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Political Sociology: Between Civilizations and Modernities
A Multiple Modernities Perspective

Willfried Spohn

FREE UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN/UNIVERSITY OF GÖTTINGEN, GERMANY

Abstract

This article outlines a comparative-civilizational multiple modernities perspective on political sociology. In the context of the major currents within political sociology – modernization approaches, critical and neo-Marxist as well as postmodern and global approaches – it is argued that a comparative-civilizational multiple modernities perspective is defined by several characteristics. First, against functionalist-evolutionist modernization approaches it emphasizes the fragility, contradictions and openness as well as civilizational multiplicity of political modernity and political modernization processes. Second, against critical and neo-Marxist approaches, it insists on the cultural and institutional contradictions of political power, social protest and political conflict. Third, against post-modern and post-colonial micro-sociological approaches, often primarily micro-sociological, it holds to a macro-sociological constructivist orientation. Fourth, against the primarily socio-economic and political-institutional approaches to global political sociology, it again emphasizes the historically changing, culturally contradictory and pluri-civilizational dimensions of international relations and world politics. Though sharing with all these major currents in political sociology some common ground, the outlined comparative-civilizational multiple modernities perspective conceptualizes and analyses, more specifically, the varying impacts of civilizations, empires and world religions on the complex dimensions and levels of the political arena and on power relations in a modernizing and globalizing world.

Key words

■ comparative civilizations ■ multiple modernities ■ political sociology

Sociology and political science have a complex relationship and against the backdrop of both disciplines, political sociology can be defined as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry developed by both sociologists and political scientists to study the interrelations and interactions between the socio-cultural life-world and the

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political sphere, between social and political arenas, institutions and agency. Political sociology, in short, looks at the social bases of politics. Despite this common inter-disciplinary core, however, there are considerable tensions between both cooperating disciplines. Political scholars often raise objections that political sociology is too sociological in underestimating the autonomy and complexity of the political sphere, and sociologists critically emphasize that political sociology often narrows down the complexity of the socio-cultural life-world as basis of politics. In addition to these common difficulties in inter-disciplinary cooperation, political sociology is characterized by a considerable variety in theoretical approaches and methodological orientations across both reference disciplines.

Modern political sociology emerged as a distinct field of specialization only after World War II, building on various intellectual and academic traditions of political science and sociology that had developed in the first half of the twentieth century. A common theoretical background for the interdisciplinary development of political sociology was the modernization paradigm. It integrated classical sociological traditions and in its structural-functional version provided a way to integrate the political into a multi-dimensional framework of socio-political evolution of Western democracy (Knöbl, 2001, 2007). This evolutionary framework also allowed for the integration of the specific dimensions of traditional political science: government, political institutions, public law and related political behaviour. The modernization paradigm was accompanied by a fast-growing field of comparative research that extended the scope of comparisons within the West to the de-colonizing, newly developing states in the non-Western world. As a result, political sociology was essentially defined as comparative political modernization research on the globally varying formation of modern political systems as part and parcel of societal modernization processes.

The modernization paradigm grounded political sociology in a macro-sociological Western-centric evolutionist framework. It served not only as a value-free analytical frame of reference but also as a self-legitimizing ideology of the Western and particularly US-American developmental models (Latham, 1997; Yack, 1997). As a reaction, it has been questioned by critical counter-trends in political sociology that define also its current theoretical and methodological complexity. A first critical counter-trend against structural-functionalist evolutionism, turned its attention to issues of political power, social inequality and protest (Coser, 1967). A second counter-trend, combining critical political sociology with neo-Marxist approaches, grounded the analysis of political power in capitalist development and class conflict (Bottomore, 1979). A third counter-trend evolved in the form of post-modernist and post-structuralist perspectives re-oriented through the cultural turn that questioned not only the Western-centric modernization paradigm but also the economism of most neo-Marxist approaches (Nash, 2000). The modernization paradigm as well as its counter-trends in political sociology have been accompanied by a general movement from macro-analytical and quantitative to meso- and micro-analytical qualitative approaches and become contested, under the current experience of intensifying globalization processes, by a fourth counter-trend to global political sociology (Baylis et al., 2008) in which also the multiple modernities perspective has a specific place.

In the context of the outlined complex situation in contemporary political sociology, this article intends to specify the multiple modernities perspective on political sociology. Following but also modifying Shmuel Eisenstadt's comparative-civilizational approach, I see four constitutive elements of a multiple modernities perspective to political sociology. First, the starting point is a conflict-theoretical modernization approach that emphasizes political conflict and social protest as crucial for politics and political change but grounded not only in conflicting material interests but also conflictive and contradicting normative orientations or the cultural and political antinomies of modernity. Second, of crucial importance is the assumption of the continuing relevance of tradition in the form of empires, religions and civilizations. Third, as a corollary, there is not one unifying Western modernity but multiple modernities on the basis of differing civilizational dynamics. And fourth, a basic axis of the contemporary intensifying globalization processes pertains to the interrelations and interactions of civilizational complexes or changing inter-civilizational constellations.

In order to outline these core elements of a multiple modernities perspective on political sociology, in the following I will elaborate: (1) the specifics of a multiple modernities perspective on political sociology; (2) discuss the relation between the antinomies of modernity and the paradoxes of democracy; (3) explain the connections between the varieties of political modernization and comparative-civilizational analysis; and (4) finally address the relation between multiple modernities, globalization and the political sphere.

Varieties of Political Sociology and the Specifics of a Multiple Modernities Perspective

In order to specify more precisely the multiple modernities perspective to political sociology, it is helpful to return for a moment to the classical modernization paradigm and the following development of political modernization research. In a nutshell, the classical modernization paradigm assumed a cluster of basic evolutionary processes that in the end would lead to a common form of modern society and polity. These basic evolutionary processes, though with different emphasis in the many strands of modernization theory, encompass social and functional differentiation, individualization, capitalist development, rising standards of living, state formation, nation-building, democratization, cultural development, value generalization and secularization. Confronted with growing criticism from without and within, the teleological and functionalist assumptions underlying the multi-dimensional modernization processes have been weakened and reformulated in terms of an empirical testable theory of social change (Zapf, 1971; Scheuch, 1992). However, even when replaced by less teleological concepts of social change and political development, the concept of modernization remained in place as a theoretical guide-line for analysing the evolutionary direction of social change towards a modern society and polity.

The current core of political sociology (against the background of the collapse of communism and its world-wide implications) is based on the model of political

modernization research – although the key term of political modernization, due to its evolutionist and functionalist undertones, is mostly replaced by political development. Seymour M. Lipset and his many collaborators have applied the comparative research on democracy to the whole world, continuing the basic modernization premise that the globalization of economic development and cultural modernization also contributes to the world-wide diffusion of democratic regimes (Lipset, 1998). In a different orientation, Samuel Huntington (1991) has taken stock of the expanding diffusion of democracy, emphasizing the cyclical pattern of development and reversal. Religion plays an important role (Huntington, 1996) – nationally and internationally, but the focus is again on the problematic of political order and politically stable democracies.

Against this backdrop of modernization theory and political modernization research, it is easier to characterize the specificity of the multiple modernities perspective to political sociology (Eisenstadt, 1971, 1999b, 2001, 2003). To begin with, there is no basic difference in considering the manifold key processes of modernization from social differentiation to individualization, capitalist development and nation-state formation, democratization and secularization – though these basic social processes are complemented by others and conceptualised in different ways. First, modernization is not seen as a teleological and functional process of social evolution but rather as a fragile, contradictory and open development. Second, modernization is not considered as emerging from *tabula rasa* but shaped by different traditions from and through which modernization processes evolve. Of particular importance here are civilizations as trans-societal institutional and cultural orders, empires as transnational state institutions and world religions as transcultural sacred value-orientations, beliefs and symbolic orders that all shape different programmes of modernity and varying dynamics of modernization. Third, modernity and modernization thus do not primarily encompass economic, social, political and rationalizing processes but also cultural dimensions of religion and collective identity. From this perspective, there is no one homogenizing modernity but several developing modernities. A crucial distinction here is between Axial Age civilizations that are characterized by a fundamental division between the transcendental and the mundane world and non-Axial Age civilizations that are lacking this division.

On these theoretical foundations, the multiple modernities perspective implies also a different approach to political sociology. Again in contrast to the mainstream modernist currents in political sociology, the disagreement is not about the specific political categories and dimensions as such but the theoretical framework and analytical status of the core categories.

First, in order to understand and explain processes of political modernization, it is crucial to include in a historical-sociological orientation the institutional and cultural traditions that have an impact on the varying processes of political modernization. Second, political modernization is not conceptualized primarily as social and institutional processes of state formation and democratization but also as cultural processes of nation-building and collective identity formation. Third, political modernization is basically seen as a conflictive process – though

not only as a result of asymmetries between socio-economic and political developments but also the cultural contradictions inherent in political modernization (Eisenstadt, 1999a). In this view, the Great Revolutions are not simply ruptures between pre-modern and modern political regimes through the mobilization of diverging socio-economic interests but also cultural clashes between orthodox and heterodox elite groups and popular currents (Eisenstadt, 2006). As well, the processes of political modernization are conflictive not only as a result of mobilizing social conflicts but also of cultural conflicts within political modernity – or what Eisenstadt calls the paradoxes of democracy (Eisenstadt, 1999b). Fourth, there is not one model of political modernity or democracy but many on the basis of different civilizational complexes and thus a multiple modernities perspective in political sociology particularly includes a comparative-civilizational approach to multiple trajectories of political modernization (Eisenstadt, 2003).

A multiple modernities perspective to political sociology thus defined differs not only from the mainstream modernist approaches in political sociology but also from the main critical currents against them. The first major counter-trend against mainstream modernist political sociology has been critical political sociology, which was then radicalized by neo-Marxist currents. At their core, there developed an analysis of political and social power criticizing the modernist orientation on political order with an often conservative outlook. From a perspective of participatory democracy, critical political sociology focused on the study of elites, socio-political conflicts, social movements and civil society. Neo-Marxism shared this general political orientation, but concentrated more on capitalist development, social inequality, class structure, class conflict and the capitalist state. With the break-down of communism and the decline of socialism and at the same time the inclusion of many critical topics into mainstream political sociology, however, both critical currents became rather marginalized. The multiple modernities approach also follows a critical approach to political power, not in a critical-Marxist but a neo-Weberian sense that concentrates on the institutional and cultural legitimacy structures of power. From that perspective, the analytical focus is on the relationships between elites and social protest, class conflict and social class relations, political power and the public sphere, i.e. on institutional and cultural power relations rather than on objectified social structures (Eisenstadt et al., 1987). At the same time, it undermines the often Euro-centric premises of critical and neo-Marxist political sociology by emphasizing the multiplicity of political regimes and their socio-cultural bases in the context of different civilizational complexes and trajectories.

The second major counter-trend against mainstream modernist political sociology consists of post-structuralist, post-Marxist and postmodern approaches – all of them varieties of questioning the structuralist and deterministic premises of most modernist and neo-Marxist approaches. The common thread has been the critique of macro-sociological master narratives, an orientation to the fragmented, de-centred and pluralist nature of modernity, a micro-sociological focus on the cognitive constructions of the life-world of individual and collective actors, the knowledge structures in-built in political and social power – summarized by

Kate Nash (2000) as new political sociology. On a theoretical plane, the cultural turn in political sociology has become articulated in post-modernist approaches to modernity emphasizing reflexivity either as a new stage after modernity or a critical-reflexive consciousness within advanced modernity (Kumar, 2005). The multiple modernities perspective shares a variety of elements of this cultural turn in political sociology but also deviates from many postmodernist approaches. On the one hand, it agrees with many post-structuralist and post-modern approaches on the fragmented, fragile, contested, contradictory and open character of modernization and modernity. As well, it shares the emphasis on culture and related hermeneutic and deconstructive methods. On the other, it is critical against the one-sided micro-sociological orientation to culture and epistemology and insists from the perspective of macro-sociological constructivism on the interrelations between macro- and micro-levels, institutional and cultural dimensions as well as structures and agency in social reality.

Antinomies of Modernity and Paradoxes of Democracy

In order to elaborate the multiple modernities perspective in political sociology in more detail, I will begin with a discussion of one core premise: modernity and with it also political modernity heading not simply towards a homogeneous end-stage of modernization but entailing continuous tensions, contradictions and even antinomies (Eisenstadt, 1999a). Most modernization approaches assume that modern society is to be characterized as a harmonious social and political order integrating differences and conflict. If there are revolutionary and crisis-ridden turning points, then typically at the beginning of modernization processes when accelerating social change is threatening old political orders and customary ways of life. Typically at its beginning, modernization breeds revolution as a large-scale mobilization of conflicting economic, social and political interests (Tilly, 1981) whereas along with stabilizing modernization social and political conflicts are still continuing but as a ferment of democratic pluralism rather than of democratic break-down.

In contrast, the multiple modernities perspective assumes that there are not only economic, social and political conflicts at early stages of modernization but also continuous inbuilt tensions, contradictions and antinomies of modernity itself (Eisenstadt, 1999a, 2002). The main reason for this is that modernity is shaped by fundamental cultural divisions inherent in Axial Age civilizations between the transcendental and mundane world, universalist and particularist orientations, or totalist and pragmatic directions. On these foundations, the Great Revolutions are in particular moved by the split between orthodox and heterodox elites and the sharpness of revolutionary struggles and violence is based on mutually excluding universalistic world-views and splits between universalistic and pragmatic orientations. But the fundamentalist movements within the Great Revolutions (and in the case of the French Revolution: Jacobinism) are not only situational as a by-product of radicalizing social and political mobilization in a

revolutionary context but remain a cultural potential of modernity throughout the continuing development of modernization. Fundamentalist movements and world-views thereby can be religious or secularist, varying along the predominant forms of religion or secular culture and differing between civilizations.

Given these conflictive and contradictory features of modernity, also political modernity in the form of democracy cannot be reduced to a liberal-constitutional and pluralistic form of political regime and political culture or to polyarchy in terms of the widely accepted definition by Robert Dahl. Rather, there are basic paradoxes of democracy (Eisenstadt, 1999b) related to the two principled types and conceptions of constitutional and participatory democracy that have developed throughout Western modern political history and political thought. Between them there is a whole spectre from representative to republican and communitarian conceptions of democracy. In mainstream modernist perspective, the two oppositional poles of democracy combine with each other organically in the context of political modernization. In a multiple modernities perspective, however, both are in tension, conflict and potential contradiction with each other. On the one hand, the constitutional type of democracy is oriented to the given set of institutions and rules of the game and can often go hand in hand with authoritarian components. On the other, the participatory type of democracy is more suspicious of given institutions and arrangements and can radicalize in a totalistic direction of totalitarian democracy.

Such a multiple modernities perspective with its emphasis on the paradoxes of democracy differs, first, from the currently most advanced versions of modernist approaches. They often start from a minimalist conception of democracy in terms of free and fair elections of a government with political authority but are well aware of social and cultural conditions that enable the stability of these minimalist democratic institutions. Authors like Lipset and Huntington emphasize a certain level of economic development, social living standards, cultural education and, in particular, a pluralist political culture that tolerates political diversity, respects opposition and thus is able to integrate political and social conflict. Similarly, Linz and Stepan – in the context of transition research – offer a multidimensional concept of democratic arenas such as civil society with freedom of association and communication; political society with free and inclusive political contestation, rule of law with a constitutional-legal culture; a functioning state apparatus with rational-legal bureaucratic norms; and an economic society based on an institutionalized market. From a multiple modernities perspective, there is no principled objection against the definition of democracy and its prerequisites. However, as an ideal-typical model, it presupposes a degree of functional integration that is rarely given in existing democracies; it excludes within the spectre of political pluralism the potential of a radicalizing participatory democracy on the basis of different programmes of modernity; and does not systematically consider the varieties of democracies in differing national configurations and civilizational contexts.

A multiple modernities perspective also differs, second, from the historical-sociological orientations in political sociology that have been strongly influenced

by critical and neo-Marxist approaches to political power. The emphasis here is on social inequality, social structure, social classes, class conflict, social movements and civil society as social basis of political power and political conflict. For example, Barrington Moore (1966) in his classic study on the social origins of dictatorship and democracy concentrates on varying pre-modern social class constellations in relation to political regimes and includes also in his study on social injustice (Moore, 1981) its moral meanings as cultural conditions of obedience and revolt. Michael Mann (1986, 1993) in his macro-historical approach of organizational materialism investigates the changing constellations of ideological, economic, political and military power. Theda Skocpol (1979, 1992) in an historical-institutional meso-analytical direction explains large-scale revolutions or the evolution of a welfare state. Path-breaking as these historical-sociological approaches in political sociology have been, all of them tend to limit the cultural dimensions to political or social interests and institutions rather than to consider also the relative autonomy of the cultural, religious and secular domain and the cultural contradictions as sources of political conflict and social change. An interesting example of such an inclusion of the conflictive force of religion and culture is Eisenstadt, Roniger and Seligman (1987) who demonstrate how social structure, social agency and social conflict in America and Europe diverge due to different cultural frames and collective identities.

As a macro-sociological cultural turn, the multiple modernities perspective also has some common ground with, thirdly, post-modernist approaches in political sociology. Both approaches share a conceptualization of political modernity that emphasizes fragmentation, difference, pluralism, agency and openness and the need for a hermeneutic and deconstructive methodology to understand the culturally constructed arena of political power. There is some analytical complementarity between a Weberian and a Gramscian concept of power that emphasize the cultural dimensions of legitimacy and hegemony and between both of them and the micro-physics of power by Michel Foucault that focuses on the cultural-cognitive production of power relations in different social institutions like asylums, prisons, hospitals, schools, military or sexuality (Nash, 2000). As well, there is some affinity between the contradictory and paradoxical character of political modernity and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's (2001) concept of radical democracy that emphasizes culture, pluralism and solidarity without falling into the trap of totalitarian democracy. Or, one can also see some connections to feminist, often postmodernist approaches to political sociology that criticize monolithic conceptions of state and patriarchy by analyzing gender relations and their impact on different local, national or transnational political arenas (Hobson, 2004). Thus, there is some shared territory between a multiple modernities perspective and postmodernist directions of a new political sociology that complicate the modernist conceptions of political modernity and modernization. At the same time, there are also disagreements. In particular, the multiple modernities approach is critical of the epistemological over-emphasis of the cultural and cognitive dimensions of power and focuses on the interrelations between the institutional and cultural dimensions. The multiple modernities perspective also

questions the predominant focus on micro-power relations rather on the interrelationships between the macro-, meso- and micro-levels of power. It would moreover pay particular attention to the relation between pragmatic and totalistic dimensions in the manifold social movements from which postmodernist political sociology emerged. And it would finally emphasize not only the internal multiplicity of political modernities within Western societies but also their cross-civilizational differences and interrelations.

Political Modernization and Comparative-Civilizational Analysis

The second crucial pillar of the multiple modernities perspective is based on the premise that political modernity like societal modernity varies according to different civilizational contexts. Following Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss and Max Weber, civilizations are conceived as families of societies integrated institutionally by empires and culturally by world religions (Arjomand and Tiryakian, 2004). As such, they are regarded as a historically salient social reality *sui generis* between different world regions and in modern times between nation-states and global systems. World historians, like M. Hodgson (1994) W. McNeill (1994) C. Bayly (2004) or J. Osterhammel (2008) have undertaken to describe and analyze the complex history of civilizational complexes and inter-civilizational encounters in world historical time. Historical sociologists have concentrated on the crystallization, dynamics and decline of specific civilizations and their inter-civilizational connections in world history (Arnason, Eisenstadt et al., 2004). On these bases, the multiple modernities perspective has focused on the comparison of different civilizational programmes of modernity and dynamics of modernization as well as inter-civilizational configurations as socio-cultural bases of globalization processes.

In this context, one of the most complex theories of civilization and methodology of civilizational analysis has been developed by Johann Arnason in his *Civilizations in Dispute* (2003a) that has direct bearing on a comparative-civilizational political sociology. In a nutshell, Arnason distinguishes six thematic foci of civilizational analysis as well as three domains of civilizational formations. The six thematic foci comprise: (1) the cultural premises of civilizational formations; (2) the institutional structures and dynamics as channels for the unfolding of cultural meanings; (3) the inter-civilizational field of civilizational formations; (4) the crystallization of these three – cultural, institutional and inter-civilizational – as a family of societies; (5) the reproduction of this multi-civilizational grouping over time; and (6) the formation of this multi-societal grouping as a spatial-regional configuration. The three domains of these civilizational complexes relate to the economic sphere of wealth; the political sphere of power; and the cultural sphere of meaning. From this theoretical vantage point, a comparative-civilizational approach to political sociology has to take into consideration the civilizational and inter-civilizational, socio-economic, institutional and cultural constitution of political power. This includes particularly empires,

world religions and regional economies in different civilizational settings and their varying impact on political modernity and modernization.

First, as an increasing number of civilizational studies has shown, civilizations considerably differ in their structural and cultural composition of centre and periphery relations (Osterhammel, 2008: 565–672). For example, Europe is characterized by a construction and reconstruction of a particular structural and cultural pluralism with multiple political and cultural centres and peripheries (Eisenstadt, 1987). India with a similar variety of political and cultural centres, by contrast, has been over long stretches of time rather centralized and integrated on multiple levels of political authority (Eisenstadt, 1986). China with its long imperial history, even more so, developed a strong political and cultural centre interrupted by only temporary breakdowns (Tu Weiming, 1996, Sachsenmaier and Riedel, 2002). Japan developed in a long-term process of institutional and cultural integration on the basis of a non-axial civilization (Eisenstadt, 1996) and as a peripheral centre (Arnason, 2002). The Islamicate civilization developed multiple political centres that overarched a mosaic of segmented peripheries (Hodgson, 1994). Pre-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa was characterized by multiple emerging civilizations in the context of early state formation (Eisenstadt, 1968). North and Latin America or also Australia differ in their composition of European legacies, the inclusion or exclusion of indigenous people, the size of African slave populations and the origins and impacts of immigration (Roniger and Waismann, 2002).

Second, a core dimension of commonalities and differences between these various civilizations consists of the institutional structure of empires. An empire can be defined as a large composite and differentiated polity linked to a central power by a variety of direct and indirect relations, where the centre exercises control through hierarchical and quasi-monopolistic relations over groups ethnically different from itself (Barkey, 2008: 9). At the same time, these large-scale composites of political power are horizontally and vertically integrated by state force, symbolical politics and a universalistic ideology carried by an imperial elite and varied in their institutional dynamics according to geographical, technological and economic conditions and geo-political context of imperial competition. (Osterhammel, 2008: 610–15). Eisenstadt in his early study on *Political Systems of Empires* (1963, 1988) has tried to explain the institutional mechanisms of the rise and decline of pre-modern empires and particularly the role of political and intellectual elites. Various studies have concentrated on specific empires in modern world history (Motyl, 2001; Barkey and von Hagen, 1997; Pagden, 1995). J. Osterhammel has shown against the conventional wisdom of the rise of the modern nation-state the crucial importance of empires throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly the rising European empires competing with each other over world domination. He also tried to construct a typology of empires in relation to geographical conditions (sea and land-based empires) the relations between the colonial power and colonized societies as well as the differing civilizing missions that legitimized imperial power policy (Osterhammel,2008). And even at present, when the nation-state model has expanded

enormously after the fall of Soviet communism, the contemporary era is still characterized by a considerable number of empires that shape international relations and world politics also in the twenty-first century.

Third, another crucial dimension relates to religion and particularly world religions. Often related to empires and their military power as a means of their civilizing mission, world religions are nevertheless relatively autonomous cultural forces that expand through religious organizations and agents and form different cultural bases of political formations. One of the crucial distinctions of the multiple modernities perspective, here, concerns the difference between Axial Age civilizations and non-Axial Age civilizations as well as the cultural specificity and religious degree of axiality (Eisenstadt, 1986; Joas and Wiegandt, 2007). The varieties of Christianity – Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and their sub-types – have a certain commonality regarding the general relationship between religion and the secular sphere but differ considerably regarding their organizational structure and religious ethos, their relation to state and politics and their secularization patterns and thus have different impacts on political power relations and civilizing missions (Martin, 2005). The varieties of Islam such as Sunni, Shiites or Sufi Islam have a common denominator in the connection to state and religious law but again differ considerably in their specific religious orientations and civilizing missions (Hodgson, 1994). Judaism in its relationships between a universalist religion, religious law and societal community has some similarity to Islam but has no external civilizational mission (Eisenstadt, 1992). Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism are more oriented to imperial stability rather than restless expansion (Joas and Wiegand, 2007). And Shintoism is rather particularistic, though in combination with Confucianism and Buddhism there seem to be also axial elements (Arnason, 1997). In other words, all the differing world religions are characterized by a specific axiality regarding the intensity of the immanence/transcendence divide, degree of inward/outward directedness, orientation to/rejection of the world, or the relations between public and private or state and religion – and all these religious dimensions have varying impacts on political power, political institutions and political agency.

Fourth, of importance is also the relationship between civilizations and regional economies in the double sense of civilizational, imperial and cultural impacts on economic institutions and behaviour as well as regional economies as economic resources for political and military power. From a multiple modernities perspective, all the major civilizations in world history have participated, though unevenly in time and space, in a general evolution in the categories of M. Hodgson (1994) from archaic, agricultural, agrarian-citied to industrial-technical economies but at the same time characterized by differing civilizational economic structures and dynamics. Political empires in their competition with other empires were dependent on an economic power basis and thus stimulated and regulated regional economies. World religions shaped different attitudes to the world, differing economic ethics and cultures and thus promoted or restricted economic activity and development. Both, political and religious conditions, have an impact on the relative speed of economic development and with it the relative advantages

or disadvantages in economic and political competition between different world regions. As the recent economic global history has shown, the centres of the Asian civilizations were more developed until the eighteenth century and only then the Western European and Atlantic economy – building on long-time economic, technological and scientific imports from the East and a widening world market through imperialism and colonialism – became the centre of industrial capitalism and the basis of economic world hegemony (Hobson, 2004). Through expanding imperialism and colonialism, it combined with a restructuring of non-European economies and economic, cultural and political power relations between the major world civilizations. But in contrast to Eurocentric economic stage theories that construct economic world history as an evolution from mini-states to empire economies and to a Western-centred capitalist world economy, civilizational economies still persist and have an impact on the varieties of political modernization processes in the various regions of the world (Hamilton, 1994; Sanderson, 1995; Sachsenmaier and Riedel, 2002).

Taken together, the major claim of the multiple modernities approach to political sociology is that different civilizational foundations and frameworks generate different programmes of political modernity and processes of political modernization. Empires, world religions and regional economies as the three major domains of civilizations have a crucial impact on state formation, nation-building, national integration, political cultures, public spheres and collective identities, and thus contribute to the varying constellations and trajectories of political modernization, as well as their guiding programmes of political modernity. Empires as composite entities of political power have a lasting impact on processes of state formation, the forms of polity, legal institutions and administrative structures and shape, even when dissolved, both the contours of the contracting imperial centre or the separating forms of peripheral state formation and nation-building. Empires as multi-ethnic polities complicate homogenizing processes of nation-building and national integration in the centre and the peripheries and thus create unfavourable conditions for liberal-constitutional democratization. Religions as organized religions and religious cultures are often linked to different political entities and ethnic groups and thus form important institutional and cultural components of political modernization. As world religions, they crystallize as cultural cores of civilizations, legitimating codes of imperial centres and their universalistic claims and thus contribute to the clash of civilizations. At the same time, religions and their secularising transformation form crucial dimensions of political modernization, shape the central elements of political and legal institutions, have an impact on political cultures, social movements and public spheres and impinge on the forms of political, social and cultural integration and collective identities. Different civilizational economies have an influence on the different kinds of economic society, social structure, social policies and civil society. In sum, the three civilizational domains of political, economic and cultural power have effects on all the arenas of democracy mentioned above: polity, civil society, state, law and economic society. Thus, the manifold processes of political modernization are not simply converging in the direction of one Western type of democracy but developing along multiple path-dependent trajectories.

Varieties of Political Modernity and Globalization

On the pluri-civilizational foundations of political modernization and modernity, the multiple modernities approach finally includes also a specific perspective on the relationships between national politics, international relations, political globalization and world politics. In contrast to the main approaches in political sociology that concentrate on the nation-state, international relations between states, processes of political globalization and an emerging world polity, the multiple modernities perspective brings in the intermediate level of civilizational complexes and inter-civilizational relations between nation-states and global politics. These inter-civilizational relations pertain to the three political, economic and cultural domains and include political, economic and cultural power hierarchies and balances that are crucial determinants of international relations, political globalization and the emerging world polity. This core premise of the multiple modernities approach to political globalization and world politics has so far only been outlined and needs further elaboration. In the remainder, I will specify the multiple modernities perspective to political globalization and world politics in relation to the main approaches in political sociology.

The notion of political globalization as one dimension of the multiple layers of globalization and global modernity implies basically four meanings that correspond to the main theoretical approaches in political sociology outlined above. Modernization approaches view political globalization primarily as the international and tendentially global diffusion of nation-state based processes of political modernization, and with them – through changing international relations – the constitution of global political modernity. Transnational approaches focus on the growing transnational and tendentially global interrelations and institutions that have an increasingly transformative effect on nation-states and national politics. Global approaches concentrate on the structures of the emerging world polity and world society that encompass the international relations between the many nation-states on the globe (Robertson and White, 2003). In this context, critical and neo-Marxist approaches particularly address global socio-economic inequalities and their impact on international relations and the world polity, whereas postcolonial approaches look more to the cultural and cognitive power relations between advanced and peripheral or postcolonial societies. The multiple modernities perspective to global political sociology has overlapping areas with each of the four approaches but at the same time has its own distinct theoretical orientation.

The modernist view basically conceives of political globalization as a global diffusion of nation-state-based processes of political modernization (for instance, Huntington, 1991; Lipset, 1998). Western nation-state formation and democratization, with its prerequisites, are seen as the universalistic model that is exported to and imported by non-Western countries and as a consequence there develops a growing diffusion of Western political modernity over the globe. From this perspective, political globalization consists of an intensifying network of international relations between sovereign nation-states. International norms, laws, institutions and organizations are basically the result of interrelations and interactions

in the inter-state system, composed of the numerous sovereign nation-states. By contrast, the multiple modernities perspective emphasizes three points. First, political globalization is not simply equivalent to the diffusion of the Western model of political modernity but should rather be seen as selective appropriation and incorporation in different civilizational contexts, thus leading to multiple types of political modernization and modernity. Second, political globalization is connected with political, economic and cultural power asymmetries and hierarchies that impinge on the kind of international relations and inter-state system. Third, crucial dimensions here are inter-civilizational conflicts and, in this context, cultural and inter-civilizational forms of legitimacy of international power relations.

The multiple modernities perspective shares to some extent the modernist emphasis of the crucial importance of nation-states and international relations in addition to that of civilizations and inter-civilizational relationships and thus is critical to an overemphasis of the weight of transnational and global institutions, organizations and forms of global governance. In the same direction, the multiple modernities perspective is critical of hyper-globalist approaches in their assumption that the development of a globalized world is in the process of undermining and dissolving nation-state sovereignty and civilizational complexes. However, the modernist emphasis on the nation-state underestimated the growing impact of transnational and global forces on nation-states and civilizations. In this direction, for instance the transformationalist approach by David Held et al. (1999) conceptualizes globalization as a historical process of growing transnational spatial and organizational connectivity in terms of scope, intensity and velocity with modifying impacts on nation-states. In a similar way, Michael Mann (2003) distinguishes five spatial levels from the local, national, international, transnational and global, assuming a growing weight of the transnational and global layers. As important as these relational approaches to the varying constellations of the national and transnational/global layers are, a multiple modernities perspective emphasizes, in addition, the institutional, cultural and conflictive role of inter-civilizational interactions in a globalizing world. Here, it meets with Samuel Huntington's diagnosis of the clash of civilizations (though in a less holistic way) and Roland Robertson's analysis of the change of inter-civilizational relations under the conditions of intensifying globalization (Robertson, 1992).

For a global political sociology, of importance are also the recently developing post-colonial approaches to peripheral societies within the global system. Most of the approaches to political globalization so far addressed focus primarily on the socio-economic and political dimensions of globalization and the global system and concentrate on the advanced core countries and their impact on world politics. In contrast, postcolonial approaches particularly take the view from non-Western peripheral countries and focus not only on the material but particularly also on the cultural and cognitive power relations between 'Occidental' and 'Oriental' societies (Bhambra, 2007; Chakrabarty, 2000). In emphasizing cultural and cognitive power relations, the multiple modernities perspective shares some common ground with postcolonial studies but is also critical in several regards. First, instead of presupposing 'invidious dichotomies' between the West and the rest (Arnason, 2003b) the multiple modernities perspective insists on multiple

power relationships inside and between civilizations. Second, instead of presupposing an encompassing notion of the colony for all postcolonial peripheral countries, the multiple modernities perspective distinguishes more precisely between former colonies and non-colonies, empires and peripheries, the form of colonial power relations, their intensity, time-span and ending. Third, instead of constructing a general type of postcolonial development, the multiple modernities perspective addresses particularly the civilizational differences and multiplicity of post-colonial and peripheral trajectories of political modernization. And fourth, instead of reducing the relations of the West to non-Western world regions to cultural power hierarchies, it includes also the role and impact of centre-periphery relations, world religions and regional economies inside and between the many civilizations in a globalizing world (Beyer and Beaman, 2007; Spohn, 2008).

Conclusion

The multiple modernities perspective in the cultural and historical sciences is increasingly popular, including cultural and historical approaches in sociology, but there is also a growing criticism in the social and political sciences, including political sociology (Schmidt, 2006). What is often missing in these debates is a clearer specification of the multiple modernities perspective in its theoretical, analytical and methodological orientations in sociology and in particular also political sociology. What is needed is a movement forward to historical-sociological, comparative-civilizational and inter-civilizational research on specific aspects of the political sphere in a globalizing world (Spohn, 2009). Only then can the fruitfulness of the multiple modernities perspective to political sociology be demonstrated.

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■ **Willfried Spohn,** adjunct Professor in Sociology at the Free University of Berlin, is currently research director/coordinator of a research project 'Europeanization, multiple modernities and collective identities – religion, nation and ethnicity in an enlarged Europe', funded by the Volkswagen Foundation at the University of Göttingen, 2008–11. He specializes on historical and comparative sociology, multiple modernities and globalization with a research focus on politics and religion in Europe in a civilizational-comparative perspective. His recent publications include *Politics and Religion in a Globalizing World* (2008); and edited volumes (with Anna Triandafyllidou) *Europeanization, National Identities and Migration* (Routledge 2002); (with Atsuko Ichijo) *Entangled Identities: Europe and the Nation* (Ashgate 2005); and (with Klaus Eder) *Collective Memory and European Identity: Effects of Integration and Enlargement* (Ashgate, 2005). His current book project is *Historical-Comparative Sociology in a Globalizing World: Theoretical Approaches, Empirical Investigations and Research Perspectives*. He has taught at several German and US- universities and is currently president of the ISA Thematic Group 'Historical and Comparative Sociology'. *Address*: University of Göttingen, Institute of Sociology. Platz der Göttinger Sieben 3, 37073 Göttingen, Germany. [email: willfried.spohn@sowi.uni-goettingen.de] ■