

- Robinson, William I. 1996. "Globalization: Nine Theses of Our Epoch." *Race and Class*, 38:2, 13–31.
- Robinson, William I. and Jerry Harris. 2000. "Towards a Global Ruling Class? Globalization and the Transnational Capitalist Class." *Science & Society*, 64:1, 11–54.
- Silver, Beverly, and Giovanni Arrighi. 2001. "Workers North and South." *The Socialist Register*, 2001, 51–74.
- World Bank. 1984. *World Tables*. Vols. 1 & 2. Washington D. C.: World Bank.
- World Bank. 2000. *World Development Indicators*. CD ROM. Washington, D. C.: World Bank.

Science & Society, Vol. 65, No. 4, Winter 2001–2002, 476–484

CAPITAL, TERRITORY, AND HEGEMONY OVER THE *LONGUE DUREE**

We live in an "age of transition" (Hopkins and Wallerstein, 1996). That much is widely agreed. But a transition from what, and much more importantly, *to what?* In such ages of transition social researchers are easily blinded by the most dramatic aspects of capitalist restructuring. In this respect, the turn-of-the-21st-century debate over the future of capitalism replays the turn-of-the-20th-century debate over the future of capitalism, with leading intellectuals identifying one or another element of the emerging order and constructing a general model from it: the growing power of finance capital (Hilferding); the paramount importance of geographical expansion into the previously non-capitalist world (Luxemburg); "monopoly capitalism" and the centrality of inter-imperialist rivalry (Lenin); the phenomenon of inter-imperialist cooperation, so-called "ultra-imperialism" (Kautsky); "state capitalism" (Bukharin).

Common to all these interpretations is the transformation of contemporary events into long-run trends. And so it is with William I. Robinson's and Jerry Harris' thesis on globalization (2000). In their view, the relationship between state and capital that has characterized capitalist development over the past five centuries is coming unraveled. In its place, multiple "national" states are giving way to a single "transnational state" and multiple "national" bourgeoisies are giving way to a single "transnational capitalist class" (TCC).

* Thanks to Ben Brewer, an anonymous reviewer for *Science & Society*, and especially Diana Carol Moore Gildea for reviewing this paper in draft.

Yet, Robinson and Harris really lack a methodology to render this argument persuasive. Their contention is that a short-run (so far) and partial (so far) shift in the territorial locus of state power from the "nation" to the global economy will become long-run and complete. But this is convincing only to the extent that they explain why and how a temporary and partial shift will not return to the old state of things, or recenter on a new spatial configuration that is rooted neither in "national" nor in global territory.

My critique takes up three broad issues. First, I suggest that Robinson's and Harris' theorization of hegemony and stages of capitalism is (at best) incomplete. Second, I argue that their geography of globalization is woefully undertheorized. And finally, I contend that the failure to engage in a more systematic historical analysis of the research problem they pose is a serious methodological error.

At the outset, I should express my concerns about this term "globalization." Now deeply ingrained in the popular as well as academic discourse, the term is at best descriptive of very general changes. I prefer a more provisional approach, one that guards against reading too much into transitional developments. I have always liked Lenin's approach in this regard; contrary to the title of *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin consistently referred to contemporary capitalist developments not as the "highest" stage, but as "the *latest* epoch of capitalism" (1963, 726, emphasis added). Rather than weigh down the discussion with such a precise formulation, however, I will stick to convention and use the term "globalization" in its most generic sense as a new phase of capitalism whose exact contours are still being worked out.

Key Concepts: Hegemony and Phases of Capitalist Development

Let us consider first the conception of hegemony and stages of capitalism. Robinson and Harris spend a lot of time talking about the TCC as a "new global capitalist historic bloc" (2000, 12). Despite the language, Robinson and Harris deploy a conception of hegemony that is, in Gramsci's terms, spectacularly incomplete. In Robinson's and Harris' construction, the present *dominant* position of the TCC can be translated into *hegemony* almost entirely through the construction of a "transnational state" and a new social compact that procures the consent of "middle class" elements and the more globalized layer of the world's working class (2000, 40, 50). Curiously, the discussion is almost entirely given over to the consensual aspects of the TCC's hegemonic project, with little consideration of its *coercive* aspects. Yet for Gramsci, "the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' and as 'intellectual and moral leadership.' A social group dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to 'liquidate,' or to *subjugate*

perhaps even by armed force" (1971, 57–58, emphasis added). While Robinson and Harris concede at several points that coercion is necessary for globalization to succeed (2000, 40, 50–51), the role of force in sustaining capital accumulation does not really enter into the analysis. It is not clear, for instance, how the projected transnational state would exercise military power, or who would pay for it.

The neglect of coercion marks a dramatic break with Robinson's masterful treatment of the subject in *Promoting Polyarchy* (1996). In this brilliant study of U. S. imperialism and "democracy promotion" in the periphery, Robinson follows Gramsci in arguing that "hegemony is consensus protected by the 'armor of coercion.'" Thus conceived, hegemony is "*consensual domination*" (1996, 22, 21).

A more fundamental conceptual problem concerns the stages of capitalism argument. We are exposed to only two phases, a "nation-state" and a "global" phase, only one of which is defined with any rigor. In what is now a very familiar argument, the "globalized" era of capitalist development is characterized by the transition from national to global production networks, which at once produce — and are produced by — a global capitalist class, which seeks to establish a global state.

Robinson's and Harris' thesis relies heavily on arguments advanced in a recent article by Robinson and Roger Burbach (1999). Burbach and Robinson provide the underlying historical framework for the Robinson–Harris thesis, and the core of this framework is in theoretical disarray. In this scheme of things, the first era of capitalist development (1492–1789) is defined by primitive accumulation and geographical expansion; the second phase (1789–1900) by industrialization "and the forging of the nation-state"; the third (1900–1970s) by changes in the structure of competition ("monopoly capitalism"); and the fourth (1970s–cont.) by globalization. Even Burbach and Robinson confess that this "periodization is somewhat arbitrary" (1999, 11). But it is more than simply arbitrary. For how one periodizes capitalism has an awful lot to do with how one defines it. And Robinson's definition of capitalism changes with each new successive era. This poses big problems for any attempt to validate propositions about globalization in comparison with previous eras of capitalist development. Thus, the whole edifice of the Robinson–Harris argument is constructed upon extremely shaky foundations.

Globalization, Territory, and the Production of Space

The Robinson–Harris conception of globalization pivots on the question of space. During the era of nation-states, they argue, class and state formation occurred on a national scale; with globalization, class and state

formation is occurring on a global scale. But their argument goes further: "the nation-state is no longer *the organizing principle* of capitalism and . . . class development and social life" (2000, 17, emphasis added). Here territory is reified into an "organizing principle" and the nation-state becomes not only the boundary but the *bounding mechanism* of class formation and capitalist development.

Robinson and Harris contend that globalization achieves a radical rupture with the heretofore existing relationship between capital and space. In this scheme of things, to use Castells' phrasing (1994), the "space of flows" displaces the "space of places": "class formation is progressively less tied to territoriality." Even more emphatic: "organic class formation is no longer tied to territory." Capital is today "liberated" from previously existing "spatial barriers" (Robinson and Harris, 2000, 12, 17; also see Harris, 1998–1999).

But is global capitalism really so placeless? Geographers have emphasized that globalization depends upon new forms of territorialization such as the new "global cities" necessary to coordinate global financial markets (Sassen, 1991; Brenner, 1999; Harvey, 2000). The growing importance of such urban formations indicates that capital's liberation from spatial barriers is a partial one at best. Advances in transportation and communications infrastructure have freed capital in certain respects. Yet, these infrastructures involve huge fixed costs, and cannot be easily restructured. The flexibility and acceleration of turnover time achieved through a "built environment" favorable to capital in one era becomes a fetter upon accumulation in the next. In this way, "environments are created that simultaneously facilitate but imprison the future paths of capitalist development" (Harvey, 1991, 218).

I am not so sure that the historical geography of capitalism can be so easily reduced to a "nation-state" phase and a "global" phase. A longer view is necessary. Capitalism was not born within national economies — these were largely consequence, not cause, of capital accumulation — however much states may have promoted capitalist development for their own interests (Arrighi, 1994). It is probably more fruitful to view "the phase during which economic development was integrally linked to the 'national economies' of a number of developed territorial states *as situated between two essentially transnational eras*" (Hobsbawm, 1992, 25, emphasis added).

Moreover, the idea of a "nation-state phase" of capitalism is derived from the experience of a very small number of industrializers. Generalizations made on this basis are therefore inherently risky. Take for example the proposition that, by the later 19th century, "capitalist classes developed within the protective cocoon of nation-states." This process occurred "worldwide" (Robinson and Harris, 2000, 16–17). The problem is that this did not occur worldwide but only in the United States, Germany, Japan, and a few

other countries. The idea that we are moving from a nation-state to a global phase of capitalism makes sense only if we limit our representative cases to the "haves"; with few exceptions, the "have-nots" *have not* experienced anything akin to "national development."

Even successful "national" economies owed their success to global accumulation strategies. Imperialism was the handmaiden of successful "national" capitalism. Britain, France, the United Provinces, and Japan, *inter alia*, relied on imperialism to propel their ascent in the world-economy. Nor was the United States an exception. In contrast to its rivals, there was no compelling need for American capital to exterminate, extract, and exploit the people and resources of distant lands; it could do so in its own backyard (Moore, forthcoming). Proximity rendered such expansionism no less global. Certainly "home markets" existed, but they owed their existence to global accumulation strategies aimed at protecting and expanding domestic and foreign markets, and procuring cheap supplies of land, labor, and resources. From this perspective, "globalization" looks a lot like a transition from one global system to another rather than a rupture with a system of national capitalisms (Harvey, 2000, 61).

I agree that this latest phase of capitalism redefines "the relation between production and territoriality" (Robinson and Harris, 2000, 16–17). But are we really moving from "national" to "global" production systems? From where I sit, the reorganization of industrial production looks less like the "global assembly line" and a lot more like a new form of regionalization. Some industries are more footloose than others, but all are rooted in — indeed they create — definite industrial regions; industrialization may diffuse but it does so in an uneven and regionally specific way. Moreover, the world economy's most basic industries — automobile production for example — are highly capital-intensive, regionally clustered, involve huge fixed costs, and cannot be easily moved (Moody, 1997).

Robinson and Harris exemplify globalization researchers' tendency to focus one-sidedly on global space. But, as Neil Brenner (1999, 44) argues, "globalization unfolds simultaneously upon multiple, intertwined geographical scales — not only within global space, but through the production, differentiation, reconfiguration, and transformation of sub-global spaces such as territorial states, regions, cities, and localities," not to mention the shop floor and even the human body (Moore, forthcoming; Harvey, 2000, ch. 6). World-scale developments are but one moment of so-called "globalization." Riveting our attention to global developments, globalization discourse tends to blind us to a more complex and slippery conception of capitalism's historical geography. My conception focuses on the always shifting configuration and interpenetration of social relations at multiple geographical scales

that characterizes the emergent capitalist order. This means taking seriously the idea that local- and global-scale processes are mutually relational. (And inbetween scales as well.) For instance, the creation of large-scale production networks, while reinforcing the capacity of capital to divide and conquer working-class opposition, allows workers in one locale to disrupt national and even global production systems. Witness recent strikes by General Motors and United Parcel Service workers in the USA. The ever-shifting form of the "local-global dialectic" in historical capitalism suggests that it is how the social relations at multiple geographical scales "fit together" that counts; not simply the power of the global.

*Globalization in World-Historical Perspective, Or,
Why We Need a World-Historical Method*

A wide range of participants in the globalization debate now acknowledge remarkable parallels between the later 19th century and today (see Gordon, 1988; Harvey, 2000; Hirst and Thompson, 1996): technological innovations, revolutions in transport and communications, surges in international capital flows, and so forth. I suggest that the logic of world-historical comparison embedded in the practice of examining late 20th century globalization against the backdrop of late 19th century globalization should be extended to encompass successive "long centuries" of world capitalism, from the 16th century to the present (Arrighi, 1994). Only on this basis can we isolate what is actually new.

For Robinson and Harris, globalization is determined partly by a dramatic shift in territoriality, and partly by the hegemonic ascent of a new de-territorialized alliance of transnational capital and governing institutions to hegemony. The authors posit a rather simple transition from national capitalism and associated hegemonic forms to global capitalism and transnational hegemony. I would like to address two ways that this analysis would be complicated if viewed from deeper historical perspective.

First, Robinson and Harris are quite right to argue that theories which view the nation-state as "immanent in capitalist development" run against the grain of historical materialism (2000, 18). The nation-state perspective does, however, possess the virtue of grounding capitalist development in specific places. I think Robinson and Harris have overstated their case precisely because their conception of globalization overemphasizes the "new" global economy as "abstract space" (Lefebvre, 1991) without explaining how the "global" moment of capital accumulation depends upon very particular *places*. In their rush to offer a new historical sociology of global political economy they have failed to provide a new historical geography.

And a new historical geography of capitalism it would have to be, if the system's organizers no longer depended upon place, substituting the "space of flows" for cities, empires, and nation-states. Robinson and Harris should explain why the organizers of previous global accumulation regimes were, quite literally, centered in a particular place — the Italian city-states (Genoa above all), Amsterdam–United Provinces, London–United Kingdom, New York–United States, and (perhaps?) Tokyo–Japan/East Asia — while the organizers of globalization are essentially (allegedly) placeless?

One clear pattern that emerges is the growing scale of the organizing center in successive phases of capitalism: from city-states to the American continental super-state to, quite possibly, the rise of East Asia as a new "macro-region." Possibly, the recent changes in capitalism that Robinson and Harris attribute to the global economy — the growth of multinational firms, trade integration, and so forth — are really macro-regional processes. So they must explain why "placeless" globalization is rather more likely than "placeful" macro-regionalization.

And then there is the problem of class struggle. The possibilities for a new social compact necessary for consolidating a transnational hegemony appear slim indeed. As the scale of capital accumulation has grown larger over time, so the requisite "social compact" necessary for renewed capital accumulation has incorporated a progressively larger layer of the global working class (Silver and Slater, 1999). But there are definite limits to how far this can proceed. The 19th century saw the rise of working-class power in the core. The 20th century witnessed the rise of the "dangerous classes" in the periphery and semiperiphery. But incorporating these workers has proved enormously costly. "One could cut in several-hundred-million Western workers and still make the system profitable. But if one cuts in several billion Third World workers, there would [be] nothing left for further capital accumulation" (Wallerstein, 1995, 25).

On the one hand, capital faces the problem of incorporating several hundred million East Asian workers into an enormously expensive new "social compact." However necessary for renewed capital accumulation, the economic weight of the required social compact is probably too great for capital to bear. On the other hand, there is the problem of reterritorialization. On what geographical basis can capital accumulation be renewed? Or can it? The steady rise in the scale of capitalist organization and governing organization over long historical time suggests that some kind of macro-regional formation may become ascendant. But given the persistence of international rivalries, temporarily attenuated by uneven and unstable prosperity and overwhelming U. S. military power, the prospects for "global" capitalism appear dim indeed.

Conclusion

In the absence of a much more far-reaching *world-historical* analysis of the relationship between hegemony, territory, and capitalist development, Robinson's and Harris' thesis ultimately shores up some of the left's most backward thinking on globalization. Their treatment of the "nation-state" phase of capitalism suggests a world-system heretofore constituted by a simple agglomeration of putatively "national" capitalisms — what Ellen Meiksins Wood (1999) has called, in a singularly unfortunate turn of phrase, the theory of "capitalism in one country."

Neither a strong globalization thesis nor a strong anti-globalization thesis will do. We need a world-historical conception of capitalist geography that allows us to see not just the growing scale of accumulation and governance. Other socio-spatial realities must factor in: the importance of place and its articulation with global processes, the cyclical emergence of new sub-national territorial organizations, and most importantly, the capitalist imperative to build environments that at first liberate and then imprison accumulation. The question of a transnational hegemonic project is best answered within such a global, historical-geographical framework.

JASON W. MOORE

*c/o Department of Geography
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, CA 94720
jasonwmoore@earthlink.net*

REFERENCES

- Arrighi, Giovanni. 1994. *The Long Twentieth Century*. New York: Verso.
- Brenner, Neil. 1999. "Beyond State-Centrism? Space, Territoriality, and Geographical Scale in Globalization Studies." *Theory and Society*, 28, 39–78.
- Burbach, Roger, and William I. Robinson. 1999. "The Fin de Siecle Debate: Globalization as Epochal Shift." *Science & Society*, 63:1, 10–39.
- Castells, Emmanuel. 1994. "European Cities, the Informational Society, and the Global Economy." *New Left Review*, 204, 18–32.
- Cox, Robert W. 1987. *Production, Power, and the World Order*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Gordon, David. 1988. "The Global Economy: New Edifice or Crumbling Foundations?" *New Left Review*, 168, 24–64.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International.
- Harris, Jerry. 1998–1999. "Globalisation and the Technological Transformation of Capitalism." *Race & Class*, 40:2/3, 21–36.

- Harvey, David. 1991. "Geography." Pp. 216–219 in Tom Bottomore, *et al.*, eds., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*. Second edition. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell.
- . 2000. *Spaces of Hope*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Hirst, Paul and Grahame Thompson. 1996. *Globalization in Question*. Cambridge, England: Polity.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. 1992. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Second edition. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Hopkins, Terence K., and Immanuel Wallerstein, coordinators. 1996. *Age of Transition*. New York: Zed.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell.
- Lenin, 1963. *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Pp. 667–768 in *Selected Works*, Vol. I. Moscow: Progress.
- Moody, Kim. 1997. *Worker in a Lean World*. New York: Verso.
- Moore, Jason W. Forthcoming. "Remaking Work, Remaking Space: Spaces of Production and Accumulation in the Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1865–1920." *Antipode*.
- Robinson, William I. 1996. *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, U. S. Intervention, and Hegemony*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Robinson, William I., and Jerry Harris. 2000. "Towards a Global Ruling Class? Globalization and the Transnational Capitalist Class." *Science & Society*, 64:1, 11–54.
- Sassen, Saskia. 1991. *Global Cities*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Silver, Beverly J., and Eric Slater. 1999. "The Social Origins of World Hegemonies." Pp. 151–216 in G. Arrighi, B. J. Silver, *et al.*, *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1995. "Response: Declining States, Declining Rights?" *International Labor and Working Class History*, 47, 25–27.
- Wood, Ellen Meiksins. 1999. *The Origin of Capitalism*. New York: Monthly Review.

Science & Society, Vol. 65, No. 4, Winter 2001–2002, 484–491

GLOBALIZATION: TOWARDS A TRANSNATIONAL STATE? A SKEPTICAL NOTE

The particular set of institutions that led to a global economic expansion after the Second World War ran out of steam in the mid-1970s. Worldwide, corporate profitability began to decline dramatically from the mid-1960s on, reducing investments and resulting in a sharp decline in GDP growth. The increasing internationalization of economies since then is grounded in the