elicited by the insurgent subal-
tern; and second, that these confrontations are accompanied by nec-
essary "discursive displacements" or "functional changes in sign sys-
tems"—such as from the "religious" to the "militant"—that, in Spivak's
words, "can only be operated under the force of crisis."[35]

Reduced to these conspicuous features, the apparent double-bind of the collective's effort becomes apparent. Employing the force of a reradicalized historical materialism, it attempts to recover a subaltern consciousness from its repression within elitist historiography. At the same time, the collective also sees the moments of subaltern insurgency as necessarily dependent on shifts in discursive paradigms that, by definition, exist quite apart from any essentialist conception of consciousness. Spivak employs these and other apparent contradictions in order to steer the group's historiography toward the *strategic* engagement with essentialist paradigms that she believes to be latent in the work of the collective. She notes, for example, that the unique element in their theory of change—the force of crisis precipitated during discursive displacements—may only be signaled by "the space of a lack," or supplement, in the 'signifieds' of the sign systems that precede such displacements. Were this not the case, the agency of change, posited as subaltern, would be incapable of attempting a sign-shift from "crime to insurgency."[36]

Proceeding from this introduction of the latent deconstructive "supplement," Spivak challenges the Subaltern Studies project by asking it to consider not only the elitist historiography but also its own project as a form of "cognitive failure." The recognition of the "irreducibility" of such failures in any theoretical or historical premises would compel the collective to acknowledge that "they are themselves engaged in an attempt at displacing discursive fields, that they themselves 'fail' (in the general sense) for reasons as 'historical' as those they adduce for the heterogenous agents they study."[37] For Spivak, the stakes here are high, since their inability to recognize the necessary "cognitive failure" in their own practice opens the Subaltern Studies Group to charges that they themselves "insidiously objectify the subaltern."[38]

The collective's efforts, now themselves understood as attempted discursive displacements, oblige Spivak to link their project with that of a poststructuralist critique of humanism. The "sovereign subject of authority" in humanism appears as the same "imperialist subject" that is advanced in a problematic elitist historiography. To posit this link, however, is to dance once again around the apparent double-bind of the collective, since one is forced to recall that the subaltern insurgent is presented in the work of the collective as the instrument of historical change; that is to say, as an "orientalized" parallel to Lukacs's identification of the proletariat as the repressed subject/object of history: "They fall back upon notions of consciousness as agent, totality, and upon a culturalism, that are discontinuous with the critique of humanism."[39]

Consequently, it is at this juncture that Spivak necessarily presents the task of retrieving a subaltern consciousness as a *strategic*

reliance on essentialist paradigms, thereby reconciling the practices of the collective with the ambitions of a radical postcolonial episteme. What signals, or sanctions, this interpretation is the collective's own conception of a repressed subaltern consciousness itself. Spivak notes that "even as 'consciousness' is entertained as an indivisible self-proximate signified or ground,"[40] in the work of the collective—effectively inscribing their historiography within a "positivist project"—the same consciousness is also presented as a *subaltern* consciousness, which is necessarily historical. Moreover, inasmuch as it recognizes that this specific, historical identity is irretrievable except by plotting its existence as the "negative consciousness" of the elite, the work of the Subaltern Studies Group suggests that a historical "cathexis" is represented in the bourgeois-nationalist historiography. And this *cathexis*—a psychoanalytic term that is used to define a degree of libidinal charge invested in an object, and that Spivak also correctly understands as "occupying" in response to a desire—reveals the negative consciousness of the elite to be a simultaneous disclosure and effacement of the subaltern, a structure of surrogacy that is erected as a mimetic, and apotropaic, investment in security: "Here in vague Hegelian limnings is the anti-humanist and anti-positivist position that *it is always a desire for/of (the power of the Other) that produces the image of the self.*"[41]

Spivak presents the collective's discovery of the cathexes of a historical elite as a further sanction to read their own ambition of retrieving subaltern consciousness as "the charting of a subaltern subject effect." Having been presented by the collective as the subject of history, the subaltern insurgent reveals itself through these works as a *posited* source—what Spivak describes by recourse to the language of deconstruction as an "instituted trace at origin"—that is itself created by the "elite" subject effect within discourse. It is, in Spivak's terms, the result of a "continuist and homogenist deliberative consciousness" (an effect) "symptomatically" seeking its own origin. This means, finally, that the work of the collective records, and simultaneously cancels, a historiographic substitution of a cause for effect—a "metalepsis"—that could, in fact, only have been revealed by strategically adhering to a kind of positivist essentialism that would "*situate* the effect of the subject as subaltern."[42]

Between Orient and Orientalism

Orientalism, is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively in culture, scholarship, or institutions; . . . It is rather a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly,

economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts: it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of "interests" which, by such means as scholarly discovery . . . it not only creates but also maintains; it is rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different . . . world.[43]

The critique of Orientalism advanced by Edward Said in his study of English, US, and French representations of the East parallels the type of negotiation with structures of violence presented by Gayatri Spivak in her formulation of a situated subaltern. Although this is an interpretation of Said's work that has not been entertained by Spivak herself, one may argue that in his seminal text, *Orientalism*, Said unveils a historical cathexis similar to the example disclosed by subaltern historiography, and precisely through a *strategic* adherence to Marxist essentialism. Such an interpretation would not only make sense of what have generally been perceived as the paradoxes of Said's work, it would also serve to disclose a relative similarity of vision among postcolonial critics regarding what appears as the necessarily aporetic, or exilic, space of engagement marked out by their critical practices.[44]

As is well known, *Orientalism* documents the development of an academic discipline from its origins in philology to its extension in current forms of political practice. For Said, Orientalism is, first, a mode of discourse that both limits and produces knowledge; effectively defining "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and . . . 'the Occident'."[45] This definition places Orientalism within the configuration of power/knowledge articulated by Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and other works. This suggests, in turn, that Said's text would consistently present Orientalism as both the medium and effect of an unsituated "microphysics" of power; that is to say, as a self-perpetuating category of knowledge and coercion within "carceral" society.

However, while Said acknowledges the debt of *Orientalism* to Foucault's conceptions of discourse, he simultaneously engages Orientalism's practices with the logic of a macrophysical conception of power. Discourse analysis becomes the strategy through which Orientalism is itself represented as "the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and

having authority over the Orient."[46] Inasmuch as discourse is now implicated in the administration of a domain historically beyond the limits of an incipient carceral society—participating in the appropriation and extraction of the Orient's wealth—it may no longer be conceived of as the effect of an unsituated network, but instead as a superstructural function engaged with the dynamics of an economic base in civil society. In this manner Said, predictably, given his call to "engagement," cancels the orthodox definition of discourse by revealing how discursive practices themselves exceed the closure of their posited definition.

While this is an opposition that is only implied by the appropriation of the terms of Foucault's conception of discourse in *Orientalism*, Said uses it explicitly to criticize Foucault in a later essay entitled "Criticism Between Culture and System." In this study, the inadequacy of what Said refers to as Foucault's "passive" conception of power is assessed in relation to Foucault's conscious disengagement from the conceptual schemata of Marxist analysis. Said notes that "even if one fully agrees with his view that what he calls the microphysics of power is exercised, rather than possessed," the notions of class struggle and of class itself cannot therefore be reduced—along with the forcible taking of state power, economic domination, imperialist war, and dependency relationships, resistances to power—to the status of superannuated nineteenth-century conceptions of political economy."[47] It is important to note that according to Said the specific tactics of Orientalism as a simultaneously coercive and productive practice are premised on the preservation of "flexible positional superiority" for the Occident. This elasticity is in turn achieved through the series of historically determined, and fluid, assessments of the East that Orientalism continually reformulates as knowledge per se. Each of these pronouncements, paradoxically, asserts the Orient's timelessness. Even as it is itself forced continually to produce "new" knowledge in the wake of events in oriental history that necessarily and continually undermine Orientalism's "old" knowledge, the function of Orientalism is continually to reassert what Said has described as the "synchronic essentialism"—or denial of history—inherent in Western representations of alterity.

In order to arrive at a strategic reading of *Orientalism*, then, one must first acknowledge that in Said's text the complex affiliation/dissolution of a genealogy of regulative discourse within a kind of Marxist essentialism (one that would address such forms of discourse as a function of ideology) occasions a familiar charge of ambivalence. In his now classic review of *Orientalism*, James Clifford notes that the "ambiguous" predicament of Orientalism is symptomatic of "the uncertainties generated by the new global situation."[48] As he documents

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these uncertainties, Clifford focuses primarily on the epistemological paradoxes of Said's critical genealogy. According to Clifford, Said reveals an "ambivalent admiration for Nietzsche [through Foucault]" that forces him to posit that "all knowledge is both powerful and fictional, that all language distorts." Yet Said counters his own assertion by making "frequent appeals to an old fashioned existential realism."[49] Power/knowledge—still intact in Said's cosmos as a system of generalized coercion—must nonetheless still be opposed, in Clifford's reading of *Orientalism*, by a "counter-Knowledge."[50]

Each of these paradoxical positions—even Said's self-representation as both an oppositional critic and a humanist—essentially revolves about the liminal position of the Orient itself. The apparent epistemic incongruities in *Orientalism* present themselves as correlates to one fundamental problem in the representation of a geopolitical alterity: "Said is led to argue that a text or a tradition [discourse] distorts, dominates, or ignores some real or authentic feature of the Orient . . . however, *he denies the existence* of any 'real Orient'."[51]

Like the contradictory images of subaltern consciousness discerned by Spivak in her analysis of the historiography of peasant insurgency, Said's aporetic position regarding the East may occasion a redemptive reading of *Orientalism*, which would thus align it with Spivak's conception of a strategic use of essentialism. This interpretation of the text—previously suggested by Catherine Gallagher's assessment of Said's critical "worldliness," as well as by Clifford's estimation that a "submerged but crucial suspicion of totality" is apparent in *Orientalism*[52]—would present Said's reliance on Marxist essentialism as a strategic necessity. Said aims to reveal each instance of Orientalism's invocation of the East as the perpetuation of a successful "cognitive failure." In this sense, all that which is oriental is presented as an analogue of Guha's "subaltern consciousness." The Orient appears, at first, as a "self-proximate signified," or transcendental reality repressed by an elite discipline. Yet Said's repeated insistence on the heterogeneity of oriental reality, the resistances offered by a changing geopolitical Other to the synchronic essentialism of each chapter in Orientalist scholarship, reveal the oriental to be a historical subject as well.

And just as a historical subaltern consciousness is now only discernible by its opposite—that is to say, by its simultaneous representation and effacement in the "negative consciousness" of an elite—the Orient of Orientalism suffers a similar fate. To continue to situate the program of *Orientalism* within the language of Spivak's analysis of subaltern insurgency, the East—as the name of an irretrievable geopolitical Other—appears in *Orientalism* not as the "being"

of oriental reality, but as an image established by a persistent histor-
ical cathexis. Said examines this cathexis explicitly, noting that the
scholar, the poet, and the pilgrim "planned and projected for, imag-
ined, ruminated about places that were principally *in their minds*"[53]:

> Theirs was the Orient of memories, suggestive ruins, forgotten se-
> crets, hidden correspondences, and an almost virtuosic style of
> being, an Orient whose highest literary forms would be found in
> Nerval and Flaubert, both of whose work was solidly fixed in an
> imaginative, unrealizable . . . dimension.[54]

The cathexis of the West finally signals the practice of a kind of
"massive historiographic metalepsis" perpetuated by Orientalist rep-
resentation. The posited "authentic" Orient, which assumes the as-
pect of a transcendental signified beyond the repression of the West-
ern imagination, is revealed by Said to be yet another signifier within
that same repressive universe; that is to say, the Orient is no more
than an effect of Orientalism. And only through a strategic invoca-
tion of an "authentic" East does Orientalism as a discourse reveal it-
self as an "instituted trace at origin" created by a "desire for/of the
power of the Other that produces the image of the self."[55]
To say, then, that an Orient that does not exist is nonetheless
misrepresented, is to say that there can be no image of a geopoliti-
cally heterogenous Other that may be safely or completely subsumed
within the rubric of representation. Each invocation of the Other is
necessarily a "cognitive failure." Moreover, since the identity of that
alterity is always-already-defined by its difference, each of these "cog-
nitive failures" essentially repeats the forms of epistemic violence—
that is to say, the rearticulation of the self-as-other—sanctioned by
the relations of power presented in the examples of elitist, bour-
geois-nationalist, and Orientalist models:

> The arena of the subaltern's persistent emergence into hegemony
> must always and by definition remain heterogenous to the efforts of
> the disciplinary historian. The historian must persist in his efforts
> in this awareness, that the subaltern is necessarily the absolute limit
> of the place where history is narrativized into logic.[56]

Between Representation and *Bildverbot*

Does the strategic use of the subject-position in order to disclose the
subject's own status as an effect of the discourse of emancipation
necessarily result in an absolute denegation of the project of Western

Marxism? Does deconstruction's protection of an *impensé* suggest that to advance the prospect for resistance is to perpetuate a historical metalepsis? Certainly, one may in confidence side with Gallagher, Con Davis, and others in arguing that an affiliation between the post-structuralist textualization of history and a Marxist adherence to a narrative of freedom is politically incompatible. In this instance, and from that particular perspective, the practices of postcolonial criticism represented by the crucial examples of Said, Spivak, and others appear as deconstructions of Marxist essentialism and nothing more.

And yet, if the examples of Guha's subaltern and Said's Orient offer any suggestion for an alternative understanding of the radical project of postcolonial epistemic practice as one of synthesis, such an interpretation would rely on the observation that these works, as filtered through the necessary critical maneuvers of Gayatri Spivak, effectively equate the space of the Other with that of the deconstructionist *impensé*. The Other, the irretrievable and heterogenous agent of change, which is presented in the radical project of postcolonial thought-work as the "absolute limit of the place where history is narrativized into logic,"[57] appears as a horizon of representation that even a project of emancipation cannot—even in its interest—transgress, and still claim that representation as knowledge.

If this is the type of reconciliation implied by the radical criticism, it is important to note, in conclusion, that even as the common imperative of its proponents is to maintain the space of the Other as an ethical check against the violence of its representation, some critics are themselves divided as to the future of the space accorded to such a position. And ironically, these divisions may be articulated as contemporary equivalents to the various formulations of *emancipation-in-resistance* and *emancipation-in-negation* presented at the outset of this article.

Said cannot entertain the idea of the critical negation practiced within a postcolonial critical practice unless the horizon of interpretation offered by the "absolute limit" of the space of the Other signals not only the hope for, but also the space for, a nonrepressive type of representation beyond. This is essentially to argue, as did Fredric Jameson, that even the practice of negation or deconstructive demystification cannot itself help but to be, in some fashion, *utopian* by virtue of its resistance to closure:

> To measure the distance between theory then and now, there and here, to record the encounter of theory with resistances to it, to move skeptically in the broader political world where such things as the humanities or the great classics ought to be seen as small

provinces of the human venture, to map the territory covered by all
the techniques of dissemination, communication and Interpreta-
tion, *to preserve some modest (perhaps shrinking) belief in non-coercive
human community:* if these are not imperatives they do at least seem
to be attractive alternatives.[58]

Spivak has implied that such a measurement of "distances"—this ad-
herence to the project of a critical idealism—is a way of locating one-
self once again within the bounds of a problematic, rather than a
strategic essentialism. Since a strategic essentialism requires an ad-
herence to the principle of nonidentity of subject and object even as
it empties each of those positions, criticism can only aspire to be a
perpetual check against closure. In the interest of what Spivak pre-
sents as "the practical politics of the open end"—that is, a reconcili-
ation to the impossibility of any logically *grounded* foundation or
premise—a future radical criticism must consequently consider even
its own practice of textualization to be "no more than a way of hold-
ing randomness at bay."[59]

Notes

1. Georg Lukacs, "On the Nature and Form of the Essay: A Letter to
Leo Popper," in *Soul and Form*, Anna Bostock, trans. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT
Press, 1974), p. 17.

2. Edward Said, "Secular Criticism," in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*
(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 26.

3. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Question
of Value," in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge,
1988), p. 155.

4. Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from
Lukacs to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 86.

5. Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness, Studies in Marxist Di-
alectics*, Rodney Livingstone, trans. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971), pp.
148–149.

6. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: T. W. Adorno, W.
Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: Free Press, 1977), p. 46.

7. Buck-Morss, note 6, p. 52.

8. Fredric Jameson, "Architecture and the Critique of Ideology," in *Ar-
chitecture, Criticism, Ideology*, Joan Ockman, ed. (Princeton: Princeton Archi-
tectural Press, 1985), p. 59. Emphasis added. This rejection of humanism is
also an important premise of Althusser's Structural Marxism. For a concise
discussion of Althusser's critique of humanism, see Arthur Hirsh, *The French
New Left: An Intellectual History from Sartre to Gorz* (Boston: South End Press,
1981).

9. Spivak, note 3, p. 154.

10. Jameson, note 8, p. 67.

11. In this I follow some of the current critical interpretations of Marx's analysis in *Das Kapital.* For Marx, the circulation of capital in its monopoly or imperial stage would, in an undeclared evolutionism, lead to a type of development in the periphery that would follow that of the metropolitan center. For an elaboration on the concept of geographically uneven development as it relates specifically to the Third World, see Bryan S. Turner, *Marx and the End of Orientalism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978).

12. Ernest Mandel, "Capitalism and Regional Disparities," *Southwest Economy and Society* 1 (1976), p. 43.

13. Jameson, note 8, p. 72.

14. Ibid. More recently, Jameson has turned to a more pessimistic position regarding the prospect of an emancipation-in-resistance. See his *Postmodernism: or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), passim.

15. Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: Verso, 1979), p. 141. Emphasis added.

16. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, trans. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), p. 50.

17. This reading of poststructuralist critical practices as a form of epistemic violence to the concepts of Western Marxism may be extended even further. Frank Lentricchia notes that deconstruction in particular—with its assertion of the postponement of meaning, of an eternal nonidentity between referent and referand neatly neologized in the term *differance*—ensures that the act of interpretation may no longer be presented as a form of "passive mimesis." See Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 163. Rather (see p. 175), the opacity of language may only ensure a system of *re*presentation:

> Consciousness, the subject, the presence or absence of being, apparently forever dissolved as versions of the untouchable transcendental signified, now suddenly return as they all become situated as intertextual functions of semiological system which do not recognize the "rights of history, production, institutions" to coerce and constrain the shapes of free-playing discourse.

18. Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977,* Colin Gordon, ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 98.

19. See Said, "Criticism between Culture and System," in *World, Text and Critic,* note 2, pp. 183–184 for Said's endorsement of this position. In describing the implications of Derrida's textual practices, Said notes: "To say that the text's intention and integrity are invisible is to say that the text hides something, which also means that the text implies, perhaps also states, embodies, represents, but does not immediately disclose something."

20. Jay, note 4, p. 526.

21. For a critical analysis of this insertion of Foucault's view of discourse within a Gramscian concept of hegemony, refer to Barry Smart, "The Politics of Truth and the Problem of Hegemony," in *Foucault: A Critical Reader,* David Couzens Hoy, ed. (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 157–173. Alternatively, the case for an affinity between these concepts is made in James A.

Winders, "Foucault and Marx: A Critical Articulation of Two Theoretical
Traditions," *New Orleans Review* (fall/winter, 1984), pp. 134–161. This issue is
also taken up frequently by Said in his essays. For a condensed list of sources
for his reconciliations of hegemony and discourse, see Jay, note 4.

22. Edward Said, "The World, The Text, and The Critic," in *World, Text,
and Critic*, note 2, pp. 48–49.

23. Catherine Gallagher, "Politics, the Profession, and the Critic," *Dia-
critics* 15, no. 2 (1985), p. 37.

24. Robert Con Davis, "Theorizing the Opposition: Aristotle, Greimas,
Jameson, Said," *L'Esprit Createur* 1:27, no. 2 (1987), p. 10. For Said's descrip-
tion of exile see Said, note 2, p. 5.

25. Gallagher, note 23, p. 41.

26. Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in Derrida, note 16, p. xviii.

27. Conversely, to use and efface the language of criticism is also to re-
veal that even as we adopt a poststructuralist critique of humanism, the mo-
tives of that critique are, at present, ideologically motivated. Spivak presents
this analysis in her "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpreta-
tion of Culture*, Cary Nelson and Lawrence Goldberg, eds. (Urbana and
Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 271–272. Meditating on a
published transcript of a conversation between the philosophers Gilles
Deleuze and Michel Foucault, Spivak notes:

> Some of the most radical criticism coming out of the West today is
> the result of an interested desire to conserve the subject of the
> West, or the West as Subject. The theory of pluralized "subject-ef-
> fects" gives an illusion of undermining subjective sovereignty while
> often providing a cover for this subject of knowledge. Although the
> history of Europe as Subject is narrativized by the law, political
> economy, and ideology of the West, this concealed Subject pretends
> it has "no geo-political determination."

28. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Negotiating the Structures of Vio-
lence," in *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, Sarah Ha-
rasym, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 138.

29. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing His-
toriography," in Spivak, *Other Worlds*, note 3, p. 205.

30. Spivak, note 28, p. 139.

31. Spivak, "Practical Politics of the Open End," in *Other Worlds*, note 3, p.
111.

32. Ranajit Guha, ed. *Subaltern Studies 1: Writings on South Asian History
and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 3–4.

33. Ibid., p. 7.

34. Spivak, note 29, p. 207.

35. Ibid., p. 198.

36. Ibid., p. 198.

37. Ibid., p. 201.

38. Ibid., p. 201.

39. Ibid., p. 202.

40. Ibid., p. 202.

41. Ibid., p. 203. Emphasis added.

42. Ibid., p. 205. Emphasis added.

43. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1979), p. 12.

44. For Spivak's specific differences with Said's "engaged" criticism, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The New Historicism: Political Commitment and the Postmodern Critic," in Spivak, *Post Colonial*, note 28, p. 281.

45. Said, note 43, p. 2.

46. Ibid., p. 3.

47. Said, "Criticism Between Culture and System," in *World, Text, and Critic*, note 2, p. 221. For Said's treatment of Foucault, and specifically in relation to the question of allying the concept of hegemony with that of discourse theory, see his "Travelling Theory," in *World, Text, and Critic;* also "Foucault and the Imagination of Power," in Hoy, ed., note 21, and "Intellectuals in the Post-Colonial World," *Salmagundi* 70–71 (spring/summer, 1986). The arguments in the last essay closely parallel Spivak's critique of Foucault in "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

48. James Clifford, "Review Essay: Orientalism," *History and Theory, Studies in the Philosophy of History* 19, no.2 (1980), p. 205. This essay also appears in James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 255–276.

49. Clifford, note 48, p. 207.

50. Ibid., p. 205.

51. Ibid., p. 208. Emphasis added.

52. Ibid., p. 221.

53. Said, note 43, p. 169.

54. Ibid., p. 170.

55. Spivak, note 29, p. 203.

56. Ibid., p. 207.

57. Ibid., p. 205.

58. Said, "Travelling Theory," note 47, p. 247.

59. Spivak, note 3, p. 162.

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