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*Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews* 2013 42: 484

DOI: 10.1177/0094306113491546a

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[What is This?](#)

Everything that has been gained has been fought for, and the conflicts are messy. Perhaps better than anyone, Mann looks everything in its face. His volume, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, which like his book on Fascisms is an offshoot from Volume Three

and Four, sees the impulse of popular democracy in the genocidal killings that have marked modern times. Max Weber famously said, "I want to see how much I can take." Michael Mann gives the answer: a hell of a lot.

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## Routes or Rivals? Social Citizenship, Capitalism, and War in the Twentieth Century

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### Introduction

The guiding question of Michael Mann's third volume of *The Sources of Social Power* can be put this way: what is the connection between capitalist development and war? As Mann makes the point, "The most general tendency in the West was the dual triumph of reformed capitalism and national citizenship" (p. 459). But the period from 1890 to 1945 was also marked by "two terrible wars" in addition to more general imperial expansion (p. 2). How are these things linked?

Mann's general theoretical approach, distinguishing among four sources of social power: ideological, economic, military, and political, suggests an answer. As he states, "The world did not form a single whole. Capitalism, nation-states, empires, wars and ideologies had distinct logics of development" (p. 3). Although entwined, war and capitalism developed according to independent logics. This view is attractive because it allows Mann to develop an unusually broad and rich account of the first half of the twentieth century.

However, Mann's approach has one surprising feature. It is based on a strikingly benign view of capitalism in which the internal workings of this economic system lead naturally to some version of the social democratic welfare state. Several formulations suggest this. For example, at the beginning of his varieties of social citizenship chapter Mann writes, "Overall, Marshall was right: capitalism was being socialized, nationalized and civilized—although civil and political rights were another matter" (p. 283).

*The Sources of Social Power, Volume 3: Global Empires and Revolution, 1890-1945*, by **Michael Mann**. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 516pp. \$34.99 paper. ISBN: 9781107655478.

Further on he writes, "Had Europe remained at peace, state expansion would have slowly continued. Enfranchising workers and women would increase social welfare programs, and mildly statist late development economics would have prospered on the semi-periphery" (p. 316). Again Mann suggests that, "A logic of industrialism helped generate the first movements toward social citizenship" (p. 312). And this logic was "the most universal force pushing toward Marshall's notion of the nation state containing civilized beings" (ibid.). Further, he writes in the conclusion that capitalism should be "absolved. . . from much blame" (p. 464) for World War I and II. In short, the capitalist economic engine was tending to generate wealth, social citizenship, democracy, and peace but military, political, and ideological processes operating orthogonally to it deflected its course.

Is this a compelling empirical account for Mann's period? Volume Three's historical narrative is divided, roughly speaking, into the following sections: a brief analysis of eighteenth and early nineteenth century British imperialism, an analysis of the "New Imperialism" that emerged after

about 1870, an explanation of the First World War, an analysis of the revolutionary wave of 1917–1923, an account of the Depression, a discussion of the four great alternative political economies that emerged out of this experience (welfare capitalism, fascism, communism, and Japanese Imperialism) and an account of World War II, a conflict that Mann interprets as a clash of these alternative models. In what follows I provide a brief tour of this strikingly comprehensive and impressively argued volume, before turning to an assessment.

## Summary of the Volume

### Imperialism's Beginnings

Mann's account, as I have already indicated, tends to stress that imperialism operated according to an autonomous logic orthogonal to capitalism. However, he sees its origins as basically economic. Mann suggests that imperialism initially grew directly out of the territorial dynamics of European feudalism whose "primary motive for expansion was economic" (p. 25). Second sons of noble families created pressure groups within European states to push outward. As the old continent began to fill up in the fifteenth century, the expansionist dynamic pushed the seaward powers to search for new lands elsewhere. As Mann describes the process for Spain, "The main lures were still feudal – new realms for the king, land with dependent peasants for the conquistadores, high social status, and the Church's acquisition of souls" (p. 27). Columbus' voyage from Spain was part of the same land grab that eventually drove Islam out of the Iberian Peninsula and established the powerful but ramshackle Spanish empire (*ibid.*). He describes early English imperialism in the same way. Imperialism was a good way to deal with problems created by the "troublesome energy of young sons, bastards, restless missionaries, farmers, and artisans" (*ibid.*). The subjugation of Scotland and Ireland were laboratories for overseas colonialism also supported by a broader settler lobby (p. 28). In sum, for Mann, European imperialism was simply the continuation of the process of state formation, driven by military

fiscal dynamics that had been progressing on the continent for centuries.

### Settler Colonialism and Genocide

But this feudal dynamic seems, in Mann's account, to have had a relatively limited scope. Two subsequent forms of imperialism replaced it: settler imperialism and the imperialism of free trade.

Settler imperialism, based on democracy and land hunger, characterized temperate zones that Europeans could live in, and tended to be extraordinarily murderous. For example, the United States and Australia killed respectively 95 and 75 percent of their aboriginal populations by the early twentieth century (p. 30). These processes produced powerful territorial empires, particularly in the United States, which Mann characterizes as "the nineteenth century equivalent of the European Union, nice but harmless" (p. 59).

In other regions less amenable to European colonization, commercial colonialism developed based on unequal exchange between colony and metropole (p. 27). Britain developed this in classic form. The economic benefits of free trade imperialism, argues Mann, were however limited. Colonial profits were only 1 percent of GDP. However in the late eighteenth century "the profits of slavery provided somewhere between 21 percent and 55 percent of total British investment capital" (p. 33).

### The New Imperialism

By the far the most important form of imperialism in this volume, however, is the "New Imperialism" which began in the 1870s and stretched to World War I. Mann's key case studies of this are the United States in the Progressive period and Imperial Japan.

The new imperialism in the United States began with the Spanish American War, a conflict sparked by a small imperialist lobby within the United States. It led to the annexation of much of Spain's colonial empire: Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. But, unlike settler colonialism, this did not lead to a permanent territorial empire. Instead, it quickly shifted to gunboat diplomacy, "more capitalist than statist" (p. 92).

But even this form of imperialism “was not rational” (p. 95). Costa Rica showed that a more redistributive development path would produce higher growth. The problem was that “corporations had a malign hold over American imperialism” (*ibid.*).

Japanese imperialism, for Mann, is in some respects easier to understand. Japan after the Meiji Restoration was a new power facing an inclement international environment, lack of access to raw materials, and a restricted domestic market (p. 110).

## World War I

Having begun the volume with a detailed analysis of imperialism, one might expect that Mann would provide an explanation of the Great War in terms of it. But he shies away from any such claim, arguing that the war was a geopolitical status conflict based in ideology, not economics (pp. 134, 166).

Indeed, Mann argues that the European economy was becoming more integrated prior to the conflict and that capitalists interested in secure profits were mostly peaceful. Thus, the developmental paths of economic and military power ran counter to one another: the first becoming more cooperative, and the second more antagonistic (p. 138). Nor can the war be ascribed more generally to social imperialism, the attempt to ameliorate class conflict with ideological, material, or political gains from the colonies. Instead the fundamental responsibility for the war lies with foolish statesmen imbued with a “militaristic culture” and a desire for “status” and “prestige” (p. 166).

## The Revolutions

Regardless of its causes, World War I had enormous effects. In two very strong chapters, Mann argues that without the war neither the Russian Revolution, nor the European revolutionary wave of 1917–1923 would have occurred. Rejecting such elite theories as proffered by Theda Skocpol (1979), Mann argues that two causal chains produced the Bolshevik seizure of power: a highly concentrated capitalism propped up by an authoritarian monarchy, and the “Russian military disaster” (p. 190). The first

set of factors created mass discontent among workers and peasants, and the second set of factors gave them the opportunity to act.

Although the war also had important consequences further to the West (particularly in Germany), four factors worked against a revolutionary breakthrough here: a split in the working class between reformist and revolutionaries, the absence of a revolutionary peasantry, the absence of an army revolt, and the presence of a unified and pragmatic old regime (pp. 198–199).

## The Depression

World War I, argues Mann, also had two main effects on the interwar economy: it destroyed the regime of informal international cooperation that had existed prior to the War (pp. 212–213), and increased the power of workers and peasants in most countries (p. 214). This meant that there was great pressure from below for redistribution, in a global context in which export-oriented production was extremely difficult, resulting in policies oscillating between inflation and capital flight, and deflation and austerity (*ibid.*).

By the late 1920s, excess capacity in agriculture exacerbated these problems. During the war, producers outside of Europe benefited from the decline of agricultural production in the war zone. But “at wars end, there was agricultural recovery in the combatant and blockaded countries, and combined with continued technological development in agriculture, this produced overproduction and falling prices and incomes” (p. 217). This created an agricultural recession that intersected with a stock market bubble “resulting from a different causal chain” (*ibid.*).

In summary, Mann explains the great depression as the outcome of agricultural overproduction, a slow transition to consumer-oriented manufacturing, the persistence of an old regime committed ideologically to the gold standard, and geo-economic fragmentation (pp. 230–240).

## Welfare Capitalism and Its Alternatives

The final half of Mann’s book analyzes the regimes that issued from the crisis of

capitalism in the 1930s: the New Deal welfare state in the United States, the various social citizenship regimes of Europe which Mann divides among the Anglos, the Nordics, and the Euros, Fascism, the Soviet Alternative, Japanese Imperialism, and Chinese Communism.

This section begins with an analysis of welfare capitalism, first in a long chapter on the American New Deal followed by a masterful comparative discussion of social citizenship in Europe. As capitalism triumphed, "the relations between capital and labor became the core economic power struggle everywhere" (p. 280). Furthermore, following Marshall, Mann argues that this struggle tended to generate a reformed version of capitalism characterized by four basic features: relative equality, a progressive system of taxation, welfare transfers, and universal health and education systems (p. 281).

Nastier fascist solutions to the Great Depression emerged in the East and South of Europe where capitalist class conflict was overlaid with an agrarian old regime (p. 329). But, although relatively successful economically, fascism did not turn out to be much of an alternative. Instead, "It helped deepen social and liberal democracy in the West and strengthened state socialism in the East" (p. 346).

Further to the East, Stalinism brutally and successfully industrialized the Soviet Union with substantial benefits for the population. Life expectancy increased as did physical stature and age of maturation of children. As Mann puts the point, "It was a long way from the promised utopia. . . but it was distinct material improvement" (p. 364).

Japanese imperialism was also initially a highly successful response to the Great Depression. In Japan, like Germany, there was no lib-lab alliance. Instead, in the 1930s Japan pursued a policy of wage compression combined with increased military spending allowing for economic growth without creating inflation. All of this was made possible by conservative "state domination" of capitalism (pp. 373–374). However this Japanese model, like its fascist counterpart, shifted toward what ultimately would be a disastrous neo-imperialist expansion on mainland China as a result of the tariff walls that kept Japanese exports

out of U.S. markets and threatened access to raw materials (p. 374).

## World War II

Mann treats the Second World War as "The last inter-imperial war" (in a surprising contrast to his discussion of the First World War). He argues here that although the "immediate cause of World War II. . . was Adolf Hitler," the basic issue at stake was inter-imperialist competition: "It was a collision between imperialists, the old regime seeing peace and collective security as the better way to preserve empire; the arrivistes believe they would have to fight to get one. This was the culmination of European militarism, and also its ruin" (p. 428). Thus, "European imperialism, imitated by the Japanese, had been the deeper cause of the war" (p. 456).

## Assessment

How should this argument be assessed? The analysis raises two main and connected questions: How convincing is Mann's account of the relationship between capitalism and social citizenship? And how convincing is Mann's account of warfare and imperialism over this period?

## Capitalism and Social Citizenship

Mann, following T.H. Marshall, argues that capitalist development contains an internal tendency toward social citizenship because capitalist class conflict produces institutionalized compromise as capitalists and workers strike bargains. This is why "reformed capitalism" came to dominate much of the advanced world in the twentieth century (p. 460). In an earlier piece Mann put the point this way: "Class conflict has tended to result in liberal and social democratic institutions" (1999: 24). The other forms of social power, operating orthogonally to economic power, disrupted this basically benign dynamic.

Does Mann's evidence confirm this story? In my view there is very little evidence in this volume to suggest that capitalism tends to produce social democratic or liberal



outcomes. To assess the argument it is useful to focus on what seem to be the strongest cases for Mann—the United States and western and northern Europe which Mann divides between the “Anglos,” the “Nordics,” and the “Euros” in Chapters Seven and Eight.

I begin with what Mann himself takes as “a case study of the rise of social citizenship across the north of the world”: the United States during the New Deal. Mann argues that during the 1930s, “The United States... played catch-up in devising a normal lib-lab welfare regime” (p. 241), spearheaded by a Democratic Party that Mann argues was “now prolabor” (p. 257). This led to three basic reforms: the Wagner Act which prohibited unfair labor practices and guaranteed the right to strike, the Social Security Act (SSA) which guaranteed pensions, and the Agricultural Adjustment Act which protected farmers, especially large farmers, against market fluctuations (pp. 252–266).

I have two main reservations about this interpretation. The first concerns its analysis of the coalition that made up the New Deal, and the second concerns its characterization of the New Deal as a movement toward social citizenship. The New Deal coalition was not a lib-lab alliance as Mann’s own discussion shows. To interpret it in this framework both under- and overemphasizes the role of labor. To begin with, it is important to realize that the SSA and the Wagner Act were the result of an extraordinary wave of shop floor militancy without any close parallel in American history, not a cross class alliance between labor and capital. But at the same time, this insurgency took place in a political context in which the main party of labor, the Democratic Party, was also the main party of southern agriculture. Mann tries to argue that the United States in the 1930s had effectively a three-party system comprised of the Republicans, Democrats, and Southern Democrats (p. 253). The “real Democrats,” he suggests were social democratic northerners. But this is not true. One of the basic features of American politics has been precisely the odd and fateful organizational linkage between the industrial working class and the planter aristocracy and its descendants as W.E.B. Dubois so

presciently pointed out in his *Black Reconstruction in America* (2007: 175–177). The New Deal coalition never effectively challenged this (Brenner 2007: 40; 2010: 46; Caro 1990: 252–260; Davis 1980: 5). Southern landowners always remained a crucial part of it; they were not a third political force, as Mann’s own evidence and other historical accounts show (Caro 1990: 252–260; Mann 2012: 252, 261, 264). All this suggests that Mann’s interpretation of the New Deal as a kind of Yankee Lloyd George coalition fails to capture the specificity of this historical experience.

This is not to suggest that the United States was “exceptional.” One of the great strengths of all Mann’s writing about the States is his consistent refusal of such ideology. But it does point to a rather different set of relevant comparative cases. I would argue that the closest social parallels to the New Deal in Europe were not English Labour, and even less Scandinavian social democracy, but the clutch of reformist liberal and soft authoritarian regimes that emerged on the European periphery in the early twentieth century such as Giolittian Italy, Primo de Rivera’s Spain, or Bethlen’s Hungary. Like these regimes, the New Deal both rewarded and reinforced, regionally-based, and often quite militant, industrial working classes at the expense of agrarian direct producers who were excluded; and in the case of Italy in particular were constructed as a racial other (just as occurred in the American South). At the same time these regimes, just like the New Deal, showered agrarian elites and selected industrialists with state largesse. The reasons for the structural similarity are obvious. The United States, like the southern and eastern European periphery, contained a politically powerful agrarian “Old Regime” in Arno Mayer’s (1981) sense. It had mutated after slavery, but was certainly not by the 1930s purely capitalist.

Regardless of the social coalition it expressed, did the New Deal achieve social citizenship? A comment is first necessary about the term. In Mann’s book it tends to take on a rather broad meaning. He distinguishes four dimensions of it: a relatively low level of inequality, a system of progressive taxation, a system of welfare state transfers, and universal education and health care

(p. 281). From this perspective social citizenship is basically equivalent to any non-market provision of goods that tends to equalize life chances. However its original meaning, as used by T.H. Marshall, was more precise. Marshall argued that social citizenship was a sub-type of citizenship, which he defined as "a status bestowed on those who are full members of the community." He further suggested that "All those who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed" (Marshall 2009: 149–150). In short, for Marshall social citizenship implied universal rights and was therefore strictly analogous to political and civil citizenship. But in fact there is very little evidence of universality in the New Deal. Instead, as Mann himself puts the point, "The New Deal created a two-tier welfare state" (p. 269). Arguably this undermined social citizenship rather than creating it. For the New Deal systematically fragmented direct producers along racial, regional, and occupational lines thereby eliminating any potential worker/farmer alliance as had emerged in the days of populism.

One might accept the above points, however, and still conclude that Mann's fundamental claim about the relationship between capitalism and social citizenship is correct. After all, I have suggested that the United States needs to be understood as a very persistent "Old Regime"; and that this persistence profoundly shaped its welfare state. Perhaps the real test of Mann's argument about the connection between capitalism and social citizenship lies then in Western Europe—and particularly the United Kingdom, the classic ground of lib-labism.

The roots of lib-labism in the United Kingdom lie in the Lloyd George coalition, an attempt to keep labor-friendly MPs in the Liberal party, which eventually led to a formal coalition government in 1924 (pp. 294–295). What were the historical conditions that allowed for this development? Speaking of the Labour party's rise, one of the major historians of the Lloyd George coalition, Robert J. Scally, states that this was "probably the only case in which an entrenched and solvent ruling elite of a great capitalist state yielded a meaningful share of political

power, not willingly but without a violent social upheaval" (Scally: 4). But it is important to emphasize, against Mann and Marshall, that this smooth transition was made possible by two conditions utterly unique to England. The first of these was the formation of a strong alliance between English industrialists and the English working class against landlords in the period after the defeat of Chartism (Nairn 1964: 39). The alliance itself was rendered possible by a number of things including England's early and laissez faire pattern of industrialization, itself made possible by England's first comer status (Nairn 2003: 9). (Such a configuration never could have emerged in the United States where the landlords and labor were organized in the same political party.)

The second facilitator of the lib-lab alliance was of course imperialism. The fundamental ideological cement of the alliance was concern over racial decline and the impending loss of the United Kingdom's great power status with the rise of Germany and the United States in particular (Nairn 1964: 41–42). The Fabians were obsessed with this: Sidney and Beatrice Webb established a dining club called the Coefficients to discuss these ideas (Semmel 1960: 75), and their basic critique of *laissez-faire* capitalism was not that it was unequal or exploitative, but that it would undermine "national efficiency" in the coming great power struggle (Searle 1971: 6–12).

Mann dismisses this sort of argument claiming that, "the working class remained largely uninterested in empire" (p. 35). The question of how important British imperialism was in shaping working-class attitudes is of course a fraught one. But it seems unlikely that the pervasive racialist thinking that emerged in the later nineteenth century, and that affected precisely those political leaders closest to a lib-lab social democratic vision, would have had no impact on workers' self understandings. Like Marshall before him, Mann is far too hasty to generalize the "peculiarities of the English" to the rest of the advanced world.

Does lib-labism work as an adequate explanation of the spread of social citizenship anywhere else? The "Nordics" were arguably the only countries to establish full social citizenship in Marshall's sense before

World War II. But this was mostly because of the collapse of conservatives in the wake of the Great Depression, and crucially, the availability of an independent peasantry who were the product of an utterly unique agrarian history in which peasants had achieved representation as a "fourth estate" from the sixteenth century (Anderson 1989: 180–181; Mann 2012: 300). Social citizenship here was achieved by an alliance of labor and peasants, not labor and liberals.

Lib-labism was even less in evidence in the "Euros": France, Germany, and Italy. As Mann himself correctly points out, the French paternalist welfare state emerged after World War I for populationist reasons, whereas in the 1920s in Germany and Austria, "There was little chance of a worker-peasant or worker-middle class alliance" (p. 308).

It is worth analyzing why this was so, however. Mann places a heavy responsibility for the failure of lib-labism in Germany and Italy on the revolutionary left. He dismisses the Spartacist uprising as "a bloody fiasco, not to be romanticized; it was foolish, and only damaged progressive causes" (p. 197). In Italy, he writes the factory occupations "did not spread outside of the working class core, and the movement fizzled out" (p. 203). This is probably the dominant view. But to really assess it, it is important to get a sense of what possibilities actually existed in the historical circumstances in Germany and Italy of the 1920s. Men like Ebert and Scheidemann in Germany, and Turati in Italy, thought that a parliamentary road to social citizenship, if not socialism, was possible in the post-World War I period. But the historical evidence strongly suggests otherwise. Arguably, by actively scuttling the revolutionary waves of the early 1920s, these men bear a heavy, if indirect, responsibility for fascism. For only a determined assault on the state could have removed the noxious alliance of old regime elites and emerging industrialists that would support, even if it did not create, mass fascist parties. Reformism, in these circumstances, was arguably much more "damaging to progressive causes" than a consistently revolutionary stance would have been.

Furthermore reformism in central Europe has to be placed in a world context. The failure of revolutionary breakthrough in the

West was not just a disaster for Germany and Italy; it was also a fiasco for the Soviet Union itself. The only possible socialist justification for the existence of the USSR, as all of the principle actors of the Bolshevik revolution realized, was to spark a world revolution that would quickly spread to the advanced capitalist economies, and above all to Germany. Bottled up in a massive backward country, encircled by hostile powers, Stalinism, surely the greatest self-inflicted disaster that progressives have ever suffered, was the logical outcome (Claudin 1975: 46–50).

Mann's claim that capitalism contained an internal tendency toward social citizenship based on a labor-liberal alliance is not well supported by his historical case studies. In fact it seems that lib-labism, far from being a fundamental tendency of capitalism, was a uniquely British phenomenon, repeated virtually nowhere else in the advanced world prior to World War II. We could put the same question to Mann that Mann (1992: 189) himself put to T.H. Marshall: was "Britain typical of the capitalist West as a whole"? The answer it seems to me is probably not.

### Capitalism and War

The second main issue that Mann's analysis raises is the connection between capitalism, imperialism, and war. No other sociologist has done as much as Mann to put war at the center of the agenda of comparative sociology where it rightly belongs. But how does he understand its connection with capitalism?

Mann argues, rightly in my view, that as a mode of production capitalism does not require coercion. As he put the point in a very fine early essay, "capitalism once institutionalized, seems to require relatively little maintenance by force" (Mann 1992: 137). This general stance leads Mann further to reject two broadly Marxian accounts of imperialism: the Lenin/Hobson view that imperialism is driven by the search for investment opportunities for surplus capital, and the social imperialist view that imperialism is a response to increased class conflict. Mann rejects the Lenin/Hobson thesis that late nineteenth century imperialism was based on surplus capital because, he says,



the accumulation of capital did not spur investment in the colonies, but rather in the core, thereby increasing economic interdependence (Mann 2012: 34).

Mann also rejects the theory of social imperialism, which holds that it was not the narrowly economic interests of capitalists that drove imperialism, but their broader political class interests. He argues that this explanation fails because "The working class remained largely uninterested in empire" (p. 35).

What then explains late nineteenth century imperialism for Mann? He evokes many mechanisms, a "sense that a finite globe was filling up," the presumed existence of "untold riches" in Africa, and the fact that "Asia did have immense markets" (p. 35). But these are all subordinated to his more common answer—militarism. It was "militarism" that "enabled the conquest of global empires and spread like a disease to Japan and the United States" (p.12). Further, "There is no necessary reason why multi-state systems should generate much war, but when they come enveloped in a culture of militarism, as Europe did, it is likely to generate endless war and competitive imperialism" (p. 129).

But what is militarism? Mann defines it as a form of "ideological power" associated with masculinity. It is characterized by a fight for "status, in Max Weber's sense of the term" (p. 134). It emphasizes "honor, glory, status, credibility, and shame, fear of being seen as weak and thus ridiculed." Thus as an ideology it expresses "the emotional insecurities of little boys on the playground" (p. 134). It might seem that this is a Schumpeterian argument, treating imperialism as an atavistic expression of outmoded social classes (Schumpeter 1919: 49). But, although a formal discussion of Schumpeter is surprisingly absent in Mann's analysis of theories of imperialism, he seems to reject this view. As he puts the point for Japan, "Schumpeter's view of imperialism as generated by older, traditional social structures has even less relevance to Japan than other powers discussed so far" (p. 107). Militarism is rooted for Mann neither in capitalism, nor in atavistic pre-capitalist classes, but in a peculiarly European and elite social psychology.

However, there is one basic empirical problem with this argument: Japan was one of the most aggressive imperialist powers over this period, as Mann rightly shows. But the Japanese surely did not need to "emulate" the Europeans. The *Bushido* or "way of the warrior" was a highly militaristic ethic, formalized during the Meiji Restoration, but rooted in centuries of intense intra-feudal conflict (Nitobe 1969: 1–3, 94–96).

But anti-imperialism embodied in the idea of the Greater Asia Principle was more important. One of the major ideological justifications of imperial expansion was that Japanese hegemony was necessary in order to liberate other Asian peoples from European colonialism. Although in time this became in Maruyama's (1963: 51) words "a decoration for imperialist war," it had deep historical roots in the Meiji era. European imperialism, and particularly European fascist imperialism had none of this. *Generalplan Ost* was never embellished with claims to liberate the Slavs. Thus, neither the autonomous domestic sources of Japanese martial ideology, nor its distinctive "imperialist anti-imperialism" is adequately captured by Mann's idea of "militarism."

There is also a broader issue. European elite ideology is simply a weak armature on which to build an account of the massive bloodlettings of the early twentieth century. In this regard it is worth pointing out that Mann's reliance on an ideology of militarism to explain war contrasts in a striking way with his own previous work, and that of Max Weber whom he invokes here. It is perhaps best to begin with the latter.

Imperialism and war were phenomena at the center of Weber's sociology (Mommsen 1974: 68–90), and it might seem natural then that Mann would draw on his analysis. But Weber's actual account of imperialism was quite different from Mann's. It is true that Weber insisted that inter-state competition was saturated with conflicts over prestige. But he also argued that there was a strong material dynamic to imperialism. Although he never fully developed this, Weber seems in some places in his work to have had the view, like Marx, that modern rational capitalism was subject to declining rates of profit. Imperialist adventures,

investments in arms manufacture, and state loans (phenomena that Weber grouped under the term political capitalism) tended in contrast to have higher rates of return, and this contrast was the key to understanding imperialism. As Weber put the point in *Economy and Society*, "The universal revival of 'imperialist' capitalism, which has always been the normal form in which capitalist interests have influenced politics, and the revival of political drives for expansion are thus not accidental. For the predictable future, the prognosis will have to be made in its favor" (Weber: 919). Weber's theory of imperialism, in sum, was ultimately quite close to the Lenin/Hobson view. Imperialism was a consequence of declining rates of return on investment in a context of intense interstate competition.

Furthermore Mann's invocation of the ideology of militarism as the key to explaining war contrasts strikingly with his own previous analyses, which apart from their exemplary clarity and rigor, are strongly structuralist. In his first volume of *The Sources of Social Power*, and in the opening pages of this volume, Mann (1992: 431–433) suggests that a specific social coalition between land hungry second sons, and minor nobles and merchants who wanted their trade routes protected and their state loans paid supported imperialism. It is only in the nineteenth century, for Mann, that warfare and imperial expansion comes to be driven by ideological power.

Why the switch? To answer this question opens a more general set of considerations about the basic assumptions built into the sources of the social power model. Mann holds the view that modern capitalism is an economic system based on the peaceful exploitation of wage labor. It developed in Europe largely outside and against the system of emerging nation-states whose origins lay in the autonomous dynamic of warfare. Although at times this analysis seems to presuppose the very dynamic that it should explain, it effectively captures the non-totalized nature of pre-modern Europe.

However, the very intellectual framework that allows Mann to provide an original account of the origins of modernity in the latter work becomes an obstacle. Modern imperialism and war shows why. Mann

repeatedly argues that modern imperialism and war was not rational in purely economic terms (Mann 2013: 95, 98, 112, 136, 165). But much of this argument elides the difference between the interests of individual capitalists and nationally located capitalist classes on the one hand, and the system maintenance requirements of capitalism on the other. War might well be rational for at least some of the former, but not for the latter.

Whatever their historical origins, the state system and capitalist classes had become inextricably linked (entwined in Mann's terminology) in this period to form a discrete set of politico-economic totalities. The institutions and the personnel of states now constituted both constraints and resources that deeply conditioned capitalist rationality, while capitalism had the same effect on state managers. These social facts shaped the concrete historical options of decisive actors.

Mann tends to resist this, not so much for empirical reasons, but because he is ontologically committed to the four sources of social power; and he is therefore deeply reluctant to see totality. The appropriate stance to take on these issues, however, is neither a priori assertion of the primacy of one source of power, nor an a priori assertion of their equivalence, but rather a properly historical approach that seeks to specify the conditions under which one or more of the sources operates as ultimately determining. Surprisingly perhaps, it is Georg Lukács (the ultimate totalizer) who started down this path. Lukács argued in his analysis of the difference between capitalist and pre-capitalist forms of class consciousness that, "The most striking distinction, and the one that really concerns us, is that pre-capitalist societies are much less *cohesive* than capitalism. The various parts are much more self-sufficient and less closely interrelated than in capitalism" (1971: 55).

Thus for these pre-capitalist societies it makes sense to separate the sources of social power in the way that Weber and Mann do, for example; but he also suggested that capitalism among other things was a totalizing force that tended to fuse the previously self-sufficient parts. This suggests a general methodological point. Both the claim that a single developmental logic governs human history, and the claim that multiple

developmental logics govern it are a priori metaphysical statements. Human societies are relatively more or less "totalities" depending on historical circumstances, and the appropriate conceptual stance is to remain strictly agnostic about ultimate primacy or multi-causality. Mann's attachment to the four sources of social power has switched from being an advantage in his account of the origins of modernity, to becoming an obstacle as the social world itself has become increasingly "totalized."

To be more concrete: the economic problem which characterizes most of the period under discussion here is excess productive capacity. This is a problem that Mann recognizes, especially in his analysis of the world crisis of the 1930s (p. 224). It appeared first in agriculture in the late nineteenth century when American and Russian wheat production came fully online leading to the first Great Depression (1873–1896), an economic event with far-reaching consequences. Political elites threw up tariff walls across Western Europe in the late nineteenth century and there was a general ratcheting up of geopolitical tensions in response to them. In the more unevenly developed countries these policies not only exacerbated the underlying problem on a world scale, but also preserved a very unproductive agriculture that could not form an adequate basis for mass demand.

World War I (unlike World War II) exacerbated rather than solved this problem because, however bloody it may have been, it was a frontline conflict not fought against civilians and civilian infrastructure. By war's end, massive armaments industries had been established in all the combatant countries, and during the interwar period excess capacity was intensified; but it was also pooled unevenly through the interstate system. It was particularly pronounced in countries such as Germany, Italy, and Japan that had large unproductive agrarian sectors combined with a highly advanced industrial sector. The fundamental economic question for most capitalists over most of this period in any case was never "what is best for capitalism" but rather, "where are the markets"?

What is the potential link between all this and imperialism? Certainly there is no reason to think that excess capacity would

automatically and directly lead to massive war within the capitalist core: witness today. However when excess capacity combines with a fragmented interstate system, there is every reason to think that this particular dynamic will unleash massive and destructive war; and that some very powerful capitalists (although not all of them) are likely to be quite bellicose.

Does such an account accord with the basic facts of Mann's narrative? Yes. Such an approach explains the aggressors in both the First and particularly in the Second World War. One would expect that only those countries excluded from the initial imperial land grab of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would be aggressors against other advanced countries. This defines Germany's situation in the First World War, although it does not fully explain the behavior of other countries such as Italy and Japan. But in 1914, it was not clear that the globe had been completely divided up. Mann's approach fully explains the Second World War, in particular the alliance of excluded powers: Germany, Japan, and Italy. Each of these had experienced intense but regionally concentrated industrialization by the interwar period, each one was ruled by an elite restricted by inadequate access to markets and raw materials; thus for the Italian fascist elites the war was always understood as a search for *spazio vitale*, and for the Germans of course it was the drive for *Lebensraum*.

For Mann, the Second World War "was a collision between imperialists, the old regime seeing peace and collective security as the better way to preserve empire; the arrivistes believing they would have to fight to get one" (p. 428). Indeed his general interpretation of the Second World War has ruffled the feathers of some of his fellow Englishmen because it is insufficiently deferential to Anglo-Saxon virtue (Tooze 2013).

If this view is roughly correct, I think it suggests a quite different way of posing the relationship between capitalism and war, and it also allows for an interesting link between this book and some of Mann's earlier work, particularly *The Dark Side of Democracy*. It is not that there were two dynamics: an imperialist one rooted in "militarism" leading to war and genocide, and

a capitalist one leading to social citizenship and the welfare state. Rather, the construction of large zones of peace which are integrated and coordinated has usually been the result of extraordinary bloodletting: American colonization and civil war, the First and Second World Wars in Europe, and Japanese Imperialism in the Far East. Within these zones and under some highly particular conditions, social citizenship did emerge. But if that is the case, then imperialism, fascism, and their wars no longer appear as an alternative modernity that failed, or an alternative process intersecting with the one producing social citizenship, but rather a route to our current modernity.

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