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Violence, power and Nation-States: a sociological assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

Even though war and violence have been a near universal feature of human history and a decisive component in the formation of the modern social order, most classical and contemporary sociology has tended to shy away from the study of the gory origins and nature of modernity. This is perhaps most apparent in the sociological accounts of state power where collective violence has generally either been ignored or reduced entirely to its strategic dimension. In other words, while the consensualist approaches to power have principally neglected its violent underpinnings, the conflict and competition oriented theories were inclined to treat violence as a mere means to acquire or uphold power. However once in action collective violence regularly attains its own dynamics which in turn can change the dynamics of the entire social order. Collective violence in its widest and historically most prevalent form, warfare, generates its own dialectics of unpredictability. It is this autonomy and contingency of violence, or what Clausewitz (1997:66-9) calls the friction of war, that transforms social life for good. Hence, violence is often, if not always, much more than just a tool of power. It is one of the essential constituents of human subjectivity, and of modern subjectivity in particular, since modernity as we know it would be unthinkable without violence.

This paper explores this intrinsic structural vibrancy be-

tween power and violence in modernity. As in the modern era violence tends to be almost exclusively monopolized by the state apparatuses, the focus is in particular on the relationship between violence and power of the nation-state. The first part of the chapter reflects briefly on the classical sociological understandings of power and violence, with the particular spotlight on the contributions of Weber, Treitschke, Hintze and Schmitt. The second part provides a critical survey of the leading contemporary approaches in the field including those of Tilly, Mann, Poggi, and Collins. The final part of the chapter briefly sketches an alternative sociological account of coercion, power and nation-state by stressing the ideological underpinnings of this relationship.

2. THE NATION-STATE, VIOLENCE AND MODERNITY: THE CLASSICAL VIEWS

Despite the vast epistemological differences espoused in classical sociological theories of modernity, there was a near universal consensus that the progression of modernity entailed the inevitable diminishing of collective brutality and mass killing. Inspired by Enlightenment ideals, sociology envisaged the birth of a new social order built on reason, truth and progress where there was no room for large scale human sacrifice. For this reason alone classical sociology exhibited little or no analytical patience for the study of collective violence. This neglect was not confined only to culturalist or consensualist perspectives exemplified by the work of Comte, Durkheim, Simmel or Mead, but was also integral to the more materialist and conflict oriented theories such as those of Marx, Pareto and even Spencer and Weber.

While Marx clearly adopted a militarist discourse of collective (class) struggle and revolutionary violence as essen-

tial to class conflict, these were largely seen as linked to dialectical laws of history operating outside of individual or collective will. As class struggle was linked to the transformation in the modes of production and their ownership, so the central focus was not on killing or incapacitating the bourgeoisie, as in real war, but rather on appropriating and redistributing their possessions. The language of violence was used either as metaphor (i.e. 'class war' or 'cheap prices as the heavy artillery of bourgeoisie' (Marx and Engels, 1998:41-2) or in the context of the extraordinary processes accelerating the inexorable arrival of a peaceful communist order. Collective violence was associated almost exclusively with the brief final stage of revolutionary upheaval: 'when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class... assumes such a violent, glaring character... (Marx and Engels, 1998: 45).

Similarly Pareto, Spencer and Weber devoted little attention to the analysis of collective violence. Spencer did develop an influential typology that distinguished militant from industrial societies, while Pareto discussed the use of force by 'lions' in his theory of the circulation of elites, and Weber become renowned for his coercive definition of the state, yet none of these thinkers showed much interest in the extensive study of the complex relationships between power and violence. While for Spencer collective violence was confined to the militant stage of human evolutionary development, which for him was seen as evaporating with the arrival of industrialism, for Pareto violence was nothing more than one of available means utilised by various elites to acquire or maintain a hold on power. Finally, despite Weber's emphasis on the coercive character of social and political life, there is little empirical and even less theoretical exploration of collective violence in his work. For

example, in as in his account of modernity we find not physical carnage and irrationality but an abundance of rules and the overproduction of rationality. In other words a great majority of classical sociologists were either ignorant of the study of collective violence - seeing it as a phenomenon of pre-industrial epochs - or they simply reduced violence to no more than a particular method or resource for pursuing some other economic, political or cultural goals. Collective violent action is never analysed as a sui generis process but only as a second order reality; an instrumental or strategic device for accomplishing specific individual or group interests.

The only prominent exception to this rule was the so called German militaristic tradition of social thought[1] . Grounded in Leopold von Ranke's historical romanticism and idealism and underpinned by the peculiar geopolitical position of Germany, and particularly Bismark's Prussia in the 19th century, a number of influential German intellectuals became preoccupied with the role of power and violence in the historical processes of nation-state creation. While Ranke's legacy imprinted an intellectual hostility upon the Enlightenment's universalism and rationalism, including its scientific methodology and causality which were firmly rejected in favour of historical uniqueness, the Prussian statist heritage moulded their reverence of the nation-state and their emphasis on the importance of foreign policy in understanding social relations. Some of these authors were also directly or indirectly influenced by the emerging Darwinian paradigm of universal evolutionary struggle for survival, such as L. Gumplowicz or G. Ratzenhofer while others such as F. Oppenheimer and A. Rustow attempted to reconcile their analytical and historical statist analyses with their open political or ethical anarchism and anti-statism. Although there were many influential representatives of this bellicose tradition

of thought, three social thinkers in particular stand out in terms of their direct influence on the contemporary historical sociology: Heinrich von Treitschke, Carl Schmitt and Otto Hintze.

Treitschke was both an academic and a prominent public figure whose ideas left their mark on several generations of German intellectuals in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For Treitschke power is for the most part equalised with the ability of the nation-state to pursue its will. In fact the state is defined as power: 'the state is the people legally united as an independent power' or 'the state is the public power of offence and defence' (Treitschke 1914: 9,12). In this view the state is completely anthropomorphised, reified and essentialised as it acquires fixed and unchangeable human like abilities – personality, will, and needs. In his own words: 'if we remember that the essence of this great collective personality is power, then it is in that case the highest moral duty of the State to safeguard its power' (Treitschke, 1914:31). Not only is it that in this understanding there is no power outside of, or above the state, but also the state's raison d'etre is the accumulation, maintenance and utilisation of power. As he emphasises 'Power is the principle of the State, as Faith is the principle of the Church, and Love of the family.' (Treitschke 1914: 12). In this account the state performs two essential functions: within its borders it administrates justice while outside of its borders it fights wars. As a sovereign entity its power has no limits either internally or externally as the state can declare wars or suppress rebellions when and how it pleases. Moreover 'without war there would be no state at all' as states are created exclusively through warfare (Treitschke 1914: 21). Contrary to Enlightenment principles Treitschke (1914: 39) argues that states are not created on the basis of people's sovereignty but in fact 'against the will of the people'. It is the experience of war that moulds individu-

als into nation-states: 'only in war a people becomes in very deed a people' (Davis, 1915: 150). And in the final instance it is the possession of the army that defines the state. As Treitschke (1914:100) puts it succinctly: 'the state is no Academy of Arts, still less a Stock Exchange; it is power, and therefore it contradicts its own nature if it neglects the army'. As with other representatives of the Prussian historical school deeply influenced by Hegelian teleology, such as Droysen or Duncker, Treitschke understands history as an ethical process where the success of a particular state, defined largely by its ability to win wars, is interpreted as an indicator of its higher morality. The state, and particularly the modern nation-state, is a moral absolute that stands above individuals, that possesses omnipotent powers, and that shapes its existence through eternal conflict with other states.

Otto Hintze was a student of Treitschke which is evident in the way his early work occasionally exhibits 'a mystical belief in the state as a higher entity with a life of its own' (Gilbert 1975:13). However, despite his strong emphasis on state power and the importance of foreign policy and warfare in the formation of modern order, Hintze developed a much more sophisticated approach to the study of power and collective violence. Unlike Treitschke's normativist militarism and glorification of state and war, Hintze begins to explicate what is essentially a historical sociology of power transformation. Tracing the historical development of the constitutional state Hintze (1975:181) argues that 'all state organisation was originally military organisation, organisation for war'. The roots of representative political institutions such as assemblies are to be found in the congregation of warriors as membership in a political community was determined by one's ability to fight wars. By extensive exploration of the structure and origin of the anci-

ent Greek and Roman political institutions, the European feudal system, the 13th and 14th century Standstaat, and the absolutist orders of 18th and early 19th century, Hintze concludes that the two determining historical factors of state creation are the structure of social classes and the external ordering of the states. Both of these factors are linked to warfare as external and internal conflict are regularly inversely proportional. As Hinze (1975:183-4) points out with respect to the example of Rome: 'wherever the community was sufficiently adaptable, as in Rome, the pressure of the foreign situation forced a progressive extension of the citizenry with political rights, because greater masses of soldiers were needed. It was at heart this joint operation of external pressure and internal flexibility that enabled Rome to progress from city-state to world empire'. He identifies three dominant historical moments in the transformation of state and military power: a) the tribal and clan system where 'the state and the army are virtually identical units', and often underpinned by kin solidarity and a substantial degree of social equality; b) the feudal epoch which changed nature of warfare through a shift from non-professional mass infantry to the heavily armed professional cavalry, while a looser central authority with a multiple pyramid structure gave way to a rigid hierarchical and eventually hereditary social structure; and finally c) the age of militarism where the expansion of warfare created habitual fiscal crises thus prompting tax and state centralisation, the development of the universal military service ('a nation in arms') and the constitutional state structure defined by new egalitarian principles where 'the division between warriors and the citizenry -the fighters and the feeders- was overcome (Hintze, 1975:207). In this view the modern, or as he calls it the militarist, era is even more prone to collective violence as individuals do not fight as mercenaries or servants of

a monarch but are socialised to see their nation-state as a supreme moral authority, 'a community, a corporate collective personality' worth dying for. In other words, for Hintze (1975:199), just as for Treitschke, it was the 'power politics and balance-of-power politics' that created 'the foundations of modern Europe'.

Although Carl Schmitt was a jurist and legal rather than social theorist his theory of the political is an integral part of the militarist tradition. Just like Treitschke and Hintze Schmitt emphasises the conflictual, coercive and power driven nature of social life. However, unlike the other two thinkers he understands power and the political in much broader terms than state power alone. Not only is it that political action historically precedes state formation but also once democratisation takes off and state and society fully develop they permeate each other and in this situation 'what had been up to that point affairs of state become thereby social matters, and, vice versa, what had been purely social matters become affairs of state' (Schmitt 1996:22). For Schmitt the political can not be defined only negatively -as an antithesis of the religious, the cultural or the economic- but it requires its own positive definition. Echoing Treitschke's principle association between faith and church, love and family, and power and state Schmitt (1996:26) argues that if the realm of morality is characterised by a distinction between good and evil, economics by profitable and unprofitable, and aesthetics by beautiful and ugly, than the concept of the political also necessitates an absolute categorical distinction. In his view this ultimate distinction of the political is between friend and enemy. In other words the political is to be disassociated from the ethical and studied in its own terms: 'The political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic com-

petitor... but he is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; ...existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible' (Schmitt, 1996:27). The two are understood by Schmitt not as symbols or metaphors but as essential and existential categories of social action. Political action is embedded in antagonisms and in the last instance politics is a form of warfare[2]: if there is no external threat to maintain the friend-enemy distinction at the level of sovereign states this polarisation is likely to replicate itself in the domestic sphere where party politics becomes deeply antagonistic. However the ultimate potency of the political is rooted in its potential virulence: 'The friend, enemy, and combat concepts receive their real meaning precisely because they refer to a real possibility of physical killing. War follows from enmity. War is the existential negation of the enemy' (Schmitt, 1996:33). Hence as power politics and conflict are cornerstones of social life one can never eradicate the friend/enemy distinction without obliterating political life itself.

Deemed in part to be responsible for the ideological justification of the expansionist and blinkered policies of the German state in two world wars, this bellicose tradition of social though was largely rejected, suppressed and seen as ethically unsustainable in the post WWII context. More than anything else mainstream social theory and sociology remained convinced that such militarism has no explanatory relevance in the contemporary world. As a result, for most of the second half of 20th century, sociological theory was dominated by varieties of non-pugnacious theories of social change such as structural functionalism and neo-Marxism. It seemed that the militarist tradition was no more than a obscure tangent in the history of social thinking.

However if the arguments developed by Treitschke, Hintze,

Schmitt and other representatives of this school of thought are read and interpreted as sociology rather than ontology or ethics than they still have much to offer in explaining the historical bonds between power and collective violence. In other words, if one removes the trappings of essentialism, reificatory and moralist discourse and the determinist logic of argumentation it is possible to build on the insights of this tradition to articulate a potent historical sociology of power and violence. And in fact much more implicitly than explicitly this has occurred in the works of some leading contemporary historical sociologists. From early in the 1980s and onwards, that is, as the Marxist and functionalist paradigms were exhausted, sociology witnessed a significant revival of 'militarist' thought. However in contrast to the normative or ontological militarism of the late 19th and early 20th century, this was an explanatory militarism which attempted to move away from overly economistic and culturalist interpretations of social change by emphasising the violent foundations of modernity.

3. NATION-STATES AND VIOLENCE IN CONTEMPORARY HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY

The most influential contemporary historical sociologists of power such as Michael Mann, Charles Tilly, Randall Collins and Gianfranco Poggi rarely if ever make direct reference to Treitschke, Schmitt, Hintze or any other representative of militarist thought. Instead if a link to intellectual predecessors is made, then it is regularly to Max Weber as a 'founding father' of both the comparative historical method and a macro social theory which goes beyond narrow economism and culturalism, thus placing coercion at the heart of social theory. In this context they all uphold Weber's definitions of power and state - both of which underline the coercive nature of these social entities.

However although Weber emphasises the forceful, almost zero sum, character of power relations, and describes the state in terms of the monopoly of physical force[3] , he does not provide either a coherent sociological theory of state power nor of collective violence. Weber did develop a highly influential typology of power stratification which forms a backbone for some of the contemporary theories of power. Nevertheless, apart from a few fragmentary notes, there is too little analysis to account for a full blown theory of collective violence and the state power in the way it is invoked by leading contemporary historical sociologists. Rather Weber's definitional emphasis on the role of violence was less his own creation than a reflection of his times, together with the esprit de corps of German academia which was heavily influenced by militarist thought. In some respects Weber provided a morally acceptable face to the militarist tradition: lending to it his impeccable intellectual credentials through which the key arguments of the militarist tradition were 'smuggled' and revived in the contemporary context, and with little or no apparent consequences. It is much safer and morally responsible to be an intellectual descended of Weber than Treitschke. However it is Treitschke, Hintze and Schmitt's emphasis on the military origins of state, the view of state power as autonomous and omnipotent, the decisive role of warfare in historical transformations, and the conflictual nature of human sociability that lie at heart of the contemporary historical sociology of power. Despite his Nietzschean invocation concerning the will and glory of the state's power prestige, Weber (1978:910-11) largely ignores the broader geopolitical context in which states emerge and operate. Although he defines state power in terms of territoriality and a monopoly of violence he does not explore the exogenous context in which they transpire. However, the modern state does not appear or

function in a geopolitical vacuum, and its very existence is premised on the mutual recognition from other such states. And it is from this very Treitschkeian rather than Weberian angle that the contemporary theories of state power develop. Hence if we examine closely their arguments it is possible to see that there is a direct link between contemporary historical sociologists of power and the classical militarist tradition of thought.

Charles Tilly's (1975, 1985, 1992) entire life work is built upon the task of explicating the relationship between the birth and expansion of state power with the use of large scale violence. Although he defines power in relational terms by insisting on its 'incessantly negotiated character', his focus is firmly on the conflictual and asymmetrical dimension of power relations: 'Power is an analyst's summary of transactions among persons and social sites: we can reasonably say X has power over Y if, in the course of a stream of interaction between X and Y, 1) a little action from X typically elicits a large response from Y, and 2) their interaction delivers disproportionate benefit to X' (Tilly, 1999:344). More specifically, his focal point is on what he sees as a dominant form of power in modernity – the power of the nation-state. Although throughout human history enormous power was often concentrated in the hands of a few individual despots, tyrants and emperors, it is the arrival of modernity that for the first time provided structural and organizational capabilities not only for the concentration of, but also for a monopoly over, the coercive power channeled through the institutions of the nation-state. To explain the gradual emergence and eventual dominance of this form of power Tilly traces its historical origins to 17th century Europe where the sheer cost of prolonged military campaigns on the part of European monarchs led to the rapid centralization, territorialisation and bureaucratisation of rule. In other words,

directly echoing Hintze, Tilly (1985:170-2) argues that 'war makes states', or more precisely, that 'war making, extraction, and capital accumulation interacted to shape European state making'. As with Treitschke, Tilly (1992:1) analyses states primarily as 'coercion-wielding organisations' which possess ultimate power over a particular territory. In early modernity warfare proved to be the most efficient mechanism of social control, state expansion, capital accumulation and the extraction of resources. As a consequence modernity was a witness to the proliferation of mass scale violence with wars gaining in intensity and brutality, with 20th century -with its 250 wars, causing over 100 million deaths- by far the bloodiest in recorded history (Tilly 2003:55). Following in footsteps of Treitschke and Hintze, Tilly sees war making as the most important state activity through which state power acquired unprecedented autonomy and external geopolitical strength, while simultaniousely pacifying its domestic realm. The monopoly over the legitimate use of violence within a particular territory develops as a direct outcome of intensification of inter state warfare. The Schmittian distinction between friend and enemy emerges fully only in the context of modern state-building, as enmity becomes displaced outside of the borders of a nation-state and as private violence is largely eradicated through severe policing and social delegitimisation. War and the preparations for war are potent generators of dramatic social change, the offshoot of which is the development of both an extensive state apparatus as well as a vibrant civil society. Through warfare the state advanced its fiscal administration, courts and other legal institutions, regional administration and financial infrastructure whereas greater popular mobilization, including universal conscription, led towards the steady extension of various political and social rights to a wider population, thus

enhancing civil society. To sum up, for Tilly, as with Hintze and Treischke, the concentration and monopolization of power in the institutions of the modern nation-state was a direct product of extensive war making.

Although Michael Mann (1986, 1993) has been nearly universally regarded as the neo-Weberian sociologist[4] his theory of state power owes as much to Treitschke, Hintze, and Schmitt as it does to Weber. Similar to Tilly, Mann moves the focus of sociology from society to state as state autonomy and its geopolitical environment largely determine the condition of existence of a particular society. Instead of a unitary and inflexible notion of society that dominates much of social science, Mann (1986:2) prefers to speak of 'multiple overlapping and intersecting power networks'. In other words in a Treitschkean vein, but with much more in the way of reflexivity, and much less in the way of teleology Mann posits social power and state expansion at the center of societal change. A social world is ordered first and foremost as a conglomerate of intertwined power networks. More specifically social power is analysed along the axis of four central and interrelated sources: political, economic, military and ideological power. Although they are treated as autonomous institutional and organizational forms, Mann (1986:2) also contends that they are 'overlapping networks of social interaction' that 'offer alternative organizational means of social control'. Unlike Weber though much like Hintze, Mann separates the political and the military, thereby treating militarism as a distinct organizational capacity. As he recently puts it, by military power he means 'the social organization of concentrated lethal violence' (Mann 2006:351). Even though states have originated and developed their organizational might primarily through warfare, state power is not to be reduced to its military capabilities. While the primary function

of states throughout history was to fight wars and balance geopolitical arrangements, and though this is still a potent generator of state activity and its authority, historically the administrative and military modes of control have rarely acted as one indivisible entity. As a result the modern nation-state is a forceful war making machine, but this is not its only source of strength. In other words the omnipotence of a nation-state in modernity is derived from its military might, economic control of material resources, and ideological legitimacy. However, most of all its institutional supremacy is rooted in its territorialized organizational potency. For Mann (1993:9, 2006:352), just as for Treitschke and Schmitt, and again very unlike Weber, 'political power means state power'. The ascendancy of the political arises from the state's monopolistic, centralized and institutionalized control over a particular territory. The steady rise of this administrative power of state is linked to the historical process of what Mann (1986:112-14) calls social caging whereby rulers have gradually imposed restrictions on individual freedoms in exchange for economic resources and political and military protection, in this way simultaneously generating mechanisms of social stratification and triggering the long term process of institutional and administrative centralization. While in the early historical periods social caging was fostered by the artificial irrigation of agriculture in enclosed river-valley civilizations, in the early modern era this process reinforced tight administration of nation-states which eventually created an institutional shell for the arrival of democracy. In a profoundly Hintzean way Mann (1988) argues that citizenship rights were historically shaped by the interests of economic, political and military elites who controlled the state whereby extension of civil and political rights was directly linked to deep fiscal crises of the state and the introduction of univer-

sal conscription. The democratization of the state in modernity, including the extension of the universal franchise and welfare reforms, was in many respects a direct outcome of the mass mobilization of warfare. According to Mann (1986) the political power, that is state power, has two main forms - despotic and infrastructural. Whereas despotic power stands for the rulers unconstrained action exercised without negotiation with civil society (i.e. the unlimited powers of Roman Emperor), infrastructural power is reflected in state's ability to permeate society through its institutional mechanism of control such as its capacity to tax without consent, to conscript its citizenry in times of war, to store and use information on individual citizens, to enforce its laws on the territory it controls and so on. With the expansion of modernity, the processes of democratization, and liberalization the state gradually transformed from being despotically strong and infrastructurally weak into being despotically weak and infrastructurally strong.

Even though Gianfranco Poggi is nominally considered as one of the most Weberian of all contemporary political sociologists, and regards himself as such (Poggi 2001:12-14), his account of power and violence is really much closer to Schmitt and Treitschke than Weber, while his understanding of the origins of state power is distinctively Hintzean. Even though he follows Weber's tripartite division between political, economic and ideological power, for the most part, his interpretation of social power overemphasises the coercive character of domination and as such is only partially Weberian. Unlike Weber who stresses the administrative and juridical foundations of state power and attributes great importance to contents of various religious doctrines and especially to the distinctive form of rationalisation that emerged in medieval Christian Europe, Poggi concentrates almost exclusively on the violent sources of

social power. And whereas Weber writes about political power in general terms, including its various modalities (domination, legitimacy, authority, status, coercion etc.), for Poggi (2001:30) political power is constituted and exercised exclusively in reference to coercive actions: 'What qualifies the power ...as political is the fact that it rests ultimately upon, and intrinsically... refers to, the superior's ability to sanction coercively the subordinate's failure to comply with commands'. In other words political power can not be properly defined without reference to organised violence. Or as he recently put it, and in very stark terms: '[ancient Greeks] did not subscribe to my own bloody-minded identification of politics with violence' (Poggi, 2006: 137). While for Weber violence is by and large just a means of politics, for Poggi violence is its essence. Reminiscent of Treitschke, Poggi (2001:31) writes about 'the harsh material basis of primordial political experience' and echoing Schmitt, he argues that political power is anthropologically grounded in a capacity to inflict physical pain, suffering and death and so, in the last instance politics is unthinkable without violence[5]. In this view all forms of political power, including 'even discursively generated laws' ultimately require coercive sanctioning. In other words to command obedience presupposes the threat of violence. The development of technology expands the capability of human beings to kill and injure other humans both it terms of scope (i.e. a fiercest tiger can only kill handful of animals with his teeth and claws in one go, while by detonating a nuclear bomb a single human can annihilate millions) and form (i.e. devising a variety of strategies and methods for slaughter). This expansion of violence directly affects political power, as in Poggi's account the two are intrinsically connected, thus simultaneously extending the range and modes of political domination. With the birth of modern state structures political

power, being rooted in the monopolistic and legitimate control of violence, multiplies exponentially. The fact that rulers in modern nation-states (in the West) are institutionally constrained in their use of violence while pursuing political goals does not mean that violence disappears with modernity. Instead as Poggi (2001:53) argues 'the political system's superior capacity to use violence as a means of enforcement is assumed and kept in the background by institutionalization…,[and] such settled social circumstances are in turn the product of wanton and brutal violence, however occasionally exercised'. Adopting Hintzean analysis Poggi (2004:99) understands the modern state-making process through the prism of evolving warfare: 'From the beginning, the modern state was shaped by the fact of being essentially intended for war-making, and primarily concerned with establishing and maintaining its military might'. With his accentuation of violence as a central feature of both social power and state building, Poggi's account remains inextricably wedded to the classical militarist tradition of social thought.

Randall Collins is almost unique among contemporary historical sociologists in his attempt to reconcile the macro and micro levels of power analysis as he integrates large-scale structural historical study of state formation and geopolitical changes with the face-to-face interactional exploration of social conflict. Situating conflict at the heart of social relations Collins (1975, 1986, 1999) explains social action with reference to technological change, available resources, shared experiences of privilege, communication and cooperational networks and collective subjective perceptions, but most of all to status struggle. Adopting a very Hobbesian position (though with a Weberian twist); Collins tells us that 'Life is basically a struggle for status in which no one can afford to be oblivious to the power of others around him and everyone uses what resources

are available to have others aid him in putting on the best possible face under the circumstances' (Collins, 1975:60). Nevertheless his understanding of political and state power is fully in tune with Tilly, Mann and Poggi, and thus with the classical militarist thought, in the way he interprets politics almost exclusively through the prism of violence. Echoing Tretschke even more so than Weber, Collins (1975:352) defines the state though its unimpeded capacity to pursue its will by relying on the means of coercion: 'The state is, above all, the army and the police, and if these groups did not have weapons we would not have a state in the classical sense.' In this account political power relates to warfare, while coercive threats and politics more generally, as with Schmitt, is chiefly about force and the organisation of violence. According to Collins (1975:351-353), in pre-modern social orders private violence and politics are more or less identical, while the modern nation-state monopolizes its means ('the state consists of those people who have the guns or other weapons and are prepared to use them') which leads to a situation where 'much politics does not involve actual violence [anymore] but consists of maneuvering around the organization that controls the violence'. Hence in the modern age the dominant form of political power becomes state power. The might of a particular state is determined by its ability to secure high power prestige both internally (through the penetration and successful mobilisation of civil society groups) and externally (by raising and maintaining its geo-political standing). Drawing on Weber directly and on Hintze indirectly, Collins (1986,1999) argues that the state's geo-political status is grounded in the military experience of its population whereby war victories raise the prestige of state rulers and enhance the power and legitimacy of the state, whereas military defeats do the opposite. War is seen as a catalyst of social and political

change in history and a prime mover of state formation. To fully grasp the political power of the state one has to understand the military and other coercive apparatuses of a particular social order. The fact that modern liberal democracy allows more voice, dissent, popular representation and consequently power sharing is far from being a reliable indicator of a relentless march forward. Instead this historical contingency is deeply rooted in the coercive structure of its social order. It is the relatively balanced dispersal of resources -coercive and otherwise- among well organized and independent social groups able to mobilise different interests that have created a distinctly multi-polar social and political environment.

As is evident from this brief analysis, despite their almost exclusive identification and self-identification with the Weberian approach the leading contemporary historical sociologists of power are deeply grounded in German militarist social thought. However, because they are profoundly wary of the ethical implications of building on this highly contested tradition, modern historical sociologists rarely make direct reference to Treitschke, Hintze and Schmitt. This internalised concealment is largely unnecessary as they, for the most part, successfully de-essentialise, historically contextualise and remove the normative proto-fascist baggage from classical militarism, thus providing a much more sophisticated and explanatory potent account of power and collective violence. What in the works of the German militarists starts as teleology, ontology and apology of violence and the omnipotence of state power, ends up in the writings of Mann, Tilly, Collins and Poggi as a refined epistemology of social conflict and a highly persuasive historical sociology of domination. In this way, by drawing on classical bellicose thought, contemporary historical sociology has managed to seriously undermine the hegemony of the Marxist and

other economistic theories of history by shifting its explanatory emphasis from the control of the means of production towards something far more important in understanding the political power - the control of the means of destruction. As Collins, Poggi, Mann and Tilly convincingly argue and empirically prove one can not explain the transformation and continual importance of political power without reference to violence and one can not understand the origins of state formation and the current, almost indisputable, institutionalised supremacy of the nation-state system in the world, without intense engagement with the coercive nature of social life. Although these contemporary accounts are highly convincing in underlining and analysing the intrinsically coercive character of politics, they nonetheless seem less convincing when addressing the popular legitimisation of power. In other words whereas these theoretical models extensively, and for most part adequately, elucidate political power there seems to be too little explanatory space for an understanding of ideological power.

4. COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE AND IDEOLOGY

Despite the hopes and aspirations of Enlightenment that the new era would bring about a world without violence, where conflicting interests and values would be accommodated through rational argumentation, dialogue and debate, modernity turned out to be the most violent epoch in recorded history. Underpinned by grand vistas of an ideal social order, well equipped with the latest scientific and technological discoveries, and highly adept in mobilizing an enormous popular base, modern, democratizing, constitutional states proved to be incomparably vicious and much more efficient as war machines than any of their despotic and non-egalitarian predecessors. Notwithstanding the cruelty of pre-modern rulers, no tyrant of

agrarian civilization could match the brutal efficiency of mass slaughter in concentration camps or the scope and speed of carnage caused by machine guns, aerial bombardment or nerve gas. There is no historical equivalent to tally all the revolutions, total wars and genocides of modernity. Yet it is this era more than any previous epoch that proclaimed the emancipation and liberation of the human subject as its central and core value. As direct heirs of the Enlightenment, modern constitutional orders, including both rulers and citizens, enshrine ideas of reason, justice, liberty, equality and humanity as self evident[6] principles on which all social life should rest.

This situation - whereby modernity is normatively built on the principles that glorify reason and human life and despise violence, while at the same time witnessing more bloodshed and mass killing than ever before - may seem to be a puzzling paradox. However if one engages with the form, content, and structure of ideological power in the modern age then this particular outcome seems less mysterious. Although Poggi, Mann, Collins and Tilly adroitly explain why modernity was born and structurally remains reliant on violence, for the most part they provide no answer to the question: 'Why modern self-reflexive beings, socialized in the environment that abhors the sacrifice of human life, nonetheless tolerate and often tacitly support murder on a massive scale?'. To answer this question properly one needs to take ideological power much more seriously than contemporary historical sociologists have done.

Although Mann, Poggi, Collins and Tilly all acknowledge the importance of collective values and beliefs they nevertheless still essentially treat ideology either as a second order reality or almost exclusively reduce ideological power to religious doctrines. Thus for example Poggi (2001) identifies ideological/ normative power as one of the 'three basic power forms' toge-

ther with political and economic power. He sees it as impor-
tant but 'of derivative nature' and associates it almost exclusi-
vely with religion. In his own words 'religious power [is seen]
as a prime and indeed primordial manifestation of ideological/
normative power' (Poggi 2001:71). Similarly Collins
(1975:369,371) does not see much difference between traditio-
nal religions and modern secular ideologies: 'secular ideologi-
es operate in most respects like religious ones', or 'modern ide-
ologies are variants of the same basic set of conditions, new
forms appropriate to modern conditions of the same appeals
for moral solidarity and for obedience to the organization stre-
tching beyond individuals that make up the social essence of
religion'. Tilly (1985, 2003) devotes even less attention to ide-
ology seeing it as an epiphenomenon shaped by political, mili-
tary and economic forces. It is only in the work of Mann (1986,
1993) that ideological power receives more attention as he iden-
tifies ideology as one of the four central pillars of social power
and conducts extensive historical analysis of worldwide ideo-
logical transformations.

By ideological power Mann (2005:30) understands 'the mo-
bilization of values, norms, and rituals in human societies that
surpasses experience and science alike, and so contains non-
testable elements'. He distinguishes between its transcendent
and immanent forms whereby transcendent ideologies largely
correspond to the autonomous and universalist doctrines ca-
pable of generating a large scale support base by transcending
the existing institutions and projecting 'sacred' authority. Im-
manent ideologies refer to a more dependent sets of beliefs and
values that serve to strengthen the solidarity of existing power
networks and organizations. However even here ideology is
perceived, in both of its forms, as a weak force and rarely if ever
figures as key explanandum. Not only is it that Mann argues

that pre-modern ideological doctrines 'had no general role of any significance, only world-historical moments' (Mann, 1986:371), or that the impact of ideas generated in the French revolution on the European states was much smaller than generally assumed, but more importantly, he argues that the power of ideology, and religion in particular, since the 19th century was and is by and large in decline[7]. In addition Mann adopts a very instrumentalist understanding of ideology which focuses almost entirely on the function and means of ideological movements, and thus has little to say about the ends and contents of ideological messages (Hobson, 2004, Gorski 2006).

This apparent neglect of ideology among contemporary historical sociologists of power was not shared by their militarist predecessors. Treitschke, Schmitt and Hintze were well aware that the successful proliferation and institutionalisation of collective violence requires potent mechanisms of justification. Moreover they properly understood that the collapse of the old monotheistic universe of traditional order and their replacement with competing doctrines of universalist and egalitarian principles of modernity opened up the possibility for much fiercer bloodshed. To echo Dostoyevsky's Ivan Karamazov - once god is dead everything is permissible. As Schmitt (1996:54) argues, ideas such as humanity, justice, progress or civilization are especially potent ideological devices as they allow one side in a conflict 'to usurp a universal concept against its military opponent' and treat him not as a disliked though nonetheless respected adversary, but rather as a something outside the norms of humanity. That is, a monster. And monsters have no place in the world of humans - they unconditionally deserve annihilation. As president Truman put it in justifying his decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan: 'When you have to deal with a beast, you have to treat him as a beast. It is most regrettable but

nevertheless true' (Alperovitz, 1995: 563). Consequently wars have 'decreased in number and frequency' but have 'proportionally increased in ferocity' (Schmitt, 1996:35).

Although classical militarists often approach ideological power more from a normative, prescriptive position rather than an explanatory one - glorifying as they do omnipotent state power, militarist ethic, rigid nationalism and overt or covert racism - they also demonstrate that one can not easily separate violence from ideology. To fully understand the proliferation of violence in modernity one has to study its ideological underpinnings. In other words any successful attempt to draw on the classical militarist tradition requires engagement with both – the coercive and the ideological nature of power. To succeed any power requires legitimation, and coercive power much more so.

The accounts of ideology presented in the works of contemporary historical sociologists suffer from the two pronounced weaknesses. Firstly there is a degree of conceptual confusion whereby ideology is treated either too widely, when used as a synonym for culture (i.e. Mann 1986, 1993, 2006), or too narrowly and historically inaccurately when reduced to traditional religious doctrines (Poggi 2001, Collins 1975, Mann 1986). As I have argued elsewhere (Maleševiæ 2002: 58-61) although in modernity religious doctrines often acquire ideological attributes and can act as fully fledged ideologies, pre-modern religions lacked the institutional and organizational resources to function as modern ideologies. Not only is it that they operated in a context where there was no mass public literacy, standardized vernacular languages, state sponsored public educations systems, and printing capitalism (Anderson 1991), but traditional religions also lacked sophisticated mechanisms for dissemination of information and the bureaucratic organizational

structure all of which are essential for ideological power. As they appeal to reason and offer a rational explanation of social reality, normative ideologies require a fully formed literate public. Ideologies were born in a post-Enlightenment secular environment where what had formerly been largely undisputed religious (Christian) monopoly was suddenly substituted by ideological pluralism. In this new historical context religious doctrines found themselves competing with the secular *weltenschauungen*. Unlike pre-modern religious doctrines modern ideologies are often underpinned by the authority of science, humanist and other secular ethics and collective interests that are grounded in principles that stand in stark opposition to theological worldviews. Unlike religions, ideologies are deeply rooted in earth and not heaven. As Gouldner (1976) points out the mass appeal of ideology in our age comes only with the creation of a modern human subject who 'must be more interested in the news from this world than in the tidings from another'. Against of the promise of an afterlife ideologies articulate competing blueprints for the transformation of the existing social reality. Liberalism, socialism, anarchism, scientific racism and many other ideologies offer secular blueprints and political grand vistas of social change capable of mobilizing millions of individuals. Since Machiavelli we know that secularized politics, unconstrained by religious ethics, is able to do both – to generate mass popular appeal and to be extremely ruthless in the implementation of its ideological goals. In this context ideologies appear as a much more potent generator of social action than traditional religions could ever be.

And this leads us to the second problem of the contemporary historical sociologists – their perception of ideology as an explanatory weak force. As Mann (2006:346-7) puts it bluntly 'ideas can't do anything unless they are organized'. But this

view can just as easily be turned on its head as all organizations are built and run on the particular ideas and without ideas organizations can not do anything. This is not to say that human actions are ultimately governed by ideas and values rather than material or political interests -the general mistake of all idealist epistemologies- but that the apparent success of coercive power in modern age can not be adequately explained without understanding the justificatory power of modern ideologies. In other words ideological power is not the only, and not necessarily the primary generator of social action, but its social significance lays in its legitimizing capacity. When ends are perceived as ultimate truths, underpinned by unquestioned scientific authority and the ethical certainties of humanism, then all means become valid. In this context the question of the use of violence is often transformed into a question of mere efficiency. A decision to drop a uranium-235 20,000 ton nuclear warhead on a large urban congregation, which will inevitably kill hundreds of thousands of human beings, becomes a matter of precision and effectiveness. The first words of captain William Sterling Parsons after dropping a bomb on Hiroshima reveal this only too well: 'Results clear cut successful in all respects. Visible effects greater than any test. Conditions normal in airplane following delivery (Truman papers: 1945:7).' Similarly implementing a blueprint of the racially pure society entails the use of gas chambers as the most rational means for speedy, functional and efficient disposal of 'human waste'. In the same vain, establishing an ideal classless social order may necessitate the rapid and total extermination of kulaks and other 'leeches' and 'vampires' that suck the blood of 'our proletarian people' and so on. Modern ideological doctrines with their inclusive, universalist rhetoric of collective solidarity provide the most potent but also the most uncompromising social mecha-

nism of group mobilization able to justify the most extreme forms of violence (Maleševiæ 2006). As possessors of ultimate secular truths, liberated from curbs of sanctimonious virtuosity and equipped with institutional structures and mass armaments of the modern state, ideologies appear simultaneously as powerful mobilisers of collective action and as legitimisers of that action. Although modern self-reflexive men and women are socialized to revere human life much more than any of their predecessors they also possess more powerful narratives for the justification of mass slaughter, that is ideological doctrines. While an individual human life is sacred in principle, no price is too high when ideological goals are at stake: killing hundreds of thousands of human beings becomes 'regrettable' but acceptable when 'safeguarding democracy', 'attaining or fighting communism', 'establishing our own sovereign and independent nation', 'creating an ethnically or racially pure society' or setting up an Sharia based pan-Islamic caliphate. Once buttressed by compelling ideology there is no limit to coercive power.

5. CONCLUSION

Despite being perceived as an abomination in the modern age, violence was and remains an indispensable ingredient of social and political life. Although modern states have managed to successfully monopolize its control, thus making it virtually invisible, they have not eradicated violent action. On the contrary, the enormous power that nation-states acquire in modernity, becoming the preeminent political actors within their societies as well as in the international geopolitical arena, is essentially derived form this largely unchallenged monopoly on the control of violence. As Collins puts it so aptly, the state is

'above all the army and the police'. Put more bluntly violence and power are inherently linked as there is no power which in the last instance is not grounded in the manipulation of violence. However the relationship between the two is not one-sided whereby coercion exists only as a means of political power. Instead what I would argue is that once unleashed, collective violence becomes its own master operating on its own tracks and creating new social realities. This is most evident in modern warfare where on the one hand the use of systematic violence radically transforms social institutions and human relations thus generating new social and political orders while on the other hand it dramatically expands the scale of human sacrifice and bloodshed. It is only in the wake of two devastating total wars and a couple of brutal revolutions that the liberal, democratic, constitutional, welfare inclusive social order has emerged. Regardless of its distaste for violence sociology can not afford to ignore the other, vicious, face of the modern Janus. Although the classical militarist thought and the contemporary neo-bellicose tradition of historical sociology have revitalized the importance of collective violence for the study of power, there is still need for greater analytical engagement with the ideological processes through which coercion becomes legitimized. This is highly significant since, sociologically speaking, coercive power without ideology is blind while ideology without coercion will always remain feeble.

Notes

[1] H. Joas (2003:141-162) disputes the existence of such a militarist tradition in Germany or Austria by attempting to show that there was little in common between number of individual thinkers taken to be representatives of this tradition. However, despite obvious diversity in their political views and their disciplinary interests their research focus on war, violence and state power as well as their distinct bellicose approach to social life distinguish these authors as representatives of a particular intellectual tradition.

[2] Schmitt (1996:34f) incorporates Clausewitz's dictum that war is the continuation of politics by other means into his friend/enemy distinction by arguing that "war, for Clausewitz, is not merely one of many instruments, but ultima ratio of the friend-enemy grouping. War has its own grammar... but politics remains its brain. It does not have its own logic."

[3] Weber's (1978:53-4) often cited definitions of power and state are as follows: 1. power is "the probability that one actor within a special relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" and 2. the state is "a compulsory political organisation with continuous operations...insofar as its administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order".

[4] For example see most chapters in J.A. Hall and R. Schroeder (Eds) 2006 and also Malesevic, 2004: 134-136; and Malesevic, 2006:204-226)

[5] In a rare direct reference to Schmitt in his early work on state formation Poggi (1978:5-13) acknowledges the ontological importance of Schmitt's account of politics: "Much as one might discount Schmitt's view as demoniac or fascist, history has repeatedly born him out. Once the dangerousness and the ultimate disorderliness of social life are recognized, their implications remain utterly amoral and-today more than ever-utterly frightening".

[6] As for example stated in the preamble to American constitution : "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness".

[7] In recent writings Mann (2006:345) has acknowledged this problem and now seems to accept that late modernity has been and still is highly ideological.