

## SOURCE PACKET VI: THE NATION-STATE BIAS

We will use the following source in our lesson on how thought paradigms that seem to work for making sense of most of the modern developed world—particularly the concept of nation-state—are not automatically transferable to other times and places. As you read the following sources, please jot down your impressions—anything you find striking, interesting, confusing, or otherwise worth your attention—in the margins or in a separate notebook.

### Source I: Beyond Nation-State Paradigms: Globalization, Sociology, and the Challenge of Transnational Studies<sup>1</sup>

#### THE NATION-STATE REIFICATION IN EXISTING PARADIGMS

Globalization has thrown existing **paradigms** in development (and more generally, in comparative and macro) sociology and in international relations (IR) into an **impasse**. The way out of this impasse is to break with nation-state centered analysis. Paradigms consist of particular ontological assumptions and particular epistemological principles, and embody as well a set of theoretical principles. Most importantly, they provide a definition of the appropriate domain of inquiry to which these principles are to be applied. Despite their divergent theoretical principles, distinct nation-state **paradigms** share as the domain of their inquiry the nation-state and the interstate system. As a consequence, these paradigms are unable to account for mounting anomalies brought about by globalization. Nation-state paradigms describe how motion occurs given a set of historical structures. But limitations are revealed in the ontological comprehension of fundamental transformation in the historical structures upon which the analysis of motion is predicated. The nation-state is not transhistoric. Good social analysis requires that we study not only the laws of motion of a given set of structures, but also the transformation of those structures---both the synchronic and the diachronic dimensions of historically constituted structures. The nation-state system is the historically specific correspondence between production, social classes, and territoriality---a correspondence that led to a given political form that became the nation-state. The material basis for the nation-state is presently being **superseded** by globalization. Thus, a truly transnational studies requires the return to a theoretical conceptualization of the state, not as a "thing" but as a specific social relation inserted into larger social structures that may take different, and historically determined, institutional forms, only one of which is the nation-state.

Viewing the interstate system as an immutable structure in which social change and development occur has resulted in a nation-state reification. The essence of this reification is the twin conflation of the nation-state with the state and with society. Several seminal studies in the 1970s renewed interest in studying the state (cf. Evans et al., 1985). For example, Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions* (1979) highlighted the role that states play in mediating

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<sup>1</sup> William Robinson, "Beyond Nation-State Paradigms: Globalization, Sociology, and the Challenge of Transnational Studies," *Sociological Forum* 13, no. 4 (1998: 561-594).

the intersection of internal and external boundaries of a social formation. Evans' *Dependent Development* (1979) analyzed the role of states in guiding national development. But the case for "bringing the state back in" has been overemphasized, tending to equate states with the institutional form they have taken in the nation-state. In contrast, a new transnational studies requires that analysts "take out" the crippling nation-state framework into which states, social classes, political systems, and so on have been pigeonholed. The problem is **manifest** in the way the terms "state" and "nation" are used almost interchangeably in nation-state paradigms. The imputation of a transhistoric character to the nation-state is **erroneous** in that it assigns a universal character to relatively fixed set of historic structures whose foundations were laid in the sixteenth century. Yet the presupposition of an immutable nation-state structure and interstate system still constitutes the basis of IR research and remains one of the central theoretical tenets of sociology's world system analysis and of development sociology in general.

The second **conflation** contained in the nation-state reification is the conflation of the nation-state with society. Following Giddens' (1985) assumption that society and the nation-state tend to be coterminous, many recent approaches to globalization and transnationalism pose a research agenda that implicitly and often explicitly rests on interactions among nation-states as societies and propose that the task of a transnational studies is to examine such exchanges between national societies. The problem with this construct is the proposition that social relations across the formal juridical boundaries of nation-states are somehow "extrasocietal." A recent study of the impact of globalizing dynamics on development, for example, asserts that "societies are not independent units," and therefore global phenomena should be approached by focusing on "intersocietal exchanges" and "the character and dynamic of the international system" (Fiala, 1992:205).

But "society" as social structure cannot be limited to the specific historic form of the nation-state. Without understating the existence of societies prior to the emergence of the nation-state, nation-states cannot be understood as isolated social systems under the assumption of a transhistoric symmetry between nation-states and social structure that rules out by **ontological** assumption and methodological **fiat** the study of social structure that is truly **supra-** or transnational in character. It is debatable whether the essential locus of social organization was the nation-state even in the modern period. Transnational studies must move beyond the notion that nation-states are the organizing principle of modern society since globalization involves the emergence of truly supranational social structure (cf. Sklair, 1995a; Robinson, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c).

But the "intersocietal systems" approach proposed by Giddens to "cut across whatever dividing lines exist between societies or societal totalities" (Giddens, 1984) does not resolve the national-global antinomy. This approach views the nation-state as the basic unit of analysis, assumes that a nation-state "society" is in fact a totality, and posits relations between nation-states as an object of study external to the study of nation-state societies. Although Giddens systematically incorporates the term "globalization" in a more recent study, the nation-state **fetishism** persists: globalization is the "universalization of the nation-state" through a

deepening of the modernization process ("space-time distancing"; 1990). In Giddens' construct, transnational studies becomes simply the examination of "intersocietal systems" that leaves untouched the conflation of nation-states and societies.<sup>2</sup>

Mann (1986) remarks that sociologists often have conceived of society as "an unproblematic, unitary totality" and as "the total unit of analysis" when, in fact, this concept applies at best to nation-states. In distinction to Giddens' and others' approaches that would suggest transnational studies focus on external exchanges between nations, Mann argues that nation-states cannot be understood as social systems. The nation-state is an historically bound phenomenon, emerging in the last 500 years or so, in conjunction with the European transition from feudalism to capitalism, the consolidation of national markets and productive structures, and concomitant states and polities. The emergence of territorially based national economies regulated by the (nation) state led to peoples' derivation of subjective identities from their sense of geographic space, with a certain congruence between subjective identity and the material coordinates of life in the preglobalization period. In turn, the phenomenology of the nation-state period of world history led to the "nation" as a Sorelian myth or what Anderson (1983) has pointedly characterized as an "imagined community." The nation-state system, or interstate system, is an historical outcome, the particular form in which capitalism came into being based on a complex relation between production, classes, political power, and territoriality. This relation is now being superseded by globalization.

Mann shows how the system of territorial states emerged as part and parcel of the emergence of capitalism in its European core, and this system has dominated international relations ever since. However, there is "nothing in the capitalist mode of production" that itself leads to the emergence of "many networks of production, divided and at war, and of an overall class structure that is nationally segmental" (Mann, 1986:515). Mann identifies four basic networks of social interaction constitutive of social power: economic, political, ideological, and coercive. He challenges the concept of "society" and argues that every historical period should be analyzed in terms of these networks of interaction. Although the lack of determinacy in his construct raises issues of causality in historic change, the point I wish to raise there is that these interactive networks, under globalization, operate both "over" and "under" the nation-state system and undermine its institutional logic and any rationality in conceiving of social structure in national terms.

The global economy is eroding the very material basis for the nation-state. Territoriality and production are no longer bound together. Yet sociologists, political scientists, and other scholars are still trapped in outdated notions of international relations as a phenomenon whose principal dynamic is interaction between nation-states. The terms we have developed are highly revealing and underscore a problem of **commensurability**: international, or interstate,

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<sup>2</sup> In somewhat contradictory fashion, Giddens also notes (accurately, in my view) that globalization involves the disembedding or "lifting out of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across time and space" (1990:21), or what I would characterize as the globalization of social structure. This being the case, it is not clear why the capitalist nation-state should remain the primordial fixed institution of social life, as Giddens suggests.

meaning between nations or national states; comparative national development, and so on. The nation-state reification is apparent in existing paradigms in development studies (and comparative sociology more generally) and in IR. While paradigms have competed with each other within sociology and political science, a definite correspondence exists between philosophical and macrotheoretical ideas and assumptions and a set of three principal paradigms in each discipline.

The three broad paradigms in development sociology are modernization, dependency/world system theories, and Marxist models. The three paradigms in IR are liberalism/pluralism, realism, and Marxist models. Modernization in development studies and liberalism/pluralism in IR exhibit a rough correspondence, as do realism and dependency/world-systems theory, respectively,<sup>3</sup> and Marxist class analysis in both. Each of these three sets of paradigms has maintained an internal logic and consistency. Until recently, each has also been able to maintain a theoretical coherence and therefore legitimacy in the social sciences despite competition from other paradigms. Modernization theory in development studies and liberalism in IR are both premised on pluralist models. They are philosophically anchored in Grotian natural law theory and theoretically grounded in **structural-functional** sociology. They rest on assumptions of social equilibrium as a natural state of global order and of developmental processes based on the nation-state system. The free operation of the market in an international setting brings the most efficient worldwide **allocation** of resources and output, and is in the general interest of nations seen as unitary units. Attempts to come to grips with globalization within the logic of the paradigm have remained within the nation-state framework. A new generation of modernization studies, for instance, purports to correct earlier defects in modernization theory, such as conceding that "tradition" is not necessarily an impediment to development, incorporating "external factors" and concrete historical analysis into a more synthetic analysis of development (Weiner and Huntington, 1987; So, 1990). But the unit of analysis remains the nation-state system, and the fundamental assumption is that modernization and development unfold within this system. Reich (1992), operating from within the liberal paradigm, has warned of impending paradigmatic breakdown absent a reconceptualization.

Dependency/world-system theories in development studies and realism in IR share managerial and "state-centered" models of power and nation-state interaction as the basic locus of analysis. They are philosophically anchored in **Hobbesian** assumptions of a natural state of conflict and zero-sum dynamics in the international system, and are of Weberian theoretical persuasion in underlying notions of geopolitical competition and in theoretical conceptualization of the state. The dependency theory of the 1960s and 1970s, in large part a

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<sup>3</sup> Equating dependency/world-system analysis with realism in IR as I do is not typical. The reasons why are discussed below. While this equation should not be overstated, both share a state-centered structuralism, although the point beckons an elaboration not possible here. But I should state as caveat that aspects of these paradigms overlap, and scholarship does not usually exhibit a one-to-one correspondence with a particular paradigm. Thus, e.g., many Marxist analysts borrow from world-system theory, many dependency theorists would consider their brand of analysis Marxist, much realist analysis incorporates major assumptions of liberalism/pluralism.

response to modernization assumptions, emphasized external constraints to national development. Dependency theory was later broadened and systematized in world-system theory. This theory dramatically challenged then-conventional assumptions and should be credited with having altered the whole terrain of inquiry at the time with its original and path-breaking emphasis on a larger world-system as the appropriate unit of analysis. Concomitantly, much realist IR theory in the 1970s and 1980s called attention to growing international interdependencies. However, paradigmatic reconceptualization in these paradigm sets continues to be **hampered** by the fundamental premise of a nation-state system in which the units of comparison remain nation-states and within which relations of dependency and interdependency are reproduced or modified.

World-system theory, akin in this regard to "left-wing realism," posits a zero-sum dynamic: any national or regional movement through the periphery, semiperiphery, core continuum is, by theoretical fiat, at the expense of downward movement of another (nation) state or region. The construct is predicated on the (nation) state system, and the spatial, territorial, and juridical parameters of that system, in which the historically specific becomes transhistoric. The interstate system remains central to theoretical work in the world-system perspective, and much analysis from this theoretical perspective remains couched, implicitly if not explicitly, in nation-state centrism. The fundamental premise of world-system theory that "the key political institution of the modern world-system is the state system (or 'international system') [Chase-Dunn and Rubinson, 1979:277]" is almost identical to the fundamental operating assumption of realism in political science. Realist theory posits world dynamics as a zero-sum game board. The key actors are (nation) states operating in an "anarchic world" through a "competitive state system."

Leading IR scholars have grappled with the systemic implications of globalization, proposing that transnational actors and processes are displacing the nation-state (cf. Keohane and Nye, 1977; Rosenau, 1980; Gilpin, 1987). And world-system theorists have noted certain systemic constraints in the world-system. Chase-Dunn and Rubinson (1977), for example, identify "ceiling effects" revealed by globalization. And Arrighi (1994) grapples with systemic implications as he explores the disjuncture, or increasing nonsymmetry, between world centers of accumulation and nation-state power as the world-system enters a new phase with the breakdown of the "U.S. regime."<sup>4</sup> But most cling tenaciously to the notion of an immutable

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<sup>4</sup> Arrighi's study is masterful and he proposes a research agenda quite compatible with a new transnational studies. But his prognosis for the future remains couched in embedded nation-state centrism. State power (and territorial-bound geopolitics) are implicitly equated with nation-states. He identifies, for example, the late 20th-century noncongruence of economic and political centers of power in the world-system and ponders the systemic implications of the observed phenomenon. But the state remains theoretically conceived as the nation-state. Arrighi suggests separate logics of analysis for the interstate system and the world economy, and discussion in the conclusion and epilogue is on the systemic implications of this novel development. He explores the changing patterns of distribution of attributes within an interstate system, i.e., particular novel combinations of economic and political networks that are increasingly out of synchronization and no longer under the coordination of a single center, as well as the tension between an emergent "East Asian regime" and a declining "U.S. regime." In contrast, as I argue below and elsewhere, neither centers of accumulation nor political power are any longer correlative with nation-states or for that matter with geographic coordinates. Economic and political networks are increasingly located in transnational space and managed by transnational classes and groups that exhibit conflict among themselves not correlative with nation-state or territorial dynamics. World-system theory remains a benchmark in the social sciences. In my view, however,

nation-state system or to the position recently reiterated by Wallerstein that "the correspondence of the boundaries of the capitalist world-economy to that of an interstate system comprised of sovereign states" is a constitutive feature of the system (1990:289).

What is problematized is how globalization modifies the dynamics of the nation-state system (in IR), or the international state system (in world-system theory), rather than how globalization transforms and transcends the nation state system itself. Classical Marxist paradigms are better positioned in regard to paradigmatic reconceptualization insofar as they posit social classes and capital accumulation as the key unit of analysis, rather than the nation-state and the state system per se, at least at the level of theoretical abstraction. Tensions in the state system are derivative of class tensions and the contradictions of capitalism within and between nations, and uneven national development is a consequence of the law of uneven capital accumulation. Scholars in the classical Marxist tradition have thus argued, taking their cue from Lenin and Bukharin (cf. Bukharin, 1917/1989), that the dynamics of international relations are explained by "competing national capitals" and that the dynamics of unequal development are explained by the uneven accumulation of capital across national boundaries. However, as I discuss below, most Marxist inquiry into globalization posits, as a consequence, a globalizing scenario of competing core states and regional blocs (U.S., Europe, Japan) reflecting intensified rivalries among national capitals which become coequivalent with state rivalries. On the basis of the nation-state framework of analysis, they search, along with realist and world-system analysts, for a new "**hegemon**" in the international system.

And most debate within the Marxist paradigm, played out among other places in the annual compendium of articles published in *The Socialist Register*, also problematizes how globalization modifies (but does not qualitatively change) the interstate system and modifies the prospects and circumstances of national development (cf. Miliband and Panitch, 1992, 1994). Many Marxist models thus also reify the nation-state by assuming that a correspondence between class and (nation) state power are immanent to capitalism, that (uneven) capital accumulation necessarily takes place within given nation-state territorialities, and that the indicator of uneven development is necessarily the uneven development of nations. As the global economy removes the territorial and national basis to capital, globalization tends to redefine the historic relationship Marxists have posited between class power and state power (cf. Gill and Law, 1988). Conflict between capitals in a global setting continues in such forms as fierce **oligopolist** competition over world markets, but this competition corresponds ever less to nation-state competition and rivalries, given such factors as the interpenetration of formerly "national" capitals and the transnationalization of capital and of classes (van der Pijl, 1984; Hymer, 1979; Gill, 1990; Robinson, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c; Gilpin, 1987; Cox, 1981, 1987).<sup>5</sup>

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the adjustments to the theory necessary to explain the phenomena associated with globalization, such as the separation of the social, economic, and political variables that drive the global system from identification with nation-states and geographies, would result in a transmutation of the theory into something other than what it is, precisely along the lines of the paradigmatic reconceptualization that I advocate in the present essay.

<sup>5</sup> Classical Marxism has not provided an adequate explanation for which dominant classes by some unexplained fiat are nation-state based, whereas subordinate classes are organically internationalist.

It cannot be assumed that the contradictions of capitalism necessarily **manifest** themselves under globalization as contradictions between nation-states representing the interests of competing national capitals. With the onset of globalization, there has been increasing recognition of the obsolescence of the nation-state as a practical unit of the global political economy, and concomitant recognition of the need in all three paradigm sets for new perspectives and for paradigmatic reorientation.

These concerns led in recent years to a attempts to develop new approaches, including calls within sociology for a "New Comparative International Political Economy," or simply NCIPE (cf. Evans and Stephens, 1988; Fiala, 1992; Kincaid and Portes, 1994), and within political science, for a renewed "International Political Economy," or IPE (cf. Gilpin, 1987; Gill and Law, 1988; Murphy and Tooze, 1991; Hettne, 1995; Holm and Sorensen, 1995). A rich body of NCIPE and IPE literature continues to thrive. Nonetheless, much otherwise fine research within these modified approaches continues to posit the nation-state as the basis for analysis in all three sets of paradigms. A careful reading of recent NCIPE, IPE, and related literature in sociology and political science exploring globalizing dynamics suggests that the focus is still on the nation-state and the interstate system, as Taylor (1996) has recently noted.

Sociology has focused on globalization processes as a new context for comparative national development (cf. Kincaid and Portes, 1994), and IR research in political science has taken a similar tack, posing in essence the following question: How is globalization modifying the context in which relations between nations--or international relations---unfold? In both disciplines, globalization is seen as some new stage in inter- or cross-national relations as the interaction among nation-states. The challenge is seen as how to modify existing frameworks or paradigms. But the same underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions bound up with the nation-states and the interstate system are accorded continuity. Mind-sets-in this case, nation-state centric mind-sets-are **exceedingly** difficult to break even when confronted with problems of logical inconsistencies and of empirical validity. The various efforts in sociology and political science to grapple with globalization "are prepared to admit the emergence of a world economic system but are unwilling to admit the possibility of the ultimate disintegration of nation-states and national cultures," observes Waters. "Indeed, they often resort to a theoretical dualism in which contradictory causal effects are allowed to reside in separate parts of the theory." Given the tenacity of this theoretical dualism, one might justify Waters' extraordinarily harsh criticism of these logical inconsistencies as intellectually "schizoid" (Waters, 1995:28).

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<sup>6</sup> Note: This is NOT in the Chicago Style!

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## **Source II: The Other One-Third of the Globe<sup>7</sup>**

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*Please see attached packet.*

## **III. Vocabulary**

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### **From Text<sup>8</sup>**

**Paradigm:** A set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them, especially in an intellectual discipline

**Erroneous:** Containing error; mistaken; incorrect; wrong

**Conflation:** The process or result of fusing items into one entity; fusion; amalgamation.

**Fiat:** An authoritative decree or order

**Supra-:** Above, over, beyond the limits of

**Feitishism:** Blind devotion to an idea or preference

**Structural-functional:** An approach to the social sciences that views society as a complex system of constituent functions such as customs, traditions, norms, and institutions

**Hobbesian:** Espousing a view of man as cruel and unjust in his natural state, as that presented in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651)

**Hampered:** Impeded; hindered; held back

**Oligopolist:** A person who promotes and supports limited competition within a business market

**Exceedingly:** To an unusual degree; extremely

**Manifest (adj):** Readily perceived by the eye or the understanding; evident; obvious; apparent; plain

**Manifest (v):** To make clear or evident to the eye or the understanding; show plainly

**Supersede:** To replace in power, authority, effectiveness, acceptance,

**Ontological:** Of or relating to the essence or nature of being

**Allocation:** Apportionment or division (as of resources)

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<sup>7</sup> Ben Finney, "The Other One-Third of the Globe," *Journal of World History* 5, no. 2 (1994: 273-297).

<sup>8</sup> "Dictionary.com," Dictionary.com, LLC, <http://dictionary.reference.com/>.

**Commensurability:** The state of being measurable by a common standard

**Hegemon:** A leader or nation that exercises leadership or predominant influence over another

**Abashedly:** In an ashamed or embarrassed manner

**Sequela:** A secondary consequence or result (plural sequelae)

**Aborigine:** One of the original or earliest known inhabitants of a country or region.

**Atoll:** A ring-shaped coral reef or a string of closely spaced small coral islands, enclosing or nearly enclosing a shallow lagoon.

**Stratified:** Arranged in layers

**Protectorate:** The relation of a strong state toward a weaker state or territory that it protects and partly controls.

### GRE Words<sup>9</sup>

**Gainsay:** to contradict or oppose

**Irenic:** conciliatory

**Limn:** To outline in detail; delineate

**Ochlocracy:** Mob rule; government by populace

**Sybaritic:** Proclivity to luxury; voluptuous

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Chapman, *The Historian's Companion* (Reading, MA: Trebarwyth Press, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> For the sake of brevity, the sources of sources are not listed in the bibliography.