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**Historical sociology and global transformation**

The social sciences are undergoing a major transformation at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The theoretical turmoil in international political economy (as in international relations) is one reflection of a wider crisis, which can be seen across the social sciences and indeed in all fields of knowledge. Fundamental intellectual challenges have arisen not just from within the disciplines themselves, but from historical turbulence and change.

It is generally the case that intellectual currents, however esoteric they sometimes seem, are deeply implicated in the social ferments which in turn they attempt to grasp. Any proposal for understanding the intellectual problems of the present, such as that which I make in this chapter, is itself necessarily a response - direct or indirect - to the historical situation. By naming the crisis in a certain way, we are also contributing to a particular direction within it, even to a certain kind of solution.

There is some agreement that at the beginning of the twenty-first century we are in a period of deep historical flux. Indeed the question of when and how the twentieth century ended (in other than the strict chronological sense) is a key question of contemporary historiography. Eric Hobsbawm (1994) argued that the 'short twentieth century' actually came to an end around 1989. In this sense the twenty-first century is well under way: there was no need to wait for 1 January 2000.
Even in the 1980s, the idea that society was moving beyond the principal features of the modern age was widespread. A discourse of ‘post-modernity’ became fashionable in many fields, so that the specifically geopolitical turn - ‘the post-Cold War era’ of which many began to write in the early 1990s - had already been anticipated by many ideas of movement beyond modern conditions in culture and society. ‘Post-’ ideas of all kinds, however, indicated a loose, even nebulous sense of change rather than a definite content. Indeed the point of post-modern thought was precisely the dissolution of certainty.

By the mid-1990s, however, one particular concept of change was becoming central to many social science fields, and was particularly influential in international political economy. This was the idea of ‘globalisation’, defined by Anthony Giddens (1990), one of its most influential proponents, as the worldwide stretching and intensification of social relations. In many versions, this kind of global change had an inexorable quality, linked to the rapid spread and speeding up of market relations, eliminating the possibilities of conscious social control.

While we are indeed in the midst of a fundamental historical transition, none of these widely diffused accounts adequately grasps its character. Indeed there is a continuing incoherence at the heart of the ‘globalisation’ literature, in that the meaning of ‘global’ is often undefined. Where it is, is identified with the essentially technical changes in communications, transportation and economic structure which have linked distant locales. In this sense, the social meaning of ‘globality’ (the name for the global as a condition: see Albrow, 1996) is not grasped. This meaning should be located, I argue in this chapter, in the widespread recognition of a worldwide human commonality, or of world society as a whole as the framework of human action.
Global change, in this sense, is literally a revolutionary transformation, and of course a highly contested one. In this context, globalisation as commonly understood creates only some of the technical conditions for globality. The mechanisms of worldwide linkage, which are not all as novel as some ‘globalisers’ suppose, are necessary but not sufficient for global transformation in its full meaning. Globality is a conscious process or it is nothing: the key is the worldwide development of a common human consciousness, not as a simple abstract moral or intellectual affair, but deeply rooted in social struggles, and linked to social processes like democratic change which are commonly seen as discrete. In this sense a diffuse, uneven and unfinished global revolution - as well as many manifestations of anti-globalist counter-revolution - can be identified.

While globalisation has been identified as an economic and cultural process, global change in the broader sense is much more political. Global politics can be seen at work in the growth of democratic pluralism, environmentalism, gender politics and anti-racism, even if in their concrete forms these often have confused relationships to nationality and globality - many involve, for example, ideas of ‘resistance’ to ‘globalisation’. Global politics has contradictory relationships, too, to transformations in the state-system, in particular the tendency towards the formation of a ‘global state’ from the dominant Western system of power.

Understanding the major historical change of our own times, therefore, involves us in understanding the links between economic, cultural and political transformations, and between markets, state institutions and social movements. If these can be considered tasks for international political economy, they obviously involve understanding the field in the broadest sense. They bring into question the relationship between international political economy and other disciplines.
In particular this proposal directs our attention towards the field’s intersections with history and sociology. If global change is considered not just as a set of relatively discrete processes, but as a profound and all-embracing transformation, then it takes us back to the foundations of our understanding of the modern world as well as forward to new ways of thinking. We need to examine the history of social thought in order to understand its current dilemmas - and to see the relevance of the historical-sociological approach with which this chapter is concerned. I start in the first main section of this chapter with an account of the history of social thought, before turning in subsequent parts to the specific contributions of a historical sociology to understanding the state and international relations, and to contemporary global change.

1 Sociology, history and political economy

International political economy can be considered a ‘new’ field of social science only in that it is the product of late twentieth-century attempts to bridge disciplinary boundaries between economics, politics and international relations. This does not mean, however, that the subject has no history - even less that the history of the social sciences can be considered irrelevant to the future of international political economy. On the contrary, classical debates, at the root of the modern social-scientific tradition, are of central relevance to contemporary international political economy. If a historical sociology is a new approach in international political economy debates, it is nevertheless a synthesis of major classic traditions of understanding. To appreciate the contribution which a historical-sociological approach can make, we need first to understand something of these traditions and their background.

Classical political economy was one of the forms of thought which emerged in the revolutionary changes which created what we have come to think of as the modern world. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Britain was in the forefront of industrial change, and Scottish
writers like Adam Smith - seen today as the founder of economics - developed important insights into the relations of the market relations of the emerging industrial world.

In the other major European countries industrialism was slower to develop, but the French revolution had stimulated the development of political theory and of philosophy. The greatest thinkers of the early nineteenth century were much more encyclopaedic than their successors in the twentieth-century social sciences. Among the greatest of the German philosophers, for example, Immanuel Kant was concerned with the conditions of world peace, and GFW Hegel absorbed many of the critical insights of the new political economy.

In the mid- to late nineteenth century, however, fundamental changes occurred in the intellectual picture. With the consolidation of the increasingly industrial market economy, on the one hand, and of the modern bureaucratic state, on the other, the relationships between philosophy, economic thought and politics were transformed. On the one hand, the greatest of all polymaths, Karl Marx, synthesised the dialectical thought of Hegel with the political economy of Smith’s principal successor, David Ricardo, and the emergent communist and socialist strand in the revolutionary politics of the time. On the other, the new disciplines of social-scientific thought emerged and eventually became institutionalised in the academy. Sociology was developed by writers like Auguste Comte, as a new form of social thought in which economic conditions were no longer seen as fundamental. Later, as a result of what was called the ‘marginalist’ revolution, economics developed as a discipline which no longer acknowledged social and political relations as theoretically central to the economy.

Marx presented his work as a critique of political economy, in the sense that it not only uncovered the historically specific social relations of labour and capital underlying the market economy - these had already been acknowledged in Ricardo’s claim that labour was the source
of value - but in that it showed how these would lead to the transcendence of political economy in practice. Marx understood his theory as pointing beyond philosophy, political economy and political theory as they had been understood previously, although it incorporated a ‘critical’ version of each of these. Overall, however, Marx has been seen as making a transition from philosophy to historical social theory (Korsch, 1963). For Marx, social relations, understood as specific to a particular historical epoch, were the central problem in the understanding of economics, politics and philosophy.

Sociology represented a parallel but, initially at least, a radically opposed development. Not only did Comte proclaim a ‘positive’ scientific philosophy - hence ‘positivism’ - in opposition to Marx’s continuation of Hegel’s ‘negative’ or dialectical thought (Marcuse, 1968). But for Comte, like his forerunner Henri de Saint-Simon, what was important about the new industrial society was not the contradictory social relations of the market, but the scientific idea through which a new sense of social solidarity would emerge.

This strand of sociology - opposed to political economy - which was developed further in the work of Emile Durkheim, became central to the functionalist theory of the ‘social system’ developed by Talcott Parsons (1951), which dominated American sociology in its mid-twentieth century heyday. With Parsons, the main tradition of sociology became fundamentally idealist, locating the unity of society in its ‘central value system’. It also became profoundly ahistorical, not only in the Marxist sense of neglecting the contradictory historical specificity of capitalist social relations, but in the more general sense of seeing broad transhistorical generalisations as its basic purpose, and any kind of historical difference as of secondary significance.

A more historical approach to sociology had been developed, however, by Max Weber (even if the historical dimension of his work was minimised by Parsons, who also claimed
Weber’s legacy). Not only has the significance of his huge, wide-ranging life’s work has often been compared to that of Marx’s, but he has been seen as the ‘bourgeois Marx’, offering a fundamental alternative to the latter. In reality, Weber’s work does not lend itself to such an easy ideological polarisation. Despite his famous investigation into the significance of Protestant religion for the rise of capitalism (1948), Weber does not offer a simple ‘idealist’ foil for Marx’s ‘materialism’. Just as Marx, the heir of Hegel, understood the significance of ideas, so did Weber emphasise material circumstances.

Weber’s importance lay precisely in the breadth of his historical perspectives, centred on a comparative sociology of world civilisations, and the reasons why only the West had developed capitalist economic rationality. Weber (1964), like Marx, recognised the world-historic significance of capitalist modernity, but he defined capitalism more in terms of this rational logic of market relations than the specific social relation of wage-labour and capital - which Marx made central. This meant that he had a view of the future of capitalism which was simultaneously more closed and more open than Marx’s.

On the one hand, Weber believed that the instrumental rationality ushered in by the capitalist market - even if originating partly in religious ideas - was becoming universal and all-pervasive. Weber believed that socialism, far from radically disrupting this process, would actually consolidate it. In this sense, there was no escape from the ‘iron cage’ of capitalist rationality. Rationalisation - which Weber also saw as implying bureaucratisation - was ineluctable, and history was in this sense ‘closed’ to any serious alternative to capitalism.

In another sense, however, Weber’s approach appeared more open than Marx’s. Capitalism was compatible, he recognised, with a variety of cultures and historical conditions. The defining class dialectics of Marx’s understanding of capitalism, which in some hands became a deterministic
view of the inevitability of socialism, were circumvented. Weber’s historical method was looser than the more systematic approach to which Marx’s concept of historic specificity lent itself.

As critical sociology developed a distinctive voice against the 1950s supremacy of Parsons and other functionalists, writers like C. Wright Mills (1958) argued that the ‘sociological imagination’ needed to be historical - in a broad sense that owed more to Weber than to Marx. The late 1960s and early 1970s, however, saw the re-emergence of calls for sociology to be historical in distinctively Marxist senses: although even among Marxists, differences emerged between the structuralist followers of Louis Althusser (1972) and the others whose idea of history was more humanist (e.g. E.P. Thompson, 1978). These Marxist divisions centred on the relationship between opposed concepts of history: as the succession of modes of production, or as the product of the agency of classes.

By the 1980s, these arguments were increasingly transcended in a sociology which was broadly Weberian, but also post-Marxist in the sense of having absorbed some important parts of Marx’s and subsequent Marxist thought. Giddens (1981, 1984) had developed a ‘contemporary critique of historical materialism’, and attempted to resolve the dilemma of structure and agency in his theory of ‘structuration’. Giddens’, even more than Weber’s, was a sociology which was intrinsically historical but also made open-endedness and discontinuity principles of analysis (see Giddens, 1985).

Despite this new synthesis gaining a dominant position, especially in Europe, much contemporary sociology remains very limited in scope - centred in partial analyses of present-day Western society. For this reason, Philip Abrams’ Historical Sociology (1982) set a trend in seeing this as a specific sub-field of the discipline, and other major writers adopting a distinctively historical approach, like Theda Skocpol (1979) and Michael Mann (1986, 1993)
have been regarded as ‘historical sociologists’. Historical sociology has come to be seen as Weber-inspired, but like the Marxism from which it has also drawn, is characterised by a concern with macro-issues of the nature of large-scale historical phenomena.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, therefore, historical sociology can be regarded as both a general theoretical tradition of the discipline, and increasingly a specific set of approaches within it. It is not particularly helpful to try to legislate away this dilemma, which is strongly rooted in the history and institutional embedding of these strands of social thought. Although the introduction of a historical-sociological approach into international relations has tended to rely on a relatively few works, concerned with a fairly well-defined set of issues (as we shall see in the next section), it also draws on this broader tradition of historical social thought, both Marxist and Weberian.

The core relevance of historical sociology to international political economy (and indeed to international relations) is therefore its potential to offer a richer pathway out of the classic dilemmas of social thought, than those offered by the political-science and economic roots of the field. Historical sociology offers the possibility of both transcending the narrow institutionalism of some mainstream ‘IPE’ and developing a broader-based historical alternative to Marxist-inspired work, with its own particular closures of historical perspective. Having explained the roots of the approach, we can now turn to some of the particular ways in which recent historical sociology has been developed, and how some have attempted to incorporate it into international political economy and international relations.

2 The historical sociology of the state and international relations
A number of writers are currently cited in international studies as key figures of historical sociology. Steve Hobden, in an international relations-based critique of the field (1997), takes four as central: Skocpol and Mann, together with Charles Tilly and Immanuel Wallerstein. The latter he praises as the only one of the four to have a developed concept of the international system.

This is one way of recognising the difference between Wallerstein and the other writers, who are actually more representative of what would be considered by most scholars a historical-sociological approach. Wallerstein’s ‘world-systems theory’ is clearly Marxist-derived, although often considered quite distinct from mainstream Marxism because of its emphasis on the world market rather than capitalist relations of production. Even more than more orthodox Marxists, however, Wallerstein is widely regarded as offering a one-dimensional approach. The overriding emphasis on the ‘world system’, like parallel structural systems-approaches in international relations (such as Waltz, 1979), creates a particular closure in historical explanation, and tends to reduce the significance of agency.

Tilly, who is widely acknowledged as a founding writer in contemporary historical sociology, in contrast comes from a more mainstream historiographical background. His trend-setting work (e.g. Tilly, 1975) was less sharply informed by a distinctive theoretical position, but he adopted a broad comparative approach to questions of macro-historical change such as the origins of the nation-state in Europe, and the nature of revolutions. Tilly’s work has had an agenda-setting role for other historical sociologists, as these issues have been central to the work of all the best-known contributors to the field.

In many ways, the pathbreaking work in the emergence of a distinct historical sociology was Skocpol’s *State and Social Revolutions* (1979). In tackling the three key revolutions of modern
times - France 1789, Russia 1917 and China 1949 - she not only examined upheavals in which Marxist doctrines had played defining roles, but addressed a field of historiography in which Marxists were dominant. Her critique of predominantly ‘internal’, class-based explanations was therefore a clear marker of the post-Marxist character of the new historical sociology, setting the scene in some ways for the more fundamental theoretical critique which Giddens (1981?) was shortly to publish.

Skocpol defined some fundamental positions in the emergent sociology of the nation-state. Revolutions were defined as responses to instabilities of the international order (notably wars) as well as of social relations, and revolutions were seen as inherently - rather than incidentally - international events, with causes and consequences in international conflict. States, she argued, were ‘Janus-faced’, pointing both inwards towards ‘their’ societies and outwards towards other states in the international arena. States were also, as Evans, Rueschemayer and Skocpol (1985) argued, centres of interest distinct from those of dominant classes.

The importance of Giddens to the specific development of historical sociology rests mainly on The Nation-State and Violence (1985). This is both the fullest systematic historical articulation of his own perspective, and the most comprehensive theoretical exposition to date of a historical-sociological perspective on the nation-state in the context of war and international relations. (As such, its omission from the canon by Hobden is difficult to justify.) At the basis of Giddens’ approach is his definition of four main institutional clusters of modernity, concerned with capitalism, industrialism, surveillance and warfare.

The nation-state is defined by Giddens, similarly to Skocpol, in terms of two sets of processes, inward-pointing surveillance and outward-pointing warfare. He argues that as surveillance has become more complete, and violence has been ‘extruded’ from the internal social relations
of states, so it has become concentrated in their external relations. Giddens’ account has been criticised, by more orthodox Marxists such as Bob Jessop (in Held and Thompson, 1989) for its separations of capitalism, industrialism and state, and by the present writer (Shaw, in Held and Thompson, 1989; 1994) for its neglect of more complex dialectics of war and ‘internal’ conflict.

Discussion of The Nation-State and Violence in international relations has suggested that it does not go far enough in challenging the bifurcation of domestic and international spheres. Justin Rosenberg (1990) argued that surveillance is not just a process within, but also between states. Faruk Yalvaç (in Banks and Shaw, 1991) pointed out the irony that while international relations writers were moving away from realism, sociologists appeared to be adopting quasi-realist world views. Certainly Giddens does seem to conform to this pattern, but this is partly because he develops a broad historical perspective on the rise of the nation-state, rather than closely examining contemporary realities. Among other writers, John Hall (in Shaw, 1984; 1996), who is influenced by Raymond Aron, probably came closest to an explicit realism, although Mann (in Shaw, 1984; in Shaw and Creighton, 1987; 1988) also argued for the importance of ‘geopolitical’ explanations.

Even granting the salience of Yalvaç’s point, it would be a very serious mistake to see historical-sociological accounts as limited to the restatement of realism. At the very least, this school of work has provided far fuller, sociologically-rooted explanations of the important fact that, during the heyday of the nation-state and even in the Cold War, there appeared to be a rigid separation of intra- and inter-state social relations. Giddens and others have made it clear that the nation-state unit cannot be regarded as a given, as international realism has assumed. They have shown how the nation-state has been socially constructed, and how this affects its international role. In this sense, there has been a fundamental advance on realism.
In the most developed work of the new historical sociology, Mann’s *The Sources of Social Power*, and especially its second volume on major nineteenth century states (1993), any tendency towards realism was clearly transcended. Mann argues that modern sociology has oscillated between civilisational and national definitions of society. His own approach examines the significance of nations within what he calls the ‘multi-power actor’ civilisation of the West. In his closely argued study of the nineteenth century, he demonstrates the complex articulation of the development of state power with the (contemporaneous) creation of both nation and class as major categories of social action. In an approach based on the idea of ‘power networks’ - which include what international theorists have called both state and ‘non-state’ actors - Mann shows the interaction of societal and state forces in the production of ‘international’ outcomes (which involve of course also distinct societal results) like the First World War.

In Mann’s work, what he has called ‘empirical theory’ (Mann, 1988) vindicates a broadly Weberian approach to historical sociology. Capitalism is not analytically prioritised, as it is by Marxists, and instead the major forms of power - in Mann’s terms, economic, political, military and ideological - are analysed in terms of their historical changing forms and relationships. Not surprisingly, it is this approach which has inspired a second tier of researchers, and some important new work on the relationship between states and economic development (Weiss and Hobson 1995, Hobson 199?).

Although I have noted the concern among international scholars about the apparent (in reality very partial) congruence of some historical sociology with realist assumptions, in general the trends in sociology which we have discussed have provoked positive reactions in critical areas of international relations. As we saw, Giddens’ *The Nation-State and Violence* produced responses in the international literature. More generally, Fred Halliday, for example, has seen the integration of sociological concerns as part of the new agenda in international relations. He
has particularly emphasised the international-national-international circuit of revolutionary change, in work which interweaves the issues raised by Skocpol (Halliday, in Banks and Shaw, 1991; 1999).

The broadly Weberian approach has also found echoes in notable historical work by international scholars. Notable among these are Spruyt’s (1994) account of how the sovereign state saw off its main competitors to emerge as the dominant modern political form and Halperin’s (1997, 1999) comparative historical studies of European development. The point which was made earlier, that historical sociology is however broader than Weber, is emphasised not only by Spruyt’s critique of neo-Weberianism (1994: 19-21), but by the more clearly Marxist-inspired work of Rosenberg (1994).

The increasing body of the new historical sociology has led to an attempt by John Hobson (1998) to systematise its contribution to international relations. He identifies six principles of its approach to states and the international system:

1 **history and change**: state forms are not ‘a natural product of an alleged liberal social contract’, but are ‘forged ... in the heat of battle and warfare.’ Nor indeed, he argues, ‘should the anarchic system of sovereign states be regarded as natural.’ In a historical sociological approach, shows the

2 **multi-causality**: 

3 **multi-spatiality**: societies are ‘constituted by multiple overlapping and intersecting sociospatial networks of power’ (Mann).
4 **partial autonomy**: ‘power forces and actors’ constantly ‘interact and shape each other in complex ways’ and hence are not ‘wholly autonomous and self-constituting’.

5 **complex change**: historical sociology understands ‘both societies and international politics’ as ‘immanent orders of change’ (Norbert Elias); it emphasizes ‘discontinuity’ (Giddens); it indicates moments of ‘tracklaying’ and ‘converting to a new gauge’ (Mann).

6 **a ‘non-realist’ concept of state autonomy**: historical sociology introduces the important notion of state embeddedness within society, developed particularly in Hobson’s own work (199?).

Hobson’s summary is very useful in pointing up key differences between historical sociology and more mainstream international relations approaches. In particular it indicates clearly why the simple conflation of historical sociology with realism is inappropriate. However the limitations of his approach are indicated by the presentation of state embeddedness, for example, as a means of understanding ‘foreign policy and international relations’, and ‘the spatial trinitarian approach’ (Halliday’s conception of a ‘international-national-international’ chain of causality) providing ‘an alternative perspective for understanding traditional IR concerns.’

In these phrases, Hobson indicates a problem of his approach, which to some extent represents a difficulty in historical-sociological work as a whole. Although the school clearly presents a distinctive and powerful *explanatory framework*, it has largely accepted the *categories* of traditional international relations. Hobson’s historical sociology is rooted in the old international, pre-global categories of realism. Thus Hobson seeks to incorporate historical sociology into ‘international’ relations, and does not recognise the extent to which the categories of the national and international have become problematic in critical global theorising.
The way the broader potential of the historical sociology approach is restricted by Hobson is indicated by his collapsing of Mann’s idea of multi-spatiality into the idea of the dual reflexivity of the ‘international’ and ‘domestic’ spheres. Hobson assumes the relationships of a state and a society, of the state to its society. The dualism of state and society is tackled but its sister error, the dualism of national and international, remains firmly in place. Hobson thus confines historical sociology to a world in which the international and national (domestic) are the two main spatial dimensions. But in the emerging global world these are intersected by many others - conventionally described as local, regional, transnational, world-regional and global, although these terms only partially capture contemporary ‘sociospatial networks of power’.

A serious problem here is the rootedness of the major historical-sociological works in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century world order. Tilly studied the origins of the nation-state system; Skocpol’s major study was of classic revolutions; Giddens’ work focussed on the consolidation of the nation-state; Mann’s study of power has so far reached only the First World War and (in ongoing research) fascism. No major work has yet tackled the historical present. Although Giddens (e.g. 1990, 1991) has written extensively about globalisation, he has presented it as fundamentally continuous with modernity, and has not presented a fully historical account of its development. While Mann (1997) has accepted some of the novelty of contemporary global change, he remains cautious as to its significance. This may be correct: but it cannot be assumed, as it appears to be in Hobson’s account of historical sociology.

This difficulty is clearly critical if historical sociology is to be taken seriously in international political economy. Much of the impetus to the development of the field has come from dissatisfaction with the traditional concerns of international relations. International political economists have developed our understanding of the contemporary significance of trans- as well as inter-national relations, and of global and regional developments. It is true that the
field has not resolved its own dilemmas over the relations of internationality and globality - indeed ‘international’ and ‘global’ are often used interchangeably to name it. Nevertheless the sense that the world has changed in ways which move beyond traditional international categories has been at the centre of debate (see e.g. Strange, 1994).

If historical sociology is to be relevant to international or global political economy, it too needs to address these issues. The most obvious developments of historical sociology to date are in quite fundamental senses insufficiently radical and contemporary. Indeed, they sometimes appear to have hardly kept up with critical trends in either international or sociological theory, since they almost completely ignore the emergence of global theorising of all kinds (except for world-system theory).

3 The historical sociology of contemporary global change

Historical sociology cannot simply be the study of the past, where the present is acknowledged only through the prism of prior ages and the possibility of a radically different future is absent. For Marx and Weber, it was axiomatic that a historical approach involved engaging with the novelty of contemporary forms, and with the definition of possible futures. Marx claimed that the distinctiveness of his approach lay not in the identification of the class struggle in history, but in the conclusions he drew about the possibility of proletarian revolution. Weber’s practical concerns - like his view of historical possibility - were more limited, but he too was politically involved, for example in the consolidation of national-democratic forms in Germany after the First World War.

The decisive issue for historical sociology at the beginning of the twenty-first century is to understand - and to contribute to shaping - the character of today’s ‘global’ transition. We need
a new development of the approach, with a sense of contemporary discontinuities - the moments of ‘tracklaying’ we are currently living through. We need to recognise that historical change is disrupting the very categories which international relations has taken as constitutive. Power actors can no longer characterized in any simple way by the domestic-international distinction. Increasingly states as much as firms, movements and communication networks take global and regional forms. ‘Nation-states’ are embedded not merely in ‘their’ societies but in the multi-layered socio-spatial networks of an emergent global society. Some networks may be only residually national-and-international in character. In breaking free from national-international dualisms, we can begin to understand the transformations of the emerging ‘global age’ (Albrow, 1996).

There are two partial, and ultimately inadequate, theoretical responses to these transformations. One is represented by many strands of international political economy which downplay the classic military context of state power and argue that realism has overstated its significance. While such political-economic approaches have analysed the changing economic and juridical aspects of the state - the ‘competition’ state (Cerny, 1991), ‘offshore’ state (Palan, in the present volume), etc. - they have neglected the changed relations of violence in the emerging global period, in the context of which these economic and juridical changes have developed.

The other flawed response, however, is a continuing Weberian characterisation of the nation-state as a monopolist of violence, presented as though the changes of the last half-century have not occurred. Accounts of state-society relations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries cannot be offered as models for contemporary international relations. The global must be clearly in view. Historical sociology cannot examine the variables of of the old order - states, state systems, the international economy and social forces - at the expense of those of the new - globalized authority networks, globally legitimated policing, global markets, global
communications and global social movements.

What we need today are theoretical approaches which go beyond traditional international relations concerns. We need sociological approaches, historical in character, which address the fundamental transition towards a different world order which is underway in our times. Many of the ideas of a neo-Weberian historical sociology can be integrated, with critical transformation, into a new globalist historical sociology, which extends the debate in international political economy. However it is as much a question of exploring the rich, general legacy of historical social theory as of developing the more specific tradition of analysis which has been developed in recent years.

Thus we should take on board accounts which are broadly historical and sociological in approach but which do not come with the label ‘neo-Weberian historical sociology’. The application of classic Marxist ideas to international relations by Rosenberg (1994), mentioned above, is relevant here. Another direction from which such an approach has developed is ‘neo-Gramscian’ theory (discussed more fully elsewhere in this volume), which has begun to translate the problem of hegemony from the statist terms of realist debate into the broader terms of class economic, cultural and ideological dominance (see e.g. Cox, 1987, Gill, 1990). However, as Germain and Kenny (1998) have pointed out, a key problem of this literature is its failure to develop the concept of the internationalised state, to correspond to the emerging ‘global civil society’ which they posit. As I have argued in a more extended discussion of the state in international relations (Shaw, 1999), the underdevelopment of an alternative concept of the state is a key weakness of most critical, post-realist international relations.

The contribution of historical sociology to global theory should extend the understanding of the state developed by writers like Giddens, Mann and Skocpol, and show how the state of
the global era has developed beyond the nation-state which has hitherto been at the centre of both historical sociology and international theory. In other recent work (Shaw, 1997), I have analysed, in outline, the rise and development of the integrated, transatlantic Western state from around 1940 and its transformation into the core of a global state from about 1990.

The historical sociology of globalism also needs to examine the mutual constitution of globalised state and the economic, social and cultural forms of ‘globalisation’. At its centre will be the question of how the Western state created conditions for economic, social and cultural globalisation, as well as the more commonly discussed issue of how the transformation of states is increasingly conditioned by rapid economic, social and cultural changes.

This historical sociology will need to examine the contribution of various forms of agency to global transformation. The dominant concept of globalisation in international political economy, as in other fields, is that of the inexorable progress of market forces, and the dominance of transnational corporate interests. What need to be brought into our understanding are not only the role of state elites, but the extent to which global political change is the work of cosmopolitan democratic forces worldwide. The end of the Cold War, for example, has been understood primarily as the outcome of elite processes, in the USA as well as the Soviet Union. In this way, the contribution of democratic movements to political change has tended to be explained away.

A historical sociology of the current transformation needs to encompass its contradictory character. It is clear that, on the one hand, global change involves major steps towards the universalisation of market relations in all fields of social activity and territorial jurisdictions. On the other, however, it involves processes of integration of state forms, in which borders of violence between states are replaced by new borders between the globalised Western state
conglomerate and some secondary centres of state power.

On one hand, global change involves the increased subordination of political power to market imperatives. On the other, it involves stronger global norms of human rights and the beginnings of some new forms of international law enforcement. On one hand, democratic movements have achieved significant political change across many states and regions. On the other, an anti-globalist counter-revolution of nationalist parties and authoritarian movements has carried out horrific genocidal massacres.

An all-encompassing understanding of the current global transformation, which understands how these contradictions can be resolved, is easier to demand than to achieve. Nevertheless historical sociology enables us to raise this question: to look at the relations between economics, politics, military power and culture in the context of broad historical trends and periodisation. Although in some senses current changes continue long historic processes of change - such as the universalisation of market relations - in others they are much more revolutionary - notably in the formation of a much more unified global set of authority relations radiating through more integrated state institutions.

To global political economy, historical sociology offers the promise of studying global change as this contradictory set of political processes, in the context of change in the social relations surrounding state power as well as the forms that this power takes. It lays the foundations for a broader programme, in which the analysis of contemporary trends is brought into contact with theoretical perspectives deeply rooted in the history of social thought. By integrating the understanding of a transformed historical sociology, global political economy can play a role in the transformation of the social sciences as they respond to current changes.
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