

and accumulation within a capitalist system. These include studies of institutions of the state such as the state apparatus. Not coincidentally, studies of the more insidious effects of the state emerged as globalization and neoliberal policies took hold. Geographers became interested in the internationalization of states and in devolution or the role of the shadow state. Some scholars argued that the liberal welfare state was being hollowed out as a result of global flows, whereas others looked at its more scattered reconfiguration as diasporic populations and global networks facilitated the reterritorialization of communities and the structures that govern them. During recent years, geographers have become less interested in states as containers and more interested in states as spaces of global flows and networks where new configurations of power materialize.

As geographers explored the work of Henri Lefebvre, they became more interested in theorizing scale. Political geographers studied how states produced space at various scales and, conversely, how states themselves were produced at various scales. This change in epistemology accompanied a radical economic shift to a postindustrial global economy where power is amassed with the trafficking of knowledge and ideas rather than the trafficking of raw resources and production. The role of the state changed, as did theories of the state and empirical practices of sovereignty and citizenship.

Following the cultural turn and influenced by Michel Foucault and other poststructural and postmodern scholars, geographers grew less interested in the state and more invested in diverse ways of thinking about power. A healthy literature on governmentality has arisen. Whereas states once asserted power through repression, this literature took into account the power of the state to operate in productive ways, producing identities and subgroups.

The start of the 21st century has seen a resurgence of interest in the state across the social sciences, driven in part by the hegemony of the United States and the reemergence and reconfiguration of the concept of empire. Political geographers are studying the new roles and governance of international borders, new configurations and practices of security and sovereignty, and new ways of conceptualizing identity in relation to the state. Postcolonial and feminist perspectives have brought histories of violence to bear on understandings of the state. Geographers are jumping scale in their understandings of states to understand at once the roles

of states in the global economy and the highly localized daily practices at work inside the states. They are studying the reconfiguration of spatialities of the state and discourses of sovereignty. Through critical geopolitics, they are simultaneously critiquing and displacing the predominance of state-centric views of international relations. Political geographers are exploring alternative forms of organization that exist outside of or transcend the state such as transnational social movements, alternative forms of political organization, multiple and nontraditional practices of citizenship, and stateless zones and individuals.

—Alison Mountz

*See also* Critical Geopolitics; Geopolitics; Local State; Nation-State; Nationalism; Political Geography; Sovereignty; World Systems Theory

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## STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT

During the 1970s and 1980s, many poorer non-petroleum-producing countries took out loans to help them pay their hard currency bills for imported goods (including oil) and services. With lower-than-expected economic growth rates in the debtor countries and rising interest rates, the amount of debt and debt service payments (interest on the loans and fees) grew rapidly. With this situation at first viewed as a temporary "liquidity" problem, additional loans were made to indebted economies. However, with the default of Mexico in August 1982, when it failed to service its enormous debt, the problem became redefined as the debt crisis. Heavily indebted countries found



themselves in a tight situation—unable to pay off or even service their growing debt burdens.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF, set up at the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference), based in Washington, D.C., began negotiations with debtor countries. The IMF typically recommended a package of policies aimed at stabilizing the national currency and controlling inflation. Further loans from the IMF were conditional on the prescribed stabilization measures being put into effect. The World Bank (also set up at the Bretton Woods Conference) worked on broader economic stabilization agreements with similar conditionalities.

Although they are not homogeneous and have changed over time, the policies favored by the IMF and the World Bank in their dealings with indebted countries, along with those advocated by other multilateral development banks and bilateral aid organizations, have enough common elements to be characterized broadly as structural adjustment policies (SAPs). SAPs, sometimes also known as austerity programs, are based on neoliberal economic ideas—a set of ideas about the best way in which to manage an economy that was increasingly in vogue during the 1980s and that was reflected in the policies of the major economies at that time. The overall trajectory of SAPs was toward the free market and entailed the deliberate withdrawal and shrinkage of state or government involvement in the economy.

There are six major elements typically found in any SAP. The first is a strict tight monetary policy. This is meant to stabilize a country's currency, but often this is achieved only through one or more major devaluations of the currency. Controlling the money supply is also aimed at controlling inflation and preventing high rates of inflation. The second element is a decrease in government spending, especially social spending. Government spending is not supposed to be deficit spending. Reducing social expenditures is done characteristically through the weakening or abolition of subsidies for basics such as food, cooking and heating fuel, public transport, healthcare, and education while at the same time not establishing policies that would tend to increase wages for ordinary working people. User fee systems, whereby payments need to be made to access formerly public services or facilities, often are instituted. Government spending on prisons, the military, and police often is exempted from these policies. The third element is a reduction in public ownership of the economy. It involves the privatization of

state-owned companies and social assets, including land, communications, utilities, and water. The fourth element is a liberalization of trade regime. This is done particularly through the reduction or elimination of barriers to imports of goods and services and the lessening of restrictions on foreign direct investment (FDI) and foreign ownership of businesses. The fifth element is the promotion of, and provision of incentives for, exports. Exports of commodities, manufactured goods, and services are encouraged through the liberalization of FDI and the devaluation of the currency (making the exports relatively cheap on the world market). The sixth element is the general deregulation of the economy (including of the banking system) and reform of the tax structure to lower the tax burden on corporations and high earners, to broadly encourage business and business classes, and to expand the market (the price system) into previously nonmarketized domains.

Clearly, SAPs are not just economic given that they can deeply affect social relations in countries. For this reason, SAPs have, from their very beginnings, been criticized, challenged, and resisted. Although street protests against the IMF and the World Bank have occurred recently in the United States and other so-called developed countries, major protests and riots against SAPs have been occurring all over the world since their beginnings. Some analysts have recorded more than 100 major social protests over SAPs in countries from Algeria to Zambia. In addition to their redistributive consequences for adopting countries, SAPs have been criticized for reinforcing global geographies of inequality rather than being programs that have led to a narrowing of the development gap. Even sympathetic insider critics such as William Easterly and Joseph Stiglitz have noted the unequal power that undergirds any pretense at negotiation between the leaders of indebted countries and IMF officials. Stiglitz, like many critics of SAPs, pointed out the parallels between the operation of SAPs and old colonial relations of power. As expressions of a metaframing of both development and geopolitics, SAPs reinforce a relation in which the richer countries insist on the poorer countries following rules made up by the rich countries. A basic problem of SAPs is that they are aimed first at ensuring repayment of debt—not at poverty reduction or development—despite official rhetoric that assumes the latter will follow from the former.

In part as a response to the critics, the IMF and the World Bank have promoted policies in lieu of SAPs.



These policies and programs have had new names and varied emphases, including poverty reduction, the inclusion of civil society (usually in the form of formal nongovernmental organizations), anticorruption and transparency, and so forth. Many critics have noted that these new policies, in the main, are just variations on the familiar precepts of SAPs examined earlier. For example, under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, initiated in 1996, SAPs continued in all but name.

There have been many calls to cancel and/or reduce the debt burdens of the world's poorest countries. These campaigns have raised public awareness in the rich countries of the extent of debt and the effects of SAPs. Among several recent developments, in 2005 the G8 (a leading forum for the world's richest countries to formulate economic policy) moved to cancel some debt.

Despite these events, there remains a stubborn and deeply significant geography of indebtedness and SAPs. Of the 38 current countries classified as HIPCs, 32 are in sub-Saharan Africa. Many countries are not classified as HIPCs but still are paying large amounts in fees and interest on old loans annually. SAPs have become a more or less permanent fact of life for the majority of the world's population.

—Susan M. Roberts

*See also* Debt and Debt Crisis; Developing World; Globalization; Neoliberalism

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## **STRUCTURALISM**

French social theorists working in the fields of linguistics, anthropology, and (later) psychoanalysis throughout the early to mid-20th century theorized that language, culture, and the psyche were guided by

a set of unseen underlying societal structures. Thus, structuralism, as a philosophy and methodology, was guided by an interest in uncovering the logic of those structures. By nature of their theories of the world, structuralists are antihumanistic and do not believe that human agency exists outside of broader structures such as capitalism. Instead, structuralism suggests that the social (and spatial) world is mediated by structures that manifest themselves in particular events "out there" in the world (e.g., capitalism structures relations between workers and factory owners).

Early work in the area of structural linguistics, particularly through the work of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, suggested that social scientists should focus on the interrelationships between words rather than treating each word or phrase as an independent object. In such a conceptualization, it is necessary to investigate the relationships between signs and symbols as signifying larger social structures, such as capitalism, patriarchy, and racism, through the emergence of hierarchized binaries of words and objects such as entrepreneur and worker, men and women, and white and black. This suggests not only that social scientists should be interested in the signs present in everyday life (e.g., magazine representations, the built environment) but also that it is necessary to interrogate the ideological presuppositions that mediate those signs and the relationships between signifiers (e.g., words, images) and the signified (e.g., abstract mental constructs). In so doing, it is possible to construct a set of generalizable laws about how those ideologies operate in structuring everyday social interactions and relations.

Structuralism first entered geography through the work of Marxist geographers and as part of a larger critique of spatial science that began to emerge during the 1970s. This critique included the work of humanistic geographers who were interested in challenging spatial science's limited understanding of human experience. Marxist geographers, working through structuralism, rejected this naive reading of human agency and instead focused their attention on unpacking the depths of the spatial economy or the social landscape. The work of David Harvey and Manuel Castells used differing readings of structuralism in their analysis of urbanization and cities more generally. Harvey argued that the structures of capitalism, and its contradictions, produced space and spatial relations in ways intended to maximize capitalist accumulation, whereas Castells drew from French Marxist Louis Althusser in suggesting that space and