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To cite this article: Shannon Brincat (2023) Introduction: Che Guevara and world politics, *Globalizations*, 20:8, 1426-1446, DOI: [10.1080/14747731.2023.2274649](https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2023.2274649)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2023.2274649>



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Published online: 04 Dec 2023.



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INTRODUCTION



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Introduction: Che Guevara and world politics

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ABSTRACT

This introductory article to the volume *Che Lives!* provides a general primer to Che Guevara's thinking and practice in world politics. Situating Che's historical significance as a radical agent and thinker in the 1960s, it canvasses the various politicised readings of his legacy, suggesting focusing on shared textual evidence and widely agreed thematic areas can limit this problem for analysis. The article argues that, despite some apparent changes to world order, that Che's thought remains highly relevant because the so-called 'philosophy of plunder' still dictates much of the global economy and relations between states just as it did in Che's time. Focusing on Che's dialectical method that brings together class exploitation and the operations of neo-imperialism, the chapter shows how Che is of continued relevance for contemporary social movements fighting for a just world. The article concludes with a chapter summary of each contribution to the volume.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 12 July 2023

Accepted 19 October 2023

KEYWORDS

Che Guevara; legacy; myth; class analysis; neo-imperialism; New Social Movements

Che Guevara's life has been the subject of numerous biographies, film adaptations, and documentaries (on biographies see Anderson, 1997; Taibo, 1997; Sandison, 1997; Guevara & Vincent, 2016; Kellner, 1989; films Soderbergh (2008); Salles (2004); documentaries Montes-Bradley, 2006; Massari, 1995). The public's fascination with Che is not just as a revolutionary figure but matched by his contributions across a number of fields, especially his political and military works, and of course his very active life itself. However, out of Cuban social sciences and some examples in Latin American contexts (Petras, 1998), Che's legacy has not been seriously studied in the field of ('Western') International Relations (IR). This is partly attributable to the dominance of 'Western' preoccupations in the discipline with the result that there has been a lack of focused engagement on Che's contributions to decolonization, military strategy, economics, philosophy, or revolutionism in the field of IR specifically. This volume aims to address this oversight by being the first to engage with the legacy of Che with a focus on the international dimensions of his thought and praxis.

Guevara had a prominent role in world politics, especially during the 1960s. He was a highly visible actor in Latin America and the Global South regionally but also in conferences and formal diplomatic settings internationally. His speeches at the UN are well-known for the quality of their rhetoric and their championing of under-developed states.¹ Che's pre-eminence within radical social movements and revolutionary groups during this time is also well documented, influencing (in varying degrees) groups as geographically spread as the Algerian National Liberation Front to

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the Black Panthers (Reitan, 1999). No less remarkable is the diplomacy he personally conducted across countries of the Global South, especially promoting Afro-Asian solidarity. Such individual agency alone warrants serious scholarly attention in IR.

However, this volume is not some festschrift to Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, nor a reader on his works (on readers see Bonachea & Valdes, 1969; Deutschman, 2003; Guevara, 2005). Rather, it is intended as a critical engagement with both Che’s ideas on world politics across such themes as internationalism, regionalism, economics, colonialism, imperialism, development, solidarity, revolution, gender, and guerrilla warfare, amongst others, and, the ongoing legacies of Che’s actions or practices in these areas. It is ‘critical’ because Che insisted on an undogmatic approach to socialist ideas and he embodied, however imperfectly, what Farber (2016) has called being an ‘independent Communist’ (p. 16). Che consistently restated the need to be critical of *all* revolutionary processes and revolutionary leadership, especially his own. No deference of respect or appeal to authority, nor historical romanticization or ideological distortion, should then stand in the way of the analysis of Che’s legacy – and I daresay Che would have agreed with this judgement.

Nevertheless, the jury is quite loaded when making this assessment for I doubt there are few more divisive figures so prone to misrepresentation and misinformation as Che. Clouding analysis are the cultural wars and symbolic meanings surrounding Che’s almost mystical aura in the public eye. At one extreme is how he has been beatified by some churches in Bolivia as ‘San Ernesto’. In Cuba, the adoration is secular but still highly value-driven as reflected in the adage that students recite on some school days, ‘Seremos como el Che’ (‘We will be like Che’). He remains an icon in global popular culture, with one of the most famous images of all time. The use of Che’s image on t-shirts across the world is a globalized cultural phenomenon of idolization and capitalization (Casey, 2009), something Che would have, of course, rejected. Yet even the serious historical research of Hobsbawm (2002) is infected by this image, with his otherwise weighty historical tome *Age of Extremes* making repeated references to Che’s handsome looks. We must be wary also of the litany of problems associated with the ‘great men history’ approach. Far more effective have been those studies that have examined Che’s image as a mnemonic symbol in collective memory and contemporary radical movements (Larson & Lizardo, 2007, p. 426). Transmitted through this image Che remains one of the ‘most visible political icons’ (Taylor, 2022) and not just of the Twentieth Century. When we add to this public imaginary the multi-faceted character of Che – as a doctor, revolutionary, minister, ambassador, theoretician, and military strategist, amongst many others (Löwy, 1973, pp. 7–10) – his mythologization across so many narratives become as many layers collapsing onto each other. Under this historical weight, any objective analysis is almost impossible.

Nevertheless, if we can put aside these disputed cultural representations and admit the impossibility of canvassing the entire array of condemnations and celebrations made about Che, we can observe some generalizations across the political spectrum that colour analysis. The Right amplifies Che’s violence and use of executive force, often citing Che’s involvement in executions at La Cabaña prison (Anderson, 1997, p. 387) or his involvement in Cuban land reform that brought about significant changes in redistribution to the peasants, expelling unproductive *Latifundia*, and ending foreign ownership of key commodity sectors (Kellner, 1989, pp. 55–60). This is a particular grievance of the vocal ex-patriot community in Miami who seek to retake their position of wealth and power in Cuba, continuing to sue for property seized in the revolution (exemplar the Villoldo case in 2009; Reuters Staff, 2009). Che is one of the chief villains in this dispossession, they believe, and cite other alleged human rights violations and/or the use of force to bolster their claims regarding private property. When focused on revolutionary violence these criticisms are difficult to

deflect because Che was open in his acceptance of legitimate political violence: ‘I believe in the armed struggle as the only solution for the people who fight to free themselves and I am consistent with my beliefs ...’ (Guevara, 1965 in Deutschmann, 2003, p. 384). With such an admission, debate then shifts to the perceived legitimacy/illegitimacy of this form of resistance and whilst interesting debates can be had on the just cause of revolutionary violence and Che’s relation to Just War theory, the discussion usually becomes intractable.

On the Left, whilst these accounts tend to offer far deeper engagements with Che’s life, thought, and actions, they usually focus on Che’s limitations, especially his authoritarianism and/or voluntarism. One of the most vocal has been Farber’s critique who claims Che downplayed ‘self-mobilization’ and ‘organization of the people’, alongside the importance of minority rights and civil liberties (see Farber, 2016: xvii). Others insist that Che’s voluntarism, whether in the deemed applicability of *foquismo* across all Latin American contexts, and later, his insistent belief that the Bolivian masses will rise up alongside him – despite all signs to the contrary – were forms of ideological blindness to objective conditions. Che is thus viewed as a heroic but nevertheless ‘tragic’ and ‘flawed’ revolutionary accordingly.² Those from the perspective of ‘Real Socialism’ condemned Che’s break with the Soviet model on both ideological and economic grounds (on this see Riddell, 2008). As shown by Yaffe, Che’s critique of the USSR’s *Manual of Political Economy* in the so-called Great Debate of 1963–1965 was a clear rupture with any Soviet orthodoxy (on this see Yaffe, 2012, pp. 23–28). With Che’s late break with the Soviets, he was quickly subsumed by some under the amorphous category of New Left (see Cranston, 1971). Other, more generous readers, suggest that the Che offered important radical insights into the nature of imperialism and the role the US played in extending these dark forces globally.³ It is telling to observe that in the developing world, especially former colonial countries, Che’s reputation for emancipatory freedom remains highly regarded – Mandela called him an ‘inspiration’, for example (Guevara, 2009, p. II). Here, some even find virtue in Che’s voluntarism. Fanon, for example, called Che nothing less than a ‘world symbol’ that exuded ‘the possibilities of one man’ (though Fanon held to a voluntarism of his own, the Algerian model of the Third Front, with similar unsuccessful outcomes) (see Fanon, 1988; Zeilig, 2016).

So how are we to make sense of this vast discrepancy in just some of the leading interpretations of Che’s legacy? And if it is so contested, what constitutes a legacy and what are its constitutive parts? For instance, where does Che’s contribution begin and end in fundamental *events* as the Cuban Revolution, or, in his international revolutionary *deeds* in Angola or Bolivia? How can we measure the influence of his *ideas* on imperialism, guerrilla warfare, or socialism today? The term ‘legacy’ has featured in so many of the exegesis of Che’s life that it is the dominant key term, whether in writings or symposiums (Yaffe, 2009; UCLA, 2015).⁴ Myths is also a popular adage (Bueno, 2007). These terms of myths or legacies are typically used to either assist in banishing Che to the past (Gall, 1967; Hagan, 1969), maligning him in some way (Scauzillo, 1970),⁵ or to suggest how he lives on in whatever sense the author wishes to instil (typically the latter are aimed at rendering him a contemporary figure, a revolutionary, or hero) (McCormick, 1997; McDonnell, 2007; Besancenot & Löwy, 2009; Azikewe, 2011). The problem of rendering any person’s legacy/s, however, is that it implies knowing what counts as a one and how to examine it; that there is an acceptance of the dividing line between continuity and discontinuity to contextualize that legacy; and that the difference between actual and possible legacies can be distinguished. Legacies sit uncomfortably as both a continuation of the past and a reaction to that past (Hite & Cesarini, 2004, p. 3). In the case of Che, such analysis must tread between iconography and almost hagiography of his persona, and, undertake the moral gymnastics of balancing ‘good/bad’ acts

and their outcomes against some derived hierarchy of evaluative principles (Conn, 2018). These problems make the judgement of the legacies of historical characters like Che an impossible task – at least in terms of established criteria that all would accept. Reduced to a question of doubt, any form of thinking on Che's legacies must be seen as an inherently politicized undertaking. In today's context, this problem has become acute with so-called 'cancel culture' interrogating matters of the past now deemed morally problematic. The bifurcation between those who suggest such artefacts/documents/characters must remain completely unaltered for study and those that claim they must be effaced/removed in-line with contemporary standards, are both dogmatic. Moreover, both positions are typically made without the evaluative framework of the oppressed social groups themselves – and these are the audience that Che was most concerned, rather than scholarly and public interest 60 years in the future.

There is simply no way out of Che's complexity, or how his thought developed and shifted over-time, just as the historical understanding or interpretations of Che have also shifted over time. Cognisant of these significant problems, this volume has taken the approach that the only viable way to weave a line between 'man, myth, and moment' – whilst recognizing the dangers of, and limitations in, any such approach – was by examining shared textual evidence, and, concentrating on thematic areas that are widely seen as congruent with Che's legacy from a plurality of viewpoints. Focusing on textual evidence brought much in terms of consistency of materials across the volume and fortunately this aspect was aided by the fairly recent publication by Ocean Press and Cuba's Centro de Estudios of Che's *Apuntes criticos a la economía política* (Critical Notes on Political Economy) (2006a), a collection of Che's writings from the years 1962 to 1965, which reveals his more radical position on economics, philosophy and the direction of socialism (many of which show his break with aspects of the Soviet model even in the early 1960s).⁶ Similarly, *Diary of Combatant* was released unedited in 2011 that covered Che's involvement in the Cuban Revolution from 1955–1958 (see Guevara, 2013), and the following year, a digital copy of his diary from his final Bolivian campaign was published online (by Soria Galvarro, 2012). These new materials helped significantly by providing shared textual analysis for comparison of Che's legacy across the volume.

The other strategy of focusing on a range of thematic areas in which Che's legacy is widely observed today (whilst recognizing that this would inevitably exclude some areas), also helped scope the volume within a certain doxa of what aspects of Che 'live on' and why. That is, we wanted to contextualize Che's legacy in the praxis of the present, thus helping to reduce though not overcome the problem of re-presentation of Che (in the meaning of Stuart Hall) by focusing on those most observable or 'dominant' in ongoing practices. On the one hand, this meant re-engaging with Che as a confluence of these elements that made Sartre call him 'the ideal man' and, on the other, re-examining the non-ideal aspects of Che's actions in the context of violence, imperialism, and revolution. And this is why the volume is called *Che Lives!* to indicate its active engagement with the contested ways in which Che's ideas and actions remain as things lived in the present. This would, it was thought, help ensure that Che was not reduced to a mere historical figure and counter those attempts that began almost immediately following his death to expunge any historical continuity between Che and the present.⁷

This motif that Che 'lives' is not new, of course. Tellingly, just like those accounts that sought to banish Che to the past, those extolling Che's relevance to the present began immediately following his death as well. Sinclair's volume, *Viva Che!* (2006/1968), was the first and offered a number of tributes and reflections by Che's contemporaries. For example, Kwame Ture, a leader of the Black Power movement, reflected that Che's 'decision to fight on to the final defeat of imperialism' was 'why in essence [he] is not dead, his ideas are *with* us ...' (my emphasis added; quoted in Sinclair,

2006/1968, p. 67). This active motif continues in more recent accounts such as Ziff's *Chevolution* (2008) that insists the importance of Che lies not within his biography or his historical context but within his ideals for 'creating a better society'. Arguably, the timeless and universal aspect of Che's legacy cannot be his ideas/actions that are temporally bounded but the *conditions* that brought these about and how these continue to structure our world. That is, many still search for a 'better' society along Che's terms, i.e. one that has overcome the 'darkness' of imperialism (Guevara, 2005, p. 422) and the contradictions facing such possibilities are similar to those that Che faced. That is, the fundamental contradictions of neo-imperialism, dependency, and exploitation within late-stage capitalism are only different by degree from Che's time.⁸ So the title *Che Lives!* captures not only how his ideas/actions live on as prefigurative in the ongoing struggles of the world's oppressed but that his humanist, class-based, decolonial, analysis still speaks directly to the problems in bringing about this emancipatory vision in the conditions of today.

To press this point, we *still* live under what Castro called the 'philosophy of plunder' – and this is particularly evident within Latin America via the same neo-imperialist processes that Che identified. The Bretton Woods institutions may have changed in name but the systems of extraction behind The Washington Consensus are the same and their failures in delivering real economic development to the South American region are consistent with Che's prognostications made in the 1960s. Long after the revolutionary wave was broken in South America, and the 'end of history' was ushering a new, seemingly uncontested liberal order, during the 1990s many Central and South American countries adopted most of John Williamson's reforms revolving around macro-economic discipline, privatizations, and authoritarianism (Spak et al., 2022). It appeared to be working. By 2002 Latin American states had a growth rate of over 2%. But at the same time many of states across the region were experiencing a net decline in income per capita. Any small gains made in the 1990s were then lost completely to recessions in the 2000s that saw economic instability, short-term cycles of hyperinflation, and increases in public debt. In 2011, ECLAS (2011) reported Latin America to be the *most* unequal region in the world and its 'extreme inequality' remains today exacerbating social and political instability (Coll, 2023). Stagnation in 2015 only exacerbated this crisis in which countries across the region 'developed some of the worst wealth and income distribution disparities in the world' (Spak et al., 2022). The World Bank's Gini coefficient highlights that the region 'consistently underperforms' in equality with The World Inequality Reports showing that 50% of the South American population earns just 10% of total income (see CAF, 2022). Trapped in high inequality and low growth, the balance of trade aggravates further this regional inequality. Trade with the North remains highly uneven (over 70% dominated by NAFTA) and the overall balance of trade in goods between the US and South and Central America remains *always* in favour of the US (over 72 million in 2022, USCB, 2023). The Biden administration's recently proposed *Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity with Latin American States* resembled that of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) but without committing the US to a comprehensive FTA and excluding market access – making it clearly one-sided in its purported benefits. The repeat of false promises of the Alliance for Progress (AFP) in Che's time is here obvious.⁹ The AFP was an attempt to buy-off Latin American elites under a thin promise of real aid and economic development but as soon as revolutionary movements were quashed, the US took away the carrot. Most of the aid was then only military in nature and made to address what the US perceived as South America's 'most severe need ... for internal defense' against the threats posed by Guevara and others like him (Hagan, 1969, p. 93).

It would be one-sided, however, to only comment on the similarities between Che's world and the present for assessing his legacy and relevance today. Whilst it is impossible to cover all of these,

three warrant serious attention: (1) the electoral success of ‘left-wing’ governments in Latin America; (2) the shifts in world polarity, and; (3) ideological developments from class-based to intersectional social movements.

Firstly, one of the key developments since Che’s time has been the fact that most countries in Latin America have been led, at one time or another, by left-wing governments: Brazil’s social programmes, Ecuador’s and Bolivia’s plurinational states, and Venezuela’s socialist-system since Chavez (the latter which is arguably the most radical of these examples). Currently, there is a second ‘Pink Tide’ of left-wing governments taking office across the region – even Colombia, traditionally one of the most conservative states in South America, has its first left-leaning President (Gustavo Petro). This helps clarify the above discussion that should not leave the reader with the impression that neoliberal globalization has been uncontested across the region. Many of these left-wing movements take some stock in Che’s legacy. For example, Che has been a ubiquitous presence in many of pro-Lula marches in Brazil or pro-MAS marches in Bolivia where his image is widely splashed across t-shirts and flags. More concretely, Cuba and Venezuela entered into an alliance with its ‘bedrock’ attributed to Che and Bolívar (Azicri, 2009). In Bolivia, Morales openly claimed a lineage that included Che’s socialism alongside Bolívar’s regionalism and Andean indigenous struggles (Postero, 2010). Nevertheless, at a programmatic level, many of the leftist governments that have been elected remained largely state-focused, have so far failed to push regional integration, and can hardly be called revolutionary given their reformist aims and capabilities. They are also dwarfed by the number of dictatorships and repressive regimes across the region that have significantly repressed any emancipatory movements across the continent. Even the most radical of these states, Bolivia and Venezuela, remain distorted by the reactionary global order and the inability of the radical left to organize global resistance along the lines Che sought to forge. Most concerning, is that these Pink Tides have only marginally shifted the developmental lag across the region. For example, even in Brazil’s ‘passive revolution’ under Lula (Chodor, 2015, pp. 121–146) that undertook one of the world’s largest public housing programmes in history (*Minha Casa, Minha Vida*), there remains the seemingly unbridgeable generational gap between classes. This is a local example of what is, in fact, regional phenomena of the very limited social mobility necessary to overcome the inequality gap with asset accumulation and labour opportunities continuing to strongly favouring the already ‘wealthy families’ across the region (Coll, 2023).

Secondly, there has been a shift in polarity from Che’s time from bipolarity, to unipolarity, and to the present juncture in which a multipolar world is emerging. Of particular gravitas, is the growing power of BRICS nations that could shift geopolitical power dynamics as signalled in its highly successful 15th Summit in 2023, with some calling it an ‘Alternate World Order’ (Suri & Tripathi, 2023). Many have commented on the ‘inertia’ or ‘passivity’ of the US (and the EU) in dealing with a surgent BRICS (see Stuenkel, 2023), instead relying on unilateralism to shore up the crumbling US-led world order. The BRICS+ expansion in 2023 (with many more states seemingly willing to join) (see Osbourne, 2023); the fact that these states maintain around 26% of global GDP (a share that appears to be rising); and the potential floating of a common currency for trade and investment between them, would constitute seismic shifts in the world order. But it is far too early for predictions. The competition between BRICS states (especially China and India) should not be downplayed, nor the difficulties in floating a new currency in competition with the Greenback. Moreover, the fact that the US still maintains its hegemony over the Southern Cone along the lines of Monroe Doctrine, should give pause for optimism at least within the Latin American region. Nevertheless, *if* these developments continue and gain pace may open space for the more radical solidarity of the Global South to emerge and compete with imperialism as Che

advocated. So ultimately, despite these potentials, Che would still recognize the same international and economic forces responsible for the ongoing structural violence of poverty and inequality across the Americas today and be able to identify the reasons why regional institutions remain complicit in these processes. Che would also acknowledge the same, ongoing hegemony of the US that is largely unchallenged in this hemisphere – even with the expansion of BRICS. Che would even be able to identify some of the corporate agents in this same system of exploitation from his time. For example, Che's condemnation of the highly exploitative role of the United Fruit Company lives on in Chiquita who are currently charged with giving millions to the paramilitary terrorist group *Auto-defensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC) to kill thousands of innocent civilians (see IHRC, Colectivo de Abogadas, FIDH, 2017).

The third difference is arguably the most important if there is to be a way to maintain Che's relevance to an emancipatory politics today. Here, we must take into account the changed form and content of contemporary social movements. Rather than centering on socialism and distributive issues, these various mobilizations or New Social Movements (NSM) – from ecological activism and racial justice, to feminist movements and queer politics (alongside the myriad of other 'progressive' movements) – tend to view oppression from an intersectional perspective rather than class-analysis alone. These movements have risen dramatically since Che's time, whereas class-based politics has declined significantly (we can cite declining trade-union memberships or the dismal electoral polling of Communist and/or Socialist Parties globally as broad indicators of this). Whilst many of these NSMs maintain a criticism of capitalism at their core, something shared with Che of course, they also include elements of identity and culture in ways that promise to respond more effectively to the complex constellations of neoliberal globalization and the diversity of the global body-politic today. Self-determination remains at the core of many of these contemporary struggles for emancipation, thus resonating with Che's own position on 'unrestricted right to self-determination' (see Guevara, 2005). However, the concept of self-determination has expanded from the independent development of 'nations' in Che's era, to also include bodily integrity, diversity, on anti-racism, decolonialism, indigenous sovereignty, women's empowerment (and so on). The state is no longer the sole referent, nor is socialism the only goal of these movements. The question is whether Guevara is still relevant to such contemporary NSMs in these changed conditions?

Che was attuned to many issues of shared concern with NSMs today. He was especially concerned with matters relating to indigeneity, race, and women's rights in ways that continue to resonate, albeit with significant developments in praxis on these matters since his time. Che continues to be a key inspiration in many indigenous struggles, such as the Zapatistas, and a pronounced figure across indigenous movements in Guatemala, Ecuador, and Bolivia especially (for example see O'Connor & Becker, 2008). These cite not only his militant resistance but Che's genuine push for indigenous rights and diversity as a key part of global socialist struggles. Che also promoted Afro-Cuban affairs, was active in pushing for racially integrating schools in Cuba, and his championing of black liberation movements across the postcolonial world – especially in revolutionary movements across Africa – are well known (see Laumann, 2005). He offers important contributions to decolonial practices even today. Guevara also advocated for gender equality and had women fighting alongside the men during the Cuban revolution (but this was arguably an exception to the Cuban revolution's largely white male hegemony). This does not dispute the fact that 'lo masculino' has often been identified in his writings, that he subordinated the women's struggle to the struggle for socialism (for a critical feminist take see Murray, 1979, p. 63), and that Che's Marxism seemed to share the defects of overlooking reproductive labour and the sexual division of

labour (Federici, 2010). Despite these limitations, it is clear Che did not doubt cultural, racial, or sexual oppressions as intersecting with neo-imperialist extraction of value, but saw them as more effectively combatted by economic redistribution and justice than claimants of identity recognition alone. These ends are perhaps best articulated in the *The First and Second Declarations of Havana* (2007). The danger today is that concepts like ‘identity’ have been abstracted from nearly all socio-economic relations and are rarely viewed dialectically. Intersectional analysis is endangered by falling to the same liberal identity politics as well. These problems are the key parts to which Che’s method (outlined further below) is a foil against. So, whilst NSMs have changed, building an understanding within intersectional movements of the links between class exploitation and how global imperialism works to undermine gender, racial, and cultural emancipations is crucial for organizing on a global scale. Arguably, the contemporary climate emergency and environmental movements focused on extractivism, sustainability, and development bear the deepest connection with Che’s analysis because they link economic exploitation, under-development, with other non-class-based ecological catastrophes. This nexus is something future research could take up.

What this suggests is how much Che’s analysis can still inform the study of world politics today. Che’s analysis of imperialism did not revolve around its illegitimacy and unethical nature alone, but how political power worked to reinforce these socio-economic forces within the very structures of global governance. His consistent messaging, encapsulated in the phrase that ‘Economics Cannot be Separated from Politics’ (Guevara, 2006b, pp. 24–25), is well known. Less known is how this stems from Che’s class analysis that links gross inequalities and its horrific lived experience at the local level and across the region to the predatory nature of imperialist finance capital (prevalent in the North) which was set against the underdeveloped countries of the South. From these systems of unjust distribution, came the ignominies of racial, cultural, and sexual exploitations. In all of them is an unjust extraction of wealth and agency. The original precursor to Hardt and Negri’s (2000) observation of the persistence of inequality and identity of the poor was, for Che, written into this unequal economic relations between North and South as the expression of the global capitalist system. Here, Che was always particularly cognisant of the disciplinary nature of this neo-imperialism underpinned by US military force. This was particularly acute under the Monroe Doctrine and visible across the numerous interventions the US undertook in their ‘sphere of influence’. Che was very familiar with what Friedman said in terms of the ‘the presence of American power and America’s willingness to use that power against those who would threaten the system of globalization ... [that] The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist’ (Thomas Friedman quoted in Waltz, 2000, p. 48). The case of Chile and the crimes of Kissinger and Pinochet, thoroughly legitimized by the economics of ‘Chicago Boys’, is emblematic of this collusion between local elites, American power, and imperialism but is far from the only example in the region (see Klein, 2006).

But how did Che arrive at this relational account of neo-imperialism and his fundamental conclusion about it? How could it assist our analysis of world politics today and even be of potential service for NSMs in their pursuit of emancipation? If we chart the development of Che’s political and economic analysis (or his ‘class consciousness’), it emerges through his high levels of reflexivity on his own experiences, augmented with some crucial readings. It was very much a case of the conditions producing the revolutionary agent. That is, the inequalities and injustices around Che pushed his thinking towards his unique revolutionary humanism and we can see this emerge in a range of experiences covered in his many biographies (Anderson, 1997; Taibo, 1997). Most revealing are Che’s profound reflections in *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2006) regarding his meeting of the homeless communist couple searching for work near the Chuquicamata copper mine. He

described how ‘the couple, frozen stiff in the desert night, hugging one another, were a live representation of the proletariat of any part of the world’ (my emphasis added). In this passage, Che makes the connection between worker exploitation and exclusion as a universal class category and, from my research at least, it is his first conclusion of this kind. What he witnessed during the Guatemalan counter-revolution in 1954 – the hypocrisy of US power used as a weapon of tyranny against the democratic will of a people – were equally consequential (see Drinot, 2010; Forster, 2010, pp. 210–244). He later reflected that this tragedy was what turned him into a communist but it was also one of the first times he concretizes his thought on the forms that neo-imperialism were taking in his region and which he would then link to many global examples from Vietnam to Algeria.

Added to the wealth of experiences, is Che’s dialectical method – that I would suggest is his most important but untapped legacy precisely because it gets to the root of how imperialism works globally and manifests as alienation. I find there are three constitutive movements in Che’s thinking which he seems to consistently apply, especially in his later speeches and writings:

- (i) a holistic class analysis that includes local, state, region, and international levels;
- (ii) understanding the machinations of imperialist and neo-imperialist exploitation that stem from these class relations across all levels, and;
- (iii) identification of potentialities for socialism to overcome these contradictions at any of these levels.

It is important to clarify that these stages of thought are in movement, like steps forward and back, rather than fixed categories.¹⁰ The first movement, Che’s holistic class analysis from local to international, remains sorely lacking in studies of world politics.¹¹ Rendered class blind, IR holds to the mere formal appearance of sovereignty, and, even worse, a false harmony of interests in institutional ‘cooperation’ to explain the global economy. Outlining Che’s thought on political economy and class is beyond the scope of this introduction (see Yaffe, 2014; Martinez, n.d.) but it is important to point out that approaches, like New Constructivism, that should be cognisant of class relations as fundamental to how world order is constructed remain largely aloof.¹² It is in the two subsequent movements of his method that we see how Che pushes into these class relations rather than falling to a reductive ‘unit of analysis’ problem. That is, whereas mainstream IR tends to observe only states or their cooperative institutions in these relations and processes, Che observes the relations between classes across levels to better understand how imperialism emanates from, and reinforces, economic forces of class exploitation (and how they are refracted across cultural, racial and sex-based oppressions), and subsequently, via his normative position of revolutionary humanism, to identify possible sources for how these conditions of alienation could be overcome. Che was consistently clear that the ‘ultimate and most important revolutionary ambition’ was ‘to see man liberated from his alienation’ (Guevara, 12 March 1965 in Bonachea & Valdes, 1969, p. 159). Rather than talking about Che’s method abstractly however, we can observe it when he is consciously addressing the global public sphere – as exemplars, his speeches at Punta del Este (August 1961), the UN (December 1961), and the Afro-Asian Conference in Algeria (February 1965).

During these speeches – his most public statements on the international stage – Che uses his dialectical approach beginning from any of these three ‘steps’, sometimes emphasizing economics, at other times focusing on institutions of neo-imperialism, and always positing his radical, humanist alternative. At Punta del Este, Guevara’s claims were most explicit regarding the political

nature of any types of international economic agreements offered by the North (like the American-led AFP), that he found would lead to imbalance of payments, drop in wages, and inflationary pressures to ultimately subdue the region according to imperialism's 'instruction' (Guevara, 2006b, pp. 78, 82, 95, 100–102, 57). The benefits were so one-sided in favour of finance capital that it would divide states in the South internally, with the bourgeois classes there eventually siding with monopoly (finance) capital of the North (Guevara, 2006b, p. 104).¹³ Che contested this future, arguing that rather than a form of growth that would be 'turned into a source of income for the US monopolies' what the people wanted was 'a growth rate that will free them from poverty now ...' (Guevara, 2006b, p. 95). Instead of the 'colonial mentality' of economic planning that brought in specialists and technical assistance, the people wanted 'authentic planning' that included the active participation of all alongside agrarian reform, redistribution, and industrialization under which they would be able to 'consume their own products' (Guevara, 2006b, pp. 43–46, 66, 95). Instead, of a concept of free trade that would channel profits away from developing economies via monopolies – a corrupted notion of 'free' enterprise that would mean 'the exploitation of human by human' (2006b, p. 74) – there should be a 'Latin American Free Trade Association' concerned with 'actual' free trade, that is, the 'right to trade with the whole world and not with just a part of it' through 'rational plans of development and the coordination of technical and financial assistance from all the industrialised countries ...'¹⁴ (Guevara, 2006b, pp. 26, 46–48). Note here that Che would soon include the Soviet Union as part of these industrialized countries who owed such a duty.

Similarly, in his speech to the UN (December 1961), Che inverts the order of the stages of his method to arrive at the same point. He begins by focusing on the contradictions between colonial systems of imperialism and its perversion of developmental economics and how this contradicts self-determination. Already in his speech at Punta del Este, Che identified the contradiction of self-determination and sovereignty promised within foundational texts of international law and these economic agreements that would only serve to enhance exploitative economic practices and thus leave the region without any capacity for 'real' independence (Guevara, 2006b, pp. 85–86). At the UN, Che said:

So long as the economically dependent peoples do not free themselves from the capitalist markets and, in a firm bloc with the socialist countries, impose new relations between the exploited and the exploiters, there will be no solid economic development.

The only means by which peoples can 'liberate themselves and can keep themselves free' was by conjoining the economic and the political, that is, economic development *with* sovereignty – Che's emphasis on self-determination throughout this period is based on this mutual relation. Moreover, self-determination as a concept served a number of Che's rhetorical and political purposes: as a means to normalize and justify independence struggles; to promote the 'right' of countries with difference social systems to 'coexist'; to ensure non-interference across the South (politically, economically, and militarily); to defend Cuba from military attack (especially from the US); and to show the concordance between his vision of socialism and the broad intentions of the Non-Aligned-Movements articulation of the concept.¹⁵ In these ways, Che could deploy 'self-determination' as a fundamental legal prescription under the UN Charter to gain political traction with this audience for the concepts more radical implications. Accordingly, we can see how Che emphasized two aspects of the concept at this forum, one a form of radical non-interventionism, the other an embodiment of 'world international solidarity' – and this is what made

‘sovereignty’, in Che’s eyes, ‘the prerogative of nations and of independent peoples’ (Guevara, 2005) (discussed further below).

In this speech, Che recounted how the litany of independence movements underway at the time, from Cyprus to Puerto Rico, were forms of struggle for self-determination and thereby legitimate. Che emphasized Cuba’s ‘solidarity’ with such peoples, with all those ‘who struggle anywhere in the world to make a reality of the rights of full sovereignty proclaimed in the UN Charter’ (Guevara, 2005). He gave special attention to the Congo through which he could demonstrate the incontrovertible links between forces of the North (specifically, UK, US, and Belgian military and economic forces) fighting against the self-determination of the Congolese. He called this the ‘other side of the imperialist coin ... the one that many of us did not see’ (Guevara, 2005). This tied with his earlier condemnations of US foreign policy and its shift to open military interventions in his region that made the preambulatory words of the Declaration to the Peoples of the Americas that emphasized non-intervention and sovereignty rather vacuous (Guevara, 2006b, p. 890). Whilst Lumumba’s death in Congo showed Che that he could not place too much faith in the UN and the doctrine of sovereignty (Gleijeses, 2002: 77), his hopes in internationalism did not change in principle, only in form.

Arguably, this comes to the fore in Che’s most radical and unique speech in the Afro-Asian Conference in Algeria (February 1965). This is also where his method is most refined in its application by bringing it full circle, that is, showing how this system of exploitation manifests externally and internally within states, even the Soviet Union. In Algeria, Che speaks for Cuba, as an under-developed country, with a ‘common aspiration’ shared across all Africa and Asia for ‘the defeat of imperialism’ (Guevara, February 1965 in Bonachea & Valdes, 1969, p. 350ff). This presages his main point that is to show how the Global South is united in its form of oppression, albeit uniquely experienced within each region’s conditions of development,¹⁶ by linking monopoly capitalism to poverty and the need for a united ‘proletarian internationalism’ against it (Guevara, February 1965 in Bonachea & Valdes, 1969, p. 350ff). Much of this is echoed in Guevara’s message to the Tricontinental, especially noted for its militancy (Guevara, April 1967 in Deutschmann, 2003, pp. 350–364).¹⁷ Importantly, Che identifies how these same economic forces operate within the Soviet Union’s retention of the bourgeois ‘law of value’ to distort international socialist economic development under unequal exchange. The problem was the wider developmental lag that unequal exchange promoted, against which the least developed could never catch-up.¹⁸ In its place, Che called for ‘relations on an equal footing’ between all countries via what he called ‘revolutionary jurisprudence’.¹⁹ This concept he never outlined in detail but it seems to involve subverting the forms of international law as made by imperialist powers with one created by ‘free peoples’, thus preserving the spirit of real sovereignty to ‘defend’ the people and advance their freedom through mutual economic association (see Guevara, February 1965 in Bonachea & Valdes, 1969, pp. 350–364). Importantly, Che’s thinking in Algeria goes furthest in showing how the Core/Periphery divide was not just between states of the South and North but within them as well. Echoing the *Declarations of Havana*, Che notes how subjected peoples, especially the black population in the US, face a double oppression – a point he had previously underscored at the UN where he tied US aggression internationally with its inequality internally, openly calling out its racism, discrimination, and murder of its black population (Guevara, 2005).²⁰ This showed how the levels of exploitation of class worked above and below the state and the ways in which the economic base of global capitalism had ‘undermined’ or distorted the ‘development of consciousness’ (Guevara, 12 March 1965, in Bonachea & Valdes, 1969, p. 159ff) across all levels (local, national, regional and state).

Notably, here Che offers a far more radical notion of the Global South than understood even in Postcolonial approaches in IR today. Many see the Bandung Conference's (1955) opposition to colonialist and neo-colonialism as a 'rupture' with IR (for example Pasha, 2013, pp. 144–145). Many of the clauses of the formal content of the *Declaration on Promotion of World Peace and Cooperation* signed at Bandung were essentially protections of sovereignty via principles of territorial integrity, non-interference, national equality, and non-alignment. Given the recent colonial history of these member states, this was a prudent defensive posture. But to the degree that these focused on formal protections only (i.e. the 'international law' of the imperialists in Che's language), it left intact the material functioning of neo-imperialism via economics that Che consistently highlighted as the barrier to real independence. The Bandung Conference called for gaining a better standard of trade for raw materials and promoting South-South trade but these failed utterly to bridge the gap to industrialization or overcome the trade imbalance with the North which Che saw as properly basic to any 'real' advancement for the South. Bandung did not challenge the economic foundation of international order, it just sought a better deal for the South and thus socialized these newly independent states and their elites into mirroring the Core's interest of capital exploitation. Part of 'decolonising the mind of IR' must mean addressing the fundamental transference of wealth from periphery to core as the foundation of neo-imperialism. On this basis alone Tricontinentalism, and Che's relation to it, deserves much more serious consideration in IR (see Parrott, 2022). With some 82 different countries participating, the Tricontinental reveals a global South attempting to construct an 'international' freed of this economic system. Recent studies have described the Tricontinental's 'worldview' as a 'secular, socialist, and militant' attempt to challenge imperialism (see Parrott, 2022). It broke with Bandung's naïve liberalism, instead seeing the necessary link between socialist economics (independent from the Soviets) and genuine national liberation. As Paranzino's (2022) notes, however unsuccessful these endeavours turned out to be, many of these items would appear again in the 1970s under the New International Economic Order (NIEO). Indeed, the NIEO advocated for the restructuring of global economic relations for the genuine development of the South including industrialization and equalization of trade, along very similar lines that Che had outlined at Punta del Este and elsewhere (see Prestholdt, 2012).

Leaving aside this area of potential future research, I want to close this introduction on how Che's method informs one of the most unique and productive parts of his legacy for IR – what Prestholdt (2019) labels Che's 'transnational imagination'. This 'imagination' links the alienation of individuals embodied across all levels of capitalist exploitation and geographic location, with global NSMs against neo-imperialism. Underlying this analysis is Che's politico-normative position as a radical humanist: 'a revolution with humanist characteristics' he called it at Punta del Este (Guevara, 2006b, p. 34). When we examine Che's humanism in the international realm, he consistently emphasizes two aspects, 'dignity' and 'solidarity'. The 'dignity of the human being' was the absolute base of human basic needs (Guevara, 2005) and included championing the abolition of racial discrimination, and, equality of women specifically (Guevara, 2006b, p. 36).²¹ It was clearly articulated consistently with the use of the term in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. 'Solidarity', in turn, was a term that Che used to describe the relations of unity with and between all the oppressed of the world and those working towards emancipation. It includes the oft-quoted standard that all revolutionaries are guided by love, but lesser known is Che's quotation from Martí where solidarity is a lived condition in which 'Every true human must feel on their own cheek every blow dealt against the cheek of another' (Guevara, 2006b, p. 35). The allusion to scripture is obvious but it is also a reworking of Kant's famous final word in *Perpetual Peace* for a time when 'a violation

of rights in one place is felt throughout the world'. This is fundamental not just as the 'golden-rule' in ethics but also a sense and experience against injustice to be *felt* by all and overcome by an emancipatory politics – something he reminds his children to always be capable of 'feeling deeply' (Guevara, 1965 in 2021). Arguably, it is this aspect of his legacy that can offer most to contemporary NSMs.

However, even this potential must be read against one change since Che's time so far unspoken. This is the ideational shift across world politics since Che's death, that is, the ideational shift away from any belief in emancipatory possibilities. Here, Žizek or Jameson's famous statement that it is easier to envisage the end of the world than of capitalism captures this sentimental eloquently. The loss of any emancipatory imaginary, let alone a transnational one like Che's, has not even come with a turn to pragmatic reformism in its place. This sense of despair is itself a manifestation of the alienation that Che was so fundamentally concerned with and which is now palpable on a global scale: a pessimistic fatalism on the one hand, and an atomized neoliberal subject on the other. This lack of vision has coincided with the erosion of any organized international working class or movement of the Global South that could challenge world order. The relatively privileged Western working class, heeding their nationalist masters, seem more concerned with shutting their borders in a vain attempt for protection. With the dissolution of the USSR and China replicating many aspects of capitalist development practices and authoritarianism, Che's critique has withered on the vine. Yet at the time of Che's death, Castro and Cuban foreign policy was at its most radical, pushing for militancy and revolution in Latin America (see Castro, 1967). After Che's death, armed revolution was de-emphasized (Harmer, 2013). Moreover, at the time of Che's death there were 'Guevarist'-inspired actions initiated in Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Guatemala, Venezuela, Brazil, and Colombia – none of which achieved were successful (McCormick, 1997–1998, p. 77). The Non-Aligned Movement would achieve little, with its member states coming to openly competing with each other for foreign capital, depressing wages, lowering costs of raw materials, and hastening environmental harms. Most of the national liberation movements of Che's time fell to some form of elite capture and were thus brought back into the fold of neo-imperialism only now with the appearance of 'independence'. Third World solidarity did not eventuate and the neo-liberal social engineering project on a global scale dominated, albeit with forms of contestation. In his final 'Letter to My Children', Che concluded that 'If imperialism still exists, we'll set out to fight it. If it is finished, you, Camilo and I will take a vacation on the moon' (Guevara, 1966 in 2021). Today, this vacation seems like it will only be enjoyed by narcissistic billionaires taking a brief joyride from a dying planet. But Che's point is that we can fight for another future.

Chapter overviews

Each of the authors involved in *Che Lives!* are specialists on Che Guevara with each article topic area selected carefully to ensure breadth and plurality across key thematic areas, as outlined above. The selected authors come from a range of disciplines, theoretical perspectives, and politico-normative commitments, and, a range of geographic and cultural spaces to provide a vibrant cross-section of critical voices on Che's legacy. The selection was particularly attentive to maintain parity in gender participation and from scholars working in or on the global South. This offers the broadest engagement possible across various points of intersection providing a diverse array of perspectives, interpretations, and critiques of Che's legacy in world politics.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Covid-19 impacted *Che Lives!* greatly. One of the intentions of the volume had been to fill significant gaps in the literature on Che and world politics, specifically

the relations of Che's political thought to Marxism/s, feminist, and postcolonial/decolonial thought to deal head on with the practical concerns of resistance against colonialism/imperialism today. The many interruptions and hardships of Covid on contributor's health and work capacity, and the many cut-backs that happened to higher education across the globe in the last few years, meant that some of the papers promised on Che and Postcolonial/Decolonial thought, Che's little known Africa Campaigns, Che's image and global popular culture, and Che's legacy in pedagogy/education, were not able to be completed. Despite these set-backs, these areas remain promising sites for future research to fill.

Given the immense written materials and historical events involving Che, it was decided to begin the volume with an overview of Che's legacy in world politics. As such Löwy and I²² open the volume contextualizing Che's complex, multifaceted, and deeply political legacy in world politics. It is argued that Che remains relevant to an audience concerned with world politics precisely because the problems that Che was responding to – the problems of neo-imperialism, dependency, and exploitation – remain endemic. Inequality is increasing across and between states, a fetter on productivity, and increasing the immiserations of the world's poor. Forces of neo-imperialism continue and are intensifying. We argue that the analytical strength Che's lies in his radical class analysis to interrogate these forms of neo-imperialism in world order and the potentialities for fighting for a world of genuine self-determination. And we show how Che's unique radical Marxist-humanism, focused on revolutionary praxis, continues to resonate across many 'critical' and/or emancipatory forms of IR theory, Marxism and Critical Theory, Decolonial IR and Feminism, amongst others. It is hoped this can be a cue to further linkages with NSM research.

After this opening article that situates the broad intentions of the volume, the next three articles are reflective and historical pieces. Harry Vanden provides a lucid back-story to Che by investigating Mariátegui's 'open Marxism' as a precursor to Che's nondogmatic socialism. Studies of Mariátegui's are rare in Western IR and those charting his influence on Che even more so, and so this piece offers a valuable contribution illuminating the long-term legacies in socialist thought provided by both Mariátegui and Che in world politics. A number of important comparisons are drawn out between Mariátegui and Che: firstly, their shared heterodox reading of Marxist-Leninism that took an active rather than staid view to history and revolution; secondly, their shared sensitivities to, and keen awareness of, the international dimensions of class struggles in ways that remain highly relevant to the globalized yet fracturing present; thirdly, the incompleteness of both in terms of overcoming the interpenetration of capitalist-imperialism as impediments to a free America and a free world. Despite this deficiency, Vanden argues that their type of socialist thinking is well-adapted to the political realities of Latin America even today and he opens a number of areas for future research into Che's legacies elsewhere in the continent, especially Peru.

Massari²³ continues this back-story to Che's thought, offering a creative approach unique in scholarship on Che. Massari provides a story of Che as an 'old film' in reference to the many accounts about Guevara's relationship with Marx, especially those attempting to downplay this relationship within the canons of Soviet orthodoxy. Massari shows how the history of this relationship was very complicated and subject to continuous, major changes that he reconstructs in the form of film scenes in which the reader jumps from La Paz, Dar es Salaam, Lima, Rome, Moscow, Havana, Prague and finally to Bolivia, following directly Che's changing reflections on Marx. From the examination of typically overlooked materials such as 'Notes on Books to Read' in the *Bolivian Diary* (1966–1967) and the 'Letter to Armando Hart' (December 1965) a new account of Guevara's relationship with Marxism, and with the social sciences in general, is offered. Massari posits that,

via Marx's humanism, Che develops the ideas of new man within his own 'revolutionary humanism'.

Turning from Che's theoretical work to his practical work as a Minister of Industries (MININD) in Cuba's revolutionary state (1961–1965), Yaffe explores how Che attempted to address the challenge of raising productivity and labour efficiency in the transition to socialism. The key problem was how to solve these issues without relying on capitalist mechanisms (i.e. the law of value) and within conditions of under-development. For Che, this became a question of how to effectively apply science and technology to production and he would institutionalize research and development to this end. Using meeting transcripts, interviews, and literature from key participants within MININD, Yaffe explores the nine research and development institutes Che set-up as minister. These established an institutional framework to begin experimentation for horizontal and vertical integration (i.e. raw materials/resources and manufacturing) in a number of research priorities including sugar; the extractives-sector; and naval construction, electronics, and automation. Yaffe argues that the long-term legacy was not necessarily in productive achievements (though there were benefits) but the methodology of applying science and technology to production as an agenda into the national development strategy. Here, Cuba's prioritization of science and technology, and the spirit of linking experimental research to productivity, can be seen in Cuba's health, biotechnology, and ecology sectors today.

Juan Cáceres and I²⁴ then interrogate the radical political analysis of Che regarding international institutions (specifically the Organisation of American States, OAS) and assess its ongoing relevance for today. Focusing on Che's infamous speeches at the Punta del Este conference for the AFP in 1961, we argue that Che's critique remains relevant for analysing regional integration by highlighting the role of the OAS and its intervention in the Bolivian coup of 2019. Che argued at Punta del Este that the US were able to retard socialist development in Latin America via foreign capital, monopolies, control of regional organizations, and in 'extreme cases' military intervention. Each of these elements is observed in the role the OAS played in the Bolivian coup – economic interests, military intervention, and the subversion of democracy. We argue that Che's way of undertaking a class analysis of imperialism and how this plays out within regional institutions remains highly useful for understanding not just regionalism in the Americas but world politics as a whole.

In the second half of the volume, the emphasis shifts to the legacies of the revolutionary aspects of Che's actions, especially guerilla warfare, *Foquismo*, and their relation to other revolutionary traditions such as Maoism and revolutionary feminism. Dirk Krujit²⁵ begins this exploration, delving into the most well-known of Che's legacies: guerrilla warfare. Krujit argues that Che's influence on the next generations of guerrilla movements in the twentieth century were vast. In fact, they became what he calls a recipe for the 'rural *foco*' and whilst such a strategy ultimately failed, his legacy remains as definitive in this tradition. Krujit examines three of Che's campaigns – Bolivia and Argentina (1963/1964), Congo (1965/1966), and Bolivia (1996/1967) – finding that these were actually inconsistent with Che's own strategic vision, specifically, that many of the conditions for establishing lasting political support for the insurgents were absent. This resulted in either a turn to urban insurgencies (in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay), abandonment of rural *foco* completely (in Nicaragua and El Salvador), or the armed forces eventually overwhelming the guerrillas (in Colombia, Guatemala, and Peru). Soon after, even Cuba would opt for regular forces in its support of anticolonial struggles in Africa, and Castro would admit the time for guerrilla warfare had passed.

Vera Carnovale takes a different angle, looking at Che's revolutionary ethics and how this formed a Guevarist legacy in the Latin America during the 1960s–1970s. Two dimensions are concentrated on. Firstly, how Che's revolutionary rhetoric on war/conflict on regional and global scales and the ideal of *focismo* were turned into a 'promise' that armed revolutionary could create the subjective conditions for revolution. Secondly, the ideal of the new man ('*el hombre nuevo*') as a model for good conduct and a centre of ethical values. Carnovale argues that these meanings coalesced into imperatives for heroics and sacrifices via the creation of an imaginary that linked conscience-morals with the vanguard, and vanguard with a sacrificial example. This imaginary would, it was believed, create the conditions for the inexorable defeat of imperialism and incarnate in the 'new man'. Across the Southern Cone, Carnovale shows how these were taken and internalized by many revolutionary activists, as shown in the strong loyalties of many of these groups, showing that Che's legacy was more than just in theory or principles, but in helping form a cohesive 'construction of identity'.

Jan Lust continues this interrogation of Che's legacy in the continental revolutionary movements by examining Che's involvement in the organization of various guerrilla activities in South America. Set in the context of US military interventions across the region, especially in Argentina and Peru (typically overlooked in other studies of Che) and Bolivia, Lust describes in detail Che's different roles across these movements. Particularly novel are Lust's insights into the Special Operations Section – an institute of the Cuban government assisting Latin American guerrilla groups – and Lust's firsthand interview materials with ex-members of the Peruvian Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). Lust finds that Che supported local socialist revolutions but anticipated these would not survive if unaccompanied by other revolutionary struggles in other parts of the continent – a similar argument Che makes in the Tricontinental but on a global scale. Even more surprising are Lust's findings on Che's actions in Bolivia, overturning many misconceptions in the literature, showing Che's difficult choices in this fateful intervention.

In the final two articles, Llorente and Meger examine how Che's legacy relates to other revolutionary theories. Renzo Llorente's²⁶ piece explores a relationship that has remained under-theorized in nearly all other aspects of research on Che: that between Guevarism and Maoism. Llorente finds that there are a number of shared characteristics that can be drawn between Che and Mao, including the primacy of imperialism as the 'world-ordering' phenomena; the basis for political resistance; the stages of revolution; the primacy of labour, and; anti-bureaucratism. So, whilst Che clearly rejects some of the key theoretical and practical aspects of Maoism and offers his own 'eclectic, non-sectarian interpretation' of Marxism, Llorente highlights how the connection between Che and Mao warrants serious reflection. Such unique insights open up important lines for future comparative research into Che and his relation to Mao and other revolutionaries.

Closing the volume, Sara Meger²⁷ undertakes a very difficult reflection on the question of whether contemporary feminism can make use of Che's idea of *foco* to bring about revolutionary change to gender relations. Ultimately, the question is whether there is a 'just' form of emancipatory political violence that could ever be reconciled with feminist ethics. Answering with a 'cautious' yes, Meger outlines that whilst feminists have had very little to say about the legacy of Che and that his advocacy of armed insurgency is an unpopular idea amongst feminists, if undertaken for the purposes of women's liberation, then there is a clear synergy between Che's revolutionary humanism and revolutionary feminism. That is, if undertaken to wrest power to ending domination, Meger posits that Che's ideas can be used as parts of a tactic in the toolbox of mass struggles against oppression. Difficult distinctions need to be made between forms of militarism and armed, revolutionary violence. Ultimately, Meger's argument forms a bedrock from which

others can begin to explore a more integrated revolutionary model for human emancipation that could emerge based on the global women's movement, humanism, and non-domination.

What is clearly evident from this overview of *Che Lives!* is that there is so much that remains of Che's legacy that is of crucial relevance for world politics today: whether re-examining the contested histories of the various roles Che has played; or questioning relationships between revolutionary theories and how to analyse imperialism; to engaging ways in which we can analyse possibilities for decolonial and emancipatory movements today. Hopefully, this volume encourages further research into these vital questions of our shared future.

Notes

1. For instance, Che's speech at UNCTAD (Guevara, 1964) is emblematic of his contributions to world politics given its focus on development and needs of the Global South (i.e. dependency, deterioration of trade, sovereignty); his criticisms of international organizations such as the IMF, World Bank, and GATT; and his condemnation of US-led imperialism.
2. Tragic perhaps but these accounts usually overlook how Che identified that this theory did not apply in Angola (and on account of which he changed tactics,) or that even in Bolivia there was a reason for his sacrifice in attempting to open another front against imperialism – however doomed it was (see his explanation in Guevara, April 1967 in Deutschmann, 2003, pp. 350–364).
3. Rothbard's offers a libertarian assessment of Che on these grounds (see 1967, p. 3). More recent libertarian accounts, however, have tended to become almost indistinguishable from the commentary of the Right (see for example Vargas Llosa, 2006).
4. The term 'legacy' features as the entry to his Wikipedia page: see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legacy_of_Che_Guevara.
5. Scauzillo (1970) was one of the first to deride admirers or even scholars of Che as 'a cult'.
6. This was complemented with the publication of *Great Debate on Political Economy* (2006a).
7. As an exemplar, we can see Hagan's attempt to ensure that Che 'will remain a revolutionary of the past – and not a martyr of the future' (1969, p. 94).
8. This idea is taken up further in the Brincat and Löwy article in this volume.
9. This is taken up in the article by Brincat and Cáceres article in this volume.
10. In my research I have not seen Che use the term sublation (*Aufhebung*) but terms like 'ending' and 'vanquishing' of imperialism that suggest a finality (this is especially pronounced on his speech at the Tricontinental). This slippage is probably due the nature of his speeches, intended to be hortatory and political, rather than aiming for theoretical cohesion. Che's outline of the 'new man', in distinction, have a much more open-dialectical basis. Many have derided Che's 'el hombre nuevo' (the 'new man') as promoting socialism through moral rather than material incentives (for criticisms see Gómez Romero, 2016, p. 109). But these tend to overlook how the concept runs parallel to Marx's idea of full, human emancipation in *On the Jewish Question*, and suggests an open-ended process of an unfolding humanity in the future. On steps on the dialectical method see Ollman (2003).
11. One of the few exceptions that has looked to global capitalism, the state-system, and class relations was a Special Issue in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (Kuok, 2007) and a handful of Marxist scholars like Rosenberg, Teschke, and Morton (see esp. Bieler & Morton, 2018).
12. The emphasis of New Constructivism on *practices* as imperatives, habits, and embodied dispositions, and *relations* as ongoing processes taken from social network analysis and actor-network theory, still remove or neglect the class-context of these practices and relations.
13. Che here follows Mariátegui's interpretation of the situation in South America as characterized by a non-productive national bourgeoisie and colonial oligarchy who owned the vast majority of the land.
14. This also included banning economic aggression, protection from foreign monopolies and reduction of US tariffs, promoting indirect investment, free trade unions, and limiting US interference in the media.
15. During the first NAM Summit in Belgrade (1–6 September 1961) self-determination was heralded as central: 'all nations have the right of unity, self-determination, and independence by virtue of which right they can determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural

development without intimidation or hindrance'. Che would link this conceptualization with his own, making a case for a 'Free Territory of the Americas' (see Belgrade Declaration of Non-Aligned Countries, 1961).

16. In the message to the Tricontinental he stipulated that even though each continent had its own 'characteristics' that Africa, Asia, and South America were 'dependent and economically backwards' (Guevara, April 1967 in Deutschmann, 2003, pp. 350–364).
17. This shares Paranzino's (2022) take and refers to the Meeting of the Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL) held in Havana between 3 and 16 January 1966.
18. He made this point also in his speech to UNCTAD (25 March 1964) (Guevara, 2005).
19. This is discussed further in the Brincat and Löwy article in this volume.
20. This stemmed also from *The First and Second Declarations of Havana* (2007) in which Castro outlined a powerful alliance between the peasantry, indigenous peoples, Blacks, and the other exploited sections of the population across the Americas and pointed out the struggles against Jim Crow segregation were part of this.
21. These remain the four principles bedrocks of the Cuban state and its social contract – emancipation of women and racial equality, with education and healthcare.
22. Shannon Brincat and Michael Löwy (2023), *Che Lives! The Legacy of Che Guevara in World Politics* (229019142).
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26. Renzo Llorente (2022), 'Che and Maoism' (2111079).
27. Sarah Meger (2023), 'Che Guevara and the Case for Revolutionary Feminism in Global Politics' (228091508).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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