

# 1 *Introduction*

No object of inquiry has been arguably more central to the development of the social sciences as “modernity.” Understandably so, for, the very birth of the social sciences was deeply implicated in and integral to the modes of life and convulsions brought into being by modernity. Modernity made thinkable the compartmentalization of social life into ontologically distinct spheres such as the “economic,” the “political,” the “social” and the “international,” with each sphere examined by a separate academic discipline. The transition to modernity usually came with a sense of unprecedented novelty and temporal distinctiveness, founded on paradigmatic transformations in conceptions of time, space and knowledge. For all of this centrality, however, modernity has remained a notoriously ambiguous concept. Whatever is meant by “modernity” and whether one chooses to emphasize the “bright” or “dark” side of it, it is usually used as a blanket concept to refer to a mixed bundle of transformations emblematic of the transition to the “modern” world, such as state formation, exclusive territoriality, capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, secularism, individualism, citizenship, nationalism, genocide, private property and industrialization. Indeed, thanks to this conceptual ambiguity, theorists have used modernity to add a sense of complexity to their analyses without pledging themselves to any monocausal conception of this composite transition.

The debate on the actual content of modernity and the timing and manner of its unraveling continues. Nevertheless, two particular aspects of modernity (i.e. its historical specificity and diversity) have become staples for most social and International Relations (IR) theory (albeit more so for the former than the latter). The historical specificity of modernity as an epochal shift from “past” to “present” (e.g. from “*gemeinschaft*” to “*gesellschaft*,” and “status” to “contract”) was a fundamental building block for virtually all nineteenth- and early twentieth-century social theory; and categories and assumptions

grounded in the historical distinctiveness of modernity continue to mark the contemporary social sciences. Likewise, it has become commonplace to understand modernity as a highly interconnected and variegated process. Different sociohistorical and geopolitical legacies gave rise to distinct forms of modernities and new conditions of being “modern.” In this sense, modernity has been a historically specific, internationally interactive and sociologically multilinear process all at once.

Indeed, speaking of modernity in the plural, emphasizing diversity, specificity and interconnectivity among multiple modernization projects, appears to be a fundamental correction to homogeneous, unilinear and Eurocentric conceptions of world history. Nevertheless, “diversity,” “specificity” and “interconnectedness,” by themselves, are by no means substitutes for social theory. The debate about how to theorize the differentiated origins and outcomes of modernity is complex, and competing explanations abound. In this book, I seek to intervene in this debate. I do so primarily by developing a *transdisciplinary* approach to the study of modernity. The importance of transdisciplinarity is rooted in the awareness that the history of modernity cannot be examined through the disciplinary divisions and categories created by modernity itself. Using these categories and divisions in an uncritical way tends to project the structure of modern society back into the past, which renders “historicization” impossible from the very beginning. Instead, we need to defy the methodological compartmentalization of social life, and subject already constituted spheres and logics of modernity to critical scrutiny. Rather than reading back the multiple spheres of contemporary life and studying their interrelations through “interdisciplinary” methodologies, we need to problematize the genesis of their differentiation from each other through a transdisciplinary methodology. Only through transdisciplinarity (and a holistic ontology) can we free historical time and space from the presuppositions of contemporary life. Only through a transdisciplinary methodology can we properly recover the history of modernity, theorizing modern processes in their unity and diversity.

To be sure, talking about transdisciplinarity and modernity is hardly a novelty. After all, crossing and overcoming disciplinary boundaries has long been on the agenda across the social sciences. In particular, scholars of IR and historical sociology have made several attempts in the past decades to bridge the analytically compartmentalized world of

*Introduction*

3

the social sciences as they have sought new ways of historicizing and theorizing the origins and development of the modern world (e.g. Wallerstein 1974, 2001, 2003; Ashley 1984; Block and Somers 1984; Cox 1986; Mann 1986; Tilly 1990a; Ruggie 1993; Walker 1993; Rosenberg 1994, 2013; Wood 1995; Hobden and Hobson 2002; Calhoun 2003; Teschke 2003, 2015; Lacher 2006; Buzan and Lawson 2015; Go 2016). That said, my contention in this book is that most extant approaches to IR and historical sociology have not sufficiently dispensed with the categories and assumptions borrowed from the modern present. In other words, existing accounts of modernity have failed to sufficiently turn to “real historical time,” continuing to read back the presuppositions of contemporary social life.

My argument in this respect is driven by a twofold methodological critique: the critique of “presentism” and the critique of “internalism.” The former critique is closely related to one of the key components of modernity – that is, capitalism. Of course, there have been many explanations for the relationship between modernity and capitalism, and a plethora of interpretations has been advanced over the years for the question as to what extent a history of modernity can be grounded in a history of capitalism. Yet, the more I examined the relevant IR and historical sociology literature, the more I found myself in agreement with an argument repeatedly made by such scholars as Karl Polanyi, Ellen Meiksins Wood and Robert Brenner: Much that has been written about the origins of capitalism tends to presume the prior existence of capitalism to explain its rise. That is, most approaches to IR and historical sociology, despite several differences and disagreements, are united by a common tendency to extrapolate back in history the logic and dynamics of the present economic order – capitalism. The critique of presentism is, in turn, firmly connected to the critique of “methodological internalism.” For, by assuming the existence of autonomously and endogenously developing societies in history, “internalist” models of historical change abstract the “social” from its wider international context, thereby transhistoricizing the spatial binaries and hierarchies specific to modernity. This, in turn, not only perpetuates the false image of bounded societies, but also fundamentally obscures the interactive constitution of the modern world. In particular, the assumption of endogenous development tends to force sociological imagination into a straitjacket in which historical particularities are not seen as organic components of an interactively and cumulatively unfolding

world history but viewed as “exceptions” or “aberrations” from a purportedly universal and unilinear framework of analysis.

This two-tiered critique, once systematically operationalized, turned out to be an important key to recovering the historicity and diversity of modernity, both inside and outside Europe. A departure from the vocabulary of transhistoricized concepts and categories allowed me to interpret (early) modernity’s diversity and interconnectivity in a new light. More specifically, once I adopted a non-presentist and non-internalist conception of history, the conventional notion of a “unitary” Western modernity collapsed, which, in turn, generated significant implications for a rereading of world historical development. I understood that the rise of a pan-European “market civilization” was by and large a “myth” up until the early nineteenth century. While capitalism was developing in Britain during the early modern period, continental European states were not following their British counterpart with a time lag as often presumed. Although the rise of capitalist agriculture and later industry in Britain generated unprecedented geopolitical and fiscal pressures on the continent for emulation, this did not lead to an immediate convergence of socioeconomic forms. Mainland Europe, and perhaps above all, France, up until the end of the Napoleonic Wars, was marked by fundamentally different forms of rule and appropriation, which were absent in capitalist Britain and can hardly be explained by the dictation of any internal capitalist dynamics. Therefore, it became increasingly clear to me that instead of a more or less singular transition to capitalism in Western Europe, geopolitical conflicts, international connections and socioeconomic specificities led to the development of radically different modernities. In particular, revolutionary and Napoleonic France seemed to pose a formidable challenge, as well as a distinctive alternative to capitalism, which, even if short-lived and ultimately defeated, could not be subsumed under an overarching conception of “capitalist modernity.”

Clearly, I cannot claim originality for most of these historical insights. The conventional narratives of Western European history have long been criticized for reproducing idealized conceptions of the “Western path to modernity.” Similarly, generations of historical sociologists such as Theda Skocpol (1979), George Comninel (1987), Ellen Meiksins Wood (1991) and Xavier Lafrance (2019a) have long argued that French society barely involved any internal capitalist dynamics before the French Revolution and even the revolution itself hardly

cracked this noncapitalist social fabric in any decisive way. The revolutionary and Napoleonic state expanded and consolidated subsistence-oriented peasant proprietorship on land and paved the way for new forms of customary regulation of manufacturing activity. Likewise, the commercial and industrial classes were by and large dependent on income, rents and careers provided by the state. In this sense, the revolution did not institutionalize a (seemingly) self-regulating market, nor did it embark on a systematic commodification of land and labor. Instead, by expanding state-based rents and income, it retained the state's direct role as the main source of social reproduction. Unless one takes a (very) long-termist view, therefore, the revolution provided a contradictory, if not totally infertile, ground for the development of capitalism in France (despite engendering unprecedented changes in the form of state and economy).

What I found missing in this literature, however, beyond the recognition that the French Revolution was not directly triggered by and did not immediately lead to capitalism, was a systematic inquiry into the question as to what the process of (post)revolutionary French “modernization” was actually about. In other words, if 1789 was not a mere continuation of the absolutist past, nor could it be easily understood as a form of protocapitalism, what was to be made of its socioeconomic character and (geo)political innovations? For example, if the political and ideological novelties conventionally associated with the French Revolution, such as universal citizenship, universal equality, universal conscription and nationalism, had no immediate connection with the development of capitalist social relations – how to make sense of them?

Indeed, these questions turned out to be far more important than I originally anticipated. For, on the one hand, revolutionary and Napoleonic France seemed to have generated forms of mobilization and appropriation alternative to capitalism – hence, pointing to the birth of a radically novel form of being “modern.” And on the other hand, the social forms and institutions created by the revolution became a model for subsequent modernization projects in and beyond Western Europe. Read together, the revolution and the Napoleonic period seemed to have instituted a socioeconomically opposing, geopolitically contending and potentially internationalizing project more than a century before the rise of Bolshevism.

The potential implications of such an argument were massive. Given that the French Revolution has long served as a template by which

other paths to modernity are compared, rethinking the “original” French “path” might have paradigmatic implications for the multilinearity of world historical development. The debate on the social nature of the French Revolution, therefore, was not merely a historiographical one but concerned social theory as a whole. Also, given that the revolution itself became an international vector, inquiring into the revolution could provide new insights into the historicization and theorization of the “international” – that is, it might shed new light on the social content and developmental tempo of the modern international order. A deeper understanding of the results and legacies of the French Revolution could thus generate a new perspective on the international relations of modernity within and beyond Europe.

The following research therefore required two major interventions. First, I needed to find out what kind of social and institutional mechanisms buttressed the (post)revolutionary political, economic and military apparatus in France. Second, I needed to demonstrate the spatial and temporal reach of this project – that is, the extent to which it evolved into a world-historical force impacting the constitution and development of other modernization projects. As for the former task, Robbie Shilliam’s early work provided an invaluable starting point. Shilliam (2009) shows that Revolutionary and Napoleonic France set in train a new mode of modernization that did not invoke the systematic commodification of the means of life. More precisely, the French elite, organized in and as the state, introduced the modern rights of the (male) “individual” in Revolutionary France, but did not condition the enjoyment of these rights to a property-ownership criterion (as was the case in Britain until 1918). Instead, under severe social and geopolitical challenges, they extended modern economic and political rights down to the lowest stratum of society by linking these rights to individuals’ compulsory service in the newly formed “citizen-army.” By conditioning the right to property and equality on compulsory military service, they not only substituted the logic of British participation in the public sphere – the propertied citizenship – but also led to the universalization and institutionalization of a new extra-market mechanism for acquiring income and status. Participation in the army, instead of “productive” utilization of property, gave individuals access to land and equality. Therefore, universal equality, universal conscription and the citizen-army in France were not simply the

*Introduction*

7

political/military components of a nascent capitalism; nor were they merely the aspects of an emergent “political modernity,” as often assumed. Rather, they constituted the socio-institutional foundations of a new regime of political economy and property relations radically different from capitalism. Following Shilliam, I call this new mode of modernization “Jacobinism.”

The citizen-army mobilized social forces and resources in a way the ancien regimes of Europe could not even dare to imagine. In that sense, Shilliam is certainly right in noting universal conscription as the hallmark of Jacobin (geo)political economy. However, Shilliam overlooks that mass conscription was not the only factor that bolstered the revolutionary state. The mobilizing vision of the revolution, despite periodic retreats from and popular reactions to it, was also pursued in the field of “education.” The revolutionary- and postrevolutionary elites, while seeking to boost political unity and geopolitical competitiveness through a citizen-army, also attempted to integrate the common people into the state through public education. The French elite, unable or unwilling to subject the peasants to capitalist market imperatives, attempted to centralize and universalize education as an alternative mechanism to tap peasant labor and energies. In addition to the invention of the citizen-army, “public schooling” was envisioned as another extra-market mechanism to discipline and appropriate peasant bodies. This was in stark contrast to capitalist Britain, where the political/cultural mobilization of the lower classes was neither necessary nor desirable for the reproduction of the ruling elite. In Britain, the “market” could well discipline the poor and deliver geopolitical objectives; therefore, there was no need to “educate” the lower classes beyond voluntary and localized forms of vocational/industrial training (at least until the latter nineteenth century). Yet, in a context that could not systematically subject land and labor to market imperatives, universal education was intended to be another method of mobilizing and appropriating peasant bodies based on a new (geo)political pedagogy.

As a further implication, the politico-cultural mobilization of the lower classes through public education and universal conscription led, in principle, to the generalization of access to the state in France, which was the main source of social reproduction, unlike in Britain. In this context, the French elite employed new discourses of “nation,” “religion” and “science” to universalize and restrict the lower classes’ access to the state and property. As a result, in the making of French

citizens, “nationalism” and “secularism,” in a way unheard of in Britain, acquired entirely new meanings, turning into “developmental” ideologies and practices. Also, given the centrality of secularism and nationalism for the reproduction of Jacobin political economy, it is no wonder that Jacobinism brought about a continuous onslaught against the potentially contending sources and interpretations of political community and religion. In this sense, Jacobinism was marked by an elite-led and top-down process of nation-building, war-making and subject formation. Yet, for social and geopolitical reasons that I will discuss in the following chapters, Jacobinism also provided a breeding ground for the radicalization of lower-class demands, hence, involving an emancipatory dynamic.

In short, Jacobinism, in the face of social and geopolitical crises, developed and sought to generalize two geo-institutional responses to and substitutes for the “market.” By revolutionizing the social basis of the army and school (rather than production), the Jacobin project engineered new nonmarket means to the acquisition of equality and property. Revolutionary and Napoleonic France witnessed the systematic subjection of the peasantry to “universal conscription” and “public education,” and the concomitant birth of the “citizen-soldier” and “citizen-officer,” endowed with land and state-generated income. “Mass conscription” and “public schooling” conditioned the social mobility and social reproduction of the poor to their successful socialization and disciplining in a new military/educational complex. Service to the state, rather than successful market competition, gave direct access to the means of life and provided the ultimate form of civic participation. As such, Jacobinism did not lead to a concentric extension of a more or less similar market project in France, but set in motion a qualitatively different modernity.

The international reverberations of Jacobinism can hardly be overstated. For, Jacobinism not only instituted a set of new rules of social and geopolitical reproduction that did not invoke the commodification of land and labor but provided a blueprint for other modernization projects. The geopolitical success of the Jacobin project (unstoppable until Waterloo) inspired other ancien regimes within and beyond Europe to selectively adopt, alone or alongside the capitalist project, the socio-institutional legacy of Jacobinism. For example, the economic and geopolitical challenges generated by capitalism and Jacobinism compelled most Western European states to pursue a



combined “capitalist–Jacobin project.” They took steps toward commodifying labor and land while invoking popular sovereignty by introducing the citizen-soldier and citizen-officer as the new engine of the military/administrative machine. However, the long-term result of this mutually conditioning and contradictory course of development in the Western European context was the gradual subordination of the Jacobin forms to the emerging capitalist market in the course of the nineteenth century. Put differently, capitalism, Jacobinism and local social forms were combined in historically specific ways in Western Europe, yet the ultimate result of these processes of socio-institutional cross-breeding in nineteenth-century Western Europe was capitalism. Capitalism, by and large, universalized itself in Western Europe during the nineteenth century, ultimately assimilating the historical legacy of Jacobinism into its systemic logic (despite the persistence of “national” differences linked to the spatial and temporal conditions of the transition to capitalism).

At first sight, therefore, Jacobinism, given its short life span and early “retirement” in Western Europe, seemed to be a phenomenon that belonged merely to a distant past, producing only minor consequences for the constitution of the modern world as a whole. Yet, what if Jacobinism was not merely a passive bystander to capitalism? What if Jacobinism, under certain social and international circumstances, could serve as a substitute for capitalism much longer than it did in Western Europe? Indeed, what if, as Shilliam (2009: 55–6) intuitively suggests, it was not capitalism, but its substitute, Jacobinism, that introduced the majority of the world to the relations and institutions of modernity? What is implied here is that Jacobinism might be as much central to the constitution of the modern world as capitalism, hence it is an important link in recovering the “lost history” of modern social and international relations (Rosenberg 1996).

With these questions in mind, I turned to the history of the late Ottoman Empire and Turkey to evaluate the spatial and temporal reach of Jacobinism. There were two reasons for my case selection. First, it is well known that the late Ottoman and early Turkish reformers took France as a reference point for their own modernization efforts. Second, as the late Fred Halliday argued, the Ottoman and early Republican modernizations were “arguably the greatest turning point in the modern history of the Middle East” – that is, the Young Turk Revolution and its early Republican offshoot in Turkey launched

or inspired the development of modern institutions in the Middle East, decisively reshaping the international relations of modernity in a wider regional context (Halliday 2005: 7). Therefore, a systematic inquiry into the late Ottoman Empire and Turkey could point to the ways in which Jacobinism, combined with the social-intellectual resources of an Islamic-Ottoman milieu, turned into a transnational vector that shaped the international relations of modernity in the wider Middle Eastern context. In short, an inquiry into Ottoman/Turkish Jacobinism could provide a new starting point to explore the quality of international sociality in the making of the modern Middle East.

That said, my turn to Ottoman and Turkish history, exciting though it was, immediately encountered a number of problems. Most conspicuously, I was surprised to find out that most of the macrolevel historical sociological analyses of Ottoman and Turkish modernity, albeit empirically very rich, were informed by idealized conceptions of Western European history. They rested on standard narratives of Western capitalist development, according to which the “modernness” of the Ottoman and Turkish experience was judged. As a result, the alleged peculiarities of the Turkish “path” to modernity – that is, its transition to “capitalism from above,” its “conservative” modernization, its “peripheral” capitalism and “incomplete” bourgeois revolution, alongside the “persistence” of bureaucratic interests, “weakness” of bourgeois classes and so on – were all derived from a counter reference point that hardly existed in history. After all, even the most “archetypal” cases of bourgeois revolution and capitalist development from “below,” England and France, widely diverged from the premises of the conventional narratives of the “rise of the West.” Therefore, the puzzle to be unravelled was this: if Turkey’s transition to modernity could not be understood just as another *Sonderweg*, an aberration from an idealized and unitary “Western” model of modernization, how to make sense of it?

Indeed, once I departed from the pan-European conceptions of “market civilization” and introduced into my analysis the concept of Jacobinism as a historically specific path, Ottoman/Turkish modernization efforts appeared in a totally new light. I realized that Ottoman modernization did not follow a single project of “Westernization,” but rather that Ottoman and Turkish elites selectively appropriated, oscillated between and recombined with local social resources two inherently contradictory “development” strategies: capitalism and