

Anthony Giddens

THE NATION-STATE AND VIOLENCE

Volume Two of
A Contemporary Critique of
Historical Materialism

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Introduction

This book is the second volume of three, all concerned with the relevance of historical materialism to today's world. The trilogy is not intended, however, as another contribution to the endless critical dissection of Marx's writings. Rather, it is an attempt to explore the contours of a post-Marxist analysis of contemporary society and politics. Marx's writings are of signal importance for understanding one of the most pervasive influences moulding the modern world. This influence is of course capitalism, regarded as a mode of economic enterprise that has a dynamic tendency to expansion far greater than any prior type of productive order. But capitalism is not the only force which has shaped modernity, and there are in any case cogent reasons to be dissatisfied with some of the main perspectives of Marx's portrayal of capitalist development.

Marx's discussion of the past origins and future fate of capitalism is part of an overall historical scheme the explanatory power of which is limited. The insights he provides about the nature of capitalist enterprise have to be prised free from the general framework of historical materialism, and integrated with a different approach to previous history and to the analysis of modern institutions. Treating modern societies as the culmination of a process of progressive expansion of the forces of production fails to disclose how *different* they are from all forms of traditional order. Modern 'societies' are nation-states, existing within a nation-state system. Traditional states — or what I call 'class-divided societies' — contrast very substantially with these, both in their internal characteristics and in their external relations with one another. Social scientists are accustomed to thinking of 'societies' as administrative unities with clearly defined boundaries. Class-divided societies were not like this, and if modern ones are,

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it is not because of anything intrinsic to social association in general, but a result of distinctive forms of social integration associated with the nation-state.

Historical materialism connects the emergence of both traditional and modern states with the development of material production (or what I call 'allocative resources'). But equally significant, and very often the main means whereby such material wealth is generated, is the collection and storage of information, used to co-ordinate subject populations. Information storage is central to the role of 'authoritative resources' in the structuring of social systems spanning larger ranges of space and time than tribal cultures. Surveillance — control of information and the superintendence of the activities of some groups by others — is in turn the key to the expansion of such resources.

In this book I also place a good deal of emphasis upon the role of military power in the organization of traditional and modern states. Who controls the means of violence, how complete such control is and to what ends it is deployed are plainly matters of significance in all societies with 'armed forces'. Surveillance and control of the means of violence are, however, phenomena that largely escape the purview of the most influential schools of social theory, including Marxism, both in the nineteenth century and today. They have to be studied in relation to the main preoccupations of Marxism — capitalism and class conflict — but they stand alongside them as independent influences upon the development of modernity.

There is a fourth 'institutional cluster' relevant to modernity the impact and consequences of which is largely obscured in Marxist thought. This is industrialism. One of the main debates in social theory has been between those who regard capitalism as the 'maker' of the modern world, and those who accord this perhaps dubious honour to industrialism. Thus to the Marxist interpretation of the spread of capitalism and its transcendence by socialism, there stands opposed the 'theory of industrial society', according to which both capitalism and socialism are minor variations on a major theme, the fashioning of modern social life by industrial production. This opposition is in large part a mistaken one because, although industrialism developed under the stimulus of capitalism, in various respects the two are distinct in their nature and their social consequences.

The twentieth-century world is a bloody and frightening one. I think it fair to say that Marx anticipated fierce class struggles and dramatic processes of revolutionary change — in which he was not wrong — but not the appalling military violence that has in fact characterized the present century. None of the major figures now commonly accepted as the main founders of modern social theory, including Max Weber, foresaw quite how savage and destructive would be some of the forces unleashed in current times. Weber lived to know of the carnage of the First World War, but could hardly have seen how rapidly it would be succeeded by a second war and by totalitarianism. No one could have foreseen the coming of the thermonuclear age, even if the trends that eventually led to it were well under way in the nineteenth century. These trends are to do with the development of the means of waging industrialized war. The merging of industry, technology and the means of waging war has been one of the most momentous features of processes of industrialization as a whole. But its importance has never been adequately analysed within the major traditions of social theory.

Having made such an analysis, as I attempt to do in the bulk of this study, where does it leave us in respect of the critical aspirations of which Marxism has been the main bearer? At a minimum, one must conclude: at a vast distance from the future anticipated by Marx, with few obviously available paths of moving towards it. Certainly 'the dialectical movement of history' will do nothing for us, in the sense of guaranteeing the transcendence of the problems which, as members of a global human community, we face today. We live in a world riven between extraordinary opportunity and wholesale disaster, and only the most foolishly optimistic would suppose that the former will necessarily triumph over the latter.

In order to provide systematic form to a text that spills out over large tracts of world history, I shall summarize the main claims of this study in the shape of number of basic observations. I imagine that most readers will regard some of these as contentious, but I trust that they will also find others illuminating. Of course, their meaning will only become fully clear during the course of reading the book, and they should be referred back to.

I Traditional states (class-divided societies) are essentially

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- segmental in character. The administrative reach of the political centre is low, such that the members of the political apparatus do not 'govern' in the modern sense. Traditional states have frontiers, not borders.
- II In the absolutist state we discover a break-away from traditional state forms, presaging the subsequent development of the nation-state. The concept of sovereignty, linked to the notion of impersonal administrative power, together with a series of related political ideas, become in some part constitutive of the modern state from absolutism onwards.
 - III The development of nation-states presumes the dissolution of the city/countryside relations basic to traditional states and involves the emergence of administrative orders of high intensity (associated with borders).
 - IV Nation-states are inherently polyarchic, in a sense of that term specified below. Their polyarchic character derives from their administrative concentration (achieved via the expansion of surveillance) and from the altered nature of the dialectic of control which this produces.
 - V Nation-states only exist in systemic relations with other nation-states. The internal administrative coordination of nation-states from their beginnings depends upon reflexively monitored conditions of an international nature. 'International relations' is coeval with the origins of nation-states.
 - VI Compared with traditional states, nation-states are for the most part internally pacified, such that monopoly of the means of violence is normally only indirectly the resource whereby those who rule sustain their 'government'. Military governments in modern states are quite different from traditional modes of rule in this respect. This is the valid element in the contrast between military and capitalist industrial societies drawn in nineteenth-century social theory.
 - VII The spread of capitalism is of fundamental importance to the consolidation of a novel world system from the sixteenth century onwards. Both capitalism and industrialism have decisively influenced the rise of nation-states, but the nation-state system cannot be reductively explained in

terms of their existence. The modern world has been shaped through the intersection of capitalism, industrialism and the nation-state system.

- VIII The industrialization of war is a key process accompanying the rise of the nation-state and shaping the configuration of the nation-state system. It has led to the creation of a world military order that substantially cross-cuts the divisions between 'First', 'Second' and 'Third' worlds.
- IX The development, in the twentieth century, of an ever-increasing abundance of global connections stretching across the borders of states should not be regarded as intrinsically diminishing their sovereignty. On the contrary, it is in substantial part the chief condition of the world-wide extension of the nation-state system in current times.
- X There are four 'institutional clusterings' associated with modernity: heightened surveillance, capitalistic enterprise, industrial production and the consolidation of centralized control of the means of violence. None is wholly reducible to any of the others. A concern with the consequences of each moves critical theory away from its concentration upon the transcendence of capitalism by socialism as the sole objective of future social transformations.

Some comments should perhaps be registered about the nature and scope of these arguments. The main emphasis of this book is upon providing an interpretation of the development of the nation-state in its original, i.e. 'Western', habitat. Prior to the concluding three chapters, whenever I speak of 'the nation-state', the reader should understand 'Western nation-state' and, most often, 'European nation-state'. In those final chapters I try to trace out how and why this political form has become generalized across the globe; but I make no claim to offering an exhaustive analysis of variations among states in today's world.

1

State, Society and Modern History

Power and Domination

In this opening section I outline some general notions connected with the concept of power, which will help construct basic underlying themes of the book as a whole. 'Power', along with 'agency' and 'structure', is an elementary concept in social science.¹ To be a human being is to be an agent — although not all agents are human beings — and to be an agent is to have power. 'Power' in this highly generalized sense means 'transformative capacity', the capability to intervene in a given set of events so as in some way to alter them. The logical connection between agency and power is of the first importance for social theory, but the 'universal' sense of power thus implied needs considerable conceptual refinement if it is to be put to work in the interests of substantive social research.

Such conceptual refinement needs to be of two principal sorts. On the one hand, power must be related to the resources that agents employ in the course of their activities in order to accomplish whatever they do. Resources implicated in the reproduction of social systems that have some degree of continuity — and thus 'existence' — across space and time form aspects of the structural properties of those social systems. Two types of resource can be distinguished — the allocative and the authoritative. By the first of these I refer to dominion over material facilities, including material goods and the natural forces that may be harnessed in their production. The second concerns the means of dominion over the activities of human beings themselves.² Both sources of power depend in large degree upon the management of time-space relations.

In the sociological and anthropological literature, both Marxist and non-Marxist, primacy has often been given to allocative resources in the constitution of society and in the explication of social change. Such a view is given full and direct expression, of course, in historical materialism, if that term be taken to refer to the interpretation of history that Marx outlines in the 'Preface' to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.³ 'History' there is understood in terms of the expansion of the forces of production, underlying both the institutional organization of different types of society and their processes of change. But it is by no means only in historical materialism that this sort of emphasis appears. It is characteristic of virtually all those theories that can be classified under the rubrics of 'cultural' or 'social evolutionism'. Such theories attempt to understand social change in terms of the differential adaptation of forms of society to their 'environment'. I have criticized this view extensively elsewhere, and there is no point in recapitulating that critique here.⁴ Suffice it to say that, according to the standpoint informing this book, no account of history that gives to allocative resources some sort of determining role in either social organization or social change can be defended.

To say this does not mean moving to the other extreme — placing the whole weight of the emphasis upon authoritative resources. If there are no prime movers in human history (even in the last instance) the problem for social analysis becomes that of examining a variety of relations between allocative and authoritative resources in the constitution of social systems and in the dynamics of social change.⁵

Resources do not in any sense 'automatically' enter into the reproduction of social systems, but operate only in so far as they are drawn upon by contextually located actors in the conduct of their day-to-day lives. All social systems, in other words, can be studied as incorporating or expressing modes of *domination* and it is this concept more than any other that provides the focal point for the investigation of power. Social systems that have some regularized existence across time-space are always 'power systems', or exhibit forms of domination, in the sense that they are comprised of relations of autonomy and dependence between actors or collectivities of actors.⁶ As has been exhaustively discussed in controversies over the nature of power, forms of

domination thus portrayed cannot be reduced to acts or decisions taken, or policies forged, by individual agents. Power as the capability to effectively decide about courses of events, even where others might contest such decisions, is undeniably important. But 'decisions', and 'contested policies', represent only one aspect of domination. The term 'non-decision-making' is an unhappy one to refer to the other aspect of power, but it has become quite firmly established in some sectors of political science. What matters is not just that certain decisions are not made, but that they are not even considered. Non-decision-making, in other words, is not accurately seen just as the obverse of decision-making, but as influencing the circumstances in which certain courses of action are open to 'choice' in any way at all. Power may be at its most alarming, and quite often its most horrifying, when applied as a sanction of force. But it is typically at its most intense and durable when running silently through the repetition of institutionalized practices.⁷ As I use it, therefore, 'domination' is not a concept that carries an intrinsically negative connotation.⁸

All social systems of any duration involve an 'institutional mediation of power'.⁹ That is to say, domination is expressed in and through the institutions that represent the most deeply embedded continuities of social life. But in the context of any collectivity, association or organization,¹⁰ domination is expressed as modes of *control*, whereby some agents seek to achieve and maintain the compliance of others. I shall refer to relatively stable forms of control as types of *rule*. Forms of rule are (more or less) stable relations of autonomy and dependence in social systems and are sustained by the routine practices that those in superordinate positions employ to influence the activities of others. As such they are to be analytically separated from the institutional mediation of power.¹¹ Thus, for example, a given type of bureaucratic organization may generate a high level of power in the sense of transformative capacity. This is true, for example, of the modern, large industrial corporation, as judged in terms of both the allocative and authoritative resources it commands. However, the capability of any individual, or group of individuals, to control what goes on in the organization is not a direct extension of the 'amount' of power generated. An individual may be in a 'powerful' position in the sense that he or she has the

capability to deploy a range of resources. But how far these can be used to secure specific outcomes depends upon securing whatever compliance is necessary from others.¹² The frequently stated experience of those in positions of 'high power' that what they can accomplish is hedged with very defined limits is not wholly disingenuous.

We should distinguish the 'scope' of rule from its 'intensity'.¹³ The former refers to how far actors in superordinate positions are able to control large areas of the activities of those subject to their rule. The scope of control of a managerial executive over those in lower echelons of the labour force may be quite extensive, although usually confined to whatever goes on in the sphere of 'work' only. By the intensity of control I refer to the sanctions that can be invoked to secure compliance, the most extreme being the command over the means of violence, of life and death. A variety of possible relations exist between the scope and intensity of control — a matter of great significance for the themes of this book. Thus, many traditional rulers have possessed 'complete' power over their subjects, in the sense that those subjects are supposed to obey their every command 'under pain of death'. But such power by no means yields a wide scope of actual mastery over the conduct of the subject population. Ruling groups in traditional states, as I shall argue in some detail later, lack the means of regularly influencing the day-to-day lives of their subject populations. One of the major characteristics of the modern state, by contrast, is a vast expansion of the capability of state administrators to influence even the most intimate features of daily activity.

All types of rule, then, rest upon the institutional mediation of power, but channel this through the use of definite strategies of control. Strategies of control naturally always depend in substantial degree upon the form of domination within which they are invoked. In a modern industrial setting, for instance, strategies used by managers to achieve compliance from workers operate within a framework in which the direct threat of violence or the use of force cannot be brought to bear. Much of what 'management' means in modern industry derives from this fact. Nonetheless, the resources that managers are able to draw upon to sustain control over the work-force can be focused and applied in a range of different ways. All strategies of control employed by

superordinate individuals or groups call forth counter-strategies on the part of subordinates. This phenomenon represents what I call the *dialectic of control* in social systems, something that connects back directly to the theme of human agency with which I opened this discussion. To be an agent is to be able to make a difference to the world, and to be able to make a difference is to have power (where power means transformative capacity). No matter how great the scope or intensity of control superordinates possess, since their power presumes the active compliance of others, those others can bring to bear strategies of their own, and apply specific types of sanctions. 'Self-consciousness', Hegel says, 'attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness',¹⁴ speaking of the master-slave dialectic. Hegel makes of this a teleological philosophy of history but, stripped of such grandiose pretensions, what is at issue is the capability even of the most dependent, weak and the most oppressed to have the ability to carve out spheres of autonomy of their own.

All forms of rule have their 'openings' that can be utilized by those in subordinate positions to influence the activities of those who hold power over them. One consequence of this is that technologies of power — in other words, formalized procedures of rule — rarely if ever work with the 'fixity' which on the face of things they might seem to possess. The more a social system is one in which the control exercised by superordinates depends upon a considerable scope of power over subordinates, the more shifting and potentially volatile its organization is likely to be. The literature on prisons or asylums, for example, is replete with descriptions of the 'effort-bargains' which those who administer such organizations are forced to conclude with inmates in order to make their rule effective.

All social reproduction and, therefore, all systems of power, are grounded in the 'predictability' of day-to-day routines. The predictable — that is to say, regularized — character of day-to-day activity is not something that just 'happens', it is in substantial part 'made to happen' by actors in the diverse settings of social life. Of course, actors do not do this 'consciously' in the ordinary sense of the term, although they do often discursively reflect upon the nature of the activities in which they engage. Many of the characteristics of social life that actors 'make happen' are accomplished via non-discursive 'practical consciousness'.¹⁵ That

is to say, actors routinely monitor reflexively what they do in the light of their complex knowledge of social conventions, sustaining or reproducing those conventions in the process. Since agents in all societies are 'social theorists', whose discursively articulated accounts are in some part constitutive of the social forms they reproduce in their conduct, it is never the case that they blindly enact and re-enact the routines of daily life. Even in the most traditional of cultures 'tradition' is reflexively appropriated and in some sense 'discursively understood'.

In traditional societies, however, especially in small oral cultures, 'tradition' is not known as such, because there is nothing that escapes its influence and, therefore, nothing with which to contrast it. 'History' is not understood as the use of the past to mobilize change in the future, but as the repetitiveness of 'reversible time'.¹⁶ A significant alteration in the conditions of human social existence comes about with the invention of 'history'. From then on the circumstances of social reproduction are themselves reflexively monitored in an effort to influence the form institutions assume. I take this to be the main feature that separates *organizations* from other types of collectivity. The term 'organization' will crop up a great deal in this study. An organization is a collectivity in which knowledge about the conditions of system reproduction is reflexively used to influence, shape or modify that system reproduction. All forms of state administrative bodies are organizations in this sense, for reasons I shall document at some length in what follows. In modern nation-states, however, the reflexive monitoring of system reproduction is much more highly accentuated than in any pre-existing form of state and, in addition, 'organization' characterizes many other aspects of social life.

I have earlier linked domination with the mastery of time-space. Elaborating the implications of this means giving some conceptual attention to the timing and spacing of human social activities.¹⁷ It is particularly important to emphasize the association between power and *locales*, which will also be one of the leading themes of the book. I use 'locale' in deliberate preference to the notion of 'place' as ordinarily employed by geographers, because 'place' is often only a vaguely formulated notion and because it does not usually mean the co-ordination of time as well as space. Locales refer to the settings of interaction, including the physical

aspects of setting — their ‘architecture’ — within which systemic aspects of interaction and social relations are concentrated. The proximate aspects of settings are chronically employed by social actors in the constitution of interaction, a matter of quite fundamental significance to its ‘meaningful’ qualities.¹⁸ But settings also are everywhere involved in the reproduction of institutionalized activities across wide spans of time and space. Thus, a dwelling is a locale displaying specific architectural features: these are socially relevant in so far as they are bound up with the distribution and the character of behaviour in time-space. A dwelling which has several rooms is ‘regionalized’, not just in the sense that there are various distinct ‘places’ which it thereby contains, but in the sense that the rooms are habitually used for different types of pursuit, distributed differentially in the routines of day-to-day life. I do not mean by ‘locale’, however, just settings of a fairly confined nature. Locales include internally regionalized settings of very wide time-space extension, from cities to nation-states and beyond.

The importance of locales to the theory of power can be spelled out as follows. Certain types of locale form ‘power containers’ — circumscribed arenas for the generation of administrative power. A locale is a power container in so far as it permits a concentration of allocative and authoritative resources. In what I shall call class-divided societies, castles, manorial estates — but above all cities — are containers for the generation of power. In the modern world, the administrative settings of organizations — business firms, schools, universities, hospitals, prisons, etc. — are centres for the concentration of resources. But the modern state, as nation-state, becomes in many respects the pre-eminent form of power container, as a territorially bounded (although internally highly regionalized) administrative unity.

It is possible to give some general indication of how power is generated by the ‘containment’ of resources, although naturally there are many specific differences between settings within different types of society. Power containers generate power, as has been mentioned, first and foremost through the concentration of allocative and administrative resources. The generation of allocative resources is, of course, influenced directly by forms of available technology in any society, but the level of their

concentration depends primarily upon factors creating authoritative resources. These are of the following kinds.

1 The possibilities of surveillance that settings of various kinds allow. 'Surveillance' refers to two related sorts of phenomena. One is the accumulation of 'coded information', which can be used to administer the activities of individuals about whom it is gathered. It is not just the collection of information, but its storage that is important here. Human memory is a storage device, but the storage of information is enhanced vastly by various other kinds of marks or traces that can be used as modes of recording. If writing is in all cultures the main phenomenon involved, in modern states electronic storage — tapes, records, discs, etc. — considerably expands the range of available storage mechanisms. All modes of information storage are simultaneously forms of communication, cutting across the face-to-face communication that is exhaustive of human interaction in oral cultures. The 'externalized' character of information traces inevitably severs communication from its intrinsic connection with the body and the face. But electronic communication for the first time in history separates 'immediate' communication from presence, thereby initiating developments in modern culture that I shall later argue are basic to the emergence and consolidation of the nation-state.

The other sense of surveillance is that of the direct supervision of the activities of some individuals by others in positions of authority over them. The concentration of activities within clearly bounded settings greatly enlarges the degree to which those activities can be 'watched over', and thus controlled, by superordinates. In most types of non-modern society, the possibilities of surveillance in this second sense (as in the first) are relatively limited. There are many examples of large aggregates of people being brought together in the construction of public projects, for example, the building of temples, monuments or roads. But these groupings usually only exist for a limited duration and are relatively marginal to the activities and involvements of the majority of the population. Within fairly confined areas, such as small rural communities, certain kinds of surveillance procedures can be sustained in class-divided societies and these can be linked to larger networks with varying degrees of success. Examples can be found in the role of local priests in medieval

Catholicism, or in the use of informers by the traditional Chinese state. But only in cities could direct and regular surveillance be maintained by the central agencies of the state, and then with a low degree of success compared with modern organizations. In modern organizations, either large segments of the daily lives of social actors (as in factories or offices), or substantial periods of their lives in a more 'total' setting (as in prisons, or asylums) can be subject to more-or-less continuous surveillance.

The two senses of surveillance belong quite closely together, since the collection of information about social activities can, and very often is, directly integrated with styles of supervision — something which again tends to be maximized in modern types of organization.

2 The possibilities of assembling, within definite settings, large numbers of individuals who do not spend most of their daily activity involved in direct material production. The formation of organizations, and of any substantial level of disciplinary power, depends upon the existence of specialized administrative officials of some kind. In orthodox versions of historical materialism, the early emergence of such administrative specialism is 'explained' in terms of the prior development of surplus production. But the way this explanation is often presented makes it neither plausible nor even a valid empirical description. It is hardly an explanation at all, even in the most general sense of that term, because surplus production has to be co-ordinated in some way if it is to become a resource for the generation of administrative power. However, it is also empirically wanting. If 'surplus production' means anything specific, the term must refer to material production which develops beyond what, for a given population of producers, are traditional or pre-established needs. Thus defined, surplus production is not even the necessary condition for the formation of specialized administrative apparatuses. Such organizations have very often come into being in circumstances of acute deprivation for many of the subjects of their rule — the appropriation of the 'surplus' perhaps being at the origin of that deprivation.¹⁹

As Max Weber emphasizes, the regularized 'containing' of assemblages of individuals within the settings of organizations can only be extensively achieved in a society given various other conditions in addition to the expansion of 'surplus production'. Some of these conditions are peculiar to the modern West. They

include, particularly, the disappearance of 'prebendal' forms of remuneration and the associated development of a full-blown money economy. The purely 'vocational' official is one with a salaried income, whose sources of remuneration have become wholly cut off from the use of the official position to gather material resources put to private use.

3 The facilitating of the scope and intensity of sanctions, above all the development of military power. There are two locales of overwhelming significance here, or so I shall argue — the city in class-divided societies and, in modern societies, the nation-state. The relation between military power and sanctions of law is always important. Organizations of all types develop legal rules of some sort. All forms of law, in turn, involve sanctions administered in one way or another via officials. Such administration is backed, in a direct or a more indirect manner, by the threat of the use of violence.²⁰ It will be part of my main thesis later in this book, however, that in many modern organizations — in contradistinction to what was the case in class-divided societies — the sanction of the use of violence is quite indirect and attenuated. Moreover, military power on the whole tends to become rather clearly distinct from policing power, the one turned 'externally', the other pointed 'internally'.

The first formation of permanent armed forces injects something substantially new into world history. But in all class-divided societies, no matter how strong the military forces commanded by the state, there are significant sources of armed opposition that escape the control of the central apparatus. The prominence of local war-lords, the existence of marauding nomadic groups, and all kinds of pirates and brigands, express the segmental character that class-divided societies display.

4 The creation of certain conditions that influence the formation of ideology. The system integration of class-divided societies does not depend in a significant way upon the overall acceptance of particular symbolic orders by the majority of the population within those societies. What matters is the hegemony achieved through such acceptance on the part of the members of dominant groups or classes. Concentration of activities within city *milieux* plays an important part here in more than one way. Through the expansion of surveillance, especially for example as pressed into the service of some kind of formal education, even if this is

confined to a small stratum of the literate, the influence of ideology can be considerably sharpened. But probably also the sheer physical lay-out of many traditional cities has ideological effects. In such urban forms, the city is frequently dominated architecturally by state and religious edifices, giving a visual representation of power that no doubt makes an impress upon the minds of those who move in the vicinity of them.²¹

The Concept of the State: Preliminary Remarks

'State' has two senses in ordinary language, but the ambiguity is not a particularly worrying one for social theory. 'The state' sometimes means an apparatus of government or power, sometimes the overall social system subject to that government or power. The two usages are not confusing in most contexts, but where they are a terminological distinction has to be observed between them. Thus I shall speak of 'the state apparatus' when I mean the administrative organs of government and 'society' or 'culture' when I mean the encompassing social system. Both 'society' and 'culture' have their own ambiguities. So far as the former is concerned, a word of caution is required. 'Society' has often been understood by sociologists, implicitly or otherwise, as a clearly bounded system with an obvious and easily identifiable set of distinguishing traits. But while this is true of modern nation-states, it is very often not the case with other types of societies, whether these are 'states' or small localized groups.²²

All forms of state apparatus consist of a plurality of organizations in the sense in which I have outlined that term above, but for many purposes it is also worth treating that apparatus as a single organization. This is indeed the first characteristic I wish to single out as definitive of the state in general. *All states involve the reflexive monitoring of aspects of the reproduction of the social systems subject to their rule.* We should be careful to distinguish this from the view of the state set out by writers such as Durkheim. Durkheim takes as the main feature of the state its role as an organ of communication with the rest of society. 'The state', he says, is 'the organ of social thought'. This does not imply, he goes on to add, 'that all social thought springs from the state'. One source is to be found in 'the sentiments, ideals, beliefs that the society has worked out

collectively and with time'; the other lies in the 'thought processes' of the state. 'There is something spontaneous, automatic, something unconsidered, about day-to-day social life', Durkheim writes. But 'deliberation and reflection, on the other hand, are features of all that goes on in the organ of government . . . There all is organised and, above all, organised increasingly to prevent changes being made without due consideration.'²³ Most of this, I think, is correct. But Durkheim goes on to suppose that the state thereby inevitably represents the interests of those it rules, save in certain exceptional and 'pathological' circumstances. He treats modern democratic state forms too much as a simple extension of state power in general and he also underestimates how far the state apparatus can become a source of power independent of the rest of 'society'.

Durkheim refuses to regard as characteristic of states just those phenomena that, for Weber, distinguish the state from other organizations. The definition of 'state' that Weber offers involves three main elements: (i) the existence of a regularized administrative staff able (ii) to sustain the claim to the legitimate monopoly of control of the means of violence and (iii) to uphold that monopoly within a given territorial area. While Weber's definition highlights characteristics (violence and territoriality) that Durkheim was surely wrong not to regard as characteristic of states in general, we cannot be wholly satisfied with it.²⁴ Weber defines the state in terms worked out first of all with reference to the modern state, generalizing them backwards as it were. 'The concept of the state', he says bluntly, 'has only in modern times reached its full development', so 'it is best to define it in terms appropriate to the modern type of state, but at the same time, in terms which abstract from the values of the present day, since these are particularly subject to change'.²⁵ The trouble with this procedure is that it tends to minimize differences between traditional and modern states in respect of the very features he singles out. For, as I shall try to indicate later, only in modern nation-states can the state apparatus generally — not, of course, universally — lay *successful* claim to the monopoly of the means of violence, and only in such states does the administrative scope of the state apparatus correspond directly with territorial boundaries about which that claim is made. The appropriation of the right to monopolize the means of violence and the association of this with

some kind of conception of territoriality are characteristics of states in general. But we have to be careful to accentuate 'claim' in the first part and to recognize that the territorial element may be quite ill-defined as regards the second.

Weber not only defines the state in terms of control of the means of violence, but does the same for the 'political', which is a far wider category. A 'political' organization, according to Weber, cannot be specified in terms of the ends to which it is devoted. There cannot be a satisfactory 'substantive' definition of the political, because political organizations, including states, have been concerned with all sorts of different activities. 'All the way from provision for subsistence to the patronage of art, there is no conceivable end which *some* political association has not at some time pursued.'²⁶ The only feature which all political groups have in common is the means they employ, namely the use of force. But, as Weber himself points out, the use of force, or of the threat of its use, as a sanction is not confined to organizations that would usually be thought of as 'political'. Force 'has been used freely by kinship groups, household groups, consociations and, in the Middle Ages, under certain circumstances by all those entitled to bear arms'.²⁷

I shall define the 'political' in the following way. All human interaction, as I have argued at some length in other sources, involves the communication of meaning, the operation of power (the use of resources) and normative modes of sanctioning (including the use of physical violence or the threat of its use).²⁸ In the production/reproduction of interaction, agents draw upon corresponding structural elements of social systems: signification (meaning), domination (power) and legitimation (sanctions). As implicated in the reproduction of social systems, these provide a way of categorizing institutions that can be represented as follows:

S — D — L	Symbolic orders/modes of discourse
D(auth) — S — L	Political institutions
D(alloc) — S — L	Economic institutions
L — D — S	Law/modes of sanction

The 'political' is not defined here in a substantive way. Nor does it inevitably concern the use of force. The 'political' aspect of organizations concerns their capability of marshalling authoritative resources or what I shall call *administrative power*.

All organizations have political features. But only in the case of states do these involve the consolidation of military power in association with control of the means of violence within a range of territories. A state can be defined as a political organization whose rule is territorially ordered and which is able to mobilize the means of violence to sustain that rule. Such a definition is close to that of Weber, but does not accentuate a claimed monopoly of the means of violence or the factor of legitimacy.

It should be noted that several of the major concepts associated with political theory, as developed from the sixteenth century onwards — and frequently generalized to all states — do not appear in the foregoing discussion. In particular, I make no mention of sovereignty or of the significance of popular representation. My reasons for excluding these are bound up in an intrinsic way with the main themes of the book. These concepts do not originate merely as a new descriptive language of rule, which can be generalized back to pre-existing state forms. Like the very notion of ‘government’, they signal the emergence of a novel political formation. More than this, I shall argue, they become key elements of what the modern state is — they help constitute its very distinctiveness as compared with traditional states.

All states — as state apparatuses — can be differentiated from the wider societies of which they are part. What is ‘outside’ the scope of the state has, since the Enlightenment, been understood in varying senses as ‘civil society’. I shall have more to say about this later, but for the time being it is important to enter some early qualifications about the use of the notion. Let me concentrate here on the concept as it can be traced in the relation between Hegel and Marx. For Hegel, the state is the final development in the emergence of a series of ‘ethical communities’ in the course of social evolution, the others being the family and civil society. Hegel’s views on these matters are by no means wholly consistent, but the main thread of what he has to say is that the state actualizes and furthers forms of ‘the universal’ which are lacking in society, particularly the *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* of modern times. The latter is largely composed of atomistic, self-seeking individuals. Civil society cannot exist without the state, and in virtue of its nature cannot achieve ‘universal freedom’. The modern state embodies reason, not by absorbing civil society but

by guarding certain of the universal qualities upon which it is predicated. The state is 'the Universal that has expressed its actual rationality', representing 'the identity of the general and the particular will'. It is 'the embodiment of concrete freedom, in which the individual's particular interests have their complete development, and receive adequate recognition of their rights'.²⁹

In 'reversing Hegel', Marx argues that the state rests upon civil society, which it does not transcend but whose class composition it reflects, and he extends the concept of civil society to include not just the 'economic', but everything lying outside the immediate sphere of the state apparatus itself. The consequence, however, is a fatal flaw both in the resulting interpretation of the state/civil society relation and in the presumption that the state can be superseded in socialism. 'Civil society' now becomes something distinct from the state in its origin and nature, to which the state owes its own existence and form. This view sacrifices an important part of Hegel's insight into *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, whatever else may be dubious about his conception of the state as the 'realization of the universal'. For Hegel sees that 'civil society', as *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, is in substantial part created by the (modern) state or, put more accurately, that the two come into existence in conjunction with one another.

The importance of this is not just that Hegel accentuates the independent power of the political, as against Marx's tendency to economic reductionism. The point is that, with the formation of the modern state, 'civil society' is no longer that which co-existed with previous state forms. In class-divided societies there are large spheres of society which retain their independent character in spite of the rise of the state apparatus. That is essentially what I mean by saying that the political centre lacks the capacity to regularly shape the day-to-day lives of those who are its citizens. It is also why, in class-divided societies, 'city' and 'countryside', while in some ways interdependent, have a contrasting and distinctive character as compared with one another. The 'countryside' is not exactly the same as 'civil society' but, nonetheless, much of what that concept refers to is located there, in the spheres of agrarian production and local community life. With the rise of the modern state, and its culmination in the nation-state, 'civil society' in this sense simply disappears. What is 'outside' the scope of the administrative reach of the state

apparatus cannot be understood as institutions which remain unabsorbed by the state.

Because of the difficulties to which the notion of civil society gives rise, I shall not employ it in the remainder of the book. I shall want to emphasize the significance of the elimination of the 'countryside' with the rise of modern urbanism, which I shall connect directly to the nature of the nation-state.

State, Nation-State and Military Power in Social Theory

At this point we have to shift conceptual gears somewhat, and consider briefly what appear to be perplexing problems in the sociology of knowledge, applied to sociology itself. By common agreement, 'society' is the object of study of sociology — more specifically, that form of society associated with the modern era. Understood as a bounded unity, 'society' here refers to the nation-state. But very little attention has been given in social theory to examining the nature of such a phenomenon. Why should this be?

There is a further oddity about the sociological enterprise as it is usually practised today. Opening any textbook of sociology, the reader will find there discussions of most modern institutions — the family, class, deviance, etc. But it is very unlikely that he or she will discover any discussion of military institutions, or of the impact of military violence and war upon modern society. Much of the same is true of more rarified treatises on social theory, which concentrate upon capitalism, industrialism and so on.³⁰ Yet who, living in the twentieth century, could for a moment deny the massive impact which military power, preparation for war, and war itself, have had upon the social world?

To explain what on the face of things seem extraordinary lapses in sociological thought, we have to look back to the influence of nineteenth-century social thought upon theoretical thinking in the social sciences. I think it true to say that we live today in circumstances for which the traditional sources of social theory have left us quite unprepared, especially those forms of social theory associated broadly with liberalism and with socialism. We live in a world dominated by the nation-state form, in which a fragile equality in weaponry possessed by the two most powerful nation-states is the main brake upon global violence