The Globalization and Theories of the State of the Agricultural and Food Sector

Alessandro Bonanno

The paper investigates the theoretical dislocation between the domestic oriented character of theories of the State and the transnational character of theories of socio-economic development. Employing the case of the food and agricultural sector, it is argued that the literature in this area has emphasized the transnational dimension of capital accumulation and the process of by-passing State authority at the national level. This situation mandates a re-evaluation of State theories in regard to the international dimension of current processes of capital accumulation. Furthermore, the present analysis suggests patterns of "contradictory convergence" in which expansion at the transnational level of State action is demanded by transnational corporations and subordinate classes alike. This demand, however, is contradictory, as it finds its limits in the transnational bourgeoisie's desire to avoid State action. Politically, as a result of this situation the locus of emancipatory social action should be increasingly transferred to the international arena.

Alessandro Bonanno is Assistant Professor of Rural Sociology at the University of Missouri-Columbia, USA. He has researched among other topics, the structure of agriculture, regional and international development, aging and the State. He is the author of numerous journal articles and books, among then **Small Farms** (1987) **Sociology of Agriculture** (1989) **Agrarian Policies and Agricultural Systems** (1990). He recived his Ph. D. in Sociology from the University of Kentucky, USA.

Introduction

Recent transformations in the agricultural and food sector have influenced a number of rural sociologists to argue the emergence of a transnational system of agricultural and food production (Bonanno et al., 1990, Campbell, 1990; Friedland, 1988; Friedland et al. 1991; Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; McMichael and Myhre, 1991). In these analyses center stage is occupied by the role of the State vis-a-vis new trends in the economic and political spheres. Epistemologically and with some exceptions (e.g. Campbell, 1990), the theoretical underpinnings of these works rest upon Marxian interpretations of societal development and the relationship between the economy and superstructural[1] elements in society. The centrality of the Marxian theoretical construction in regard to these issues is made evident by the long standing attention paid by Marxian scholars to the role of the State in society and by the number of Marxian studies analyzing the phenomena of multinationalization and transnationalization[2] of the food and agricultural system. Indeed, the problematics of multinationalization of food and agricultural production and its later transnationalization have been developed predominantly within the Marxian debate in the sociology of agriculture[3].

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The present study would like to contribute to the Marxian scholarship in the sociology of agriculture and sociology of the State by analyzing the theoretical implications that the transnationalization of the agricultural and food sector has in regard to the role of the State. The paper opens with a brief review of the major theories of the State: the "instrumentalist," "relative autonomy" and the "mixed approach." In the following section the domestic dimension of the relationship between the polity and the economy in Marxian analyses is illustrated. Particular attention is paid to the domestic dimension of the original work of Marx. In this respect, it is argued that the stage of capitalist development achieved in the middle of the last century, the effort to illustrate the laws of capitalist development and the emphasis placed on the British case did not allow Marx to transcend the domestic dimension of capitalist development. Furthermore, it is maintained that though Marxian theories of colonialism and imperialism were developed in the decades following Marx's death, they reflected the multinational development of capital in a manner which emphasized the struggle of national capitalist States and national capitals to control the international arena. In this context the domestic oriented dimension of the capitalist State was maintained. Finally, a discussion on the national cultural dimension that the reproduction of capitalist rule mandates is also undertaken.

In the third section the transnationalization of the economic sphere is briefly illustrated, while the fourth section of the paper reviews some of the recent literature on transnationalization and its relationship to State action. Focusing on the literature on the State and on that of transnationalization, the next section provides a discussion of the dislocation between the global dimension of capital accumulation and the domestic dimension of State action. It is argued that the theoretical underpinnings of current theories of the State are becoming increasingly inadequate. Furthermore, it is maintained that the mediation of the various fractions of capital carried on by the State at the domestic level is unresolved in the international arena. Finally, it is pointed out that subordinate classes find their power in society reduced due to the dislocation between State power and economic activities. The concluding portion of the paper illustrates patterns of "contradictory convergence" in which expansion of the transnational level of State action is demanded by transnational corporations and subordinate classes alike. This demand is contradictory, as it finds its limits in the transnational bourgeoisie's desire to avoid State action. Politically, as a result of this situation the locus of emancipatory social action should be increasingly transferred to the international arena.

Theories of the State in the Sociological Literature

The role of the State in society has been a central theme of sociological debate in recent years (Block, 1980, Domhoff, 1979; Hooks, 1990; Offe, 1985, Poulantzas, 1978; Prechel, 1990; Quadagno, 1990). Originally formulated in the context of political sociology, Marxist sociology and the sociology of complex organizations, theories of the State have been increasingly employed to address issues in the area of sociology of agriculture (Bonanno, 1987a, 1987b; Friedland, 1988; 1983; Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; Mc Michael and Myhre, 1991; Green, 1987; Gilbert and Howe, 1988). In this debate the State has been identified as a) an institution instrumentally controlled by the ruling class; b) an entity endowed with relative autonomy; and c) an institution in which the instrumental dimension and the autonomous dimension are both contained in the State's historical role.

The instrumentalist account (Domhoff, 1978) views the State in capitalism as either "an instrument for promoting the common interests of the ruling (capitalist) class" (Offe and Ronge,

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1979:346) or "a committee of the ruling class directly manipulated by the members of this class" (Carnoy, 1984:214).

Two types of instrumental theories have emerged. The first calls for an identity between the ruling class and the State officialdom (Miliband, 1969; 1970; Domhoff, 1979; 1967). In this case, State bureaucrats tend to belong to the same class or classes that dominate society and are bound to it by common educational backgrounds, friends, and family relations. Though it is possible for members of other classes to enter the upper class, it is the latter which controls the political apparatus. The second theory, which has also been labeled "State Monopoly Capital Theory", indicates that the monopolistic-corporate fractions of the bourgeoisie exercise direct control over the State (O'Connor, 1973; 1974). Essentially, it is maintained that the control that monopolistic-corporate class fractions exercise over the economy entails, almost automatically, control over the State.

The theoretical and empirical bases of the instrumentalist approach have been criticized by studies which have emphasized the complex character of the relationship between the economy and the polity. Moreover, empirically observed discrepancies between the action of the State and that of the ruling class have cast doubts on the ability of the latter to control directly the former. Drawing from portions of the work of Marx (1964:5-69) and more recent formulations (Gramsci, 1975, 1971; Habermas, 1975; Horkheimer, 1974; Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972; Lukács 1971; Marcuse, 1964) which emphasize the role that ideology, the polity and the superstructure in general play in the process of development of capitalism, the relative autonomy approach underscores the partial independence of superstructural elements from the economic structure. Accordingly, it calls for the relative autonomy of the State (an element of the superstructure) from the economy (the structure) (Block, 1980; 1977; Poulantzas, 1978, Offe and Ronge, 1979).

In essence it is argued that the State reproduces class relations not because one class or fraction of class directly controls it, but because the State is interested in reproducing "the rules and social relationships that are presupposed by the class rule of the capitalist class" (Offe and Ronge, 1979:346). The "instrumentalist" and "relative autonomy" theories have generally been employed in exclusive terms (for the debate in sociology of agriculture see Bonanno, 1987a; 1987b; Green, 1987, 1989). In other words, it has been maintained that the two camps are based on different assumptions. Indeed, in the illustration of the instrumentalist and relative autonomy theories attention has been paid to the relatively diverse theoretical origins of the two positions. Offer and Ronge (1979:345-347), for instance, while recognizing the Marxian roots of both positions, point out that the "instrumentalist" position is rooted in some passages of the **Manifesto**, while the "relative autonomy" approach finds its origins in the analysis contained in **The German Ideology**. However, it is also acknowledged that this distinction is more "heuristic" than real (Green, ":221) and that there are more similarities that differences between the two (Bonanno, 1988:133).

An analysis which explicitly rejects the separation between the instrumentalist and relative autonomy positions is provided by William H. Friedland (1988; 1983). Friedland's work assumes more relevance for the present discussion as it has been developed within the debate in the sociology of agriculture and represents one of the innovative attempts to adapt debates in general sociology to issues relevant to rural sociology. In essence, for Friedland the role of the State in society is not given, but rather depends upon specific historical circumstances. Indeed, these circumstances are the sources of an instrumentalist or autonomous posture of the State in society. Employing the cases of various

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agricultural commodities, he demonstrates that the State is simultaneously called upon to organize various interests of the ruling class and to mediate between the ruling class interests and opposing interests emerging from other classes (relative autonomy theory). However, he further demonstrates that in specific instances the State also operates as an instrument of the ruling class, as the latter directly and effectively controls the action of the former (instrumentalist theory). Empirically, he concludes, neither theory is sufficient to describe the complex patterns of State involvement in society. Paradoxically, each theory becomes correct under differing circumstances.

Similar conclusions have been reached by scholars working within both the Marxian and the State Center paradigms and examining a variety of historical cases (e.g. Campbell and Lindberg, 1990; Hooks, 1990; Jenkins and Brents, 1989; Prechel, 1990).

As underscored by many students (Carnoy, 1984; Bonanno, 1987b; Green, 1987; O'Connor, 1973; 1974), the various theories of the State contain a number of important similarities. Among these are the overall tenets that accumulation of capital is not possible without the aid of the State and that the State cannot exist without the continuous existence of an accumulation process. In more specific terms this signifies, **first**, that accumulation of capital and the rule of the bourgeois class in society depend upon the ability of the State to maintain the conditions necessary for the reproduction of capital. **Second**, accumulation of capital must be legitimized and the State provides legitimation through the mediation of the various interests in society. This phenomenon refers to both mediation among members of the bourgeois class and among the bourgeois class and other classes. **Third**, the State obtains its financial resources from the taxation of revenue generated through the accumulation process. Accordingly and historically, the continuous existence of the accumulation process is paramount for the existence of the State. In essence, for all the above mentioned schools there is an intrinsic relationship between the process of capitalist development and the existence of the State apparatus.

Global Development and Theories of the State

The domestic dimension of the relationship between polity and the economy.

Central to the objectives of this paper is the common characteristic of the various theories of the State which views the relationship between the polity and the economy as framed in domestic terms. More specifically, in Marxist analyses the State has been conceptualized as a **predominantly domestic entity** which regulates the process of reproduction of capital.

This posture finds its roots in the historical phases of capitalist development in the analytical importance that the historical context assumes in Marxism. In a nutshell, the development of Marxian theories of the State reflected the evolution of capitalism and its interpretations provided by scientific and political circles. Three general items are of importance here.

a) The original work of Marx is based on the analysis of the development of national capitalism. More specifically, it is an illustration of the establishment and development of the capitalist mode of production in Great Britain (e.g. **Capital**).

b) Theories of colonialism and imperialism first, and later theories analyzing the development of multinational capital considered colonialism and imperialism as phenomena which reflect the extension of national interests in the international arena.

c) The work of early twentieth century Marxists concerned with the relationship of polity and the economy emphasized the national cultural dimension necessary for the maintenance of capitalism (e.g. Gramsci, 1975; 1971).

Let us briefly review each of these points.

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The original work of Marx.

The original Marxist analysis of capitalist development (e.g. Capital; see Sweezy, 1942) and particularly the discussions on "Primitive Accumulation" (Marx, 1977:873-940) and on the "General Laws of Capitalist Accumulation" (Marx, 1977:762-853) are based on the analysis of a single national case (the British case). In Marx's work references are made to other "national" cases, such as the Prussian and the French, to indicate historical differences form the British example originally discussed. These examples are introduced to demonstrate the generality of the laws of capitalist development which, nevertheless, produced particular outcomes an individual national levels. In this respect, these examples re-captured the stages of capitalist development which historically occurred and which characterized the formation and consolidation of national capitalisms (Brewer, 1980:18; Friedmann and McMichael, 1989:98-99). From its establishment in a few initial geographical enclaves, capitalism, according to Marx, expanded to other regions, becoming the "world" dominant mode of production (Marx, 1977:940; Marx and Engels, 1963:25-29). Historically, Marx's analysis could hardly have been different, as he examined a period characterized by the emergence of national capitalism in which its international expansion was, heuristically and politically speaking, less relevant (Dobb, 1963).

Marx's emphasis on the domestic dimension of capitalist development[4] has led many modern scholars to stress the limited original contribution that the German philosopher provided to international issues (Brewer, 1980:18-20; Dobb, 1963; Mutti and Poli, 1975:28-29). Despite his focus on the functioning of capitalism in a closed economic system (Mandel, 1977:12; Brewer, 1980:27) and his declared intention to study the international market and uneven capitalist development internationally (e.g. see the 1857 introduction to **A Contribution to the Critique of the Political Economy; Marx, 1976**), Marx never succeeded in elaborating an organic theory of capitalist accumulation on a world scale, even in relation to the historical period of colonialism. A limited analysis of colonialism is suggested in a non-systematic way only in some parts of **Capital** and in a series of articles dealing with European penetration in China and India that Marx wrote in the 1853-60 period when he was a foreign correspondent for the "New York Daily Tribune." In essence, then, both from the view point of the creation of the capitalist system and from the point of view of the internationalization of capitalism, Marx's work is domestically centered. In this context, the original Marxian formulation of the relationship between the polity and the economy does not represent an exception.

Theories of colonialism and imperialism

It would be misleading, however, to argue that the international dimension of capitalist development is foreign to the work of Marx and Marxist tradition. Despite the incomplete character of the classic work of Marx on this subject, the richness of Marx's theory has led many scholars to undertake the task of analyzing the diffusion of capitalism on a world scale. Furthermore and from a historical view point, only a few years after the death of Marx the rapid expansion of capitalism made the analysis of the international question a scientific and political imperative. It was in this context that the classic works of Lenin, Luxemburg, Bukharin, Hilferding and others on colonialism and imperialism emerged.

Reflecting the stage of capitalist development existing at that time (circa 1910), these classic studies of colonialism and imperialism conceptualized these phenomena in terms of "national capitals" which matured into their monopolistic form and expanded beyond the boundaries of their territories of origin (Bukharin, 1972; Hilferding, 1970; Lenin, 1926; Luxemburg, 1971). Indeed, according to Bukharin (1972) and

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Lenin (1926) it was through the establishment of national monopolies that the phase of imperialism developed. In their view, the growth of capitalism in Western nations led to the establishment of domestic monopolies. In turn, monopolies captured the nation state's organizational powers to foster their interests domestically and compete internationally against other national capitals. The competition among various monopolistic nations created the preconditions for the imperialist domination of the world. Following similar considerations, Hilferding (1970) argues that monopolies can develop more easily at the domestic level as barriers to foreign competition can be imposed. Once the monopoly stage is achieved, state protectionism ensures the viability of national capitals in the world market. Finally, Rosa Luxemburg (1972) viewed the capitalist solution to crisis of realization (i.e. the inability of capitalists to spend [realize] all their profits) as the incorporation of non-capitalist geographical areas into the sphere of influence of the domestic capital.

These classic Marxian formulations of the expansion of capitalism from a few centers to the entire world were challenged in the 1960's and 1970's by the emergence of the "Dependency Theory" (Frank, 1967a, 1967b,) the "World System Theory" (Wallerstein, 1974, 1979) and the "Unequal Exchange Theory" (Emmanuel, 1972). Remaining within the Marxist framework[5], these accounts responded to the growth of capitalism and its evolution into the phase of "multinational capital" (Dickens and Bonanno, 1988:173; Hoogvelt, 1982). They maintain that capitalism has been a world system since the beginning (circa sixteenth century) and that national economies are hierarchically placed in a system of domination in terms of three unequal statuses: core, semi-periphery and periphery (Wallerstein, 1979). Domination is established through the appropriation by core countries of surplus generated in periphery and semi-periphery countries, and the cyclical nature of the capitalist system is reflected in the upward and downward mobility of **nations** (Dickens and Bonanno, 1988:174-175; Howe and Sica, 1980:235-236).

The unique merit of these theories lies in the establishment of a clear connection between development and underdevelopment across national boundaries and continents, while acknowledging the emerging multinational dimension of capitalist development. Despite their reformulation of classic Marxian analyses, however, the dependency theory and world system theories' understanding of the development of capitalism is still centered on the concepts of national capital and on its international ramifications. Core countries are essentially exporters of capital, which penetrates peripheral and semi-peripheral countries to foster the process of exploitation (Brewer, 1980:158). Dependent countries, on the other hand, remain the objects of exploitative mechanisms maintained through the establishment of a "Dependent State" (Carnoy, 1984:184-192). In this theoretical construction the dependent State is of key importance for two fundamental reasons. First, from the international point of view the State depends on the process of multinational accumulation of capital and the maintenance of the system's division of labor for its existence. This situation means that the dependent State acts as a vehicle for the extraction of surplus from the peripheral economies to the advantage of the metropole (Amin, 1980: 135-136; Frank, 1979:5). Second, the process of multinational exploitation demands the social control of domestic settings, which is achieved through the action of the State apparatus. Domestically, the dependent State ensures the class rule of the dependent bourgeoisie (bourgeoisie compradora) and the subordination of the working classes to foreign capital (Dickens and Bonanno, 1988:175-178). In the case of the dependent State, ultimately, the multinationality of the development of capital requires the maintenance of a national state.

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The Articulation of Modes of Production theory (Arrighi, 1978; Laclau, 1971; Taylor, 1979) provides another modern alternative to classic accounts. Though critical of the Dependentistas and generally considered an attempt to re-introduce some of the orthodoxies of Marxism violated by the World System and Dependency theories (Blomstrom and Hettne, 1984:81-90), it ultimately stresses the national dimension of capitalist accumulation. Proponents of the Articulation of Modes of Production theory base their accounts on the concept of social formation (society), which constitutes their unit of analysis. Within social formations the characteristics of the relations of productions are examined to assess the extent to which capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production exist and/or co-exist (articulation). Accordingly, emphasis is placed on the domestic (social formation) character of the relations of production, which postulates a limiting analytical dimension, i.e. the nation. The fact that wage relations transcend national boundaries and the fact that they are dominant at the world level are given little theoretical space in this approach.

The national cultural dimension of capitalist societies

In the Marxist tradition the development of the capitalist State finds its origins in the dissolution of previous forms of production (the economy) and in the organization of political and ideological apparati which can sustain capital accumulation (the polity) (Marx and Engels, 1963:28-30). Essential to the growth of capitalism is that the economy, the polity and the ideological spheres be controlled by the bourgeoisie. In the economic sphere, the control of the bourgeoisie is achieved through direct control of the means of production. In the political and ideological spheres, bourgeois control is generated through the establishment of bourgeois apparati (such as private property, individual liberties, individualism, etc.) which legitimize accumulation of capital (Gramsci, 1975). However, the conditions for the establishment of legitimizing political and ideological apparati is essentially **domestic** since it finds its roots in the cultural and historical traditions of that nation. As illustrated by Gramsci (1971, 1975, e.g. see the discussion on historical materialism), the dominant class' ability to reinterpret the cultural and historical traditions of one country in its favor (i.e. to employ these traditions in its hegemonic project) is one of the fundamental conditions for the establishment and success of its rule in society. Accordingly, the State's attempt to legitimize class power depends on its ability to maintain the ruling class' view of the history and culture of the country.

The New Phase of Capitalis Development: The Transition from Multinationality to Transnationality.

The historical conditions which made possible the domestic centered conceptualization of the State and capital accumulation have been gradually altered in recent decades. More specifically, capitalism has abandoned its "multinational" phase to enter a new "transnational" phase. In the multinational phase of capitalist development it was possible to identity corporations with countries of origin (Bonanno, 1987a; Mingione, 1990; Sassen, 1988) and to argue that the most important segments of the State were controlled by monopoly capital (Poulantzas, 1978). In this context, international operations were treated as extensions of entrepreneurial activities designed and engineered in the home country and supported by the home State apparatus.

In the transnational phase, economic activities, identity and loyalty of conglomerates with a

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country are decreasingly visible[6]. The large number of acquisitions of companies by other international conglomerates, the decentralization of production across national borders and the transnationalization of the financial sector are all cases in point (Bluestone and Harrison, 1982; Bonanno, 1987a; Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; Mingione, 1990; Heffernan, 1990; Sassen, 1988). A report in the specialized media describes this process thusly: "As cross-border trade and investment flows reach new heights, big global companies are effectively making decisions with little regard to national boundaries. Though few companies are totally untethered from their home countries, the trend toward a form of 'stateless' corporation is unmistakable" (Business Week, 1990:98).

To be sure, the extent and characteristics of the process of transnationalization have been the subjects of debate. In the progressive camp Gordon (1988) challenges the assertions that there is an increase of movement of productive capital around the world and that, ultimately, interpretations of recent changes in the global economy have been distorted. In the conservative camp, accounts dispute the very existence of phenomena which are considered to be among the most important reasons for the existence of the process of transnationalization (Medoff and Strassman, 1985). Regardless of the arguments presented the transnationalization of the economy and new the dimension of the role of the State in this process are acknowledged in the debate (Gordon, 1988:63).

The changes at the global level have affected the internal organization of a number of productive sectors, including the agricultural and food sector. Indeed, it is not a coincidence that the emerging limits of the national State have been a subject of debate recently (Friedland, 1988; Friedmann and McMichael, 1989:112; McMichael and Myhre, 1991). The globalization of the food and agricultural sector and the implications that this phenomenon has in regard to the issue of the State are discussed in the remaining sections of the paper.

The Globalization of the Agrgricultural and Food Sector and its Implications in Regard to the Role of the State

Recent analyses of the agricultural and food sector have underscored the process of globalization characterizing the present historical phase. Friedmann and McMichael (1989; 1988) discuss the development of the "second food regime," its global, transnational character and its implications for the State. According to these authors, the first food regime was characterized by the emergence of national economies which governed the development of national states. In this context, agricultural production was concentrated in colonies which traded agricultural products for manufactured goods, labor and capital from the European metropol and in settler colonies which were distict forms of economy. The second food regime emerged in concomitance with the transnationalization of the agricultural and food order. Transnationalization indicates "(i) intensification of agricultural specialization (for both enterprises and regions) and integration of specific crops and livestock into agro-food chains dominated at both ends by increasingly large industrial capital and (ii) a shift in agricultural products from final use to industrial inputs for manufactured foods" (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989:105). Accordingly, the restructuring of agricultural and food production greatly diminished, yet did not eliminate, the possibility of the national State directing agricultural production to specific ends such as food security, community development, etc. (Friedmann and McMichael 1989:95).

Similar issues are discussed by William D. Heffernan and his associates (Heffernan, 1990; 1984; Constance and Heffernan 1989, forthcoming). According to these authors, the evolution of the food sector has transcended the

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national State arena since there has been a concentration of the food sector orchestrated by a few global conglomerates. The global dimension of the concentration of food production is based on these conglomerates' actions to a) increase economic returns by shifting production from one location to another to reduce economic uncertanties and b) avoid State regulations (such as environmental regulations, health regulation, etc.) which have created additional production costs. It is argued that food producing conglomerates are increasingly controlling food commodity markets at the global level and that this control is maintained through by-passing the national State. Though these authors acknowledge that national agricultural policies and national agriculture related policies are relevant in terms of domestic production, they also stress that the "undesired" effects of these policies can largely be avoided by food conglomerates through operating at the transnational level.

Bonanno et al. (1990) also point out the global dimension of agricultural and food production and the inability of national States to mediate the various contradictions emerging at the productive and legitimative levels. Employing the cases of the US and the European Community in a comparative fashion, these authors argue that the complexity of the pattern of interaction between the State and the food producing sector does not allow for a return to a laissez-faire system. More specifically, it is argued that the proposal to "return to the laws of the market" and an elimination of the intervening role of the State is only a theoretical option since in the present phase of advanced capitalism it is socially, economically and politically nonviable. Indeed, though there would be some advantage in eliminating State intervention, the disadvantages and contradictions that would emerge from a withdrawal of State action would be much greater and unacceptable to progressive and regressive societal forces alike (Bonanno et al., 1990:240-244). A further step forward is taken by William H. Friedland (1988) who discusses both the relationship between the process of transnationalization and the State and the emergence of a transnational State. Employing the case of transnational conglomerates in the food sector, Friedland contends that the emergence of the transnational corporation implies that the State can control these new economic forms only partially. Transnational corporations, in fact, "can only be partially controlled by nation-states because so much of their productive, manufacturing, distributing and marketing functions are nationally-dispersed." (Friedland, 1988:4). He concludes that, despite a push toward the embryonic tendency for the creation of a transnational State, no legal or political entity at that level has yet emerged.

The Dilocation of State and Economy: a Discussion

The literature on the State and on the globalization of the food and agricultural sector provides us with a body of knowledge from which some general considerations on future trends can be inferred. In fact, if both literatures are correct and the phenomena discussed are accurately described, it is obvious that we face a **dislocation** between the internationalization of the accumulation process and the national dimension of State action. This dislocation, in turn, can have repercussions both at the theoretical and socio-economic levels. Let us examine some of them.

a) If the literature on globalization is accurate, **the theoretical underpinnings of current theories of the State become inadequate.** Theories of the globalization of capital accumulation have not been accompanied by a transnationalization of the conceptualization of State actions, which remain domestically centered. Current analyses of the State present a discrepancy between the domestic dimension in which the State is viewed and the not necessarily

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domestic dimension in which capitalist development is analyzed. In essence, the assumption of the domestic dimension of State action is empirically challenged by the transnational dimension of the economic process. This situation calls for a reformulation of State theories vis-a-vis the transnational process through empirical analysis. As indicated by Friedmann and McMichael (1989:112), the nation-state is increasingly untenable as an "organizing principle of the world economy."

However, as indicated by Friedland (1988), the emergence of a transnational State is presently embryonic and contingent upon the transnationalization of the economic sphere. Nevertheless, the process of transnationalization of the economic sphere does not necessarily involve the transnationalization of other constitutive components of the State such as the cultural and ideological spheres. It can be argued following an orthodox Marxist posture that the transnationalization of the cultural and ideological apparati would automatically follow the transformation of the economic sphere. However, and drawing from other Marxian theoretical currents, it is possible to reject this hypothesis to argue that the relative autonomy of superstructural elements does not involve an automatic transformation of the ideological and cultural spheres. On the contrary, the relative autonomy of superstructural elements could prolong the simultaneous existence of an increasingly transnational oriented economic system and a still nationally based system of social consensus and legitimation. In this respect, cultural, ethnic and regional political movements can represent relevant forces against the emergence of a transnational State. Regardless of these and other hypotheses, the relationship among the constitutive components of the State vis-a-vis the process of transnationalization should occupy analytical center stage.

b) If the theories of the State are correct in their description of the historical "functions" of the State in society, then **the process of mediation of the various fractions of capital at the international level is unresolved.** It has been pointed out that in order for accumulation to occur, there must be a certain degree of harmony in society. This situation, which Block (1980) called "business confidence," refers to two related issues. The first refers to the creation of harmony between the ruling class as a whole and subordinate classes as a whole. The second refers to the harmonization of competition and conflict among the various fractions of the ruling class. Currently at the international level, competing fractions of the bourgeoisie do not seem to have an organizing entity such as that present at the domestic level (i.e. the national State). Put in a different manner, the transnational bourgeoisie does not have an organizing State which mediates its action vis-a-vis opposing classes. These organizing and mediating actions are necessary as bourgeois fractions compete among themselves in the pursuit of profit enhancement.

Paradoxically, the globalization of capital accumulation developed as a partial response to the increasingly intervening role of the State at the domestic level (Bonanno, 1987a, Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; Sassen, 1988). However, limiting the intervention of the State in the process of accumulation carried on by transnational corporations has hampered the ability of the State to organize economic activities in a situation in which the transnationalization of the economy demands more (State) coordination (Sassen, 1988:135). After all, historically the State played a fundamental role in previous phases of the international expansion of capital (Murray, 1971; Rowthorn, 1971). In essence, then, the bourgeoisie's need for organization finds its limits in the bourgeoisie's desire to avoid State action.

It can be argued at this point that transnational corporations actually attempt to coordinate their actions and, as such, overcome the lack of a coordinating State. In fact, these attempts are not new patterns as indicated by the case of the

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Trilateral Commission, which was established over two decades ago. It should be stressed, however, that organizations such as the Trilateral Commission can never obtain all the various powers associated with a State apparatus. Corporations do not have the monopoly of power that the State has and cannot directly legislate and/or execute legislation. They can influence legislation and political action in general but, as illustrated by the literature on the State (Poulantzas, 1978:179-185), they are not the State. While it is undeniable that attempts to organize themselves at the global level are undertaken by transnational corporations, these attempts have not historically replaced the mediating and organizing functions performed by the State.

c) If the State is increasingly unable to extend its action at the international level, **subordinate classes find their power in society reduced.** Theories of the State underscore that, together with a repressive role, the State can in some circumstances perform a progressive role (i.e. the fact that subordinate classes through political action force the State to protect some of their interests) (Offe, 1985; Poulantzas, 1978). However, the interests of subordinate class are protected only in so much as the State maintains normative control over the production process. Once this control is reduced or eliminated, the protection of the interests of subordinate classes is also reduced or eliminated. Accordingly, legislation passed to establish wages levels, safety and health regulations, and regional and community development has been avoided through economic maneuvers such as the migration of capital and production outfits across national borders and other forms of by-passing State authority (Sassen, 1988).

Conclusion

Contradictory convergence

State action in favor of transnational companies and the simultaneous State protection of the interests of subordinate classes point to a **convergence of interests on the part of these two groups in preserving the intervention of the State** in socio-economic affairs. However, this convergence of action is contradictory. The interests of transnational companies and subordinate classes in maintaining State action are motivated by opposing reasons and, more importantly, they tendencially undermine each group's essential objectives.

Transnational capital is interested in State action which fosters accumulation. If this action is opposed, counter actions are taken. In recent years the latter have assumed, primarily, the form of by-passing the coordinating and mediating role of the State[7]. This solution, in turn, undermines the State's ability to assist corporations in the process of accumulation.

Subordinate classes are interested in State action which protects their well-being vis-a-vis economic problems (inflation, declining wages) and social problems (limitations in the provision of health care; declining education, etc.). The transnational restructuring of the economy — accomplished primarily through the shifting of production across national borders, reliance on low wage labor, and concentration of capital— has severely limited the national State action to protect the social and economic gains of subordinate classes obtained in previous periods (Bonanno, 1989; 1988).

The International Arena

The national dimension of State action and the globalization of capital accumulation could be overcome by the establishment of an entity which would continue the role of the State at the international level (Friedland, 1988).

Empirically, tendencies toward the emergence of a multinational State are found in the expansion and consolidation of the European Community (EC), the creation of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the US and Canada with the proposed inclusion of Mexico, political attempts

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by Japan to organize a multistate organization of countries in the Orient and OECD regulatory patterns in the agricultural and food area, etc. Among these attempts, the EC is indeed the most advanced one with its thirty years of history and a proposed schedule for economic and eventually political unification (Bonanno, 1990:3).

The attempts to create a multinational State represent, however, only a partial solution to the dislocation between the arena of State power and the arena of capital accumulation. In fact, this dislocation might well continue to exists since the EC as well as the other examples of multistate organizations incorporate only a limited number of nations and do not constitute global political entities. If this reasoning is correct, the terrain of confrontation between opposite social forces in society could be increasingly shifted to the international arena. In turn, the lack of a clearly established State entity could provide the opportunity for creating a system in which equitable and democratic ends could be established. Equally, this "State vacuum" could be transformed into an increasingly repressive global system. Though both outcomes are possible, neither will result from the mechanical reproduction of ongoing trends. It is in the socio, economic and political arenas that future directions of the global society will be decided. Finally, increased attention to the international arena should not be confused with disregard for action at the local level. Disregard for events at the local level for exclusive action at the international level and vice versa could signify forfeiting the possibility of generating emancipatory changes in the new transnational order.

Notes

1. The concept of "superstructure" refers to the political, ideological and cultutral components of a society. In the Marxian tradition, the political, ideological and cultutral spheres are called superstructural since they are opposed to the economy, wich constitutes the structure of society.

2. The term transnationalization is often replaced with the term globalization. Though som differences between the two concepts do exist, for the purposes of this paper they will be considered synonyms.

3. See for example the programs of international and domestica conferences by the Sociology of Agriculture Research Committe of the ISA in the last decade. Particualrly, see the programs of the X, XI and XII World Congress of Sociology wich took place respectively in 1982, 1986 and 1990. See also the program of the VII World Congress of Rural Sociology and of the 50th annual American Rural Sociological Socity Meetings held respectively in 1988 and 1987.

4. It should be noted that the domestica centered analysis of capitalism developed by Marx is also the outcome of the heuristic task to create a model wich would reflect the essential characteristics of capitalism. Marx's emphasis on the method of "abstraction" mandates the undersocring of aspects pf the social whole wich qualify the essential characteristics of society (see, Sweezy, 1942:31-44). Accordingly, Marx's methodological posture requiered a simplified and close capitalist system, wich was provided, then, by Great Britain.

5. The statment that theses theories were elaborated within a Marxian framework of analysis has been challenged by proponents of the so-calles "Articulation of Modes of Porduction Theory" (see, Laclau, 1971 and Taylor, 1979). According to his theory the Dependentistas (i.e. proponents of dependency, World System and Exchange tehories) operate outside Marxism as they base their definition of capitalism on a system of exchange rather than on one of production. In his work, articulationists argue, Marx defines capitalism on the basis of relations of production, i.e. wage relations.

The resolution of this dispute is not among the goals of this contribution. However, it is relevant to stress that despite the alteration of some of the orthodoxies of Marxian scholarship, Dependentistas wrote in the spirit of the anlytic and political content of the work of Marx. For this reason aloine they should be considered within the Marxian framework of analysis.

6. Though difficult in practice, the identification of a company with a country is often used ideologically as a commercial strategy. For example, American garment companies often appeal to their domestic clientele by stressing their American origin. However, many of their products are licensed to be produced overseas. Furthermore, as in the case of car manufacturing companies, domestic

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production often signifies joint ventures with foreing capital or simply foreign product masked as domestic. In all this process it is increasingly problematic to mantain a distinction between foreing and domestic capital.

7. This is not to say that responses to the regulatory action of the State generated the trasnationalization of capital. Indeed, a numbre of factors, including the action of the State in favor of the subordinated calsses, contributed to the transnationalization of capital.

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■

RESUMEN

La Globalización del Sector Agrícola y Alimentario y las Teorías sobre el Estado

Este artículo indaga en el desfase teórico existente entre las teorías del Estado, con un carácter orientado hacia lo nacional, y el carácter transnacional de las teorías del desarrollo socio-económico. Con base en el caso del sector agrícola y alimentario, se afirma que la literatura en esta área ha enfátizado la dimensión transnacional de la acumulación de capital y la evasión de la autoridad del Estado en el ámbito nacional. Esta situación requiere revaluar las teorías del Estado en atención a la dimensión internacional del presente proceso de acumulación de capital. Más aún, este análisis sugiere patrones de "convergencia contradictoria" en la cual, la expansión de la acción del Estado a nivel transnacional es exigido tanto por las corporaciones transnacionales como por las clases subordinadas. Esta exigencia, sin embargo, es contradictoria ya que se encuentra limitada por el interés de la burguesía transnacional de evadir la acción del Estado. Desde el punto de vista político, como resultado de esta situación, el espacio de la acción social emancipadora debe trasladarse, cada vez más, a la escena internacional.

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*Alessandro Bonnano asistente de Sociología Rural en la Universidad de Missouri-Columbia, EEUU. Ha investigado, entre otros tópicos: la estructura de la agricultura, desarrollo regional e internacional, envejecimiento y el Estado. Es autor de numerosos artículos de revistas especializadas y libros, entre ellos: **Small Farms (1987); Sociology of Agriculture (1989); y Agrarian Policies and Agricultural Systems (1990)**. Recibió su Phd en Sociología en la Universidad de Kentucky, EEUU.*

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