
IN MEMORIAM

GEORGE MODELSKI (1926–2014)*

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George Modelski, born in Poland in 1926, passed away on February 21, 2014 in Washington, D.C. at the age of 88. He is survived by his wife of many years, Sylvia Modelski. Trained at the London School of Economics (BSc. in Economics) and the University of London (PhD in International Relations), he was Professor Emeritus at the University of Washington and had been a professor of political science there between 1967 and 1995. His main earlier appointment had been as a Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Advanced Studies, Australian National University. Visiting appointments at various points were held at the University of Chicago, Princeton University, Harvard University, the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, the University of Stockholm, and the University of Catania.

Throughout his career, George contributed to an impressive number of different research questions. His dissertation, completed in 1954 and published in 1962 as *a Theory of Foreign Policy*, was a very early attempt to treat foreign policy issues theoretically, as opposed to the then standard reliance on descriptive accounts. No doubt reflecting in part his Canberra position at the time, Modelski wrote several monographs in the early 1960s on Southeast Asian international relations. But he also wrote around this time early analyses of the international relations of internal war, Kautilya's international relations, the differences between agrarian and industrial systems, and the communist international system that were conspicuous in their attempt to treat these questions in a theoretical fashion. They also underlined his very early interest in comparing the types of international systems.

His main contribution to the study of international relations, nonetheless, has to be founding a research program on leadership long cycles. Modelski began developing this original perspective around 1974 (the first conference paper) and published the first article in 1978, following a slightly earlier effort to begin developing a systemic interpretation of world politics (*Principles of World Politics*, 1972). Responding to the destabilized international system of the 1970s, George constructed an interpretation of world politics that was based on the emergence of lead economies, their rise and fall, and implications for global war and order. His core writings on these processes, some co-authored, came out at about the same time (*Exploring Long Cycles*, 1987; *Long Cycles in World Politics*, 1987; *Sea Power in Global Politics, 1494–1993*, 1988; *Documenting Global Leadership*, 1988; and *Leading Sectors and World Power*, 1996). It is fair to say

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that the perspective that emerged over time came to be one of the leading schools of thought in world systems analysis.

Some of George's other work were highly complementary to the long cycle interpretation. *Transnational Corporations and World Order* (1979) focused on MNCs while *North/South Relations* (1983) examined dependency reversal processes in international political economy. The co-edited *World System History: The Social Science of Long-term Change* (2000) reflected the interest he and others had developed in the 1990s to push the study of world politics back to its origins. In addition to an edited special issue of *International Studies Quarterly* (1996), *Globalization as Evolutionary Process* (2008), also a co-edited work, highlighted his commitment to harnessing evolutionary perspectives to the study of long-term international processes. Another major venture in this vein was his effort to develop a better empirical and theoretical understanding of historical urbanization processes, as reflected in *World Cities, -3000 to 2000* (2003). Written after he had retired, this book represents a major contribution to the data base on city sizes in the ancient world, which he viewed as indicators of an evolving city network that undergirded world economic growth. The long-term trend towards democratization was another special interest, culminating in several articles on the subject.

George Modelski contributed to the International Studies Association in various ways. He was President of the ISA-West in 1982, a long-time member of the IPE Section's World Historical Systems group, and winner of the Susan Strange Award in 2006. He also chaired the University of Washington's Pacific Northwest Colloquium on International Security from 1982 to 1991. In 2012, he was awarded a bronze medal by the International Kondratieff Foundation and Russian Academy of Sciences for his contribution to social sciences. Throughout a long and distinguished career, George Modelski emphasized the need to bring together theory, evidence, and history in the unraveling of world political processes. Although never widely cited or known in IR circles, his contributions were always distinctively different and original.

NOTE

* This text is based on 'In Memoriam: George Modelski (1926–2014)' published at <http://www.isanet.org/News/ID/2534/In-Memoriam--George-Modelski/> on September 12, 2014.