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Wars and Path Dependency Is History a Boon or a Bane for the (other) Social Sciences?

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■ **Abstract** ■ During the modern era a kind of war developed that surpassed everything that had gone before it in scale, cost and destruction of human life. The consequences are in evidence all around us; societies are formed, to a considerable extent, by these short outbursts of violence, investment and destruction. The social sciences, however, have not been quick to appreciate the influence of wars. On the contrary, it seems that war as a social phenomenon is almost exclusively investigated from a purely historical perspective. This paper investigates some possible theoretical directions that may lead to a social science in which wars take their necessary place.

■ **Key Words** ■ War, Historical Sociology, Path dependency

Introduction

Within academia, the study of wars lies firmly in the domain of historians. They have quite a tradition in the subject; most of the earliest (known) historians, such as Herod, Sima Qian, and Ibn Abd-el-Hakem, focused on military history, and that tradition continues to today. Histories of war are prone to dominate commercial bestseller lists, certainly much more so than the average social science publication. School history education in most countries continues to this day to be dominated by past military conflicts, which in many cases are considered formative episodes in the history of the nation. Social scientists, however, seem mostly to shy away from war as a subject of study, almost as if there lies a taboo on crossing into the tribal lands of the historical brotherhood.

It didn't help that those historians who, in the course of the Twentieth Century, have drifted towards the social sciences, left much of their interest in war behind. Fernand Braudel, as well as other historians of the *école des annales*, placed war squarely in the realm of the "events", the inconsequential foam drifting on the sea of structural change. Marxist historians have almost without fail interpreted wars as consequences of long-term class relations, and hence as telling indicators of social conflict, rather than as autonomous agents of change.

Economic historians, especially those who, like this author, are heavily indebted to traditions like the New Economic History and Cliometrics, tend to simply leave gaps in their series of data where wars ought to be. This is, of course, partly a result of the dearth of reliable data for those periods, but also reflects a view of history -one in which wars are at best pauses which do not form part of the wondrous ascent of mankind to the age of high economic growth which economic historians primarily study. (Mills and Rockoff, 1997)

This is not to say that social scientists and social scientific historians have entirely ignored wars. A substantial literature exists which, from a wide variety of disciplines, addresses the question what the causes of war are. Given the immense carnage and cost of wars, the drive to understand what causes them is both understandable and admirable. But the question what the consequences of wars are, and to what extent modern society is a product of war, is much less investigated. Wars tend to be seen primarily as outcomes of ‘real’, ‘structural’ or ‘essential’ social and economic forces, but not as causes, except occasionally in the United States. (Modell and Haggerty, 1991) As I will argue below, the modern world is shaped to a considerable extent by warfare in the recent past, more so, in fact, than the superficially more violent societies of the more distant past. This brief essay will outline the need to address mass violence in the social sciences, and argue for the development of a methodological concept for doing so.

What is War?

War is, it appears, as old as mankind, and so universal that has been argued to be a natural tendency of all human societies. (Dawson, 1996) Today, however, not unlike other aspects of modern society, the term “war” is often understood as a legal term. Only violence between states, or state-like entities within a state, is normally considered “deserving” of being called war. Likewise, wars are expected to be formally “declared”. This limitation has led to an upsurge of terms such as ‘terrorism’ and ‘enemy combatant’, to describe organized violence therefore considered outside the realm of war. Legal criteria to denote wars may be common, but they are not particularly interesting from the perspective of the social scientist. Not the legal status of a conflict is of interest here, but its consequences to society. (Hallet 1998)

I propose, as a working definition, to think of war as denoting organized violence between two or more large collectives of people. Thus, conflicts like the 1914-1958 ‘war’ between Andorra and Germany, which existed only as a legal fiction, can be safely excluded, whereas the undeclared (and largely unnoticed) wars currently raging in Central and East Africa can be included. That said, even if such a working definition is accepted, there remains a considerable historical problem. Wars have taken many forms in the course of history, and it is difficult, if not downright impossible, to come up with a universal theory of war to complement the rather wide-ranging definition. It is worthwhile to have a quick look at the development of war -in the

widest sense of the word- into the gruesome practice it has become.

As a rule of thumb, societies that have to devote the overwhelming bulk of their resources to food production necessarily have little left with which to wage wars. The simplest form of warfare, probably the historically most common, is a simple raid, usually to acquire cattle or people. But in many parts of the world, war developed into something more sophisticated and prolonged. Not that the scale of war soon became great. The relatively few pre-industrial military campaigns that were both massive in size and prolonged in time had to rely on the appropriation of foodstuffs from subjugated populations. The Harrowing of the North, an all-too charming name for the Norman genocide against the Anglo-Scandinavians by William the Conqueror in 1069-1070, left large areas of England virtual wastelands, in which over 100.000 people starved. Such excessive operations, however, were exceptional before the modern era, not least because the need to expand continuously into rich areas proved difficult in the long run. The fearsome and enormous Mongolian empire, for example, eventually succumbed to its need for ever more expansion into ever bleaker territory. Even the most formidable fighting force of the day could not overcome the limitations imposed by primitive agriculture. (Keely, 1997)

With regard to size, as much as past empires appeal to us, the Roman, Inca, Mughal, Chinese, and other great empires were not as such the main actors of pre-industrial war. For much of human history, the bulk of warfare was waged on a geographically limited scale, with few people, and mostly in very brief campaigns. Combatants were mostly local hereditary elites or, sometimes, mercenaries. Japanese nobles, Athenian free males and many other hereditary elites appropriated a virtual monopoly on waging war, thereby ensuring continued food production by their perceived inferiors, and protection against the danger of armed rebellion against the social order. Because of the limited number of people involved, these wars tended not to develop fronts, or take the form of prolonged, geographically fixed exchanges. More commonly, battles were pitched confrontations, lasting a day or less. Prolonged siege warfare and similar undertakings were not unheard of, but expensive and far from common. (Keegan, 2001)

Premodern warfare was in most cases a display of the relative strengths of military elites as well as a out and out violent confrontation between the communities they represented, and as such were performances, or demonstrations, as much as they were battles. That is not to say that these wars were not terribly gruesome. Although often bound by extensive rules of honor, the wars waged by the world's warrior elites were not pretty. Even the remarkable Aztecs, who tried to capture enemies rather than slay them in battle, did so only to kill their prisoners ceremonially at home. (Conrad and Demarest, 1984) Yet, as brutal and as frequent as premodern war often may have been, the involvement of non-military castes could, if they were lucky, remain relatively limited. Wars were frequent, but at least not large or long. This began to

change first in China, and later, much more seriously, in Europe. In early modern Europe, numbers of mercenaries swelled and war became aggravated by religious conflict. The Thirty Years' war, which wiped out a third of the German population between 1618 and 1648, was a grim harbinger of a violent future.

Religious Warfare, which remains an apparently incurable tendency of a sizeable minority of religious people, is also a good example of war fought between groups who consider each other fundamentally 'other'. In the history of war, a distinct difference existed between the treatment of enemies considered, for whatever reason, to be similar, and those considered fundamentally other. Thus, limitations set within societies on the kinds of violence to be deployed, were usually considered void against a racial, religious or otherwise different people. The history of European expansion in particular offers an array of examples of extremely gruesome violence, which would almost certainly have been deemed unacceptable in Europe at the time.

By that time, war in Europe had already changed beyond recognition, as it soon was to do in the rest of the world as well. In a particularly dangerous development, the 19th century saw the birth of the conscription army. With the formation of the nation state, universal citizenship came to be bundled with the universal duty for (male) military service. France, which fielded the first modern conscript army in 1798, used it to beat Prussia, which promptly followed suit and introduced conscription as well. Conscription began to spread around the world like a wildfire. It proved, as Foucault rightly argued, one of several important disciplinary institutions of the modern state, as well as an egregious tool for mass murder in many cases. (Foucault, 1975) But the traffic was not one way. Any country that introduces conscription erodes the elite nature of its armed forces. Even if in many countries officers remain mainly drawn from old elites today, the proletarianization of war that conscription necessarily caused, by and large destroyed any notion of the 'gentleman soldier', bound by a code of honor derived from his elite status. This became painfully evident in the battle of Shiroyama in 1877, where (noble) Samurai felt obliged to storm, sword in hand, the machine guns manned by (common) conscripted soldiers.

The introduction of conscription not only increased the numbers of people involved in waging wars, but it also marked an ominous trend towards the dissolution of the difference between soldiers and civilians. As will become clear below, this changeover was fundamental to the development of a new, total type of war. Between 1750 and 1950, much of the world industrialized, and came to use fossil fuels as a main source of energy. Once released from the shackles of Malthusian agriculture, astonishing population growth, cultural and physical wealth, as well as a vast body of scientific knowledge was acquired with apparent ease. As a by-product, the world became exposed to the first tasting of what would become known as 'Total War'. (Chickering, 1999)

Several developments contributed to the escalation of warfare into its 'total' incarnation.

Countries became more integrated, and governments were able to extract more people and appropriate far more resources from ever richer economies. The rise of nationalism fuelled the irrational devotion to the fatherland needed to motivate the seemingly absurd waste of life. The technology of war, notably the invention of the machine gun, made defense far more effective relative to offense, so that battles could take longer. Eventually, the world ended up with the two most Total wars in human history; the First and Second World Wars. In those conflicts, the decisive factor determining the outcome of wars proved no longer to be military, but economic. In both Asia and Europe, they became wars of attrition, that were ultimately won by mobilizing more resources than the opponent, devoting them to war with an almost complete abandon of prudence, and without considering anything but complete victory an acceptable outcome. War thus became even further demilitarized; when citizens became as important to the war effort as soldiers, they also became a prime target of enemies. In August 1945, two atomic bombs marked the final consequence of this development (Harrison, 1994).

In a sense, the nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended the era of total war. The technological pendulum had swung from the defensive to the offensive; the option of a total war would likely lead to immediate mutual destruction.. After the Soviet Union also developed an Atomic bomb, an out and out confrontation between the two remaining superpowers became unlikely in the extreme. The period of Mutually Assured Destruction, aptly abbreviated MAD, did not mean that peace broke out. Rather, in a string of proxy wars, continuing in a sense to the current day, war raged on for decades. For people in the developing countries where they took place, these wars were most certainly total -but to superpowers like the USSR, US and China, and minor players like Britain and France, they no longer were.

Postwar societies

With the escalation of warfare in the industrial era, its impact on societies also changed. Whether in Korea, Spain, India, Japan or Norway, many if not most people consider relatively recent wars as foundational, formative influences on their societies. This is one reason why, as mentioned, public interest in past wars is enormous, and social discourses are, if not dominated, certainly strongly influenced by them. The amount of time and energy devoted to the history, and heritage, of recent wars, certainly compared with other historical or social science subjects, in public education is a case in point. That most developed countries, even those that are currently involved in military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq or elsewhere, are routinely described, domestically, as being in their 'post war' period, is another.

But the influence of modern wars extends well beyond the perceptions prevailing in modern societies. The enormous waste and carnage, as well as legal and political changes brought by war have shaped and continue to shape our societies. Many modern states, and certainly the

relations between them, are products of war. The massive expansion of bureaucracies and economic controls needed to wage total wars, more often than not remained in place after they ended. (Klausen, 1997) But such essentially historical observations, however true, do not make for a very sophisticated social science of postwar societies. Historical causality is important, but focuses exclusively on change and continuity through time. It does not provide much insight in the extent to which the influence of war continues at present, to what extent past wars are still looming over our societies. If historical expertise of war is to mean anything to social science, a more sophisticated theoretical framework may be necessary, for the social heritage of wars tends to be complicated, and difficult to identify. Allow me to give two examples.

The most evident consequence of past wars is, evidently, its human toll. A postwar society lacks the people that did not survive the fighting, or the related dangers such as disease and starvation. The demographic consequences thereof can be considerable, and echo through several generations. Wars don't just kill, moreover, but also maim. In several societies, such as Rwanda and Cambodia, the proportion of people lacking limbs is considerable. Less evident, but very important, is the psychological and neurological impact of war. Combat, at least in its modern guise, is so detrimental to people that fully 98% of people engaged in it suffer lasting damage to their mental health.

Moreover, it has become apparent in the Twentieth Century that in a battle situation the majority of troops do not actually engage in fighting. An extensive training program to remove these inhibitions is part and parcel of military training around the world. This poses an interesting question to sociology. The adversity to hurting and killing other people is perhaps the most socially essential quality of mankind. Since the majority of soldiers, fortunately, return into non-military society, this may pose serious, but as yet little understood consequences. It is clear, however, that wars enormously increase numbers of troops, and hence increase the number of people who have received military training. (Grossman, 1995)

Still, the mental damage caused by actual war experiences dwarfs the impact of mere military training. In many cases, wartime experiences lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorders in people. Even decades after a conflict has ended, wartime experiences can lead to debilitating psychological illness. But aside from the epidemiological impact, one may well ponder the impact of PTSD on societies. Sufferers of PTSD have vastly higher incidence of alcoholism, violent behavior, divorce and many other negative social traits. This disorder is not, as a consequence, one of individuals alone, but also of societies and the people who grow up in them. Because the psychological consequences of war often emerge long after a war has ended, and many of them can be inherited by people never exposed to war as such, this may be an important and little understood cause of social problems. As Modell and Haggerty (1991) argued, there is a remarkable failure among sociologists to integrate these long-term effects into their

assessment of such problems as violence, social trust and civic society.

Not all long-term consequences of war are quite so ominous. The immense investments modern wars necessitate leave a tremendous physical heritage to postwar societies. In some cases, as in the Danish defense works left after the Second World War, these can become the focal points of social conflict, whereas in other cases, such as the infamous bridge over the Mae Klong (the river Kwai), has become a profitable tourist destination. From the Belgian railways to the Great Wall of China, societies exist to a large extent within man-made surroundings created for the purpose of war. A simple example will show how layered, and crucial, the legacy of war can be.

The history of Japanese airports may serve as a somewhat trivial example. During the 1930s, airports were constructed near Japan's main cities, Osaka and Tokyo. These airports, Itami (1939) and Haneda (1931) respectively, had become necessary primarily as a consequence of Japan's military expansion in Asia, most notably in Manchuria. After 1945, both airports were taken in use by the American military, which also drastically expanded Haneda at the expense of local residents' homes. In their later conflicts in Asia, notably the Korean and Vietnam wars, the United States made extensive use of both airports. After a few decades, however, neither airport was able to cope with the vastly greater, civilian, air traffic into the Kansai and Kanto regions. Extending them by simply expropriating locals again, as the Americans had been able to do, was no longer legally feasible. Indeed, the very proximity to both airports of large residential areas was itself problematic, since the many flights were causing considerable noise and other forms of pollution. The heritage of Japanese militarism, and subsequent American occupation, included both two inadequate airfields, and a liberal, democratic political order that made it very difficult to adapt them to the newly arising needs of a globalizing super-economy.

In the 1960s the Japanese government decided to acquire land in Chiba prefecture to build Narita Airport. The plan met with resistance, because hundreds of people would have to give up their land, and because the airport was to be used by the American Air Force in case of a conflict with the Soviet Union. The construction of Narita Airport caused one of the most prolonged and violent clashes between the Japanese government and its citizens. Over a thousand were wounded, ten killed, and billions of yen lost, in a virtual guerrilla against the police. As a consequence, the new Western Japanese airport, Kansai International, was, at enormous expense, built on an artificial island in the Bay of Osaka. (Aldrich, 2005)

The remarkable historical path of Japan in the Showa era had left the country with an infrastructure aimed at military use, but also with a vocal antimilitarist movement, and legally sanctioned property rights. It is easy to see these factors leading to the construction of Kansai International Airport, an example, clearly, of a chain of historical causalities. But from a perspective of historical sociology more can be learned from this narrative than a mere

explanation of how Renzo Piano's breathtaking airport came to be. How important, relatively speaking, was the impact of the Second World War in the coming to be of the new airport, and what does that tell us about modern Japan? High-tech, efficient offshore Airports are not necessarily built as a consequence of war. In the particular case of Kansai International, the importance of the war may, on close inspection, turn out to be fairly trivial. The question is how to assess that relative importance -can we develop a methodology for studying the importance of wars past in current society.

In recent years, a considerable literature has flourished aimed at assessing the theoretical possibilities to integrate history in the study of present societies. A number of interesting theoretical possibilities have been proposed, although empirical application remains difficult.

Path dependence

The problem of integrating historical events in the assessment of modern society first arose in classical and neoclassical economics. The considerable confidence of classically inspired economists in the efficiency of free markets brought about a number of problems. Firstly, the belief in the efficiency of markets makes it difficult to account for change. Economic growth, historically the greatest achievement of free market economies, is difficult to explain within the theoretical framework of classical and neoclassical economists. A second, somewhat more controversial problem, is that many real-life market situations actually appear to lead to inefficient outcomes. (Puffert, 2008)

One of the first to attempt to fill this hole in economic theory was the American/Norwegian economist Thorstein Veblen in 1915. Veblen explained the tremendous success of Japan and Germany catching up economically with early industrializing countries by introducing the 'latecomer advantage'. The older railway systems of England and the United States, he argued, had been built with a relatively inefficient gauge. As relative latecomers, aware of the problems experienced elsewhere, Japan and Germany could introduce a more efficient gauge in their railway system, gaining a decisive advantage over countries whose infrastructure was locked into an outdated technology. (Ozawa, 2004; Veblen, 1915)

The concept of what came to be known as 'lock in' to a heritage technology was further developed by David (1985, 1987) and Arthur (1989). Soon a booming sub-discipline of economics, the newly termed path dependency theorists claimed that, even rational actors in completely free markets would find their choices limited by past choices. Since human foresight is limited, unfortunate but rational historical choices could lead to non-optimal outcomes later on. Path dependency did not, in the end, prove the holy grail it seemed to many economists. As Margolin and Liebowitz (2000), and many others, were to argue, the token examples of technological lock-in, the QWERTY keyboard and the VHS videotape were not quite as inefficient as the

prophets of path dependency had claimed. That is not to say that technological lock-ins do not exist. The recent format war between HD-DVD and Blu Ray saw some of the worlds largest companies vying to produce a standard format that would, and did, leave the competitor obsolete. Sony's decision to include, quite likely at a loss, a Blu Ray player in its Playstation game consoles won it the surviving format on clearly non-technical grounds. Free-marketers would argue, however, with some justification, that this would have been impossible if Blu Ray had been an inferior project.

When facing the problem of how to assess the long-term impact of historical events, wars in this instance, path dependence is an evidently attractive theoretical direction. In fact, a vast literature is currently developing outlining the potential uses of path dependency theories in other social sciences. Some discretion is necessary, however. Path dependency theory was developed to understand technological lock-in, and as such focuses on relatively simple technologies such as keyboards or railway gauges. In its initial conception, path dependence theorists argued that a once adopted standard can be so expensive to replace, that an inefficient standard has the opportunity to survive. As much as these technological standards exist in a network of relations with other technologies and practices, such as touch-typing or train carriages, they are essentially singular in nature.

As Boaz (2007) recently argued with regard to political science, the matters investigated by social scientists are usually composite rather than simple, making the popular metaphors of technological lock-in much less compelling in the social science context. Rather than a single technology, social and political practices tend to be part of a network of other practices. Thus, the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, a textbook example of a war-caused social phenomenon, only functions within a wider network of the German justice system, political parties, parliament, etcetera. This is quite different, I would argue, from the kind of lock-in seen in keyboard layouts, nuts and bolts, and other more technological phenomena.

A further problem with path dependency theory is that it leaves an empirical problem that is not easy to bridge. Even the fairly simple examples given by early adherents to the theory, such as the QWERTY keyboard, required rather complicated evidence, and as noted, it seems more likely than not that the benefits of abandoning QWERTY would be small or nonexistent. When looking at the problem of the persistent influence of war trauma, this is all the more problematic. Sure enough the historical occurrence of war has created societies in which a considerable number of people suffer psychological problems, and those problems persist to this day, even through the generations. But can path dependency offer a tool to assess this problem in a more profound manner than the mere observation that this problem occurs? The development of path dependency in other disciplines than economics is still in its infancy, but some skepticism is legitimate.

All the more so because the search for path dependent lock-ins has not, even in the

relatively simple economic uses, led to overwhelming empirical results. We don't doubt that war trauma's, airports and many other things have been brought about by war, but one may legitimately ask how much of the current situation is a consequence of past war. Switzerland, for example, suffered far less in recent wars than neighboring, and culturally similar, Germany. Is that an explanation for differences between Swiss and German society? Did war-caused aspects of German life perhaps leak into Switzerland through German-language television? It is doubtful whether the metaphor of technological lock-in will help to address these issues. One may retain hope for path dependency as a future analytical tool to investigate the impact of past war on current society, but that would require a considerable amount of refinement and adaptation.

Embeddedness

Possibly, more can be salvaged from economic theory to keep Path Dependency afloat as an approach to assess the current consequences of war. In a recent paper, the economic sociologists Ghezzi and Mingione (2007) attempt to salvage path dependency theory by introducing the notion of 'embeddedness', with particular reference to the work of Polanyi. Polanyi had, in his works on economics, argued that in non-market or pre-capitalist societies actors must not be seen as insular, utility maximizing individuals, but rather as actors within a network of social relations, who are much more likely to exchange goods and services within relations of reciprocity and redistribution. Polanyi worried about what he saw as the rise of self-regulated markets and the de-embedding they would cause. In retrospect, to this author's mind, this interpretation betrays too much confidence in a naïve (if worryingly popular) version of neoclassical and classical economics. Not only have free market economies been shown time and again to harbor far more reciprocity and redistribution than Polanyi believed, it also proved difficult to empirically prove the more embedded nature of earlier and alternative economies. Polanyi was perhaps even more right than he believed. (McCloskey, 1997)

The concept of Polanyiite embeddedness in combination with path dependency, Ghezzi and Mingione argue, may be a useful tool to understand the historically specific relations within a society. Labour markets, they argue, do not actually function according to blind market forces, but have, simply for the sake of stability, to embed themselves. How they do so, however, is contingent upon history. Ghezzi and Mingione compare, the north- and south-Italian labour markets as an example. But also in an international comparison, the different outcomes are striking. Countries like Japan and the Netherlands today have far less bellicose labor relations than France or Spain, even though the four countries have similar levels of economic development, similar political systems and, interestingly, roughly similar outcomes in terms of wage and job security.

Path dependent embeddedness may offer a far better tool to assess the impact of wars than path dependence alone. With regard to labour relations, Japan owes its rather exceptional radical (communist) labour movement to the American occupiers who on the one hand stimulated its postwar inception, but at the same time repressed it into the subaltern position where it arguably remains today. In the Netherlands, labor relations remain to a large extent run along the lines of collective agreements that were introduced during the occupation by Nazi Germany and which, albeit modified, remain today. (Dower, 1999, Klemann, 2003)

Again, however, the empirical problem remains. Sure enough, there is an evident causal relation between a current state of affairs and a past war. But since that is not the only factor exerting an influence, it is difficult to say how significant that influence is. Culture, religion, and other influences play a role as well, and even embedded path dependency seems, for now, to offer few empirical tools to transcend from the 'soft' path dependency view that 'history matters' to a harder one that actually contributes to understanding how and how much history matters.

Comparison And Transnationalism

This essay is admittedly taking a slightly depressing turn. Theoretical work is evidently well underway to integrate historical occurrences, such as wars, in modern social science, but the empirical application of those theories remains, for now at least, problematic. On the other hand, the development of a growing body of theoretical work, in the slipstream, perhaps, of the popularity of historical sociology and historical institutionalism, suggests that there is at least a considerable interest in social scientific use of historical phenomena.

Even if a cogent theoretical basis to investigate the impact of past wars does not come about, that does not of course mean that research is impossible. A recent article by Djelic and Quack (2007) supplements, or perhaps expands is a better term, path dependence theory by introducing a strong comparative element. With postwar Germany as an empirical example, they show that different sectors of the German economy reacted differently to (mostly) American-imposed structural changes after 1945, and that the political constraints within which they function also show considerable diversity.

Their proposal, a successful one if their case study is anything to go by, is to focus not on the outcome of a path dependent outcomes, but on the generation of paths. As they rightly note, institutionally nested historical paths are slow changing but unpredictable. Rather than assuming a kind of social lock-in which may exist but remains out of our empirical reach, they suggest following the development of the path itself. Doing so obviously brings their research very close to historical research, but that may not be a problem. One may well argue, in fact, that an historically institutionalist sociology differs more from history in terms of focus and

research questions than in terms of methods. The direction suggested by Djelic and Quack does, for now, appear to be by far the most viable approach to integrating historical knowledge into the social sciences.

Evidently, this remark is nothing if not a plea for interdisciplinary research into the role of War in modern society. The vast literature on modern wars that historians have spawned, painfully lacks an assessment of their current consequences. The historiography of war can safely be said to be both the largest, and the dullest there is, averse as it seems to set any step beyond “one damn thing after another”. (Futselaar 2008, Ch. 1) The social sciences, on their part, seem until recently to have by and large ignored the greatest economic and social upheaval of the past century and the lasting legacy in the modern world.

Conclusion

War has plagued mankind since time immemorial and shows little signs of subsiding. Almost all modern countries have experienced a modern war in living history, and none have escaped their dramatic impact. The integration of historical events into a coherent social theory is thus far proving difficult, but not hopeless. It should be said, moreover, that a social science that succeeds to give historical events a proper place in its assessment of current society need not become a radically new direction. Rather, there are grounds to believe that a process of conversion, between sociology and history, or political science and history, is a more likely and ultimately more productive outcome.

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