



Editorial Note

Crime, Punishment, and Historical Capitalism

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We are excited to bring you a special issue on policing global capitalism in crisis, guest edited by Zeynep Gonen and Zhandarka Kurti. The papers in this special issue explore the ways the penal arm of the state has replaced the welfare state, demonstrating how other areas of life are increasingly reorganized by the logic of policing and surveillance to meet the end goals of productivity and profit. In doing so, this special issue brings together two distinct areas of study: Marxist scholarship on the political economy of global crisis, and the studies of policing, surveillance, and criminalization. This special issue could be seen as an important contribution to building an area of study that can explore the historical and contemporary relationship between capitalist crises, policing, pacification and state legitimacy. These are complex issues which often befuddle scholars as well as readers, and our guest editors are to be congratulated on the clarity they bring to these topics. They have done a superb job of bringing distinct scholarly voices into an exciting intellectual dialogue.

Our regular research articles complement the special issue by showing how the current world-historical moment informs possibilities and limitations faced by those challenging the logic of global policing and surveillance. Robert Denemark's essay asks about what happens when leaders and populations of hegemonic states generally fear that the internal and external challenges are too great, and their status is in real peril. He interrogates two categories of responses to "fear of



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decline.” The first concerns individuals and their roles in organizations, and the second concerns the process known as “reversion to tradition” in the face of crisis. The structure of what he terms pre-emptive decline may help us understand the nature of some current concerns in the world-system as well as the processes by which poor decisions have been made historically, due to the self-reinforcing character of the “fear of decline.”

Is China creating a new, miniature world-system? In his analysis of the Belt Road Initiative bound world-system, Toufic Sarieddine documents China’s growing economic dominance in the Middle East and North Africa. His examination of the BRI-bound world-system sheds important light on the relationship between the emerging hegemon and the “reigning, yet waning” core. Alexandre Abdal and Douglas Ferreira focus on the short term of the COVID-19 pandemic and the medium term of the effects of the 2007-2008 Financial Crisis. The analysis of the short, medium, and long-term impacts of the 2007-2008 Financial Crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic on the trajectory of the capitalist world-economy brings them close to Sarieddine’s observation that the world-system is going through an important moment of structural change, rooted in China’s emergence as an economic and geopolitical power on the one hand, and in the deepening of the U.S. hegemony crisis on the other. The United States has dominance, but not hegemony or leadership capacity, making it a destabilizing element in the post-pandemic world. Junfu Zhao then offers an ambitious proposal for a new network approach to the study of the world-system. His analysis of the “pyramidal international hierarchy” is centered on the core/periphery relation in the capitalist world-economy, revealed in the network of international time flows. Following Arrighi’s conceptualization of the core/periphery relation, he finds little evidence that the underlining hierarchical structure has fundamentally changed. The close scrutiny of international labor time flows does not deny the centrality of class conflict in the capitalist world economy: on the contrary, this approach opens the possibility of critically examining different social structures of capital accumulation and different forms of class antagonism.

Not all of our research articles are concerned with hegemonic transition, however. Yikang Bai and Jennifer Givens successfully unsettle the conventional narrative about the global trade in plastic waste, where the North simply transfers waste to the Global South. The article provides a nuanced evidence of ecologically unequal exchange relationships between high-income countries and non-high-income countries in plastic waste trade, advancing our understanding of the theory of ecologically unequal exchange in the context of international trade in plastic waste.

In her provocative essay, Kristin Plys ventures to Dar es Salaam to recover the intellectual roots of the world-systems tradition. She employs Walter Rodney’s notion of “capitalist imperialism” in order to go beyond certain theoretical limitations of the dominant world-systems theories of global imperialism. Plys argues that while Amin, Arrighi, Frank, and Wallerstein all adopt Lenin’s periodization of imperialism, Rodney’s approach differs in that it sees capitalism and imperialism emerge in the same historical moment as synchronous processes of historical capitalism. She argues that this conceptual historicization of traditional analysis of global imperialism could help those working within the world-systems perspective craft a richer concept of anti-imperialism.

In the last two years we lost two leading social scientists who have contributed to the development of the world-systems perspective: Immanuel Wallerstein and David Graeber. In our new section *Lectures*, we provide a reprint of two lesser known lectures delivered at the Kurdish Studies conference held in Hamburg.¹ Reading Wallerstein is always an intellectual delight. Late German director Rainer Werner Fassbinder referred to his films as a way to build a house: “some films are the cellar others the walls, still others the windows. But I hope in the end it will be a house.” The short talk given by Immanuel Wallerstein provides an approach to his theoretical-historical house, and to all its floors.

David Graeber’s talk on “human economies” provides further clarification of the central argument in his magisterial *Debt: The First 5000 Years* (New York: 2011). His analysis has been informed by his reading of the world-systems scholarship, an exciting intellectual exchange first initiated in his book *Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion and Desire* (Oakland: 2007). Two lectures are presented in support of the Kurdish liberation, another important cause Immanuel and David had shared.

Finally, we are very pleased to publish a conversation with Alice and Staughton Lynd as part of our new section *Interviews*. We talked to the Lynds on the topic of accompanying and learning from people incarcerated in the so-called Supermax prisons.

Our book review section offers an engaging set of essays. This section includes reviews of six books: Gregory Williams’s *Contesting the Global Order: The Radical Political Economy of Perry Anderson and Immanuel Wallerstein* (reviewed by Juho Korhonen), *The Routledge Handbook of Transformative Global Studies* (reviewed by Amentahru Wahrab), and William Robinson’s *The Global Police State* (reviewed by Zhandarka Kurti). In addition, Marylin Grell-Brisk has authored a review essay about Zakiyyah Iman Jackson’s *Becoming Human*, Achile Mbembe’s *Necropolitics*, and K.Y. Taylor’s *From #Black Lives Matter to Black Liberation*.

With this issue, we introduce our new editorial team at JWSR. I cannot emphasize enough our gratitude to Jackie Smith. Her editorial skills are legendary, and her contributions to the journal in the last nine years immeasurable. We will strive to maintain the high standards she helped to set. I am grateful to our managing editor, Rallie Murray, for all her hard work. Our communication editors, Michelle Glowa and Julien-Francois Gerber, have contributed tremendously to this issue of JWSR— not least with their patience for long editorial meetings. Finally, I am grateful to our book review editors, Isaac Kamola and Alexandre White, generous colleagues who make the editorial process appear deceptively simple.

¹ Fassbinder, R.W. 1992. *The Anarchy of the Imagination*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, p xv