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International, Political, Sociology Revisited

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On the basis of a review of forces shaping the initial publication of International Political Sociology in 2007, we explore how some of the challenges to which it responded remain unresolved and may now be even more pressing. We focus initially on the need to internationalize the study of international relations and then on the principled difficulties of combining social, political, and international analysis. We argue that these two challenges are closely related, partly in terms of claims about history and temporality and partly in terms of a fallacy of simple addition. We then explore some implications of this relationship. We note the need for but also dangers of more temporally oriented modes of analysis. We also note a tendency to minimize the significance of both "international" and "political" in favor of "sociology." On these and related grounds, we argue that international political sociology names a site of profound problems more than it does a coherent project or vocation, and that the strength of the journal lies in the heterogeneity of contributions it has attracted. Finally, we speculate that international political sociology offers insight into problems confronting interdisciplinary scholarship more generally.

En nous fondant sur un passage en revue des forces qui ont initialement façonné la publication d'International Political Sociology en 2007, nous nous intéressons au fait que certains défis que la revue a traités restent d'actualité et qu'ils pourraient revêtir un caractère encore plus urgent maintenant. Nous nous concentrons d'abord sur la nécessité d'internationaliser l'étude des relations internationales, puis sur les difficultés de principe de la combinaison d'une analyse sociale, politique et internationale. Nous affirmons que ces deux défis entretiennent des liens étroits, tant au niveau des revendications historiques et temporelles que de la croyance erronée qu'il s'agirait d'une simple addition. Nous analysons ensuite certaines implications de cette relation. Nous soulignons le besoin de modes d'analyse à l'orientation davantage temporelle, mais aussi leurs dangers. Nous remarquons par ailleurs une tendance à minimiser l'importance de l'≪ international ≫ et du ≪ politique ≫ en faveur de la ≪ sociologie ≫. Pour ces raisons, et d'autres raisons connexes, nous affirmons que la sociologie politique internationale désigne un site de problèmes profonds plutôt qu'un projet cohérent ou une vocation, et que la force de la revue réside dans l'hétérogénéité des contributions qu'elle a attirées. Enfin, nous supposons que la sociologie politique internationale nous renseigne quant aux problèmes rencontrés par la recherche interdisciplinaire de façon générale.

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Analizamos, partiendo de la base de una revisión de las fuerzas que dieron forma a la publicación de Sociología Política Internacional en 2007, cómo algunos de los desafíos a los que se enfrentó la revista siguen sin resolverse y pueden ser ahora incluso más apremiantes. Nos enfocamos, inicialmente, en la necesidad de internacionalizar el estudio de las relaciones internacionales y, a continuación, ponemos el foco sobre las dificultades, a nivel de principios, que conlleva combinar el análisis social, político e internacional. Argumentamos que estos dos desafíos están estrechamente relacionados, por un lado, en términos de afirmaciones sobre la historia y la temporalidad y, por otro lado, en términos de una falacia de simple suma. A continuación, estudiamos algunas de las implicaciones que conlleva esta relación. Observamos la necesidad, pero también los peligros, que conllevan aquellos modos de análisis más orientados temporalmente. También notamos una tendencia a minimizar la importancia tanto de lo ≪internacional≫ como de lo ≪político≫ en favor de la ≪sociología≫. Partiendo de esta base, y de otras relacionadas, argumentamos que la sociología política internacional designa un ámbito de problemas profundos más que un proyecto o una vocación coherente, y que la fortaleza de la revista radica en la heterogeneidad de las contribuciones que ha atraído. Por último, especulamos que Sociología Política Internacional ofrece una visión sobre los problemas a los que se enfrenta la investigación interdisciplinaria en general.

International Political Sociology has been a presence in the study of international relations for some 20 years. Whether this suggests a condition of youthful bravado, wise maturity, or less predictable temporalities remains an open question. It is too soon to tell. We all have investments in the answer. More significantly for what we want to do in this article, the uncertain character of contemporary temporalities, and thus spatialities, is one of the core historical conditions that journals of this kind must both negotiate and engage. Even a week is a long time in politics. Decades may unravel in a month. Timing is of the essence. Always expect the unexpected. Time may tell.

The journal did emerge in specific places and at a fairly turbulent moment. A lot has happened since, and the politics of place have generated serious disruptions on many fronts. Twenty years may be a lot or very little, depending on the scale used to guide judgment; and the very title of the journal already raises under-appreciated questions about how we rely on specific calibrations of scale to guarantee order and the boundaries that ordering demands.

International Political Sociology has played an important role in many settings over those 20 years. It has been especially influential in and around the scholarly field or discipline of international relations but also across other arenas of contemporary scholarly research and analysis. It has articulated distinctive voices, cultivated new communities of scholars, opened novel avenues of investigation, and sustained pluralistic horizons in its substantive analyses and methodological strategies.

As long-time editors of both this and several other journals, we are acutely aware of how difficult it is to sustain momentum and relevance under transformative historical conditions and scholarly contestation. We are perhaps even more aware of how much editors depend on scholars looking for congenial outlets and readership for their work. Editors may shape the life of journals in some important ways but, to borrow yet another phrase, not necessarily under conditions of their own choosing. Thus, given the dynamics in which we have all been caught over those 20 years, albeit in very different circumstances, we would first of all like to express our immense appreciation of the work done by other editors and associate editors as well as the authors and reviewers who have contributed to its success. We would also like to ac-

knowledge the remarkable support that came from the broad array of scholars who enabled and helped shape the journal from its earliest and somewhat precarious moments.

Despite passages of time and dislocations of place, many of the conditions under which the journal emerged remain relevant to the challenges it still faces. Many other conditions have changed dramatically, though we are clearly scrambling to understand not only the patterns of change but especially the historicity of change, transformation, and especially claims about temporospatialities as such. This is why we propose to ground the analysis to be developed in this contribution to an anniversary collection by recalling just a few elements we experienced as particularly pressing while the possibility of this journal was being discussed. This will enable us to reflect upon various ways in which the journal has taken on both shape and substance. We especially want to explore a few broad patterns identifiable across what the journal has achieved and what it has tended to push to the margins, while also remembering that disruptions to established accounts of centers and margins have been a common theme of most attempts to think about critical possibilities for a very long time.

We will focus most explicitly on the three concepts that eventually appeared in the name of the journal and on our own attempts to insist that each of these concepts is deeply problematic, in many respects, and quite obviously so. We will also insist that relations between these concepts and the sequence in which they are ordered—scaled—raise profound questions that reach far beyond the concerns of any specific disciplinary setting.

We begin with a brief moment in time but are primarily thinking about historical limits that have been placed upon time and the ways these limits have been challenged and reproduced. Our analysis speaks to expansive questions about the conditions under which both contemporary circumstances and future possibilities are typically engaged, politically, socially, and internationally. Our initial backward glances at our understanding of where the journal was coming from will provide a convenient ground from which to pose questions about what may be at stake now when putting political, social, and international analysis into conjunction as just one example among transdisciplinary social sciences.

Given the level of generality at which our analysis is conducted, we have not sought to engage directly with any specific contributions or modes of analysis, although we do refer very briefly to two exemplary contributions that speak to the problematic character of the three concepts that make up the title of this journal. Moreover, given our sense that the great virtue of the journal has been its heterogeneity, we do not seek to identify the emergence of any common or quasi-disciplinary project; in any case, this is clearly not the only journal that would have to be considered relevant for such a task. Nor do we suggest any clear strategies for the future; these are very far from times of our own choosing, and an "international, political, sociology" names a multifaceted problem much more than it names any solution, strategy, project, or vocation.

We do want to suggest that two primary impulses helping to set this journal in motion some 20 years ago remain at least as challenging now as they were then. One concerns increasingly familiar but still problematic calls for greater internationalization of the discipline of international relations. The other concerns the relationship between the three terms of the journal's title that we considered very briefly in its first issue. We suggest that these two themes are very closely linked, in ways that have both temporal and spatial implications. We will work through these themes sequentially before addressing some of the character and implications of their close conjunction. Although we do not speak directly to the fraught circumstances in which we are now experiencing often mesmerizing spatiotemporal transformations, we hope that it will be clear that these circumstances have shaped the way we have

looked back on this journal's trajectory and its place in a broader scholarly environment.

Contexts and Possibilities

Anniversaries invite stories about origins, always among the more slippery and consequential stories that can be told: dubious histories and effective politics (Walker 2023). In this case, it might be possible to tell such a story in relation to specific institutions, committees, individuals, interests, advice, negotiations, and interventions in and around the International Studies Association in particular. War stories can be entertaining, but also unreliable and self-serving. They are likely to be most interesting to those who were present at the time and now struggle to remember the details. What stands out for us is less any specific moment or sequence of institutionalized or personalized events than the broad support the journal received once it was proposed. This is less a story about origins than about continuities and conjunctures.

It is also a story about specific problems and partial responses rather than about any clear prescription for a new order of things. Not all of its early supporters were enthusiastic partisans of a political sociology in particular, international or otherwise. Nevertheless, the designation was broad enough to attract the support of a much wider range of constituencies than could be captured by the already extensive array of scholarly traditions—historical, comparative, and global as well as resolutely statist—that might have been understood as an international political sociology. Problems had arisen, and the International Studies Association (ISA) was one of many venues in which scholars had become convinced of a need to think beyond their established horizons, and not for the first time. These attempts to shape and reshape not only the ISA but also our understanding of something identified as international, and thus the discipline devoted to understanding what that something might be, have greater significance for us than any events in an institutionalized decision-making process.

At the same time, it should be acknowledged that some disciplinary claims about international relations, or world politics, have long expressed broad inter- and even trans-disciplinary ambitions, some combination of world history and geopolitics perhaps, attempts to capture the broadest contours of human experience. Sometimes this found expression as detailed exegesis of events exceeding territorial borders, sometimes as speculative imaginaries, sometimes as abstract models of systemic determinations and temporal trajectories, sometimes in ways that might be understood as an international or global political economy, even as an international political sociology. In some ways, the discipline had long been rather shapeless, indeterminate, and sharply contested. In this respect, it may also be useful to distinguish between how the study of international relations had come to be conducted within some of the more prestigious academic institutions in the United States, where the character of the discipline was most effectively controlled, and in the many other places where both more parochial but also more innovative trends could be found.

By the time a new journal was being discussed at the ISA, the discipline was widely understood to have settled down into a form of normalized science, in the Kuhnian sense: one in which a clear "mainstream" could be identified and reproduced not only as a literally disciplinary procedure but also as a rhetorically convenient and historically selective ground against which to elaborate alternative strategies. Like other disciplines, it had managed to contain most of its multitudes of possibility within a much more determinate consensus about problems, assumptions, concepts, classifications, privileged theoretical traditions, and epistemological procedures. Academic journals tend to coalesce around sites of consensus more readily than around multitudes of possibility.

Insofar as one can characterize a moment 20 years ago when the first issue of *International Political Sociology* appeared, it is one in which the discipline of international relations was again experiencing unhappiness about the narrow constraints within which specific versions of it had come to claim privileged expertise about its presumed object of analysis. The general outlines of this story will be familiar, in competing versions. We will not attempt to rehearse them here except to point briefly to a few themes that were especially consequential for what the journal eventually became.

Perhaps most significantly, the most influential institutional form of the discipline that claimed to encompass the most extensive—world-wide—modes of political life had become normalized as a quintessentially "American social science." The awkward relation between the specifically national character of the ISA and the overtly international character of its substantive concerns was becoming glaringly obvious. The so-called English School, among others, had been making muted complaints about this since the 1960s, to mixed effect. But considerably more consequential complaints about its more broadly "Western" rather than just Anglo-American character were becoming ever more audible, and rightly so.

Feminists had launched indictments of practices of silencing and exclusion. Political economists and lawyers warned that states do not exist in a vacuum. Peace researchers had objected to the conservative and dangerous consequences of the overwhelming concern with security and war. Normative thinking did not back down in the face of reductionist accounts of the way it is. Many others insisted on the urgent need to pay attention to ecological, technological, social, and many other dynamics that were difficult to engage within the conventions of the discipline that seemed especially stuck in the expectations of an earlier era. Nevertheless, the Cold War had largely receded. The pretense to a unipolar moment had passed in a flash. Promises of something global were re-energizing calls for more dynamic accounts of historical and thus structural transformation.

It was also significant that while in some parts of the world the study of international relations had become a fairly autonomous discipline in its own right, or was attracting the attention of several disciplines at once, in the United States, it remained primarily a mere field within the fully fledged discipline of political science (Rosenberg 2016). As such, it was often taught by scholars in comparative and American politics, fields that tended to privilege the centrality and even natural necessity of nation-states rather than systemic relations among them. Somewhat disconcertingly, the study of international relations was far from immune to the "methodological nationalisms" endemic across the social sciences, albeit shaped by a country prone to shape-shift from nation-state to globalizing *imperium* and back according to circumstances.

Flowing through all of these developments came increasingly forceful challenges to forms of socio-scientific epistemology that had worked as a diffuse guarantor of authoritative knowledge within the disciplinary "mainstream." Although taking many different configurations, some impressively rigorous and some much less so, this understanding of epistemology had been shaped by the regulative ideal of a convergence between explanation, prediction, and causality resurrected by logical-positivist philosophers of science in the mid-twentieth century. Many methodological practices may have operated at some distance from this ideal, but it was nevertheless an ideal that helped neutralize concerns about the always problematic character of claims about generalization, explanation, and especially causality. In response, many forms of interpretive and critical analysis were attempting to articulate what they understood to be more appropriate scholarly strategies. Most of these were explicitly rooted in "continental" European philosophical traditions, again expressing varying degrees of philosophical, theoretical, and methodological sophistication. These also drew upon more historically and humanistically oriented disciplines. They advanced very different understandings of what it means to engage in the-

orization, understanding, causality, scholarship, critique, and thus both authority and responsibility in scholarly practice.

Moreover, many of these challenges to quasi-positivistic orthodoxies implied an underlying skepticism about the primacy of epistemology as the most relevant form of philosophy and theorization, insisting instead on the at least equal importance of questions about what it is that we claim to know rather than about how we claim to know whatever that might be. Many of these more ontological questions had long received highly conventionalized answers, to the point of becoming apparently innocent concepts to be deployed in reified models of states and systems to which one could then apply some degree of methodological expertise.

For all their potential elegance and parsimony, such concepts, like very broad generalizations and universal nouns, easily obscure not only many highly variable phenomena but also the complex analytical, social, and political processes through which multiple phenomena can be converted into apparently timeless and bloodless abstractions. Consequently, much work was being devoted to the analysis of the practices and discourses involved in the complex lives of sovereignties, states, peoples, securities, liberties, balances, boundaries, laws, and so on. These sometimes echoed once-thriving though philosophically suspect traditions of ideology critique and the sociology of knowledge. Sometimes they elaborated innovative socio-cultural analyses of practices once understood in more conventional terms like propaganda, diplomacy, intelligence operations, covert action, and much else.

Furthermore, apparently abstract concepts, like the positivist ideal of a formalist convergence between generalization, explanation, and causality, tend to presume a condition of a more or less static order. They are at home in the house of Parmenides, in a world of repetitive patterns available for repeatable interrogation and thus methodological rigor. Concepts of change were still tied very tightly to the conventional triad of continuity, progressive evolution, and revolution. Genealogies and contingencies were still associated with disreputable figures like Nietzsche and Machiavelli.

Conversely, many of the theoretical challenges to disciplinary orthodoxy were rather more (though rarely completely) comfortable in the house of Heraclitus, more insistent that things change, and that contingencies, genealogies, and pluralizing histories matter more than any linear, teleological, and universalizing history popularized in the name of Hegel, Darwin, Development, or Progress. Machiavelli and Nietzsche reappeared as important sources of wisdom. Quite apart from the long-standing philosophical and theoretical disputes this implied, this was a time in which the apparent continuities of the Cold War era were already a cause for nostalgia as international relations seemed to be ever more susceptible to disruptions and unruly transformations. Consequently, whether in terms of theoretical fashion or empirical experience, hopes for predictability and normalization had become a little fragile.

This is more or less where *International Political Sociology* entered the ongoing flow. The prior histories of this flow are of much greater consequence than any stories that might be told of this journal in particular, not least because these were histories that shaped what was both desirable and possible or not when the journal was launched. For some, what was primarily at stake was a specifically US-centric form of hegemony. For others, it was a broader liberal or even more broadly Western formation. For some, it was the status of the field within the discipline of political science or as an object of desire on the part of other disciplines that considered it to be a part of their natural domain or, more opportunistically, as the way of the future in a rapidly globalizing world. For a few, it was a desire to avoid almost any kind of disciplinary capacity to police radically individualized scholarship. For perhaps most, it was in effect the annoying reification of states, nations, cultures, genders, classes, races, migrations, and concepts of security and thus liberty, equality, identity, and so on that silenced many ways of being human, and of being political, within the frozen cate-

gories and classifications of a presumed mainstream. This was after all a discipline that was already working successfully to minimize the significance of other ways of thinking about an international political order, especially within many elite institutions in the United States. Like other disciplines, it was itself susceptible to a historical and political sociology.

Concurrently, many orthodoxies had been revealing vulnerabilities for some time. Some of those orthodoxies had in any case been in place for only a short period, having been sustained by an infectious fashion for neoliberal economics as the paradigm of structural rationality and thus human action. The appearance in 1979 of Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* had marked a decisive shift in this direction. It also saw the rapid disappearance of many other accounts of an international political order that had been interesting precisely because they were rather less parsimonious, idealized, dehistoricized, and depoliticized.

Given the circumstances, we might say that the ISA really had no option but to become one of the more open-minded institutional sites of contemporary academic life in the United States. A mainstream persisted, and something related to it still persists, but the world was moving and turning in ways that increasingly eluded its grasp. Our timing worked well. Perhaps we are in a similar moment once again. Or perhaps we need to be thinking about this moment two decades later in very different terms, and not only through resurrected memories of nationalist, imperialist, and geopolitical tendencies. It may be that those who ignore the past are doomed to keep repeating it. It is almost certainly the case that those who keep repeating their version of the past will miss their obvious failures of both diagnosis and imagination.

In short, we understand *International Political Sociology* to have been a response to a very wide range of problems, historical, geographical, institutional, and intellectual. The costs of intellectual complacency were becoming more difficult to ignore. We also understood that this response had to be of fairly limited scope, and not only for institutional reasons. As discussions unfolded, it became clear that two broad sentiments expressed by significant numbers of the members of the ISA might converge, both institutionally and to some degree intellectually. One was the sense that it was time to take ambitions to internationalize the study of international relations much more seriously. The other was that an international political sociology would provide a reasonably attractive home for at least some of the many scholars who were feeling out of place in the prevailing mainstream and its journals. Both the tensions and convergences between these two broad sentiments may be recognized in the ways in which *International Political Sociology* has taken root over the past 20 years.

Twin-Track Strategies I: Internationalizing the Study of International Relations

As many people had already discovered long before, while there may be widespread agreement in principle that the parochial character of the study of international relations is a serious problem, moves to broaden or internationalize it turn out to be much harder to achieve in practice. There are many reasons for this. Some are fairly obvious, often involving the pressures of nationalist and other forms of sociocultural discrimination as well as great disparities in skills and resources; that is, for reasons that analyses of international relations might be expected to explain rather than simply express. Some are much less so, especially the degree to which practices of international relations already work as conventional and highly problematic affirmations of developmental and progressivist philosophies of history.

The international political order is generally understood as a spatial form. It is sometimes imagined to be a three-dimensionally global affair. For the most part, it is understood as a flat two-dimensional field; hence the familiar analogies with chessboards, billiard tables, and balances of weights and forces. References to the related term geopolitics ought to suggest something more global but even here the popularity of sharp distinctions between land and sea confirms the pervasive presence

of a more two-dimensional imagination. This dimensional ambivalence is rhetorically affective in many circumstances, most obviously in maps, representations, and projections. Analytically, it is clearly a problem, as it has been at least since it became a pressing and very practical problem for sailors and cartographers some five centuries or so ago. It has become a more acute problem more recently whenever appeals are made to something global when it is very clear that the thinking behind too many such appeals still express orders of a two-dimensional spatiality.

Still, either way, maps or globes, the understanding of an international political order as a spatial form was largely predicated on a historically specific understanding of temporality, the arrival at a point in time, 1648 being the exemplary instance, that differentiates the international political order from something else, something prior, vaguely and contentiously located in the mists of times in which many other myths of origin may be identified. Having been enabled in this way by claims about an already spatialized, linear temporality, and with a vast field of historiography reduced to a mere before and after, internationalized concepts of spatial form have in turn helped enable our most familiar practices of modernization and development, a spatialized line linking past, present, and future. The deployment of geographical (as geometrical) categories simultaneously enables the deployment of historically specific categories of temporality. We may then hope for freedom in time rather than only in territorialized space. Immanuel Kant lies very close to the heart of both this story and the story about maps and globes.

Consequently, calls to internationalize the international cannot usefully be understood only in geographical terms, as a simple process of including the geographically excluded; unless a universalizing conception of development and modernization is assumed to enable a common ground on which to convert the analysis of international relations into a form of comparative politics, with history understood as the process driving the construction of that common ground and therefore to be deployed in ways that confirm that common ground in the present. In this move, an idealized present is already the ground from which a moment, some 1648, is projected back into the past and out into a spatialized order. Calls for the internationalization of the study of international relations then turn into a legitimation of such a developmental philosophy of history, and something close to 1648 is affirmed as a mythology of origins, especially when descriptive histories are projected as far as possible in all directions from this historically dubious but rhetorically effective nodal point, both temporally and spatially. Offers to include then serve to affirm the authority of those who make the offer.

Thomas Hobbes knew a lot about this move from the way he set up his contractual account of sovereigns and subjects. It is an exemplary case of a doubled origin story, a present moment from which a past is identified so as to affirm claims about the way things must be in the present. It retains its magic not only among influential philosophies of history but in many accounts of boundary conditions more generally (Walker 2016).

This is not an understanding of an internationalization of the study of international relations that we had in mind. What mattered for us were the prior assumptions about temporality that generated a spatial formation in which geographical directions expressed not only very powerful historical forces but also powerful conceptions of temporality and historicity. This is why Walker especially tends to use the term "modern international" to underline the significance of its ultimately temporal rather than spatial character even though this risks engagements with perhaps even more difficult and contentious fields of scholarship about what it means to speak about modernity.

While the history of the discipline as well as the history of ideas about the international have been receiving welcome and increasingly sophisticated attention, the relationship between what we refer to as international and what we take for granted as history has also had important consequences. This is not only a matter of the

continuing grip of Westphalian mythology but also of the uncertain boundaries between studies of world histories and studies of international relations. Whose world histories? Likewise, whose international relations? Furthermore, which world histories are already embedded in the analysis of international relations and which accounts of international relations are already embedded in the analysis of world history? There is no clearcut distinction to be made here. Whether engaged in relation to scholarly disciplines or material formations, each is already implicated in the other. This is one key reason why attempts to add historical analysis to a discipline that has often tried to marginalize it as much as possible seem so drawn to reproduce familiar forms of progressive development, modernization, and the infamous story of an "expansion of international society" (Bull and Watson 1984) or, in more skeptical terms, "the globalization of a regional IR" (Bilgin and Capan 2021; more generally, Seth 2021).

One broad implication of this intermeshing of the spatial and the temporal for attempts to imagine an international political sociology is what might be called—perhaps with a few echoes of what Alfred North Whitehead (1925) once called the fallacy of simple location—the fallacy of simple addition. It applies to many attempts to add things that are apparently missing from the study of international relations but are already present in forms that are taken for granted, whether as constitutive principles or concepts of space, time, and human/political subjectivity. These include the figure of Man as the official expression of humanity; statist citizenship as the expression of political qualification; and nation as the master expression of cultural differentiation and identity.

Similarly, with international political sociology, we have three terms that are already mutually implicated both historically and conceptually and yet also appear to be firmly naturalized, both as sharply distinct and as mutually antagonistic. The problem of simple addition applies. It cannot be a straightforward matter to add one entity or concept to another when that one is already present in the other in ways that have a capacity to inoculate against a confusion of principles expressed through each concept. We will return to these three specific terms shortly.

A second implication is that if international political sociology is conceived as a reaction to a discipline predicated on the mythology of Westphalia, it will have to come to terms not only with the legacies of a familiar form of spatial order but also with its accompanying and mutually constitutive temporal order. This cannot rely on any simple switch from space to time, for example, although it might involve ontological explorations of what it means to deploy such concepts, especially given that Newtonian–Kantian distinctions between them, and their status as guarantors of scientific reason, have lost much of their theoretical credibility. Moreover, in terms of what it might mean for an international political sociology to engage in an internationalization of the study of international relations, this would especially involve resistance to the kind of developmental history that invites inclusion not as if on common ground in a present moment but as if on the supposed journey to that common ground and present moment. This was the kind of history expressed in forms of international political sociology that took root in early twentieth-century Europe, remained alive and well in many later attempts to think about international relations in more historical terms and which later disciplinary formations preferred to tone down in favor of apparently ahistorical systemic and structuralist formulations. We will also come back to this eventually, after a few more steps along a primarily spatial path.

Given both the demands for and the difficulties of a much more internationalized discipline, a move toward Europe seemed to be a limited but at least fairly manageable option. This was partly because so much of the theorization driving the more critical literatures in international relations that had emerged in the 1980s was partly grounded in various strands of "continental" European philosophy and sociopolitical theory, the standard counterpoint to Anglo-American empiricism and socio-

scientific explanation. It was also partly because, although the study of international relations in Europe was only sporadically organized into the kind of discipline or field familiar from the Anglo-American experience, it did have many scholars across many disciplines who were heavily engaged in studying key aspects of international relations, from security to political economy to law.

In more immediately practical terms, it was also partly because we had already spent the best part of a decade working together on large EU-funded projects on the changing dynamics of liberty and security and had thus developed a network of scholars and institutions in Europe that could sustain a serious and indeed enthusiastic editorial base. This was a project through which our own different linguistic, cultural, and intellectual backgrounds turned out to be a considerable virtue not only within the multidisciplinary and geographically dispersed networks of the project itself, but also for thinking about whether or not sociologists and political theorists had anything useful to say to each other in the context of a not-quite international entity like Europe: a Europe encountering increasing levels of migration, boundary problems of many kinds, new technologies of surveillance, and social control and much else that speaks to changing configurations of something international.

Moreover, some of the critical currents that had been playing out within the ISA were also present in parts of Europe. In France, for example, the study of international relations had been decisively shaped by early institutional struggles to establish a political science against the privileged position of public law and then by attempts to establish the authority of sociology against the recently established authority of a largely state-centric form of political science. In effect, it was sociology that was most successful in mobilizing analyses of less state-centric accounts of international relations in ways that were more attentive to changing structural conditions and to the need for more appropriate conceptualizations and diagnostic tools (Bigo 2025).

One outcome of the increasing institutionalization of sociology and its critique of the framing of international relations within French political science was something resembling the so-called third debate that had helped shape the Anglo-American discipline through the 1990s. Having participated in these debates, we considered them to be only modestly successful. We especially missed a reflexive sensitivity to the histories, assumptions, and understandings of both social and political theory enabling its disciplinary commitments and capacities. We also thought that insufficient attention had been paid to prevailing understandings of power and authority, both in theorization and in practice. Quite apart from all the conceptual and institutional messiness attending the status of a political sociology, we were also forced to wonder yet again about what the phenomenon we call international was supposed to be anyway, whether framed in conventional Anglo-American terms or in relation to the somewhat novel and rather mysterious formations of Europe.

On the other hand, the move to Europe did provide impetus for attempts to provide more opportunities for scholars to submit their work and have it reviewed in languages other than English. Languages shape phenomena, how we respond to them, and how we claim to know them. Linguistic hegemonies have serious consequences. They tend to privilege certain styles of writing and reasoning. They enable specific criteria for scholarly judgment, including the criteria used in the reviewing processes used by academic journals. Translations are difficult, and much is often lost in the process; the relatively simple contrast between English and French is already a source of considerable irritation in this respect.

As a very practical problem, attempts to internationalize studies of international relations can hardly assume that everyone else must be first translated into English or indeed any other European language in order to be reviewed for scholarly credibility. At least reviewers need to be able to appreciate submissions arriving in a plurality of languages and styles before translations are made for publication. This is much more than just a practical matter. It also speaks directly to both the poli-

tics involved in authorizations of scholarly integrity and to the ways in which such politics might be in play in attempts to internationalize the study of international relations.

It may be that a move to Europe could not take us very far. Some would say that it merely swapped a frying pan for a fire. It is certainly the case that the internationalization of the study of international relations remains a poorly realized ambition. At the time, this was at least a small move in one important direction, mainly spatially but perhaps with just a little more temporal sensitivity also.

Twin Track Strategies II: International, Political, Sociology

The second sentiment was that some form of internationalized political sociology would appeal to many scholars who were in effect already working in these broad terms. Other journals were already taking advantage of a vogue for more critical analysis.

Alternatives (based primarily in Delhi and New York and with which Walker had been involved since the early 1980s) had begun life with interests in more pluralistic and counter-colonial forms of development and thus political practices (the impetus from Delhi) and possibilities for more universalistic forms of "world order" (the impetus from New York). It gradually added an interest in critical and counter-colonial theories of international relations. *Millennium*, which had significant leadership from post-graduate students with a keen eye on emerging trends, also became receptive to more critical material. Journals in both the United Kingdom and Europe increasingly became options. One of these, the French journal *Cultures et Conflits*, edited by Bigo, collaborated with *Alternatives* in both translation and publication. Journals in the United States still showed greater though not complete reluctance.

With the increasing number and greater diversity of journals becoming available, we felt that there was a fairly obvious opening for something more clearly focused on an international political sociology in particular. In retrospect at least, our thinking about this was probably shaped by at least four considerations.

To begin with, we understood that some traditions of political sociology had already been part of the most conventional forms of international relations theory. Max Weber may offer the still most resonant example. Many sociologists continue to think of Weber as resolutely one of their own, the paradigmatic sociologist primarily concerned with multiple forms of rationalization and value-free social science. Yet this is a radically dehistoricized and depoliticized Weber, filtered through many processes of ideological rectification and structural–functional appropriation. This Weber is an easily recognizable source of much of the mainstream literature on international relations. He nevertheless remains a very elusive, multidimensional, and vigorously contested figure, as he seemed to be even to himself. Many take him to have been at least as much concerned with the limits of human rationality and especially what happens when rationality colonizes all spheres of human existence, squeezing meaning further and further to the margins of the "life world," leaving ultimate values, and politics, to be determined on non-rational grounds. This was less a matter of keeping values out of science as of keeping science out of values; less Kant, more Nietzsche (among many, see Mommsen and Osterhammel 1987; Hennis 2000; Strong 2012).

This is the Weber, the nationalist and proto-existentialist, the primarily political theorist, who is recognizable both in various forms of political realism (Carl Schmitt, Hans J. Morgenthau, Raymond Aron, John Mearsheimer) and various forms of critical theory (the Frankfurt School's "Dialectics of Enlightenment" especially but also aspects of Michel Foucault and many others). It is the Weber whose nationalism is driven by the historical dynamics of capitalist modernization and development but now understood less in terms of linear progress than of competition to become the most advanced and thus most powerful states. It is the Weber who, like Carl Schmitt,

sits uneasily between expressions of nationalism understood in terms of territorially delimited accounts of self-determination and the more imperializing forms of nationalism justifying claims to territorial expansion. It is also the Weber who is recognizable in forms of "modernization from above," state-led strategies of "catch up" for states lacking the right kind of middle-class enabling Britain, France, and the United States to leap ahead in a more "natural' manner: the most prevalent historical solution to the hegemonies of the Euro-American world, and thus another default solution for those looking for a greater internationalization of the study of international relations. It is this Weber who destroys any illusions that assumptions about a field of more or less equal and sovereign states can be projected back into an empire-ridden past or forward into a present formally divided between "great powers" of the Security Council and the chasing pack in the General Assembly. This is also the Weber who had expended enormous energy exploring other civilizations in order to gain some comparative perspective on why the European experience of development had been so successful, and so tragic.

This is certainly a legacy, and an international political sociology, undoubtedly flawed in so many respects, though at the moment perhaps just a little too familiar. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see much explicit connection between this legacy and what has been shaped as an international political sociology in this journal.

A related and perhaps contrary example might be Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, partly shaped in Weber's shadow, a pale reflection of which shapes the banalized versions of realism, utopianism, and ideology critique popularized so effectively by E. H. Carr. Carr seems to have been writing for the British Foreign Office, and wrote more theoretically considered books than *The Twenty-Year's Crisis* (1939), so may have excuses. But there can be no excuses at all for a discipline that has so often conflated problematic relations between, say, knowledge and power, concept and phenomenon, formalized truth, and practical wisdom, and historical achievement and political aspiration and then converts them into something close to conspiratorial or propagandistic form. It is perhaps in reasonable reaction to this legacy of depoliticizing simplification that we can understand the emergence of so much work on cultural and discursive practices, affective behaviors, technologies of surveillance, and so on both in critical theories of international relations and in the pages of *International Political Sociology*. After all, older forms of ideology critique, sociologies of knowledge, and perhaps of the meaning of critique itself are scarcely adequate when modes of information, communication, and other "extensions of man"—to invoke the comparative potential of Marshall McLuhan's *Gutenberg's Galaxy* (1962)—are mutating so dramatically.

In any case, there is much history here, and even more oversimplification of history, both of academic disciplines and of the continuing persistence of nationalism against which many recent moves toward pluralism and micro-sociology should perhaps be partly contextualized. Given the striking presentism that has been pervasive across so much recent scholarship, including *International Political Sociology*, it is worth insisting that international political sociology did not begin life a mere 20 years ago, and that much of what we take to be both mainstream and critical theories of international relations as well as the philosophical traditions from which they both draw, still express echoes of political sociologies worked out in the traumatically internationalizing context of the First World War and its immediate aftermath. Many other histories might also be invoked in this context.

Second, we were partly responding to the gradual disappearance of once-classical forms of political sociology from both political science and sociology, especially but not only in their American versions. This disappearance was presumably a partial consequence of resistance to neo-Marxian theories of class and neo-Weberian accounts of hierarchical status and so on, as well as of the success of voting studies as a measure of an often minimally specified *demos*. Boundaries between political science and sociology had tightened. Under conditions of the Cold War and a hostile climate

for critical intellectuals, many sociologists found it convenient to avoid theoretical and ideological conflicts by moving toward what Robert Merton (1949) called "middle range theory," a term that obscures a distinct narrowing of what counts as theory. Sociologies of knowledge and of ideology understood as relations between power and knowledge had also faded considerably, partly because of an understandable loss of confidence in prevailing sources of authoritative knowledge against which to judge what counted as falsehood and illusion. Moreover, the many problems long hounding structural–functionalist sociologies were assumed to be resolved in one way or another, not least by reducing the triad of structure, function/action, and agency into a predictably normativized dyad of structure and agency. As with political economies, a lot of political sociologies had survived only in highly diluted forms.

Again, many of the innovations that were being pursued around the more critical edges of international relations theory might be understood as attempts to rework the discredited and/or repressed versions of political sociology on more sophisticated foundations and in very different historical circumstances (among recent examples, see Anievas and Matin 2016). But rather than being part of more or less conventional disciplinary expectations, they now had to respond to their new status as rebels and outsiders. Fair enough, but continuities with much older traditions should not be underestimated.

Third we were partly thinking not only about political sociology as a mode of analysis but also of the many sociopolitical phenomena that were attracting much less attention within the discipline than many scholars thought they deserved as well as many phenomena that did receive attention but of a very limited kind. *International Political Sociology* has been especially successful in this respect. It has excelled at innovative and creatively diverse encounters with both contemporary problems and long-marginalized phenomena: the instrumentalized cultivation of fear and social unease, practices of inclusion and exclusion, sovereignties that are not what or where they are supposed to be, movements of people, both privileged and traumatized, and so on.

Finally, but far from least, we were thinking about what it would mean to put those three terms, international, political, and social (or sociology) together given that they express very different principles, sometimes complementary and sometimes profoundly antagonistic. Political sociology is already a problem, and not only because cliches often prevail over more sophisticated scholarship. Political theorists are generally inclined to imagine foundational origins in the classical *polis*, and social theorists sometimes assume that societies have always existed in more or less modern and statist form. Nationalism has underwritten claims about the seemingly natural but massively bloody convergence of "state" and "society." Most liberalisms have counterposed civil societies against the state and worried that the latter might take over the former, always in the name of someone's unequal liberty. Some analysts assume that states produce national societies and others that already national societies produce states. Political economists and historians have other stories to tell about all of the above. Others continue to complain that the terms state and society simply reify too many different phenomena in ways that seriously hinder our capacity to make sense of what is going on. Too many empirical trends elude established analytical categories, which then have to be made to work very hard to sustain epistemological control over which phenomena and trends should be considered significant and insignificant, the way things are and the way things cannot be. Beyond the cliches and empirical complexities, however, many competing principles are in contention, not least when claims about liberty, equality, and democracy come into collision with claims about security and sovereign necessity.

The relation between *the* political and *the* social is precisely one of the key problems engaged by political theorists from one angle and social theorists from the other. In both cases, they often take their foundational concepts of polis and soci-

ety for granted. Reductionisms prevail. Political sociology thus names a problem with long historical or genealogical roots, not an "approach," or a "perspective," It cannot be just a convenient or risk-free analytical tool. This is a problem that will be especially familiar to anyone who has experienced difficulties avoiding the twin reductionisms at work in traditions of political economy.

For a journal of the ISA, this already well-known problem is amplified many-fold by the addition of the term international. There is in many respects a greater gap between international and both state and society than between either of these. Some scholars do happily refer to an international society despite repeated warnings about the "domestic fallacy," the resort to analogies taken from relational orders within states so as to characterize relational orders between them. This is arguably a usage that says much more about the continuing hold of a progressivist philosophy of history and development than about relational structures among at least nominally sovereign nation states. Claims about a global society push a mere fallacy into both historical and conceptual incoherence (Walker 2009).

Moreover, the relation between states/societies and an international system of states—between state law and international law, for example—poses what some would say is the core antagonism that must be confronted by any analysis of international relations as conventionally understood. Systemic structure provides the condition of the very possibility of states, even if it cannot match the raw capacities of the states it enables. This is why the preservation of the system is often said to be more important than the preservation of any particular state, not least in the Charter of the United Nations, where the principle of collective security competes with the principle of national self-determination. Some people would like to give more power to the system, more authority to international law, and so on, raising questions about how far this move might be taken before visions of a universal empire take root. Others would reverse this narrative entirely, suggesting that it is the states that generate the system and that some of them can or should control it more than others, raising questions about when a system of self-determining states turns into a system of bullying empires or—the regulative worst-case scenario—a singular universal empire.

There is some parallel here with the conventional tensions between individualized subjects and collectivized societies within states that preoccupy most political theorists and generate familiar forms of political value as nationalized and/or democratized accommodations among principles of liberty, equality, and security. In practice, of course, nothing is ever so simple. Political sociologists and political economists have long tried to illuminate the complexities of class, race, gender, and much else that push these accommodations one way or another. But again, relations of universality and plurality are being played out in terms of a fundamental antagonism within a scalar order: small individuals/large states, small states/large system of states.

The simple analytical solution to all the profound difficulties that this politics of relationality and antagonism within a scalar order puts into motion, and the core conceptual move enabling not only the construction of a conventional understanding of a discipline of international relations but also the distinction between that discipline and other disciplines, has been to treat system, states and individuals as distinct "levels" and then to proceed with either methodological individualism, methodological nationalism or methodological internationalism, according to taste. Considerable empirical research of many kinds may have served to muddy this setup considerably, but it has become quite difficult to think about something international, or political, or social in any other terms. Once students are introduced to the study of international relations through this elegant conceit, they are largely set for life. All of humanity is supposedly included; all temporalities are excluded, except for the presumption of a founding moment and its implied philosophy of history.

Nor is it clear that many other people are immune to its charms. It is a rendering of a specifically modern political order that may have found its most overt expression in the analysis of international relations but is at work in one way or another both in many other disciplines but also in the orchestration of relations between disciplines. Not least, it predisposes the ways in which we understand our relationship with spatialities, temporalities, sovereignties, and subjectivities, or at least with what such terms are now supposed to mean.

This is because far from being the innocent methodological convenience distilled by J. David Singer (1961) from Kenneth Waltz's (1959) discipline-defining study of the causes of war, it expresses a pervasive and very powerful understanding of how to think about relations between large and small, between macro and micro. It affirms the still hierarchical political orders of a modernity that proclaims its refusal of the imperial orders of old though now articulated in quantitative rather than the essentialistic and qualitative terms symbolically left behind with the Treaties of Westphalia. It formalizes a way of distinguishing between liberty and equality without having to engage much with the antagonistic relation between these two core principles of modern politics. It maintains an ontology of scalar hierarchy within which a politics of liberties and necessities can be played out on a horizontal "level," on another two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional world (Walker 2018). Political theorists and sociologists are no more immune to this brilliant setup than are students of international relations. It is, not least, what requires those commas to be put in place between international, political, and sociological.

Once again, this has continuing implications. One of the more popular moves expressed in *International Political Sociology* over the years has been to celebrate the virtues of studying micro-sociological practices as if they offered a clear escape from the grand and totalizing claims made by conventional disciplinary accounts of international relations. Well perhaps; but probably not. The very idea of a micro-sociology already presumes its macro-sociological counterpart. The seriously problematic totality is not the macro but the scalar order that orchestrates relations and distinctions between macro and micro. The micro is not necessarily a repudiation of the macro. Attention to the fine details of specific sociopolitical practices may well be able to evade some of the totalizing force of this totality, but this is not a given.

This is just one of many reasons why our own explicit intervention in the initial issue of *International Political Sociology* came under the title of "International, Political, Sociology," supplemented by an essay on the international as a problem quite as much as an object for analysis (Bigo and Walker 2007a, 2007b). We suggested in effect that the commas separating these three terms may be more important than the three terms themselves. The boundaries of clearly delimited concepts are a core analytical problem not only of an international political sociology but also for many other attempts to switch from disciplinary to interdisciplinary knowledge. Internal/external relations are sharp and clear only under extreme and exceptional conditions and are usually much more complex affairs, always open to negotiation and spatiotemporal elaboration but also to the reaffirmation of differentiation in support of the competing principles they once sought to examine and defend: society against the state is just one exemplary case. Distinctions between international and both political and social are certainly drawn much too sharply in categorizations of various "levels of analysis," but they are important distinctions and identify sites where a lot of what has been examined in *International Political Sociology* has taken place. This is one of the key contrasts between such work and that of Weber, Schmitt, and so on a century earlier.

Nevertheless, the understandable temptation is to string the three terms together, to add two degrees of qualification to the primary operational term, a specific form of sociology, albeit a sociology operating less in the long shadow of neo-Weberian rationalisms and nationalisms than of relational, mobile, and micro-sociologies more concerned with specific practices than with enduring structures and functions. It is

an understandable temptation precisely because societies and the sociologies that have developed to study them seem to offer so many resources for research; it is only necessary to find interesting empirical situations to study and the innovative sociological resources that might be appropriate. There are clearly many interesting empirical situations, involving borders, surveillance, migrations, and much else. And sociology has already offered a broad repertoire of innovative concepts and methodological procedures that could be applied to many novel practices that were easily framed as in some senses both political and international: easily framed, but not always convincingly so. Which sociology for which society, for which politics, and for which international?

Politics: What? Where? When?

What understanding of politics is being assumed or imagined when we speak of an international political sociology? What has been going on in the spatiotemporalities marked by the concept placed between those two commas, both in the constitution of disciplinary distinctions and in the phenomena those disciplines claim to know? Related problems haunted studies of "new" and/or "global" social movements in the 1980s as well as of international and/or global political economies long before that.

A perhaps overgeneralizing survey of the work that has found expression in *International Political Sociology* suggests that a preoccupation with pluralizations, relationalities, and temporal practices has been at the heart of the journal's virtues. It is more difficult to identify any sustained consideration of what these preoccupations might imply for our understanding of what it means to engage in politics. There is a general sense that some kind of political radicalism is intended; but what kind this might be and what would justify a claim to radicalism is unclear. Broader conversations about changing forms and possibilities of political practice, or about what it now means to be critical, radical, or even stoically resilient in the face of overwhelming forces seem very far away.

Still, the preference for pluralizations, relationalities, and practices at least suggests a need to think more in terms of verbs rather than nouns, of temporalities rather than spaces, of mobile sovereignties and subjectivities perhaps, some radicalization of many attempts in European political thought since the nineteenth century to treat politics as an activity rather than an essentialist way of being (Palonen 2006).

Even so, perhaps the term "more" is not quite right here. It may imply a mere readjustment of relations among verbs and nouns, temporalities and spatialities, or between practices, mobilizations, and lines of flight and the various institutionalizations, reifications, and other "apparatuses of capture" that put a stop to things: that bring us back to a different accommodation with the house of Parmenides.

Or is some more ambitious leap to the house of Heraclitus really to be the intended destination? Is this what is meant by radicalism today? Have we left history to live only in the near-present, opposed totalization to pursue only a life in fragments, escaped all containments only to speed along various relations and abandoned all theorizations as complicit with hegemonic universalizations so as to dwell entirely among some microcosmos? Well, probably not, or not entirely. But if not, and if not mere adjustment, what politics or politicizations might we have in mind? "The political," the more or less essentialist account predicated on claims about the classical *polis* and associated with political theorists like Hannah Arendt, Chantal Mouffe, Sheldon Wolin, and many others seems an improbable option, even though it has played a very important role as a regulative ideal in discussions of the fate of democracy. Indeed, how do we imagine the possibilities of democracy without presuming the political, the republic, the state, the people, or the *demos*?

It was not just the classical Greeks who presented versions of this sort of question. A large part of Machiavelli's legacy derives from his insistence on the temporal character of human existence. Hence, his crucial conception of human liberties in time

rather than eternal necessities announced from above. With seventeenth-century European thinkers like Galileo and Hobbes, motion was maneuvred into static spatial forms, within sovereign states in Hobbes's case, and then into the straight lines to some future found in the standard narratives about progress flourishing in the nineteenth century and which Weber saw as cause for both optimism and despair. Liberties in time, human capacities to create something new, for example, gave way to liberties in a more or less equalitarian and delimited space. Democracies took on their now familiar representational and distributional forms. The modern state is not the classical polis, the Renaissance city, or Rousseau's republic of Geneva.

Our conventional narratives about politics, society, and international relations have inherited all of this: conservative continuity or radical change; structural realism (Waltz 1979) or historical realism (Morgenthau 1948); the static forms of states and international systems or some great transformative process taking us to some more properly global order, or not. In this sense, the prevailing debates about static spatial orders and other possibilities in time also work as an apparatus of capture. Stereotypes of Parmenides and Heraclitus may also work in this way. It is a famous setup. The repudiation of one side of a dualism in favor of the other does not eradicate the dualism. Enlightenment and Romanticism are still enjoying their elegant dance, one step, many steps, and back again. Immanence and transcendence, like the finite and the infinite, have taught us how the dance should be performed.

Figures like Foucault, Deleuze, and Derrida understood this very well, in very different ways. They understood the historical depths of what they were up against, not least the limits of how we engage with limits. This is why they and many others made such an impact on late-twentieth-century forms of critical analysis. The basic lines of argumentation had been sketched out in various formulations since at least Weber's time and on the basis of moves that figures like Foucault, Deleuze, and Derrida had spent much of their lives decoding. They understood and sought to resist the always seductive alternatives that established conventions were ready, willing, and able to offer. It is one thing to find flaws in the flimsy dogmas of the modern social sciences but quite another to engage with figures who may seem to promise cartographies for a radical escape from such dogmas but whose texts quickly betray deep understandings of the difficulties of escaping a dualism of radical extremes or the monolithic singularity that sets up or results from a game of doubles.

Heraclitus—the caricature, not the mysterious texts—is always tempting for those wanting to resist any totalization of static necessities permitting limited degrees of freedom. Crucially, the name also specifies another form of potential totalization. As a regulative ideal, this figure may provide some guidance for pluralizations, practices and as yet unknown relationalities, both ontologically and ethically. But politics? Some new form of "anarchical society"? A radical return of Machiavelli without Florence? Politicizations and depoliticizations that work in turn as politicizations? What could we be talking about here? What conception of political life, if any, is being assumed? From what pattern of examples might we learn something about how peoples in various settings think about the politics of their social and cultural activities?

Within states, and for even the boldest of social and political theorists, less radical options tend to be more popular: relationalities, practices, and pluralities may be pursued in the name of some better form of politics because the limits of such possibilities are already set by a version of the political, the demos, the nation, the state, the society, the city. Verbs can be reconciled with nouns without too much difficulty. Beyond states or across states, the limits are less clear. The international system has little obvious presence in the everyday lifeworld, although a few analysts have shown how it might be possible to make such a presence palpable, through some global civil society, for example, or a cosmopolitan culture considerably thicker than Kant could possibly imagine. Some of the more distinctive articles that have been published in *International Political Sociology* do try to defy the imperatives of modern scalar or-

ders and radical dichotomies, although engagements with what this means for our understanding of politics are generally left hanging, as if the answer was obvious. Which conversations with other attempts to rethink political possibilities are being engaged? In what ways might they be understood as part of a project to internationalize the international? Who has tried to engage with such questions already, whether in theorizations or in practices? To what effect?

In the context of international relations, critical imaginaries have usually been deployed to identify possibilities for greater universality; world peace through world law; global governance, a just world order, world society, and so on. They tend to push higher up the scalar order more than they break from it. One striking feature of recent imaginaries, present in *International Political Sociology* but also more broadly, has been the move in the opposite direction, down toward those pluralizations, relationalities, and temporal practices. Thus, one might compare the renewed attention to the politics of pluralization in the context of theories of international relations pursued by Justin Rosenberg (2023), Kurki and Rosenberg (2020), and Rosenberg and Tallis (2022) with Arthuro Escobar's more anthropologically focused designs for a "pluriverse" (Escobar 2018)). Many currents of research and theorization move in similar directions, our own included; and we are well aware that our use of concepts like transversality (as in Basaran et al. 2017) is subject to many of the questions we are seeking to emphasize here.

Yet what now counts as universality, or plurality, or a relationship between the two; and within which limitations? How does an insistence on the primacy of temporalities and relationalities now work to transform our understanding of universalities and pluralities? Why do we so often assume that pursuits of the micro, the relational, the pluralistic, and the temporally contingent all lead in similar directions? Philosophers may now step forward, though it is not clear that they should have any final word on these matters.

Perhaps an international arena relatively unperturbed by the denser atmospheres of statist domesticity offers an especially congenial context in which to think about possibilities that have only been worked out in fairly abstract and largely ontological terms. Perhaps the attraction to pluralism in particular is enhanced because the international political order is so explicitly a site of pluralistic antagonism to universalism, even if a specific universalism is the possibility condition of this pluralistic antagonism. In this sense, even some forms of "political realism" might be read as both pluralistic and critical in some (limited, coopted) senses, even while tending toward the most dogmatic of dogmatisms. If not that kind of pluralism, and that kind of critique, then where might we be heading?

Whatever responses such questions might attract, some of the more interesting moves made by critical studies of international relations have clearly been influenced by thinkers who seem to promise novel (post-Newtonian) possibilities more in ontological than in political terms: Spinoza, Leibniz, Nietzsche, Bergson, Whitehead, and so on as well as the many twentieth-century theorists they have influenced. The shift away from the unquestioned primacy of epistemology has often led to engagements with questions of fundamental ontologies of being, sometimes through secular sciences, sometimes through re-engagements with theological currents that have long shaped the nominally secular concepts of modern politics and sometimes through appeals to other cultural, civilizational, and indigenous traditions. In the study of international relations, this shift has been especially popular with scholars working on the problematization of "identities" and on assumptions about the "constructed" character of social and political life.

Two key questions arise in this context: in what sense should we expect whatever might count as a better ontology to provide some kind of guidance for a better politics? And what kind of politics does whatever is taken to be a better ontology enable? Similar questions might be posed in relation to ethics. Both questions have been posed in many forms for a long time. The first question immediately runs into fur-

ther questions about what would count as better and on whose authority. The second question involves extensive engagement with what politics has come to be and mean and on what basis, and even more work on how politics might be reimagined given the preferred ontological alternative. Two recent articles in *International Political Sociology* give some sense of what is at stake here. Taken together, these two analyses raise profound questions about what it means to act politically under contemporary conditions.

One is the provocative attempt by Jef Huysmans and Joao Nogueira (2021) to understand international political sociology as a mode of critique involving persistent attempts to prevent the capture of fluidities, contingencies, and fragments within totalizing forms. At least in this initial formulation of what has since become a more extensive project, two very different positions seem to coexist. Sometimes a different ontological relationship between "fractions" and structures might be on offer; a novel accommodation between lines of flight and apparatuses of capture, to use the Deleuzian framing in which the analysis is explicitly shaped. More often, more boldly, and also underwritten by Deleuzian texts, the lines of flight seem to be in full flow, and the overall force of the analysis suggests very strong Heraclitean ambitions.

This bolder position is partly justified on the basis of a claim that it is the primary legacy that can be extracted from a wide range of critical traditions; and it has to be said that this is very far from how we understand any of the texts or traditions on which they draw. It is also partly justified by a claim that contemporary political orders are now best characterized in terms of fragments, fluidities, contingencies, and so on. Well perhaps, though the argument is considerably overgeneralized from very underspecified and indeed counter-intuitive evidence. In this sense, the analysis might be taken as a suggestive thought experiment, though one that is difficult to reconcile with most of the analysis that has appeared in *International Political Sociology* so far, especially in relation to security practices, the dislocation of boundaries, and so on.

Still, what is most striking about both versions of the analysis is that questions about politics have disappeared almost completely, having been reduced to a permanent war against totalization. Critique has become a principled opposition to an abstract ontology, and thus might be understood as a form of dogma, precisely the opposite of critique as this is generally understood. Furthermore, insofar as it does move toward a full totalization of temporality, it is open to interpretation as an opening to a politics of catastrophe, of a totalizing fear and an eschatology of End Times. In more benign form, it works as a very familiar politics of escape from the need to engage in any political or international orders that are simply deemed obsolete. Boundaries seem to have evaporated rather than, say, become more complicated and articulated in some other spatiotemporal configuration. Binary logics are reproduced even in claims that they must be resisted. Ontological speculations often outrun the demands of political responsibility. Unintended consequences are then rarely far away.

In rather stark contrast stands the work of Rita Abrahamsen and her colleagues (2020) on the international character of the rise of the New Right, a term frequently associated with defenders of both highly nationalistic and imperializing versions of conservative (or revolutionary) politics. What is most striking about this analysis is its account of the ways in which many thinkers guiding the New Right have long been engaging with the kinds of theorists and theorizations that have shaped various forms of contemporary critical theory. It turns out that at least some of them have been reading the same thinkers who have been shaping critical theories of international relations, strongly filtered through theorists of political practice like Antonio Gramsci and a sharp eye for the main chance. Some of those unintended consequences perhaps? A capacity to read theoretical texts politically? Greater attention to political practices than to established liberal norms? Further evidence of collapsing distinctions between right and left? A close but largely unacknowledged connection

between our understanding of critique and our understanding of politics within the outer limits of an international order?

Again, a search for a better ontology, as for a better ethic, offers no guarantee of a better politics. It may even lead away from thinking about politics at all, or to a politics that is distinctly uncongenial to those who have become used to thinking of themselves as critical, progressive, and emancipatory. Similarly, trying to get away from the disciplinary practices of a compromised discipline does not guarantee any escape from the historical forms within which what counts as politics, as noun and verb, singular and plural, has come to be defined internationally.

International: When? Where? What?

International Political Sociology was set up in response to problems within the scholarly discipline or field of international relations, yet the study of international relations cannot be entirely divorced from what it is assumed to be studying. The map may not be the territory, but there are many mutually constitutive relations between maps and territories, as with words and things, subjects and objects, theories and practices, and so on. In this case, the discipline seemed especially slow to respond to both empirical evidence of significant transformations and theoretical and conceptual innovations that were underway across parts of the scholarly world. Perhaps this was a consequence of its proximity to statist and other powers and the continuing lure of advice to princes. Perhaps it was a consequence of its cultivation as a social science by one hegemonic and self-satisfied power in particular. In any case, a lot of energy was devoted to critiques of the discipline, to the point where it became commonplace to confuse engagements with the discipline with engagements with what the discipline was supposed to be studying.

Yet what was this discipline supposed to be studying? What exactly does the international in an international political sociology refer to? Is there such a thing? Is it a singularity? What is its ontology, its history, its geography? What makes it so easy to both assume and ignore? What is its connection, if any, with some world, or globe or planet? (Walker 2009; Prozorov 2013; Hanninen 2015).

Many complaints about the discipline seem to be ultimately directed at its expression of the Westphalian mythology about 1648. It is a mythology that affirms the central problematic of war externally and peace internally because it is so widely taken to affirm a foundational ontology of universality within plurality and plurality within universality within a spatialized system of states. In this sense, it refers to one just expression of the broader move toward subjectivization that is widely recognized as the hallmark of a specifically modern world. The world is brought inside, into self-consciously knowing subjects, large and small, while simultaneously remaining outside, as objects that might be known, and disowned. Hence, the regulative ideal of sharp boundaries between internality and externality. It is a foundational theme that enables many variations, and problems, especially an increasingly radical differentiation among self-affirming sovereign states, and thus a primarily conflictual understanding of the relation between external and internal rather than, say, an increasing similarity among states in conformity with some universal moral law that might or might not bring greater harmony among them.

This in turn enables a normalized division of labor: peace within and potential or active war between. International relations can then become its own discipline specializing in its own specialized problem, external relations, and the constant possibility of war. Political theorists, sociologists, and the like can focus on the home front leaving their external conditions of possibility to the specialists in externalities. Consequently, the construction of the discipline reproduces only part of a much broader picture. It does so in an extreme form, as an exceptionalism to a domesticated norm that might nevertheless be projected outwards as an analogy to be used for understanding an idealized but impossible account of the globalizing society it

might become. Moreover, this is an exceptionalism in time, progress at home and mere repetition abroad, as Martin Wight (1966) put it in another crucial text affirming how such a distinct discipline must be constructed, a decisive complement to those dehistoricizing and depoliticizing levels of analysis. The whole setup is also predicated on a temporal history that produces the mythology of Westphalia as the indispensable founding moment, contrary to Wight's own more incisive instincts as a historian.

Yet Westphalia does not only mark a symbolic origin of that particular story. It also marks a nominal conclusion of and transition from another. It is in effect an especially thick boundary zone, in time and then in space. That story involves the long and complex shift from various forms of universalizing empire organized explicitly through formally hierarchical modes of authority to horizontal two-dimensional organizational forms expressing principles of liberty, equality, subjectivity, and sovereignty. The gradual collapse of essentialistic and theologically ordained hierarchies had forced an intensified split in what was taken to be a natural and God-given order, a famously novel conception of Man; humanist, eventually Protestant in form even if not in faith, Cartesian, Kantian, and so on. Without the hierarchies under God and Emperor, Man could not be graded on qualitative levels and gradually came to be split into two, and on two fronts: Man for itself rather than for Nature or God; and Man in general and many men in particular. Read in this context, Westphalia expresses our standard modern answer to an anthropological problem: one humanity, many citizens of sovereign states that nevertheless nominally depend on some shared sense of a common humanity. The split of Man from God/Nature is then just a background condition, but also a model for a politics of limits: an international within and a world—and other peoples—beyond (Walker 2009).

This is not a story that can be told affectively by focusing only on what may be identified as international or on historical accounts of empirical details rather than regulative principles. It is a story that involves all three of the so-called levels distinguished so elegantly in the standard schematic of international relations theory and cannot be told from just one of them. This is not least because it is a story about how these three expressions of humanity—Man—came to be distinguished so sharply from each other. It is not just that the three-level story appears to be entirely ahistorical but also that this appearance hides the history of its own production. It also turns what had been produced as an array of antagonisms in a horizontal space into discrete entities in a vertical scalar order.

It is possible to exaggerate this transition from empires to a system of states, which is clearly a much-contested matter among historians and others. Many empirical continuities may be identified if one reads them through anachronizing concepts. The familiar periodization of medieval and modern creates far more historiographical questions than it resolves (Fasolt 2004; Davis 2008; Malcolm 2019). 1648 can be a convenient stand-in for both earlier and later timings, including the decisive collapse of Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and other imperial formations in the early twentieth century. Nevertheless, the core problems of principle exposed in these two most popular origin stories about what an international refers to are profoundly different. They are also sequenced. Westphalia affirms an idealized pattern of war and peace predicated on a historically and culturally specific response to the problematic character and status of Man, both universally and pluralistically and as both humanity and a politically qualified subjectivity. It should be unsurprising that one major line in the interpretation of Weber, the international political sociologist, returns to precisely this question when he wonders about what kind of human being can tolerate this world of rationalizing non-rationality and rational irrationality (Hennis 2000). It is no wonder that he echoes so much Machiavelli and Martin Luther as well as Kant and Nietzsche.

One way of interpreting the critical impetus behind many contributions to *International Political Sociology* is that it is ultimately shaped by a recognition that the political–anthropological questions about humanity and its place in the world are no longer answered either by an idealized Westphalian settlement or by the kind of nationalistic reading of a modernizing history at work within that settlement given by Weber. There is in this sense something to be said for presentism. Historical amnesia can be comforting as well as dangerous. Yet while the Westphalian settlement now appears as the specialized object of a disciplining discipline, the prior question of humanity is taken up by many other disciplines, which have also managed to negotiate their own settlement of the faculties that is not too far removed from the settlement expressed in an international political order of internalities and externalities. This is more or less what we call modernity, an all-encompassing category that is then expressed and examined within many specialized disciplines. Yet we could also refer to it as something international, the modern world contained within the outer limit of a new horizontal order of humanity whose limits were previously reached somewhere between heaven and earth. The study of this international might then be understood as the discipline that encompasses all other disciplines rather than just one among many others.

Perhaps this is just another oversimplifying thought experiment, but it might explain some of the force with which the discipline has sought to hold onto its reified concepts, its sharp boundaries, and its levels of analysis. Without them, it would expand with all the imperializing ambitions of historians and geographers. Like the Newtonian–Kantian categories of space and time, the idealized categories of a Westphalian political order work to affirm a specific account of humanity, the political, and the modern understanding of sovereignty and subjectivity and indeed those Newtonian–Kantian categories of time and space. Its problems are not just those of a specifically American social science. Resistance to a brittle discipline does not make the problem of the international disappear.

It matters which international we are talking about, and thus which problems and principles are understood to be the primary driving force guiding analysis. The problem of war and peace has of course become more and more difficult. But so also has the problem of the status of humanity, and its relation to both its many selves and the world from which it has managed to differentiate itself through a process of modernization. What could it mean to be both a human being and a politically qualified citizen under contemporary conditions? What does it mean especially given all the challenges to humanistic assumptions about Man's privileged place on the planet?

Still, the recovery of histories cannot just swap Westphalia for late medieval and Renaissance Europe. Both of those eras had effects on the rest of the world; and the rest of the world had constitutive effects on both of those eras. With Westphalia, it is easier to talk about Western domination of the rest of the world. With the earlier story, it is easier to see how what we call the West is in very large measure a product of practices and principles absorbed from far beyond Europe: Europe was not the center of anyone else's universe. It is also easy to see the appeal of some kind of world history or planetary geopolitics as alternatives to the entrenched horizons of established disciplines. Where does the Atlantic slave trade, to take just one token example, fit into the constitutive principles of anyone's discipline of international relations? Forget about Christopher Columbus, but what about Vasco da Gama? And so on. But whose world histories or planetary geographies would we be talking about? Which understandings of politics and society would be presumed? Historians and geographers have just as many problems to contend with as do analysts of international relations, and, as disciplines, are not obviously better prepared to acknowledge them.

Concluding Comments

Given the circumstances in which it arose, *International Political Sociology* has cultivated rich arenas of innovative scholarship. It has done so partly by reacting against many of the prevailing conceits of the institutionalized discipline of international relations but also partly by taking the title of the journal as a sequence, as a reference to a doubly qualified form of sociology. Both qualifications were largely taken for granted, not completely, and not without good reasons, but with consequences that need to be considered. In some ways, this form of international political sociology has become its own mainstream, so that differentiating itself from some other mainstream has less and less tactical value. In any case, the historical context has been shifting fairly dramatically, and not obviously toward greater degrees of liberty, equality, and collective self-determination. There should be no pretense that we are confident about the meaning of any of the three terms deployed as a title, either in that sequence or as expressions of closely related but also sharply antagonistic principles. They can only be taken as problems to be pursued, not as answers to be taken for granted or ignored completely.

As for the ambition to internationalize the study of international relations, a shift to Europe has been just a small but nevertheless constructive step. We have tried to show that to explore problems arising from the juxtaposition of the three concepts of international, political, and social is also to engage with problems that are palpable in attempts to internationalize the study of international relations. In both cases, we encounter relationalities of temporality and spatiality, especially the conversion and reification of the former to the latter.

This is how the myth of Westphalia, the levels of analysis schema, and sharp and even invisible distinctions between internality and externality work. Many histories are erased but a philosophy of history, a story about modernization, is affirmed. This is what we must do because this is what we wish to have become. Because this is what we have all become, some of us can invite others to walk through the open door. Or because this is what some of us are still waiting to become, we can give them a helping hand to become like those who have already arrived. Or because we are all subject to the great forces of capitalist modernization and a disenchantment of the world that are squeezing out all other possibilities, we can all get together as nationalists doomed to find meaning in our own communities and live with the consequences as best we can. Alternatively, we can claim that everything is suddenly different, boundaries have disappeared, temporalities have destroyed spatialities, and so on: yet another replay of an eternal presence ceding to an imminent absence that marks our most conventional understandings of what it means to encounter boundaries, whether spatial or temporal. These are all well-trodden routes along which it would now be inadvisable to follow.

These are also the routes that are implicitly rejected by many contributions to *International Political Sociology*. Many of the sociologists who are often invoked in its pages, like Pierre Bourdieu, Norbert Elias, and Charles Tilly, devoted much of their work to resisting the kind of history and theorization of sociogenesis shaping both versions of Weber identified here. These are also resisted perhaps even more explicitly by many of those who engage with international relations with a strong sense of its prevailing colonial and imperialistic character, although difficult problems involving what it might mean to add other or more diverse histories also have to be negotiated.

There have long been and may yet be other ways of living in the world. Perhaps this is a shared agenda that might be cultivated more carefully. Perhaps we all have a shared interest in engaging with questions about the political status of humanity given the frailty of a modernizing international and an internationalizing modernity. This too would demand attention to relationalities, contingencies, micro-practices, complex boundaries, and much else, though not in de-historized,

parochialized, and de-politicized form. It would also demand an opening to many other disciplines, and engagements with what might be shared with them and what might be secured as a matter of principle. After all, principles do matter, and they too must be engaged as practices, though of a very slow, dense, and stubborn kind. Modern lines of cartography, for example, with their representations of connections and discriminations, express millennia of navigations and multiple techniques for finding one's way in the world (Caputo 2024).

Not the least reason why Westphalia retains its seemingly magnetic attraction is that it expresses such an elegant solution to the split humanity divided between its claims to universality and its claims to plurality. It is a solution that enables practices of self-determination and emancipation quite as much as practices of war. It may be that finding ways out of the disciplinary grip of any particular discipline is much easier than renegotiating relations with other disciplines. Still, renegotiating relations with others and exploring transversalities that might show how such renegotiations might be possible is perhaps the only option we have, and not only among scholars.

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