

## 1 Mapping a *New* Global Political Economy Taking Stock for the Journey Ahead

---

### Introduction

For most scholars, the idea that globalisation is essentially 'Westernisation' and that the global economy has been 'made by the West' is so axiomatic that it requires little or no reflexive interrogation. Indeed, it likely constitutes one of the most unifying themes, and surely comes close to being a cardinal or universal axiom, across the Social Sciences. All scholars seem to be in agreement, from the neoliberal pole on the right to the neo-Marxist and even the postcolonial-Marxist on the left. For many neoliberals, globalisation and the global economy represent the 'glorious and inevitable triumph of the magnificent West',<sup>1</sup> while for neo-Marxists, various postcolonialists and postcolonial Marxists, they constitute but the 'tragic and inevitable triumph of the malevolent West'.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, both poles echo those pre-1945 scientific racist thinkers, including Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge, Karl Pearson, Woodrow Wilson, Benjamin Kidd and Josiah Strong to name but a few, who (re)present globalisation as but the 'inevitable triumph of the supremacist West'.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, both poles subscribe to the idea of globalisation as constituting, to quote the title of Theodore von Laue's book, 'The World Revolution of Westernization'.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, in highlighting Western supremacism, they produce variations on a West-side story of the global economy.

It is true that not all Eurocentric scholars conflate globalisation with the universalisation of the West, with some, such as Samuel Huntington and William Lind, in effect rehabilitating the scientific racist cultural realism of Lothrop Stoddard and Charles Henry Pearson by viewing

<sup>1</sup> Most notably, Fukuyama (1992), Friedman (1999) and Wolf (2005).

<sup>2</sup> For example, Wallerstein (1974, 1980, 1984, 1989), Chase-Dunn (1989), Arrighi (1994), Gill (1995), Cox (1996), Robinson (2004), Saurin (2006), Dirlik (2007), Ashman (2010), Davidson (2009) and Krishna (2009).

<sup>3</sup> See Hobson (2012) and Vitalis (2015).

<sup>4</sup> von Laue (1987).

## 2 Mapping a *New* Global Political Economy

globalisation as issuing a rising and rampaging ‘barbaric Asian threat’ to Western civilisation. But the key to their *shared* Western-centrism, given that neither Huntington nor Lind subscribe to scientific racism, lies in their prime concern to defend the ‘purity’ of Western civilisation against the non-Western barbaric threat, especially that which they associate with China and Islam.<sup>5</sup>

It is often said that since the buzzword of ‘globalisation’ exploded onto the social science research agenda some three decades ago, its *intellectual* time has now passed in that there is nothing fresh left to say about it, such that all we can do now is to refine it or, at best, to fill in various missing details. That is, its Western origins, contours and functions are settled such that in this respect, at least, it is considered to be a *finished* project. But this book’s core claim is that analyses of globalisation and the global economy settled merely on a Eurocentric foundation, leading me to conclude that the study of this twin phenomenon is an entirely *unfinished* project. Thus, my task in this book is to begin the analysis afresh by re-tracking it onto an alternative non-Eurocentric path.<sup>6</sup>

This book navigates the *origins* of the global economy – or more specifically, the two global economies that I identify in this book – by taking us on a journey that explores a complex series of *multicultural* passages that propel us beyond the exclusive Western-centric frontier. Here, however, it is important that I iron out any potential confusion that the word ‘multicultural’ plays in the title of this book. First, this is not to be conflated with an approach that focuses only on the *Eastern* origins of the global economy because I include Western alongside non-Western contributions. Second, some critics of multiculturalism view it as a thinly racialised discourse because it promotes separate and distinct ethnic communities within nation-states in which non-white groups live in ghettos on the Other side of an invisible line of racialised cultural apartheid.<sup>7</sup> Rather than a racial-cultural segregationism, in which the dominant culture begrudgingly ‘tolerates’ the existence of the Other, this book examines how they integrate and mutually entwine, not in some rosy cosmopolitan way, but through ‘competitive cooperation’ (on which more below). Thus, a core theme of this book, as I explain more fully in the penultimate section of this chapter, is to get at the key point that Edward Said originally made in the 2003 preface to his seminal

<sup>5</sup> See Hobson (2012: 142–9, 279–84).

<sup>6</sup> See also the important non-Eurocentric historical studies of *globalisation*: Flynn and Giraldez (1995a, 1995b, 2004, 2006), Bentley (1996), Hopkins (2002), Bayly (2002), Marks (2002), Gills and Thompson (2006) and Beaujard (2019).

<sup>7</sup> For example, Malik (1996).

book, *Orientalism*: '[r]ather than the manufactured clash of civilizations [East *versus* West], we need to concentrate on the slow working together of [non-Western *and* Western] cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together'.<sup>8</sup> In the process, this book produces, to borrow the phrase of Jeremy Prestholdt, 'an inclusive genealogy of globalization' and the global economy.<sup>9</sup>

My primary complaint with the vast majority of the literature on globalisation and the global economy is *not* the assumption that the West has been given a place of importance, but that it has been reified into a fetish such that the myriad non-Western contributions have been air-brushed out of our received picture, as is found most acutely within the discipline of International Political Economy (IPE). To counter this, to borrow the felicitous phrase from Nicola Phillips,<sup>10</sup> we need to properly '*globalize* the study of globalization' and the global economy by shifting our gaze away from the pure Western-centric or 'North-West passage' conception towards one that brings into focus the many non-Western passages that link together Africa, the Americas, India, West and Southeast Asia, China and East Asia as well as Britain and Europe. This is urgently required, I believe, because prevailing (Eurocentric) approaches produce an exclusivist or monological vision of globalisation as but a Western provincialism masquerading as the universal.

This book's voyage of rediscovery entails replacing Eurocentric Global Political Economy (GPE) and IPE with what I shall call a non-Eurocentric *New* Global Political Economy (NGPE). And this, in turn, necessarily propels us across a series of disciplinary frontiers. For while this book is aimed primarily at the disciplines of IPE, Historical Sociology and the historical sociology of International Relations (IR), as well as various cognate disciplines such as Economic Geography, Development Studies and Global Economic History/Global History, it is only through a trans-disciplinary approach that we can move beyond the Eurocentric conception of global economy and globalisation.

But why do I call it 'new' GPE rather than postcolonial political economy (PPE)? I choose this as a play on those terms that were originally pioneered in the 1990s by my departmental colleagues, Anthony Payne and Andrew Gamble on the one hand, and Craig Murphy and Roger Tooze on the other. And, at the risk of embarrassing the 'founding fathers' of these two inter-related approaches, I maintain that they are 'giants' of IPE. The former pair called for a 'New Political Economy'

<sup>8</sup> Said (1978/2003: xxii).

<sup>9</sup> Prestholdt (2008).

<sup>10</sup> Phillips (2005: chs. 1–2).

4 Mapping a *New* Global Political Economy

(NPE), after which the well-known journal was named,<sup>11</sup> while the latter pair called for a 'New International Political Economy' (NIPE).<sup>12</sup> These approaches share in common a return to the big-picture, historically–sociologically informed focus of classical political economy, especially, though not exclusively, that of the critical theory of Karl Marx. And, certainly, both approaches are open to the critique of Eurocentrism. Still, although my own conception shares a great deal in common with these approaches, we cannot get around the point that classical political economy was ultimately Eurocentric or Western-centric;<sup>13</sup> note that I define 'Western-centrism' later. Nevertheless, this is a paradox rather than a contradiction in my logic. For it is precisely the wide framework that classical political economy represents that allows me to ask critical questions of modern IPE as much as it furnishes me with the megacanvas that this book works on. Moreover, rather than representing my approach as instigating a radical break with NPE and NIPE, I view my contribution as one that stands on their shoulders.

But why not simply call my approach 'Global Political Economy (GPE)'? This term, which has been circulating for a good while now, is most closely aligned with Marxist IPE that seeks to move away from statist neorealism towards an analysis of capitalist globalisation. In this respect, it clearly enters the terrain of this book. But I find that this approach also suffers from Eurocentrism or 'Eurofetishism' (to be defined later), with the deepest paradox of GPE being that it is an insufficiently 'global' approach, given that its focus is essentially a Western provincialism that masquerades as the global. Thus, I opt for the label of '*New* GPE' simply because its resolute focus on non-Eurocentrism marks it out as distinctive to the present conception of GPE. Above all, though, the term 'global' within NGPE does not so much connote an approach that focuses on globalisation and the global economy, for GPE already does that. Rather, what distinguishes my approach's conception of the global is its focus on the multiple Western and non-Western sources of the global economy.

The chapter is divided into five sections which, in aggregate, map out the contours and underpinnings of NGPE. Certainly, this chapter is longer than ideally I would have liked, but there is much theoretical and conceptual brush-clearing that needs to be undertaken before we can begin our journey. I begin by laying out the first of NGPE's twin corefeatures – the need to develop a big-picture (non-Eurocentric)

<sup>11</sup> Gamble (1995), Gamble *et al.* (1996) and Payne (2006).

<sup>12</sup> Murphy and Tooze (1991); cf. Hay and Marsh (1999).

<sup>13</sup> Hobson (2012, 2013a).

‘global historical sociological’ framework that focuses on the deep-historical *origins* of the two global economies that I identify in this book. The second section explores the foundations of a specific brand of Eurocentrism – what I call ‘Eurocentrism I’ – within which prevailing orthodox conceptions of globalisation and the global economy are embedded. The third section then explores what I call ‘Eurocentrism II’ and its non-Eurocentric antidote that I call critical ‘Eurofetishism’, which is a common approach that underpins the analyses of many critical and postcolonial IPE and GPE scholars. The fourth section presents the second core property of NGPE: specifically, my non-Eurocentric antidote to both these modes of Western-centrism, while also presenting a sympathetic critique of the non-Eurocentric California School (CS) of global economic history. And in the fifth and final short sections, I lay out my definitions of the two global economies – historical capitalism (c. 1500–c. 1850) and modern capitalism (c. 1850–2020).

### **NGPE (I): Bringing ‘Big-Picture’ (Non-Eurocentric) Global Historical Sociology Back into IPE**

In 2013, the journal *Review of International Political Economy (RIPE)* most generously published a two-part article of mine. The first part revealed the Eurocentric foundations of classical liberal and neoliberal IPE theory as well as Listian and modern neorealist IPE theory – to which I added classical and modern neo-Marxism in my book *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*.<sup>14</sup> My task in this present book is to advance a non-Eurocentric conception of IPE by revealing the multicultural origins of the global economy. Although there are racial undertones that exist within Eurocentrism and need to be confronted, nevertheless I believe that Eurocentrism will likely remain hegemonic until we find a more persuasive alternative empirical account of the world – even, or particularly, in the face of the in-built biases among Western (and all-too-often non-Western) populations towards Eurocentrism and what I call critical ‘Eurofetishism’. Which is why this book’s critique of Western-centrism takes the form of a fully fledged non-Eurocentric historical–sociological *empirical account* of the rise of the global economy and of modern capitalism. But why ‘historical–sociological’?

IPE’s narrow focus on the here and now – or IPE’s great retreat into the present – verges on a ‘presentist pathology’. This plays out in the analyses of the post-1945 global economy that is usually presented as

<sup>14</sup> Hobson (2012, 2013a).

6 Mapping a *New* Global Political Economy

temporally *sui generis* such that the pre-1945 world constitutes in effect 'ancient history' – or what amounts to a '1945-as-year-zero' conception of globalisation and the global economy. But sequestering the global economy from its deep-historical origins means that such analyses often fall into the trap of what the rightly celebrated Gramscian-Marxist IPE/IR scholar, Robert Cox, calls 'problem-solving theory'.<sup>15</sup> In this vein, the task of scholars is to accept the existence of the 'Western' capitalist global economy and fine tune it normatively so that it can run either more smoothly (as in neoliberalism) or more fairly (as in many left-wing critiques, bar Trotskyists and Leninists of course). As Cox originally argued, 'critical theory' is vital if we are to *de-naturalise* capitalism and the global economy. And this requires rethinking the historical *origins* of these processes in order to show that they were neither the abstract realisation of some fictitious notion of human nature – as Cox argues – nor were they the product of factors that were generated solely within Britain, given that they were also partially created by social forces and pressures/opportunities that emanated from the non-Western world, as I argue in this book. All in all, thinking critically by revealing the multicultural origins of the global economy serves to unsettle the prevailing 'commonsense' views that it was made by the West on the one hand and that Western global dominance is natural and inevitable, if not eternal, on the other.

Given that these empirical topics are, of course, amenable only to very large-scale, macro-historical sociological analysis, so this feeds directly into the argument that is advanced by Benjamin Cohen in his seminal book, *International Political Economy: An Intellectual History*. There he laments the fact that 'US-school' IPE – specifically in the guise of the leading neoclassical liberal paradigm known as 'Open Economy Politics' (OEP) – has engineered a massive contraction of the intellectual borders of American IPE into an extremely narrow empirical and economically reductive research agenda.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, it is particularly telling that Robert Keohane, who is viewed as the standard bearer of methodologically narrow rationalism by constructivists and poststructuralists, complains that OEP is far too rationalist, narrow and reductive!<sup>17</sup>

This is why Cohen calls specifically for a 'bridge-building' exercise in which US-school IPE scholars should reach out to, and join hands with, their 'British-school' IPE cousins on the basis that the latter advances a much broader, big-picture approach to that of the far

<sup>15</sup> Cox (1996).

<sup>16</sup> Cohen (2008: 41–3, 82–3).

<sup>17</sup> Keohane (2009: 38).

more parsimonious and more methodologically rigorous approach of the former.<sup>18</sup> But, despite its promise to develop a broad-based approach that is interpretive, more social in focus and ultimately more historical–sociological, lamentably Brit-school scholarship has become increasingly more narrow in focus and highly presentist in orientation, particularly in its analysis of the global economy. For one of the points that I problematise is the ahistorical assumption held by British- and American-school scholars that the post-1945/79 era is both entirely new and temporally *sui generis*.

To counter the ever-contracting temporal and analytical borders of US-school IPE – to which I would add those of the British School – Cohen calls for a *return* to the ‘big-picture IPE’ that was in vogue in the 1970s and 1980s during first-wave American- and Brit-School-IPE.<sup>19</sup> For him the ‘really big question’ focuses on *systemic transformation*, by which he means ‘globalisation’.<sup>20</sup> This focus is, of course, also central to the present book. But it seems to me that Cohen’s ‘really big question’ can only be answered sufficiently by asking an ‘even bigger question’, which requires us to explain the origins of modern capitalism given that the present global economy rests on a modern capitalist base. Indeed, as Larry Summers puts it, ‘[i]n many respects the history of capitalism is the history most relevant to our times’.<sup>21</sup> *Inter alia*, this requires us to return to the whole discussion of the transition from feudalism to capitalism that began with the famous Dobb/Sweezy debate in the 1950s and 1960s before we move forward through various historical sociological debates up to the present.<sup>22</sup> And to my perplexed IPE reader who wonders why all this needs to be undertaken, on the assumption that the issue has surely been settled by historical sociologists, it turns out that their explanations settled merely on a Eurocentric foundation (as I explain in the next section). Accordingly, I believe that we need to go back to the drawing board and begin our analysis again from scratch.

Thus, while I agree entirely with Cohen’s prescription for a big-picture, historical–sociological approach, nevertheless, I disagree that Brit-school IPE in its present incarnation holds the candle for such a vision.

<sup>18</sup> Cohen (2008: ch. 7).

<sup>19</sup> Most notably, Wallerstein (1974, 1980, 1989), Cox (1987), Chase-Dunn (1989) and Gilpin (1981).

<sup>20</sup> Cohen (2008: ch. 3).

<sup>21</sup> Larry Summers cited in Inikori (2020: 251, n. 1).

<sup>22</sup> See Sweezy and Dobb (1950), Dobb (1959), Wallerstein (1974) and Brenner (1977, 1982). For key neo-Weberian-inspired analyses, see Giddens (1985), Mann (1986), Tilly (1990), Landes (1998), Ferguson (2011), Duchesne (2012) and Vries (2013, 2015).



8 Mapping a *New* Global Political Economy

For ultimately what bridges the US and British schools, in addition to their ever-narrowing analytical and temporal visions, is a *Eurocentric* understanding of the global economy.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, then, we do not need to build bridges between the US and Brit schools because they are already connected by an ahistorical Eurocentric tunnel that runs deep beneath the floor of the Atlantic Ocean. And here I must confess to sharing in Heloise Weber's 'astonishment' concerning the debate surrounding Cohen's book, which was conducted in the prominent journals of *RIPE* and *NPE* by equally prominent IPE scholars, given its failure to engage in a sustained critical analysis of the Eurocentrism of IPE.<sup>24</sup> This is precisely why I wrote my two-part *RIPE* article in the first place. And, while the 'postcolonial turn' has occurred in various cognate disciplines – including International Relations,<sup>25</sup> as well as Historical Sociology, Development Studies and Economic Geography,<sup>26</sup> IPE in contrast has been a clear laggard and has yet to reach this critical stage given that only a minority of scholars has been mining this vein.<sup>27</sup> In this respect, my vision of big-picture, non-Eurocentric IPE dovetails with much of Heloise Weber's.<sup>28</sup>

Still, this is not to say that IPE's current preference to drill down ever deeper into narrow research silos is unimportant, for certainly this enables the excavation of more specialised knowledge. And I remain deeply impressed by some of the most detailed and finely grained

<sup>23</sup> Hobson (2013a, 2013b).

<sup>24</sup> Weber (2015). Nevertheless, the pieces by Craig Murphy (2009), Anna Leander (2009) and Nicola Phillips (2009) certainly went some way to raising this issue.

<sup>25</sup> Instead of citing the many relevant references that are far too numerous to include here, I shall instead point my reader to some of the key edited volumes: Chowdhry and Nair (2004), Long and Schmidt (2005), Gruffydd-Jones (2006), Kanth (2009), Shilliam (2011), Tickner and Blaney (2012), Katzenstein (2012a), Seth (2013), Suzuki, Zhang and Quirk (2014), Anievas, Manchanda and Shilliam (2015), Bilgin and Ling (2017), Epstein (2017), Zarakol (2017), Sajed and Persaud (2018), Adelman (2019) and Bell (2019); cf. Dunne and Reus-Smit (2017) and Go and Lawson (2017).

<sup>26</sup> A smattering of this literature includes: Meek (1976), Amin (1989), Wallerstein (1997), Pieterse (1990, 2006, 2020), Munck and O'Hearn (1999), Power (2003), Slater (2004), Kapoor (2008), McCarthy (2009), Bhambra (2007, 2014), McEwan (2009), and Go (2011, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> Frank and Gills (1996), Persaud (2001), O'Brien and Williams (2004: chs. 2–3), Hobson (2004, 2012, 2013a, 2013b), Bowden and Seabrooke (2006), Pasha (2006), Hobson and Seabrooke (2007), Harrison (2013), Krishna (2009), Blaney and Inayatullah (2010, 2021), LeBaron (2012), Halperin (2013), Halperin and Palan (2015), Anievas and Nişancioğlu (2015), Tansel (2015a, 2015b), Helleiner (2014, 2015, 2018, 2021), Weber (2015), Selwyn (2015), Stuenkel (2016), Helleiner and Rosales (2017), Singh (2017), Shilliam (2018), Mantz (2019) and Zhang (2020); cf. Phillips (2005).

<sup>28</sup> Weber (2015).



analyses of IPE, far too numerous to reference here. But my point is simply that when these silos are being drilled down ever deeper into Eurocentric ground, ultimately this serves to provide us with yet more detailed Eurocentric knowledge. And, of course, such drilling is inherently precarious given the unstable nature of the meta-narrative ground that it plumbs.

Cohen's preferred macro-focus – or what is synonymous with what the historical sociologist, Charles Tilly, famously referred to as 'big structures, large processes and huge comparisons' – feeds naturally into the remit of historical sociology/global history and the historical sociology of IPE/IR.<sup>29</sup> Here, I deploy, to borrow the term that has been developed by the leading scholars, Julian Go and George Lawson, a 'global historical sociological' account, in order to build up a big global picture so that we can transcend the familiar Eurocentric narrative. Note that their definition of global historical sociology refers to the study of

two interrelated dynamics: first, the transnational and global dynamics that enable the emergence, reproduction, and breakdown of social orders whether these orders are situated at the subnational, national, or *global* scales; and second, the historical emergence, reproduction, and breakdown of transnational and *global* social forms.<sup>30</sup>

It is important to understand that my pursuit of the historical–sociological global big-picture does not produce a *history* of the global economy in the traditional sense of the term. For the role of conceptual analysis that I undertake here does not fit within the remit of traditional history. Indeed, my central task of critiquing Eurocentric world history and countering it with a non-Eurocentric empirical account would be viewed by traditional historians as an exercise in mere 'polemics'. Moreover, traditional historians' core *modus operandi* is to particularise the past by dissecting it into highly detailed micro-scale snapshots that are taken even deeper into the historical–empirical ground through archival research. Still, none of what follows is intended to denigrate their 'deep-drilling research exercises', not least because I rely on a wealth of their many excellent findings throughout this book. And I also draw on many inspirational

<sup>29</sup> Tilly (1984).

<sup>30</sup> Go and Lawson (2017: 2), my emphases. Still, my big-picture approach falls short of the kind of 'mega history' that is produced by the likes of David Christian (2004) and others (Zinkina *et al.* 2019), and nor can I match the kind of 'big history' that is found in the magisterial works of Michael Mann (1986) and Andrew Linklater (2016). Serendipitously, my argument concerning the point that the FGE emerged around 1500 gets me off that particular hook and enables me to focus on the global *longue durée* of some 400–500 years.

10 Mapping a *New* Global Political Economy

global–historical works from which I have learned so much, to name but a few: Pedro Machado, David Northrup, Prasannan Parthasarathi, Kenneth Pomeranz, Jeremy Prestholdt, Rajat Kanta Ray, Giorgio Riello, David Washbrook, Kaveh Yazdani and Zhao Gang.<sup>31</sup>

My opting for a global historical sociological approach has advantages and disadvantages vis-à-vis traditional history, and I make no claim for the inherent superiority of my choice – merely to say that such an approach is best placed to reveal the extensive *horizontal linkages*, whether they be cooperative or competitive or both, which bind the many peoples of the world together within the global *longue durée*.<sup>32</sup> And clearly, micro-scale analysis cannot reveal the origins and reproduction of the two global economies. In turn, this reveals a further key point of differentiation between NGPE and PPE. For postcolonialism’s postmodern variant adopts a resolute focus on the micro-level, given its disdain for ‘grand narratives’.

Finally, it might be objected that some of my arguments reiterate those that have long been known by specialist historians, while equally some of those historians whom I target for their Eurocentrism are now outdated. But my ultimate target is not historians but those many political scientists, IR and most especially IPE and historical–sociological scholars as well as those found in a range of complementary social science disciplines, who continue to default to the hegemonic Eurocentric narrative of globalisation and the global economy (which I describe in the next section). Thus, my critical discussion of some outdated Eurocentric (a)historians at various places serves merely as a proxy to challenge the Eurocentric historical assumptions that are held by so many IPE, IR and historical–sociological scholars more generally.

The key task ahead is to ascertain the core components of Eurocentrism. And, as we shall see, the next two sections take us not on a journey across a serene and smooth lake, but one that requires us to hold on tight as we navigate through a complex series of intellectually challenging rapids.

### Mapping ‘Eurocentrism I’

Even four decades on since the publication of Edward Said’s seminal book, *Orientalism*,<sup>33</sup> I am struck by the fact that there remains a great deal of confusion surrounding, if not more often sheer ignorance

<sup>31</sup> Machado (2014), Northrup (2009), Parthasarathi (2011), Pomeranz (2000), Prestholdt (2008), Riello (2013), Washbrook (1988, 1990, 2007, 2020), Yazdani (2017), Zhao (2013), and Ray (1995).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Halperin (2013).

<sup>33</sup> Said (1978/2003).