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Michael Mann
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1 Introduction

The third volume of my history of power in human society concerns the period of history leading up to 1945. However, I cannot put a precise starting date on this period because two different timescales are involved. My second volume, on the advanced industrializing countries, ended in 1914, so here I resume their domestic stories in 1914, although I go back a little further in the cases of the United States and Japan. I am also concerned here with global empires, which I neglected in my second volume. This involves the second, much longer, time-scale, starting well before 1914. We will also see that the years 1914–1945 must not be seen as a period quite apart, an island of chaos amid a sea of tranquility; its crises were the culmination of long-standing structural tendencies of modern Western civilization.

The main story in both periods is that globalizations were well under way. Note the plural: there was more than one process of globalization. As I have argued throughout my volumes, human societies form around four distinct power sources – ideological, economic, military and political – that have a relative degree of autonomy from each other (this is my IEMP model of power). So what is generally called globalization (singular) actually involved the plural extension of relations of ideological, economic, military, and political power across the world.

Around these sources congeal the major power organizations of human societies. In this period, the most fundamental were *capitalism*, *empires*, and *nation-states*. Modern globalization has involved three main institutional processes, the globalization of capitalism, the globalization of the nation-state, and the globalization of multiple empires (eventually replaced by just one empire, the American empire). All three – capitalism, nation-states and empires – interacted and were transformed. During this period, capitalism steamed ahead through what Schumpeter called *creative destruction*: empires rose and then were beginning to fall; the replacements would prove to be multiple nation-states, yielding uneven bundles of citizen rights to the masses. The big picture of this period in the advanced countries is that the masses were leaping onstage in the theater of power – concentrated in cities and factories, conscripted in mass armies, mobilized by demotic ideologies and mass parties. Yet this contrasted greatly with the colonies, where the masses were only just beginning to stir.

So although globalization proceeded apace, it was geographically and institutionally *polymorphous* – that is, it crystallized in different, competing forms.

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Put most simply, the boundaries of the three networks of interaction – and those of the four sources of social power – differed. The global expansion of rivalrous empires did not unite the world but divided it into segments; the rivalry of nation-states fractured international regulation and led to terrible sundering wars. European civilization rose but then fell as a result of its own hubris. Hence, my title, *Global Empires and Revolution, 1890–1945* – plural and divisive, the core subject matter of this volume. After 1945, the empires were collapsing and most nation-states were turning swords into ploughshares, soldering the world back together again. Therefore, my fourth volume will be entitled *Globalizations* – still plural but tending toward greater integration of the globe.

Capitalism, empires, and nation-states also generated contending ideologies. Capitalism generated ideologies of class and class conflict, some of them revolutionary but most of them compromised by the winning by the people of civil, political, and social citizenships rights – as specified by T.H. Marshall in the 1940s – although women lagged well behind men in this achievement, as did some ethnic/racial groups. Citizenship strengthened nation-states, capitalism became ever-more global and transnational, and the contradiction between national and transnational relations intensified. Empires generated ideologies of imperialism, anti-imperialism, and racism. Nation-states generated ideologies of nationalism, some of which became extremely aggressive. The conflicts between some of these ideologies peaked in two world wars, after which their relations became less warlike, with most disputes resolvable by “soft” negotiation rather than by “hard” war. However, civil wars over who exactly constitutes “the nation” still dominated some swathes of the world. All these conflicts generated highly ideological global movements, in this period secular as well as religious. So globalization has never been a singular integrating process; instead, it has been a series of disparate and uneven outward thrusts into the world, generating some integration but also fractures and a series of ever-more global crises.

My second volume, dealing with the period from 1760 to 1914, focused on what I called the “leading edge of power,” the capitalism and nation-states then found principally in Europe and North America. Here I continue my focus on the leading edge of power, which through this period comprised the United States, Western Europe, the Soviet Union, China, and Japan. Some of my chapters focus on a particular country or region; others are more broadly comparative. They blend historical narrative with theoretical concepts and explanations. I reintroduce empires into my narrative because they were the main vehicle through which the power of the West (later joined by Japan and the Soviet Union) extended globally. To better understand empires, I begin my empirical analysis by backtracking well before 1914 to discuss the development of three empires: British, Japanese, and American. The last one is still with us, the only global empire there has ever been.

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Introduction

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To write a history of power in the modern world may seem absurdly ambitious. Societies are complex, and there is a massive oversupply of information about the period, outstripping anyone's capacity to absorb it. Flaubert observed that, "Writing history is like drinking an ocean and pissing a cupful." The techniques of historical sociology enable me to take a shortcut through identifying the main social-structural trends of societies, and this enables me to drink less but thicker liquid. What follows is not straightforward historical narrative. It mixes doses of narrative, which may appeal more to historians, with doses of theory and comparative analysis, which provide the staple of macro-sociology. I seek to explain the development, expansion, and variety of the fundamental power structures of the period: the triumph of capitalism and of the nation-state; the rise and fall of empires, fascism, state socialism, and all their ideologies; and the growing destructive capacity of warfare and economies. By half-closing our eyes, it is possible to construct an onward-and-upward evolutionary story of the twentieth century, and this is often done. Have not capitalism and nation-states brought increased life expectancy, literacy, and prosperity to much of the world, and are they not still doing so? Has not class conflict been successfully compromised by the institutions of citizenship? Has not war given way to peace for much of the world? Finally, have not capitalism and democracy seen off both state socialism and fascism and extended their penetration of the world? One might even be tempted by all this to devise a *nomological* (law-like) explanation of the period, providing laws of modern evolutionary development.

This is not possible for three reasons, however. First, the period from 1914 to 1945 was a very uneven experience even in the advanced countries. They twice fought terrible world wars, but they also made love between times; they experienced both reforms and revolutions, and one Great Depression disrupted what would otherwise have been a period of almost continuous economic progress. These were the three Great Disruptions of the period. Second, the previously presented trends are all rather Western-centric, because other parts of the world did not go through most of these sequences. Third, although the "West" and the "Rest" did exhibit structural tendencies, other major influences and outcomes were contingent, double-edged, and subject to reversal. The world did not form a single whole. Capitalism, nation-states, empires, wars, and ideologies had distinct logics of development, but each interacted with and was intermittently thrown off course by the others. Long-term structural tendencies interact with period-specific problems and human adaptability to generate new patterns of human behavior. Humans are not fully rational, steering their projects steadily in achievement of their goals. Their creativity, emotions, miscalculations, and misadventures often upset instrumental reasoning and broad secular tendencies.

Thus, processes of globalization have been punctuated by a series of unexpected world-changing crises – that is, events whose extreme urgency was

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self-evident at the time but that could not be solved through existing institutions. The most important crises discussed in this volume are World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II. My fourth volume will continue this theme by discussing Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), the Great Neoliberal Recession of 2008, and Climate Change. These last three crises still hang over us.

We shall see that these structural crises had multiple causes and stages cascading on top of each other in unexpected and unfortunate ways. They were contingent because different causal chains, each one of which we can trace and explain quite well, came together in a way that we cannot explain in terms of either of them, yet which proved timely for the outcome. In these crisis cases, the timing was bad for the world. What we call a major crisis is not really a singular event, although it has a culminating peak, for it piled up together a series of smaller crises with different causes. Weaknesses of social structure that would otherwise have remained latent and relatively unimportant were found out as the cascade continued and crisis mounted. The cascade was by no means inevitable.

Indeed, such crises usually reveal human beings at their worst, unable to take what might seem with hindsight the actions necessary to avoid or solve them. All of these crises could have been avoided, although as the cascade continued, the necessary steps would have had to be more and more radical. They remind us of human fallibility and the ever-present possibility of regress or the shifting of the tracks of development. Consider the two world wars. They were catastrophic mistakes, bringing disaster to most of the combatants, yet they also changed the world. These changes were to a large extent contingent; they were by no means inevitable. Without World War I, I argue, there would be no Bolshevik Revolution and significant fascism, and without World War II, there would be no Chinese Revolution, Cold War, global American empire, and perhaps a lesser development of capitalism. I could continue with such counterfactuals – the trends that did not happen but might have happened in the absence of some more contingent major event. Although earlier centuries also contained crises of war and economic upheaval, they were less likely to have been so global in their implications. Perhaps also because we have more hindsight over earlier periods, we think we see more overall pattern and less contingency there. It probably did not seem that way to the actors involved.

Such singularities seem to make impossible the nomological quest for social-scientific laws and drive us toward the opposite pole of explanation, the role of the *ideographic*, the unique, in human affairs. Not only do times and places differ, but macro-processes like wars and economic booms and slumps have unique effects. Wars do have structural causes, usually plural, coming together in contingent but timely fashion. We can do quite well at explaining the different plural chains that did come together, but then we encounter human decision

making, often of small groups of people. A small group of statesmen decided to go to war in 1914, whereas one man was decisive in precipitating World War II. Neither behaved very rationally, and emotions loomed large in their decisions. Yet these decisions were also set amid deeper causal chains of militarism, interimperial conflict, and rivalry between different ideologies and economic systems. So the first distinctive challenge in writing about this period is in assessing to what extent contemporary power relations are the product of the logic of development of macrostructures and to what extent these have been redirected by both timely conjunctures producing world-historical events and individuals in positions of great power.

Combining these tendencies might suggest a model of *punctuated equilibrium*, of social change, in which in normal times capitalism, nation-states, and others evolve or develop in path-dependent ways, slowly and according to their own logics and inbuilt potentialities. They are, however, disrupted by intermittent crises that force them down new tracks – a model summarized as “long stability-short rupture” by Streeck (2009). This model is explicitly used by economists in conceptualizing long-term economic development, but it is inadequate because the logics of development of capitalism, nation-states, and others differ from each other *orthogonally* – that is, in non-determinant ways. They also occupy different geographical spaces and embody different temporal rhythms of development, and yet they do infuse each other. The task of theorizing social change is considerably more complicated and more dynamic than most prior theories have assumed.

Assessing the impact of crises involves a certain amount of counterfactual speculation – what would have happened had no war or other antecedent condition occurred. Counterfactuals, however, are always implicit in causal arguments. If we say that A caused B, we are saying both that A and then B occurred (which is a factual statement) but also that without A occurring B would not have occurred (unless some alternative cause was also present). This is a counterfactual statement involving some broader implicit speculation; I will make counterfactual logic more explicit.

The second substantive challenge is to determine the most important social structures and processes of the period. For this, I deploy my IEMP model of the four sources of social power – ideological, economic, military, and political. I contend that broad explanations are not possible without considering all four.

The Sources of Social Power

Power is the capacity to get others to do things that they would otherwise not do. To achieve our goals – whatever they are – we enter into power relations involving both cooperation and conflict with other people, and these relations generate societies. The endeavor involves three modalities of power, also used in Volumes I and II.

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- (1) We may distinguish *distributive* from *collective* power – that is, power exercised *over* others, and power secured jointly *through* cooperation with others. Most actual power relations – say, between social classes or between a state and its citizens – involve both. Workers and employers may conflict with each other, but they also need to cooperate to secure their daily bread. Collective power is of special interest in the twentieth century, which saw a colossal increase in human ability to collectively extract more resources from nature. The increasing productivity of agriculture and industry enabled a fourfold world population growth, from 1.6 billion in 1900 to almost 7 billion in 2010, with the average person being taller, heavier, living twice as long, and becoming twice as likely to be literate. These increases are rightly regarded as tremendous human achievements. Yet ironically, the increased extraction of resources from nature has also had a dark side of environmental consequences, which might even threaten human life on Earth. What hubris that would be: our greatest triumph becomes our ultimate defeat!
- (2) Power may be *authoritative* or *diffuse*. Authoritative power involves commands by an individual or collective actor and conscious obedience by subordinates. This is found most strongly in military and political power organizations, although leadership of a lesser sort exists in all power organizations. Diffused power, on the other hand, is not directly commanded, but spreads in a relatively spontaneous, unconscious, and decentered way. People are constrained to act in definite ways, but not by command. This is more typical of ideological and economic power relations, as for example in the spread of an ideology like socialism or economic markets. The constraints of markets are usually experienced as impersonal, even natural, and may become almost invisible as a power process.
- (3) Power may be *extensive* or *intensive*. Extensive power organizes large numbers of people over far-flung territories. It is the most obvious aspect of globalization. Intensive power mobilizes a high level of commitment from participants. The greatest power flows from a combination of the two, persuading or coercing more people to do more things collectively.

The most effective exercise of power combines collective and distributive, extensive and intensive, authoritative and diffuse power. That is why a single power source – say, the economy or the military – cannot alone determine the overall structure of societies. It must be admixed with other power sources. I turn at the end of Volume IV to the fundamental theoretical issue of whether one power source could be considered ultimately primary over the others. I turn now to a fuller explanation of the four sources of power. I repeat, these are organizational means by which we can efficiently attain our varied goals, whatever these may be.

(1) *Ideological Power* derives from the human need to find ultimate meaning in life, to share norms and values, and to participate in aesthetic and ritual practices with others. We seem to not be able to do without religion or more secular “isms.” I prefer the term “ideology” to the more amorphous word “culture.” Religious meaning-systems will continue to figure in this volume, as will secular ideologies like patriarchy, liberalism, socialism, fascism, nationalism, racism, and environmentalism. The power of ideological movements

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derives from our inability to attain certainty in our knowledge of the world. We fill in the gaps and uncertainties with beliefs that are not in themselves scientifically testable, but which embody our hopes and fears. No one can prove the existence of a god or the viability of a socialist or Islamist future. Ideologies become especially necessary in crises where the old institutionalized ideologies and practices no longer seem to work and alternatives offered have no track record. This is when we are most susceptible to the power of ideologists who offer us plausible but untested theories of the world.

In previous volumes, I distinguished between *transcendent* and *immanent ideologies*. Transcendent ideologies are the most ambitious. They break interstitially through existing institutions, attracting converts from many different power networks and creating their own networks, such as a new religion or fascism or green environmental movements, among many others. Immanent ideologies strengthen the emotional and moral solidarity of existing power networks. Some ideologies combine both. Racism transcends class divisions at the same time it is uniting the “white race,” as we see in Chapter 2. Max Weber (in Gerth and Mills 1946: 280) described the great ideologies of the world with a metaphor drawn from the railroad. Ideas generating “world images,” he said, were the switchmen (signalmen) of history, switching it onto a different track. This is true of transcendent and immanent ideologies.

In “The sources of social power revisited: a response to criticism” (2006: 346), I distinguished a third type, *institutionalized ideologies*, indicating only a minimal presence of autonomous ideological power. They are often hidden inside institutions, normally taken for granted or even only lurking in the subconscious. They are thus conservative, endorsing values, norms, and rituals that serve to preserve the present social order. They are found most often in very stable societies, like the West in the period from 1950 to 1980, whereas transcendent and immanent ideologies are responses to social instability and crisis. Patriarchy is a very good example of an institutionalized ideology, long taken for granted, long enduring even when under attack. This is what Marxists traditionally thought of as ideological power because they thought that social change was explained by the material level of society. This is not my view.

Powerful ideologies provide a bridge between reason, morality, and emotion. They make sense to their initiates, but they also require a leap of faith and an emotional commitment. There must be some plausibility, because an ideology would not spread otherwise, but the perception that it makes sense tugs at us morally and emotionally as well as scientifically. As Jack Snyder (2005) argues, this has the important consequence that groups infused with ideological fervor are more powerful than those who lack it. The main markers of the presence of an ideology are the claim to a total explanation of society and a better – often utopian – future as well as the conferring of qualities of good and evil on human actors and their practices. The combination enables both sacrifice and violence. The first two types of ideological power tend to be wielded

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by vanguard movements centered on younger generations, with charismatic leaders and resolute, passionate activists. I must confess to a certain degree of prejudice against the most powerful ideologies, preferring more pragmatic and compromising solutions to social problems.

Must science be considered a major ideology in modern civilization? Schroeder (2007, 2011) says not, but he argues that unlike all previous civilizations, a technology-driven rapid-discovery science now dominates all ideologies. Science, he correctly notes, is not about belief, but about certain knowledge whose findings can be replicated and refined through standardized technologies of research. Science, said Ernest Gellner, is quite distinctive from all previous forms of natural philosophy because it can actually transform the material world, and has spectacularly done so in a series of transformations of both the social and natural world, enormously enhancing the collective power of human beings, for good or ill. In this volume, I especially stress the transformations wrought by the second industrial revolution. Yet science also differs from true ideologies in its aspiration to be emotionless, and it is always subject to cold scientific refutation, unlike ideologies. Scientists themselves usually believe this, so, charlatans apart, they rarely try to command our obedience. Schroeder accepts that the relative autonomy of science also inhabits rather rarefied elite professions and research institutions with almost no capacity to mobilize social movements. The consequence, however, is that modern science and technology construct great techniques of power, but usually in the service of others. In its remarkable invention of nuclear power, for example, science has been subordinated to economic, political, and military power holders. That is why I cannot really accept Schroeder's notion that science is the third major *autonomous* structure of modern societies alongside his other two – market capitalism and the state. Science is actually distinct, anomalous, among forms of knowledge. It has had emergent properties in increasing the collective powers of human groups, but it has very little distributive power, for it places itself at the service of those who wield other sources of social power. That complicates my model of power, but then societies are always more complex than our theories.

Ideologies (and science) have a very diffuse and extensive geographical logic: they are not contained by military or economic networks of interaction because they may spread wherever human beings communicate with each other. This leads to the *revolutionary* or *liberating* qualities of ideology, the sense of freeing oneself from local power structures, more mundanely of freedom of thought. The diffuseness of ideology, however, also often gives it an open-endedness, as ideas and values from one local tradition or historical civilization mingle with those from others. This has become increasingly important in the process of globalization. Temporally, ideologies are also distinctive, in a way resembling punctuated equilibrium. An existing power structure generates its own ideology, which gradually becomes institutionalized as routine

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in the lives and beliefs of its inhabitants (although there are always dissident subcultures). When this seems no longer able to explain what is going on in the social environment, a period of ideological ferment may generate a new and powerful ideology whose adherents then change (or try to change) society fundamentally. Most people, however, cannot live intensely at the ideological level for very long, and this ideology settles down into being rather like its predecessors – an institutionalized justification for mundane and rather pragmatic behavior by social actors.

(2) *Economic Power* derives from the human need to extract, transform, distribute, and consume the produce of nature. Economic relations are powerful because they combine the intensive mobilization of labor with very extensive circuits of capital, trade, and production chains, providing a combination of intensive and extensive power and normally also of authoritative and diffused power. The first of each pair centers on production, the second on markets. Economic power relations are those that penetrate most routinely into most peoples' lives; most of us work for about one-third of every day. The social change economies bring is rarely swift or dramatic, unlike military power. It is slow, cumulative, and eventually profound.

The main organization of economic power in modern times has been industrial capitalism, whose global development is central to this volume. *Industrialization* refers to the growing division of labor and developing tools and techniques of industry. Capitalism has three main properties: (1) it endows private ownership of most economic resources on a few; (2) the bulk of workers are separated from ownership, in command only of their own labor skills, but formally free to sell their labor on open markets; (3) capitalism treats all the means of production, including labor, as commodities, tradable on markets, and this means that all four main forms of market – capital, labor, production, and consumption – are traded against each other in markets. Capitalism has been the most consistently dynamic power organization in recent times, responsible for most technological innovation and most environmental degradation. Its “forces of production,” to use Marx’s term, have developed enormously over this period. In broad terms, it is possible to identify distinct phases of their development. This period began with industrial capitalism, developed into *corporate* or *organized capitalism* in the early twentieth century, combining high productivity with rising but still quite low consumer demand, and substantially confined within national cages. Then during World War II, it became more Keynesian, combining high productivity with mass consumer demand, although still predominantly exercised within national cages and only coming to full fruition after that war (as we see in Volume IV).

This is what Schumpeter (1957) famously called “creative destruction,” whereby growth occurs through the destruction of old industries and organizational forms and the creation of new ones. However, its temporal rhythms are not quite as sudden as this might suggest. What we think of as an economic

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invention is rarely a sudden breakthrough; it is a cumulative succession of many instances of tinkering. Geographically, capitalism also brought a diffuse and fairly steady process of market expansion across the globe. Its expansion has been complex, combining national, international, and transnational networks of interaction (terms explained later). Capitalism also combines intensive with extensive power, penetrating deeply into our lives and broadly across large social spaces. *Commodification* is the term for the gradual extension of market rationality into both public and private life. The commodification of everything is only an exaggeration of a real historical process that is still ongoing in capitalism.

Capitalism's "relations of production" (again Marx's term) centers on social *classes*, groups with a common relationship to economic power resources. Classes are highly important in all human societies, including our own. Sociologists used to spend much effort trying to define exactly which class occupations and households were part of. That was misplaced ingenuity, because occupations are extremely diverse and many people have what Wright (1985) termed "contradictory class locations" – for example, many possess high skills but no capital and only a little power in economic organizations; others possess high organizational power but no capital. So I will identify classes only in broad, commonsensical terms. Naturally, therefore, classes have very fuzzy boundaries. For classes to become real social actors, they require two properties identified by Marx: being a class "in itself," definable in terms of objective relations to the means of production, but also being a class "for itself," possessing a degree of collective organization. The identity of his capitalist class, owning the major means of production and generally exhibiting clear collective intent and effective organization to preserve its own privileges, poses little problem, although at the lower reaches of property-holding it blurs into what Marxists have called the *petite bourgeoisie*. At higher reaches, it blurs into a stratum of well-rewarded but usually capital-less managers and professionals. The peasantry is relatively unproblematic, but not so the working class. To the extent that it exists, it requires not only a solid core of subaltern workers, in the past manual (blue-collar) workers, but also the existence of a labor movement pressing for its interests. The strongest working-class movements managed to draw in peasants and lower white-collar workers, too. As for the middle class, that is even less precise, and middling persons have had very varied political stances and organizations (as I showed in the case of the nineteenth century in Volume II, Chapter 17). As in everyday usage, I will plural the term to "middle classes" when I am emphasizing diversity.

The role of classes has been uneven. Class conflict between workers and their employers and peasants and their landlords figured very largely across the period of this volume, sometimes inducing revolution, although more often capitalist reform. Then, as we see in Volume IV, working-class organization and all pressure from below declined in the North of the world over the last