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## **Editorial Introduction**

*Matthew Johnson*

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has so far seen US-led military interventions, global financial crises, identity conflicts, terrorism on a grand scale, environmental disasters and fraught industrial/labour relations. These dramatic events have challenged the notion of an ‘end to history’ and the widespread belief that the collapse of the Soviet Union has made Marx and Marxism irrelevant. With growing instability in the social, political and economic functioning of societies, it is necessary to examine the relevance of Marx to contemporary global society.

We have sought to develop two forums in which to conduct this examination: first, the ‘Examining the Relevance of Marx and Marxism to Contemporary Global Society’ conference, which was held at Newcastle University on January 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> and, now, two special issues of *Global Discourse*. The conference attracted 37 participants from as far afield as Australia, with lively discussion stimulated, in particular, by the keynote papers. The two special issues contain a number of articles developed from papers given at the conference as well as several vibrant book review symposia. Also included in this issue, though not engaging directly with Marxism, is a review symposium on *Humanitarian Intervention and the Responsibility to Protect* by James Pattison, featuring rigorous reviews by David Miller and Graham Long.

We hope that, by developing these special issues, we will be able to facilitate interdisciplinary and interparadigmatic discussions within the left regarding approaches to a range of contemporary issues developments and challenges. To further this, we have developed an official link with the Political Studies Association Marxism Specialist Group which means that articles addressing relevant topics and issues are eligible for consideration for subsequent inclusion in the Group’s annual print journal *Studies in Marxism*. Papers which are accepted following the peer-review process in *Global Discourse* do not then need to be reviewed again prior to inclusion in *Studies in Marxism*. The editorial board of *Studies in Marxism* will invite authors of relevant peer-reviewed articles in *Global Discourse* to consider subsequent publication in *Studies in Marxism*. This arrangement means that there will be a formal, open access platform for discussion of articles and projects both before and after they appear in a well-established print journal.

Several people have made significant contributions to both the conference and this special issue. With regard to the conference, the editors would like to thank: Russell Foster for dealing with emails and administrative tasks prior to the event as well as contributing greatly over the weekend of the conference; Gerard Thomas for assisting with the organisation of the evening meal and with refreshments during the conference; Megan O’Branski for her help during the conference, especially in welcoming and registering participants and organising refreshments; Esteban Castro



and George Brathwaite for chairing panels; Paul Reynolds for his advice on the nature and format of the conference; William Maloney for supporting the event, and Norman Geras and Stuart Sim for their keynote speeches. With regard to the special issue, we would like to thank: Steven Robinson for assisting in the processing of submissions; the referees for their comprehensive and constructive reviews; Mark Cowling for his advice, and the publishers who provided review copies of the books in the symposia.