

The State and International Relations

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1 What's at stake in the 'second state debate': concepts and issues

Introduction: the two 'state debates' within the social sciences

If 'the state is dead', as so many International Relations (IR) scholars today contend, why do we need a book on 'the state and International Relations'? Indeed, it seems that the direction that the 'vanguard' of IR theory is currently taking is, if not in the opposite direction to the state, then at least 'away from the state'. Surely one of the common denominators that underpins the rapid rise of postmodernism, of critical theory and especially of constructivism along with feminism and Marxism, is an agenda that goes *beyond* the state: one that indeed seeks to displace state-centrism in general, and 'the state' as an object of enquiry, once and for all? At least, this appears to be the received wisdom within IR. But the argument of this book takes the form of a paradox: that it is neorealist state-centrism that denies the importance of the state in IR, while the various approaches listed above (along with liberalism), I argue, all take the state more seriously – a position which I readily concede contradicts my earlier statement (Hobson 1997: 1). This surprising conclusion emerges from introducing and applying a conceptual innovation that has largely been ignored by IR scholars – the 'international agential power' of the state – and reappraising each theory through this particular lens. This enables us to radically (re)view state theory in IR, such that in effect we end up by turning IR theory upside down.

Perhaps the key point to note here is simply that the conventional understanding of state theory in IR has been hampered by the interpretive tools of analysis that have been applied. As we shall see, when we consider the degree of international agential power (rather than domestic autonomy) that each theory accords the state, a new angle comes into view. This angle has in fact always been there, but has remained obscured as a result of the tools of analysis that have been applied – tools that are used within what I call the 'first state debate'. I reveal this

alternative angle through the framework of what I call the ‘second state debate’.

Across the spectrum of the social sciences a variety of theorists in different disciplines have situated theories of the state within two generic frameworks. The first comprises *normative* theories of the state, which consider what the most desirable or appropriate form of state and political community might be. The second comprises *explanatory* theories of the state, which consider who controls, or what forces shape, the state and its behaviour. Of course, in practice, the line that separates these two generic forms is fuzzy, given that normative concerns often creep into explanatory theory and, as one commentator put it, political philosophers often ‘see what they think the state ought to be like in the state as it is’ (Held 1984: 31). This volume is however, primarily interested in ‘explanatory’ state theory. The basic claim is that to the extent that it is possible to separate out the two forms of state theory, I suggest that we can discern two state debates within ‘explanatory’ state theory, both of which can be found across a variety of disciplines.

Within IR the first state debate emerged in its clearest form with the rise of interdependence theory in the 1970s – a debate that was a proxy for, or a means through which non-realists (especially radical pluralists) and realists fought each other for supremacy. The first state debate is concerned with the fundamental question as to whether ‘states’ predominate over ‘social forces’ and ‘non-state actors’. Put differently, the debate revolves around the degree of autonomy that states have from non-state actors and social processes. Occupying one extreme are neorealists, who argue that the state, imbued with high autonomy, is the central actor in international politics. At the other extreme are liberals and radical pluralists, who insist that state autonomy is declining as states are being increasingly outflanked by economic processes (interdependence) and non-state actors (especially, though not exclusively, multinational corporations). Specifically they argue against the neorealist assumption that the state is a rational, coherent and autonomous actor that is primarily interested in the ‘high politics’ of security. By contrast, they claim that international interdependence is leading to the breakdown of states into incoherent entities, and that states are increasingly prioritising the ‘low politics’ of economics, distribution and welfare and ecological issues over military security (e.g. Burton 1972; Mansbach, Ferguson and Lampert 1976; Morse 1976; but see Keohane and Nye 1977, and especially Rosenau 1980 for a more complex approach). For these writers, neorealism’s world of *states-as-billiard balls* is being transformed into a *global cobweb* of transactions that cuts across the increasingly porous boundaries of nation-states, rendering

the sovereign state obsolete. This in turn led to the neorealist counter-attack, where theorists reasserted the continuing primacy and centrality of autonomous sovereign states. Thus the cobweb was blown away to reveal once more a harsh anarchic world comprising states-as-billiard balls (Gilpin 1975, 1981; Krasner 1976, 1978; Waltz 1979).

It is important to note that during the 1980s a parallel and complementary 'state debate' was emerging within the disciplines of Sociology and Comparative Political Economy (CPE). With regard to the former, the work of Theda Skocpol was seminal, and her classic 1979 book, *States and Social Revolutions* was followed by the pioneering edited volume, *Bringing the State Back In* (Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol 1985). This replicates the parallel state debate within IR. Here, neo-Weberians (rather than realists) were pitted against Marxists and liberals, with the former arguing that the state has high autonomy and primacy over society, while the latter reasserted the autonomy of social forces (e.g. Cammack 1989; Jessop 1990: 275–88). At the same time, a similar debate emerged in CPE and ran up to the early 1990s. Here 'statists' argued that the key to successful economic performance was based *not* on the ability of the state to conform to either 'market principles' (as in liberalism) or the needs of the dominant economic class (as in Marxism), but rested with strong or 'developmental' states imbued with high autonomy and bureaucratic 'proactivism'. This approach was most famously applied to explaining the meteoric rise of the East Asian Tigers (e.g. Johnson 1982; Wade 1990).

However, in recent years there has been a shift away from this 'state-centric versus society-centric' debate found in Sociology and CPE towards a 'second state debate'. A variety of sociological and comparative political economists are now arguing that there is an alternative theory of state 'autonomy': that state power derives from the extent to which states are embedded in society (Mann 1993; Evans 1995; Weiss and Hobson 1995; Hobson 1997; Weiss 1998). Now the debate has shifted away from 'state *versus* society' to one based on 'state autonomy *and* society', with the central question revolving around the issue: *to what extent do states structure society and to what extent do societies shape states?* Put differently, this second state debate in Sociology and Comparative Politics/Comparative Political Economy examines the 'co-constitution' or 'mutual embeddedness' of states and societies. The obvious advantage of this approach (in contrast to the first state debate) is that it offers one possible resolution.

Returning to IR, the obvious questions are: (1) Has IR moved beyond the first state debate?, and (2) How useful is this debate? The first IR state debate did not end in the 1970s, but has continued on down to the

present through a 'second phase', where Marxists, liberals and post-modernists assert the primacy of *globalisation* over the state (e.g. Camilleri and Falk 1991; Brown 1995; Cox 1996: 296–313), while neorealists continue to reassert the primacy of the sovereign state (e.g. Krasner 1995). The first state debate, then, remains very much alive. But how useful is it? I suggest that it suffers from four fundamental limitations. First, it works within a binary, 'either-or' problematique based on 'state-centredness' *versus* 'international/global society-centredness'. Accordingly, this debate leads to stand-off between two intransigent and polarised camps. A second problem is that this stand-off is incapable of generating new research questions and agendas. Third, it tends to distort IR theory more generally, where all theories are simplified for the sake of 'winning the battle'. Accordingly 'straw-men' theories have been created, as both sides seek to simplify the 'other' in order to then knock them down. Fourth, it paradoxically suffers from 'state-blindness', in that both sides wittingly or unwittingly actually 'kick the state back out'. This is because both sides ultimately derive the state from international structures. Indeed, it could be argued that the first debate is not really about the state at all, given that both sides marginalise its importance; that perhaps the real contest is between '*international socio-economic structure-centredness*' versus '*international political structure-centredness*'. In this way, the first state debate paradoxically represents, to borrow Halliday's phrase, a 'non-encounter' on the state (Halliday 1994: 75–6).

Perhaps *the* most fundamental problem with the first state debate is that it fails to consider how the *state-as-an-agent* can determine or shape the international system. Thus while both sides of the first state debate tend to reify or exaggerate *international structure*, the second state debate is fundamentally organised around the 'agent–structure' dichotomy. I argue that all theories can be located within two continuums: the degree of agency that each theory accords the state-as-agent in the domestic and international arenas.

The 'second state debate': the two faces of state agential power

Perhaps not surprisingly, the sterility of the first state debate has given succour to the argument made by a host of writers across the social sciences that the state should be jettisoned as a theoretical object of inquiry (e.g. Easton 1981; Abrams 1988; Almond 1988; Ferguson and Mansbach 1988). I suggest, however, that we can retain the state as an analytical category by approaching it through the alternative lens of the second state debate. This new debate is *not* based around the question

of 'state centrality' *versus* 'non-state actor centrality' (or state-centredness *versus* society-centredness), and does not *exclusively* focus on the question of state autonomy *versus* social autonomy. I focus on two categories here: the domestic, and international, agential powers of the state.

The 'domestic agential power' of the state

The first attribute of the state that this book examines is the domestic agential power of the state, which is equivalent to what theorists commonly think of as 'institutional state autonomy'. Thus domestic agential state power connotes the *ability of the state to make domestic or foreign policy as well as shape the domestic realm, free of domestic social-structural requirements or the interests of non-state actors*. This is broadly equivalent to the concept of state autonomy laid out by Skocpol and others (Skocpol 1979; Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol 1985). This is charted along the x-axis of figure 1.1. Working with this definition, IR scholars generally conclude that neorealism (as well as Weberian historical sociology – WHS) attributes to the state the most autonomy or domestic agential power, while liberalism, Marxism, postmodernism and constructivism accord it the least. Put differently, 'autonomous' states loom large within neorealism and WHS, but appear to take a back seat in liberalism, Marxism, postmodernism and constructivism. At least, these are the familiar terms of the first state debate.

The issue of the degree of state autonomy or domestic agential power accorded within each theory constitutes the first aspect of the second state debate. Here we find that the received picture found in the first state debate is basically correct, though it glosses over the complexity of positions found not just between theories but, above all, within each paradigm. Realism, for example, produces three clear alternative positions, with Waltzian neorealism attributing very high or absolute domestic agential power to the state, while the modified neorealism of Gilpin and Krasner accords the state a varying or potential autonomy. In strong contrast, classical realism argues that pre-modern states have high domestic agency, while modern states have only low amounts. Marxists are divided between two positions; from the low domestic agential power found in classical Marxism to the 'relative' or 'moderate agential' power of the state approach found in orthodox neo-Marxism. Weberians are divided between the varying or potential domestic agential power found in the first wave, and the 'embedded autonomy' of the second wave. Some constructivists attribute low domestic agential power to the state (as in the international society-centric variant and

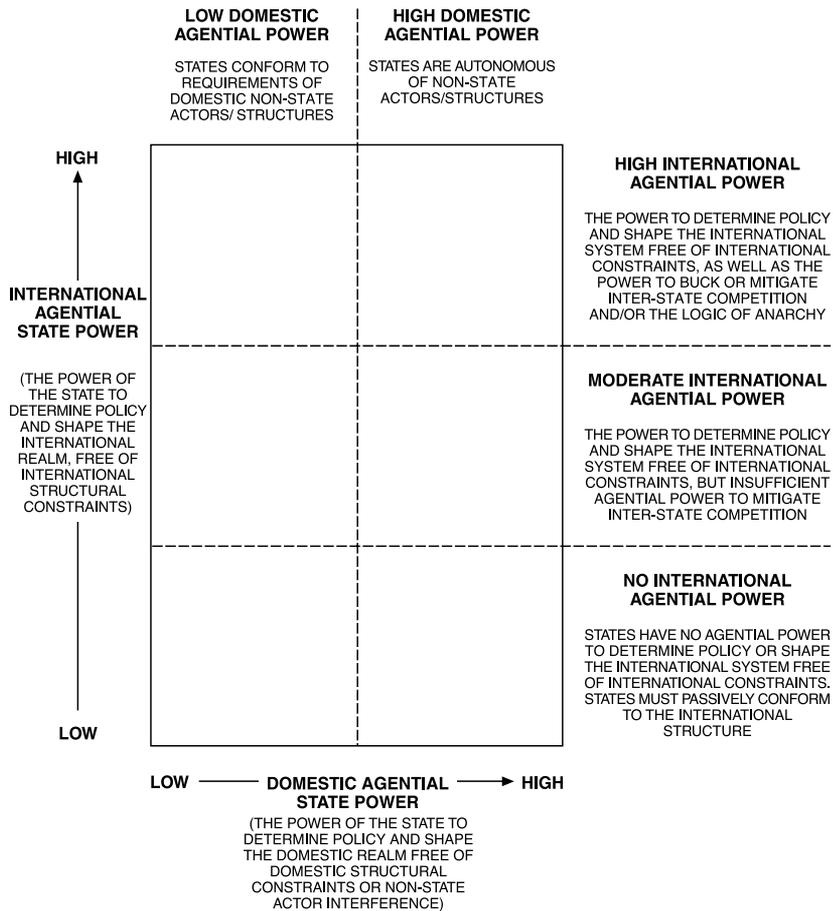


Figure 1.1 Configuring IR theory within the 'second state debate'

radical constructivism/postmodernism), while others accord it a moderate agential power (as in state-centric constructivism). And liberals range from granting the state very low domestic agential power (as in classical liberalism) through to moderate power (as in new liberalism and functionalism) and very high or absolute agential power (as in state-centric liberalism). Nevertheless, the distinct terrain that the second state debate maps out concerns the *international* agential power or capacity of the state.

The 'international' agential power of the state

If the domestic agential power of the state refers to the ability of the state to make domestic or foreign policy, and shape the domestic realm, free of domestic social-structural requirements or the interests of non-state actors, so the international agential power of the state refers to the *ability of the state to make foreign policy and shape the international realm free of international structural requirements or the interests of international non-state actors*. And at the extreme, high agential power refers to the *ability of the state to mitigate the logic of inter-state competition and thereby create a cooperative or peaceful world*. This 'international state power' must not be confused with the neorealist notion of 'state power' or 'state capability', which refers to the ability of states to effectively conform to international competition and the logic of what Waltz calls the 'international political structure'. In fact my definition of 'international agential state power' precisely inverts neorealism's notion of state capability.

With respect to international agential state power, all theories can be located along a continuum, ranging from low to moderate to high (as charted along the y-axis of figure 1.1). High international agential power refers to the ability of the state or state–society complex to buck the logic of inter-state competition and the constraining logic of international structure. All theories of IR recognise that inter-state competition exists and that the international political structure of anarchy also exists (where 'anarchy' refers to the fact that the international system is a multi-state system in which no higher authority or world state exists). This condition of potential or actual inter-state competition is sometimes referred to as the 'collective action problem', which assumes that cooperation between states is difficult or even impossible to achieve under international anarchy. High international agential state power enables the state to shape and reconstitute the international system as well as to solve the collective action problem and create a peaceful, cooperative world. Liberalism is the outstanding theory which accords such agential power to states. Classical liberalism stipulates that as states conform to individuals' social needs within domestic society, so they are able to create a peaceful world. State-centric liberalism (e.g. neoliberal institutionalism) stipulates that states have sufficiently high agency to reshape the international system and to solve the collective action problem. In establishing international institutions and regimes, states are able to reconfigure 'international anarchy' by enhancing the density of information, thereby creating a peaceful and cooperative world. High agential power is also accorded by some constructivists, classical realists

and ‘second-wave’ Weberian historical sociologists (all of which are situated at the top of figure 1.1).

At the other extreme is international-systemic theory (neorealism, first-wave WHS and world systems theory – WST). Each theory fundamentally discounts the possibility that states have international agential power. For them, states have no choice but to conform to the international structure. Thus for neorealists and first-wave WHS, state conflict is an inevitable product of the international political structure, while for world systems theorists such conflict is an inevitable product of the capitalist world economy. In each case, states have no agential power to autonomously shape or modify the international structure. Accordingly these theories are situated at the bottom of figure 1.1.

In the middle are a range of theories. Marxism and postmodernism both assert that states can shape and determine the international system in accordance with national-level or domestic forces. Nevertheless, such theories stop short of granting the state high international agential power because, for them, states cannot overcome inter-state competition and solve the ‘collective action problem’. For orthodox Marxists, in conforming to the needs of their domestic dominant economic classes, states come to create a highly conflictual international system. Nevertheless, it is simply not possible for states to create a peaceful world because for this to happen, states would have to be able to fundamentally reconcile the domestic class struggle – a logical impossibility for any Marxist. Likewise, postmodernists argue that states, through the process of engineering domestic legitimation (*normative statecraft*) create a conflictual world, in which the constructed appearance of ‘threatening others’ makes inter-state conflict not only inevitable, but the very condition of the continued reproduction of the state in the first place. These theories are situated in the middle layer of figure 1.1. (For a full summary of each theory’s position, see figure 7.2.)

In sum therefore, we can define ‘international agential state power’ as the *ability of the state–society complex and the state as a unit-force ‘entity’ (whether it is imbued with high or low domestic agential power/autonomy, or is fragmented or centralised, or is ‘imagined’ or ‘real’) to determine or shape the international realm free of international structural constraints; and at the extreme, to buck or mitigate international structural constraints and the logic of international competition.*

Seen from this alternative angle, we necessarily reconfigure our understanding of how the different theories relate to each other over the question of the state. Now the fighters of the first state debate are juxtaposed into radically new positions. The debate is no longer between statism and realism ‘as-for-the state’ *versus* radical and pluralist

theory 'as-against-the-state'. The counter-intuitive conclusion of this book is that the *non-systemic* approaches of liberalism, constructivism and postmodernism, classical Marxism and 'orthodox' neo-Marxism, second-wave WHS and classical realism succeed in attributing to the state far greater agency in the international realm than do the systemic approaches of neorealism, first-wave WHS and WST. If this conclusion appears surprising or counter-intuitive, it is only because IR theorists have either ignored the 'international' agential power of the state, or have simply confused it with institutional autonomy.

In this way, then, there is a great deal at stake in the second state debate – not just for understanding state theory, but for comprehending IR theory more generally. This of course begs the question as to why this approach has been previously ignored. The answer is that in the last twenty years, *international-systemic* theory has claimed dominance within IR theory. But the central limitation with systemic theory is that it denies the agency of the state; states are viewed as *Träger* – as passive receptors of an international structure – such that they have no choice but to adapt and conform to its constraining logic. It is precisely because the international structure constitutes the independent variable and the state the dependent variable that Waltz claimed that we do not need a theory of the state – by which he meant that we do not need to theorise the international agential power of the state. Moving away from systemic theory enables a consideration of how states and state–society complexes can autonomously shape the international system. It is this fundamental cleavage between systemic and non-systemic theory that constitutes the focus of the second state debate. In short, the second state debate redirects our attention away from pure international structural analysis and focuses on the degrees of agency that states and state–society complexes have to shape the international realm. In this way, then, when we view the ways in which IR theorises the state through the lens of the first state debate, the state all but disappears from view. But viewed through the more sensitive lens of the second state debate, we find that the state is very much brought back into focus.

A relationship between the two faces of agential power?

As noted, most IR scholars confuse the state's autonomy (domestic agential power) with its international agential power, and assume that they are one and the same thing. They are, however, distinct. Thus, for example, neorealism grants the state high domestic/no international agential power, while classical liberalism and international society-

centric constructivism grant it low domestic/high international agential power. Does this suggest an inverse relationship between these two faces of power? No, because there are a whole range of theories which argue for high domestic and high international agential power (e.g. state-centric liberalism, classical realism), while others stipulate low domestic and moderate international agential power (classical Marxism and post-modernism), or moderate domestic and moderate international agential power ('orthodox' neo-Marxism), or moderate domestic and no international agential power (WST). In short, the fact that there is no intrinsic relationship between the two faces of agential state power suggests that these two 'attributes' are distinct.

Two further classificatory schema

Clearly, the second state debate is much more complex than the first state debate and raises a whole series of issues, which are discussed more fully in the second section of chapter 7 (pp. 223–35). While this basically concludes the discussion of the second state debate for the moment, nevertheless there is one further problem to confront. To be able to fully understand each theory, we need to apply two further classificatory schemas: the 'modes of causality problem' and the 'levels of analysis problem'. Categorising theory according to these two frameworks enables us to reveal a much more varied and nuanced set of approaches than is sometimes recognised by IR theorists.

The 'modes of causality problem'

This problem essentially refers to the *number of independent variables that a theory employs in order to explain outcomes*. All theories can be located within a trichotomy which ranges from 'parsimony' to 'modified parsimony' to 'complexity'. Parsimonious theory insists that outcomes (international relations and state behaviour) can be explained through *one exclusive* variable (e.g. Waltzian neorealism and classical liberalism). At the other extreme lies 'complexity', which explains outcomes through two or more independent variables (e.g. second-wave WHS). In between lies 'modified parsimony' (e.g. Gilpin's 'modified neorealism', J.A. Hobson's new liberalism, first-wave WHS or Coxian critical theory). Because so many scholars confuse modified parsimony with complexity, it is vital to clearly define this methodological approach.

Modified parsimony is a variation on parsimonious theorising in which one basic causal variable is primary but is supplemented by a set of *intervening* variables. These variables intervene between the basic causal variable and outcomes. What, then, is an 'intervening variable'?

As the term would imply, an intervening variable lies part-way between the basic independent causal variable (the *explanans*, or that which explains), and the dependent variable or outcomes (i.e. the *explanandum*, or that which is to be explained). It has much less causal power than an independent variable. An intervening variable is in effect a 'contingency', which is added on to the basic causal variable. Thus intervening or contingent variables have only a 'relative' rather than a full explanatory status or autonomy. Put in more 'colloquial speak', we could give the following example. If a woman walks along a beach, she will leave a set of footprints in the sand. The basic or independent causal variable is the movement of the leg, while the footprint is the outcome or the dependent variable. If the woman then puts on a pair of running shoes, the print left in the sand will of course be different to the original footprint. But the basic causal variable is still the independent movement of the leg. The shoe is an intervening variable: it modifies the final outcome, but does not constitute a basic causal variable because, without the movement of the leg, no print would be created. In sum, therefore, modified parsimony enables a richer and more empirically sensitive analysis to that provided by pure parsimony, but the addition of supplementary or intervening variables does not fundamentally *transform* the parsimonious approach into a complex one.

The 'modes of causality problem' has direct ramifications for the 'levels of analysis problem'. Indeed, the 'modes of causality problem' helps bring into focus various crucial aspects that have been hitherto ignored in the 'levels of analysis problem'.

The 'levels of analysis problem'

In his famous book, *Man, The State and War* (1959), Kenneth Waltz outlined a three-fold typology that could be used to categorise or pigeon-hole all theories of conflict and war. Originally formulated as a means of classifying theories of war, I use it here to categorise theories of IR more generally. First-image theory explains state behaviour and IR through the role of individuals; second-image theory argues that state behaviour and IR is determined by causal developments at the national state/societal level, while third-image theory argues that outcomes are determined by international structures.

However while this schema is a useful analytical first cut, it suffers from two central limitations. First, it is limited in that it cannot be used to consider those theories which seek to explain developments at the national rather than the international level. Peter Gourevitch's (1978) well used concept of 'second-image-reversed' theory begins to address this, but needs to be broadened. To overcome this I suggest

that we add a ‘fourth image’, which captures those theories which argue that developments at the national or sub-national level shape international outcomes, while developments at the international/global level also shape the national realm (cf. Reus-Smit 1996: 187). Examples of this are found in second-wave WHS, Morgenthau’s and Carr’s classical realism and Ruggie’s constructivism. Second, it is unable to consider theories which use more than one level to explain outcomes. Here I synthesise the ‘modes of causality problem’ with the ‘levels of analysis problem’, by suggesting that we need to differentiate *strong* and *weak* images. A ‘strong’-image approach accords primacy to one exclusive level, and is utilised by ‘parsimonious’ theory (e.g. Waltzian neorealism). By contrast, a weak-image approach is utilised by ‘modified parsimonious’ theory, which accords causal primacy to one spatial level, but adds in the ‘intervening’ effects from one or various other levels (e.g. modified neorealism, as in Gilpin and Krasner). But note that the addition of intervening variables does not convert the theory into a fourth-image approach. This is because a fourth-image approach is congruent with ‘complex theory’ rather than ‘modified parsimony’.

We have now laid out the framework of the second state debate. Equipped with these various concepts we can now turn to discussing each major theory with respect to its position within the debate.

Discussion questions

- Why in the last twenty years have mainstream IR theorists in general chosen *not* to ‘problematise’ the state? Or, why do some IR scholars reject the need for a theory of the state?
- What are the first and second ‘state debates’ as they have been conducted within IR, Sociology and Comparative Politics/Comparative Political Economy?
- How can it be claimed that IR’s ‘first state debate’ has not really been about ‘the state’?
- How and why has the first state debate distorted IR theory and IR theories of the state?
- What are the two faces of state agential power in the ‘second state debate’, and what is the difference between low, moderate and high international agential power?
- How does the introduction of the concept of ‘international agential state power’ lead beyond the first state debate?
- What is the ‘modes of causality problem’?

- Why does 'modified parsimony' stop short of 'complexity'?
- What is the 'levels of analysis problem'? Why and in what ways, if at all, do we need to modify and extend the basic categories?
- Why is a 'strong'-image approach congruent with 'parsimonious' theory, and a 'weak'-image approach congruent with 'modified parsimony'?

Suggestions for further reading

While IR state theory can help improve the theories of the state developed in Sociology, Political Science, Comparative Politics/Comparative Political Economy and Political Geography, among others, nevertheless the reverse is also true: that IR needs to become more aware of theories of the state found outside of the discipline. Excellent introductory texts include those by Dunleavy and O'Leary (1987), Held (1987), Schwarzmantel (1994) and Pierson (1997).

For readings in the first state debate within Sociology, the classic statist text remains Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol (1985), and especially Theda Skocpol's chapter 1. Two further key texts are those of Krasner (1978) and Skocpol (1979). Good examples of the Marxist response can be found in Cammack (1989) and Jessop (1990: 275–88). The standard statist position within CPE's first state debate can be found in Johnson (1982) and Wade (1990). The second state debate within Sociology and CPE has been advanced in the works of Mann (1993), Evans (1995), Weiss and Hobson (1995), Hobson (1997) and Weiss (1998). Chapter 3 of Mann (1993) is a good starting point for an introduction to the various theories of the state, especially within Sociology. This chapter also implicitly opens up the second state debate within Sociology and CPE. For the first state debate within IR, the standard 'first-phase' texts that insist that the state is being undermined by 'interdependence' are Burton (1972), Mansbach, Ferguson and Lampert (1976) and Morse (1976), while Camilleri and Falk (1991) is an excellent introduction to the second-phase approach, in which 'globalisation' is seen to be transcending the sovereign state. The key statist and neorealist 'defences' of the sovereign nation-state can be found in Gilpin (1975, 1981), Krasner (1976, 1995) and Waltz (1979: chapter 7).

It is vital to follow up the discussion of the 'agent-structure' debate. In Sociology, good introductions can be found in Layder (1994) and Thrift (1983). Two important positions are found in Giddens (1984) and Archer (1995). The 'structurationist' resolution to the agent-

structure problem has been adapted and imported into IR, initially by Wendt (1987), and see especially, the important debate conducted within the journal, *Review of International Studies* (Hollis and Smith 1991; Wendt 1991). For an important recent discussion, see Wight (1999). Finally, it is important to follow through on the 'levels of analysis problem'; Waltz (1959) is the standard starting point. Singer (1961) is also an important discussion which argues, in contrast to the position adopted in chapter 7 of the present volume, that it is *not* possible to produce a single model that combines two or more of the levels.