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George Lawson

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‘International Relations as a Historical Social Science’

For: Andreas Gofas, Inanna Hamati-Ataya and Nicholas Onuf (eds.)

Handbook of the History, Philosophy, and Sociology of IR (London: Sage)

George Lawson (g.lawson@lse.ac.uk)

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History, history everywhere

Everyone who studies International Relations (IR) is a historian. This doesn’t mean that IR specialists are, or need be, card-carrying professional historians. Rather, it means that there is no realm of IR that does not require some kind of historical commitment. At times, this commitment is obvious, as when theorists test their arguments in history or construct their theories from historical events. At other times it is less obvious, as when concepts used in IR, such as the balance of power or sovereignty, are seen as timeless abstractions rather than historically situated categories forged in a particular time and place. Regardless of whether the use of history in IR is obvious or not, one thing is clear: history is always there, in the theories that are developed and tested, and in the concepts that IR specialists deploy.

Once upon a time, people in IR knew this. On both sides of the Atlantic, major figures in the discipline such as E.H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, Martin Wight and Stanley Hoffman saw history and IR as inexorably linked. Over time, however, the closeness between IR and history was lost, or at least misplaced. History was seemingly banished to the margins of the discipline by the emergence of behaviouralism and the association of ‘proper theory’ with deductive, nomological methods. In the process, history became part of a tug of war between ‘classical’ approaches, which saw history as their central motor, and IR’s laboriticians, who saw history as providing the objects of their experiments. More recently, the rise – or reconvening – of historically-oriented approaches such as constructivism, neo-classical realism and the English School has marked something of a return to business as usual. And ‘non-ism’ approaches such as historical sociology and conceptual history are premised on the co-implication of history and IR.

History, therefore, is used throughout the discipline, albeit unevenly. However, if we are all historians, it does not follow that we are very good historians. Over recent years, IR has been castigated for the parochial nature of its historical imagination (Buzan and Little 2001; Bell 2007; Shilliam ed. 2011; Vitalis 2016). Quite often, IR scholars and students have constructed a division of labor between theory-building, explanatory social scientists and story-telling, descriptive historians, a binary that is premised on a number of overlapping distinctions: methods (a focus on secondary sources vs. primary sources); aims (the identification of regularities and determinations vs. the highlighting of contingencies and ambiguities); orientation (nomothetic vs. idiographic); sensibility (parsimony vs. complexity); scope conditions (analytic vs. temporal); levels of analysis (structure vs. agency), and more (e.g. Elman and Elman eds. 2001; for a critique, see Lawson 2012). Taken together, these distinctions help to generate a sense in which each discipline is the binary opposite of the other. Not only this, one discipline (IR) is often taken to be the colonizer of the other (History).

This chapter takes a different tack. If, as argued above, history is the lowest common denominator of approaches within the discipline – in other words, what we share as a discipline is that we all *do* history – then it is particularly important to establish what it is we mean by *doing* history. This is because, as well as history being something IR specialists 'do' in common, history is also something that we 'do' quite differently. IR scholars and students are distinguished not simply by our choice of theory, but also by our selection of a historical mode of enquiry. In this sense, history is as foundational to IR as theory. It is a meta-discourse that simultaneously unites and divides us. It unites us because IR and history form part of a single intellectual endeavor. It divides us because diverse attitudes to history make clear that IR's view of *its* historical development rests on a particular view *of* historical development. There is much at stake when we talk about history in IR.

This chapter unpacks this contention in three parts: first, it explores what history means in IR; second, it asks what history contributes to theorizing in IR; and third, it examines the consequences of taking history more seriously as a foundation for IR's subject matter.

What is history in IR?

There are two main ways in which the relationship between history and IR are often approached.[1] In the first approach, history serves as a form of 'scripture' – as the application of timeless 'lessons' and inviolate rules removed from their context and applied to an assortment of settings: the 'lessons of appeasement' become a shorthand for the necessity of confronting dictatorial regimes across time and place; the US retreat from Vietnam is invoked to halt talk of withdrawal in Iraq and, in the same breath, used to justify non-intervention in Syria; the Reagan years are employed to support the idea that ultimate victory in the 'war on terror' rests on the deployment of overwhelming US military force married to the promotion – by force if necessary – of democratic ideals around the world. The obvious example of this tendency is structural realism.[2] Most structural realists assume that the main actors of the international system are sovereign states. They also assume that states are unitary actors with interests that are pre-determined and universal. And they work through the assumption that the international realm is distinct by virtue of its anarchical nature – in other words, its lack of an overarching sovereign authority. For structural realists, because actors are of a single kind and because the structural context of anarchy is unchanging, it is possible to reduce the international to a sparse number of derivative logics: a self-help system, the requirement for states to prioritize survival, a recurring security dilemma, and the mechanism of the balance of power. From an assumption of the 'enduring sameness' of international anarchy flows a particular view of history (Waltz 1979).

Although history as a point of data collection is present in these accounts, *historicism* – a commitment to historically locating practices and dynamics, a concern for the contingent, disruptive, constitutive impact of historical events and processes, and the study of contextualised rationalities and inter-subjectivities – is largely absent. By taking a static picture of the structure of world politics (the anarchical states-system), structural realism occludes differences between polities (such as empires and nation-

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[1] Parts of this section draw on Lawson (2012).

[2] I am aware that I am overstating my case. Structural realists have conducted an extensive debate into the operation of the balance of power across world history (e.g. Kaufman, Little and Wohlforth eds. 2007), and there are many realist accounts of far off places and times (e.g. Eckstein 2009). For a critique of the structural realist approach to history, see Schroeder (1994).

states), fails to distinguish between types of international order (such as imperial and sovereign orders), ignores *social* structural forces (such as capitalism, patriarchy, and racism), and reduces agency to the actions of state managers, generals and financiers. In this way, historically specific *social* categories – the balance of power, sovereignty, anarchy, and so on – are seen as stable, fixed entities that can be deployed without regard for time and space specificity. As a result, structural realism is home to a 'continuist mystique' in which the past is ransacked in order to explain the present: the contest between Athens and Sparta is transplanted to the Cold War in order to elucidate the stand-off between the United States and the Soviet Union; all wars, whether they be guerrilla insurgencies or great power conflicts, are explicable by the basic fact – or permissive context – of anarchy; and all political units – city-states, empires, nation-states and transnational alliances – are functionally undifferentiated. Such a view necessarily distinguishes sharply between theory and history. To all intents and purposes, history becomes an uncontested background to be coded within pre-existing theoretical categories (Lustick 1996).

A second, equally prominent, tendency is to see history as an 'if only' realm of uncertainty: Versailles less punitive, Osama Bin Laden assassinated before 9/11, Pearl Harbor never taken place. This is the view most commonly associated with post-structural scholarship. Nick Vaughan-Williams (2005: 117), for example, favors an historical epistemology which seeks not to 'resolve history' but to see it as an 'open problem', a realm of 'radical uncertainty' which remains constantly 'out of reach'. Critiquing the 'interpretative closure' of mainstream approaches, Vaughan-Williams (2005: 118) argues for the need to destabilize existing accounts of 'the historical record'. In this view, history is not a means by which to assess truth claims, but a space concerned with 'dispersal, difference and alterity across time and space'. Vaughan-Williams employs the Derridean notion of *différance* to illustrate the ways in which historical meanings occupy a space in-between 'this' and 'that'. In this reckoning, history is always ungraspable – there are no fixed points of historical settlement, instead history is an 'undecideable infinity of possible truths' (Vaughan-Williams 2005: 129). Rather than use history as a way of testing theoretical schemas, Vaughan-Williams sees history as a tool of destabilization that can reveal the distortions of prevalent ontopolitical positions. In short, for Vaughan-Williams, history is a 'butterfly' of

contingent hiccups upon which IR theorists provide ill-fitting maps – maps that reveal the distortions of their ideological prisms rather than the shape of history itself.

Vaughan-Williams is part of a broader field of post-structural scholarship, including Rob Walker (1989), David Campbell (1998) and Richard Ashley (1989), which sees history as inherently contestable. It follows that researchers in this idiom should not associate history with 'essential truths', 'timeless categories' and 'unchanging reality', but see it as impermanent, contested and contingent (Walker 1989), and as a realm not of continuity but of difference (Campbell 1998). Seeing history as a ceaseless 'irruption of contingency' serves as an invitation to permanent provocation, a means of unsettling logocentric accounts of 'history as necessity' (Ashley 1989). Yet despite a sense in which this approach seeks to foster a kind of 'pure history', it is also problematic in that it fails to see how historical events are part of broader processes, sequences and plots that provide a shape – however difficult to discern – within historical development. The result of the 'if only' approach to history is the reduction of the past to a 'pick and mix' sweet shop that is raided in order to satisfy the tastes and tropes of the researcher.

As noted above, the existence of these two approaches to history – scripture and butterfly – is forged by the working practices of IR scholarship itself. It is not just structural realist accounts, but *most* mainstream approaches that adopt a form of 'history as scripture', using history in order to code findings, mine data or as a source of *post factum* explanations (Isacoff 2002; Lustick 1996). Similarly, it is not just post-structural scholarship, but *most* post-positivist approaches that assume a form of 'history as butterfly', using history as a means of disrupting prevalent power-knowledge nexuses. Neither approach is satisfactory. While the former fetishizes general abstractions, the latter fetishizes the particular. To put this another way, if the 'history as scripture' approach is historical without being historicist, the 'history as butterfly' approach is historicist without being historical, focusing on deconstruction without attempting to reconstruct meaningful analytical narratives. Neither provides much help in terms of building deeper links between history and IR. And neither provides much help in terms of generating theoretically appealing *and* empirically rich accounts of events, processes and dynamics in world politics.

The metaphor of 'scripture' and 'butterfly' is not meant to provide a total or pure form of categorization. To the contrary, a great many IR approaches offer some kind of 'middle-way' between these two extremes.[3] And as noted above, some non-ism approaches, such as historical sociology and intellectual history, are premised on the co-implication of history and theory. My point is to oversimplify the relationship between history and IR in order to tease out a range of issues that lie beneath the surface of existing debates. In this regard, there are two initial points to note. First, from mainstream approaches comes a sense of history as contextless record through which concepts and analytics can be assessed. As noted above, this approach reduces history to a monochrome flatland by which to confirm or, at best, tweak theoretical claims. Second, from the radical historiography of post-positivism comes a contingent realm of ifs and maybes that reveals not truth, but the ideological disposition of the researcher. This too is a flawed approach, offering an account of historical disruption without indicating the ways in which historical events form part of more intelligible shapes. If mainstream approaches over-emphasize continuity and incompatible analogies, post-positivists overplay history as the accumulation of chance and coincidence. Contra both these understandings, what is required is an idea of history not as cause *or* chance, but as cause *and* chance (Suganami 2008).

Historical theory

In generating a closer relationship between history and theory, three assumptions held by many IR theorists need to be challenged. First is the sense that doing 'proper' theory must be parsimonious when it encounters history. In this understanding of the IR-history relationship, theorists skip over the intricacies of historical events – the latter is covered sufficiently by theoretical axioms or simplified radically in order for theoretical positions to retain their coherence. The view of many IR theorists is that they are 'lumpers' who can be contrasted with historical 'splitters'. The former are concerned

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[3] The obvious example is the English School, which has the most intimate association with history of any of the major approaches to IR. Several members of the British Committee on the Theory of International Affairs – the institutional font of the approach – were practicing historians (including Martin Wight and Herbert Butterfield), while many contemporary advocates of the English School (such as Barry Buzan, Richard Little, Hidemi Suganami, Eddie Keene and Andrew Linklater) continue to play an active role in bridging the theory-history divide. See: Buzan and Little 2000; Suganami 2008; Keene 2008; Linklater 2017.

with overarching macro-schemas just as the latter audit micro-details. However, the lumper/splitter distinction is a partial, often misleading, picture of the theory-history relationship. Although some historians do see their enterprise as involving minutiae rather than grand theory, there have been no shortage of historians who have sought to make bold, sweeping general statements, whether this be Thucydides' (1972) record of the Peloponnesian Wars in which he aimed to reveal a record that would stand as a 'possession for all time', Arnold Toynbee's (1934) conception of the *telos* of world history as governed by the rise and fall of great civilizations, or David Christian's (2004) work on 'big history', which seeks to construct a 'theory of everything' grounded on the human propensity for collective learning.

A second commonly held assumption is that theory can be demarcated precisely by its distinction *from* history. This, too, does not hold. Theory does not emerge in a vacuum – it arises from somewhere, and that place is history. Just as Hegel's notion of master and slave was rooted in his reading of the Haitian Revolution (Buck-Morss 2000), so Grotius generated his ideas about the laws of the sea from the practices of the Indian Ocean system (Alexandrowicz 1967), trade between Britain and India helped to form Adam Smith's ideas about free trade (Erikson 2017), and the 1870 Franco-Prussian War stimulated new ideas about strategic thinking (Gray 2012, chs. 4 and 5). Theory does not inhabit a realm that is exterior to history. Rather, theories arise historically, formed amid the encounters between theorists and the events they experience and, sometimes, take part in: Marx the revolutionary, Clausewitz the soldier, Freud the analyst (Barkawi and Lawson 2017). All IR theories are the product of a particular time and a particular place. Mainstream approaches to the subject, including realism, liberalism and the English School, are mainly abstractions of 19th century European historical practices, even if these tracks have subsequently been covered up (Owens 2015). It follows that, if IR had started in some other place and some other time, it would look quite different than it does now (Acharya and Buzan 2010). All theories are living archives of events and experiences, living because theories are not only derived in and from history understood as 'the past', they are also recrafted as they encounter new histories. In other words, theories are assessed and reassessed, made and remade through ongoing encounters with history.

Third, the assumption that history is a singular field of enquiry needs to be challenged – there are not one, but many forms of historical research. Just as social science breaks down into macro and micro research, qualitative and quantitative methodologies, inferential theory and thick description, so history too is home to debates about appropriate levels of analysis, science and truth. When it comes to levels of analysis, rather than history being solely the preserve of micro-analysis, a prominent strand of the discipline is concerned with large-scale narratives (e.g. Bayly 2004; Osterhammel 2014). The Annales School of French historians, amongst them Fernand Braudel and Marc Bloch, were less concerned with the *évenéments* of historical detail than with the impact of large-scale conjunctural forces and, on an even bigger scale, the movement of environmental changes that took place over the *longue-durée*. When it comes to debates around science and truth, traditional and radical historians have long faced off over the status of the archive, the notion of the 'historical record', and the importance, or otherwise, of the fact/value distinction in ways that will be familiar to any IR scholar and student (Hobson and Lawson 2008).

Challenging these assumptions makes clear the need to probe more deeply into the relationship between history and IR. By doing so, it is evident that many of the shorthands used to distinguish history from IR are canards, constructed from the need to establish and police disciplinary homeland security. Neither IR nor history requires a particular level of abstraction, mode of explanation, methodology or epistemology. Rather, apparently elemental differences between the two enterprises – parsimony vs. complexity, inferential vs. descriptive, macro vs. micro – have been constructed out of differences of sensibility and from the requirements of disciplinary gatekeeping rather than from any hard-and-fast intellectual requirement. Problematizing the history/theory binary means acknowledging that history is a social science just as social science, including IR, is necessarily historical.

Historical causation

Constructing a different sense of historical theory starts by challenging – and replacing – orthodox understandings of causation. Much IR theory works from regularity-deterministic accounts of causation, i.e. through a form of analysis that establishes associations between objects that are separated (or at least separable) in space and

time (Kurki 2006, 192; Wendt 1998, 105). In these accounts, 'efficient causation' acts as a 'push and pull' between determinant and regularity: when A (determinant), then B (regularity) (Kurki 2006: 193). If a particular outcome (y) can be traced to a particular cause (x), then the inference is that a set of outcomes (y-type regularities) can be traced to a set of causes (x-type determinants) (Kurki and Suganami, 2012: 403). Regularity-deterministic accounts rely on a wager about what Andrew Abbott (1988: 170) calls 'general linear reality'. For Abbott, general linear reality is an assumption that 'the social world consists of fixed entities (the units of analysis) that have attributes (the variables)'. In this understanding, the interaction of attributes leads to stable patterns, whether these patterns are contextual or transhistorical. Lying behind this wager is the view that social entities are collections of properties that can be disaggregated and the co-variation between their various properties assessed.

A more historically informed view of causation proceeds differently. In this understanding, social entities are assemblages that combine in historically discrete ways. As a result, all explanations are 'case-specific' in that the processes within which social entities cohere is singular and, therefore, unrepeatable. What we name as social entities – wars, revolutions, depressions – are 'webs of interactions' rather than collections of properties (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001, 13; Tilly 2004, 9). They are sequences of events that attain their significance as they are threaded together in and through time. To put this in Abbott's terms (1988, 179), social entities are 'closely related bundles' whose meaning arises from the order and sequence within which their events are knitted together. The focus is not on the disaggregation of entities into discrete properties, but on the relational interconnections that constitute entities in the first place. It follows that causal explanation relies on generating an 'intelligible connection' between 'closely related bundles' of historical events (Kurki and Suganami 2012, 404).

The implication of this argument is significant. Rather than approaching history as something that can be easily isolated, disassembled and tested, historical dynamics are treated as temporally specific assemblages. Take as an illustration the work of William Sewell (2005) on 'eventfulness'. Sewell argues that all historical events are part of broader chains of events. Chains of events have cascading effects in that they both

reproduce and break existing social entities – they are 'sequences of occurrences that result in the transformation of structures' (Sewell 2005, 227). Sewell argues that we need two forms of research: synchronic study of the form, content and structure of social relations; and diachronic study of how these social relations emerge, are patterned, reproduced and transformed. As Sewell points out, even events that appear to be new are themselves part of broader dynamics. Events are theorizable categories, parts of broader sequences that reproduce and transform existing patterns of social relations. Sewell uses the fall of the Bastille in 1789 to illustrate his point. The importance of the storming of the Bastille was that it was imbued with significance 'beyond itself'. In other words, it generated a recognition within broader political and cultural fields that broke existing configurations and reconstructed categories of meaning, amongst them notions of 'revolution'. It is not difficult to think of recent events that have had comparable effects: 1989, 9/11, 2008, and more. What this means is that history contains a *social* logic, a process of 'eventing' in which moments in time take on relatively stable shapes drawn from the interaction between events and the repertoires of meaning brought to bear on them (Jackson 2006).

Such an understanding shifts causal work away from regularity-deterministic accounts towards historicist forms of causation. As Abbott and Sewell note, historical regularities exist, but only in situational contexts in which events are bundled into meaningful assemblages. These relatively fixed patterns of enduring interactions are transformed into social facts, entities with a coherent, if always somewhat contingent, form. Although these configurations are open to contestation, they constitute stable sites for the development of what Duncan Bell (2009: 19) calls 'contact languages' between IR and history. Indeed, it could be argued that a 'historical ontology' rests on the study of the emergence and spread of these entities, whether understood as concepts (such as the balance of power) or institutions (such as the modern state) (Hacking 2002). In this understanding of causation, the connection between history and theory assumes centre stage: researchers examine the ways in which *historical* events enable *social* formations to emerge, reproduce, reform, transform and, potentially, break down. In this way, historical causation proceeds through three steps: first, examining the sequences through which history is 'evented'; second, assembling these sequences into 'plotlines' that are logically coherent and supported by the available evidence; and third,

abstracting the configurations that sustain these plotlines into a causal apparatus. Such an approach cuts against the grain of orthodox approaches to causation. But it fits within a more pluralistic definition of causal analysis (Cartwright 2004): how and/or why a particular outcome occurred where and when it did. Historical causal explanations are logical, systematic accounts of the sources and emergence of a particular outcome (also see Kurki and Suganami 2012; Buzan and Lawson 2016).

IR as a historical social science

Replacing regularity deterministic accounts with historical causation is one way in which IR and history can be bought more closely together, or more accurately, their co-implication can come clearer into view. There are three other ways of demonstrating this co-implication. First is the construction of accounts that show how the discipline of IR, and its core concepts and categories, are bound to particular times and places, whether this is late 19th century and early 20th century ideas about empire and race (e.g. Bell 2007; Vucetic 2011; Vitalis 2016), or attempts in the US to insulate the discipline from post-World War Two liberalism and behaviouralism (Guilhot 2008). A second possibility is the development of work that presents epistemological challenges to the ways in which IR theories are constructed and categorized, demonstrating that they are not the product of self-contained Western histories, but the result of messy, entangled, often colonial encounters (e.g. Hobson 2012; Shilliam 2016).

Both of these approaches are discussed elsewhere in this handbook. I therefore concentrate on a third possibility – the construction of new historical narratives. Because history is the only 'data' we have, it is vital that we give a 'good enough' account of it. Yet, as noted above, for much of its disciplinary history, IR has been provincially oriented towards Western interests, concepts and concerns. This will not stand. After decades (or more) of globalization, and centuries of imperial formations before that, we are far from a world – if we ever inhabited one – when social science could attend to issues only 'at home'; that is, in the sequestered sites of our particular territories. It took a special form of parochial vanity to imagine that historical development arose from the endogenous characteristics of a handful of powerful polities. Recent historical work has done much to demolish these assumptions (e.g. Pomeranz 2000; Christian 2004; Bayly 2004; Osterhammel 2014). So too has work in IR, which has demonstrated the diverse

range of polities that constitute historical international orders (e.g. Phillips and Sharman 2015), and how interactions between diverse social orders have helped to generate historical development (e.g. Rosenberg 2010). The result is a productive inter-disciplinary conversation between IR and global history.

This inter-disciplinary conversation is something that historical sociological approaches in IR have also sought to foster. Historical sociology is a long-established interdisciplinary field concerned with incorporating temporality in the analysis of social processes (Hobson et al 2010; Go and Lawson 2017). Historical sociology in IR is oriented around two main thematics: first, the *transnational* and *global* dynamics that enable the emergence, reproduction and breakdown of social orders; and second, the *historical* emergence, reproduction and breakdown of transnational and global social forms. These forms vary widely, ranging from the global dynamics of capitalist accumulation to the role of transnational ideologies and social movements in fostering change within and across state borders. Historical sociologists in IR have examined the hierarchical formations that international orders assume (e.g. Keene 2002; Hobson 2012; Bially Mattern and Zarakol 2016), the distinctions that can be drawn between modes of international order-making (e.g. Buzan and Lawson 2015; Phillips and Sharman 2015), and the ways in which the process of 'uneven and combined development' has helped to generate multilinear historical pathways (e.g. Rosenberg 2010, 2016). Historical sociology in IR offers a double punch: a focus on the rich detail of historical international relations alongside an emphasis on how configurations of social relations combine in particular contexts in order to generate outcomes.

These interventions have joined an array of historically informed approaches that have emerged, or re-emerged, in recent decades. Marxian scholarship has examined the ways in which class relations generate distinct forms of international order (e.g. Teschke 2003; Anievas 2014). Constructivists have shown how contestations over human rights have helped to forge international orders (Reus-Smit 2013). English School writers have focused on the changing norms, practices and institutions that underpin international society (e.g. Buzan 2004), as well as on the ways in which modern international order has been forged around distinctions between 'civilized', 'barbarian' and 'savage' peoples (e.g. Keene 2002; Suzuki 2009; Zarakol 2011; Linklater 2017). Other strands of work

have sought to rethink the 'rise of the West' (Hobson 2004; Buzan and Lawson 2015; Anievas and Nişancioğlu 2015), demonstrated the ways in which 'small wars' transform social relations within metropoles (Barkawi 2011), and explored the ways in which forms of radical change both constitute, and are constituted by, their relationship with the international realm (Lawson 2005, 2011, 2015, 2016). The result is a shared concern with historicizing and, thereby, denaturalizing the theory-history binary.

The global transformation

An example of how this work challenges conventional understandings of history-theory can be found in recent work on the 19th century 'global transformation' (Buzan and Lawson 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). This section briefly outlines the main contours of this argument in order to demonstrate how historical sociology utilizes a form of historical causation that, in turn, works to overcome the history-theory binary.

During the 19th century, a 'global transformation' remade the basic structure of international order. This transformation involved a complex configuration of industrialization, rational state-building and ideologies of progress. Industrialization generated an intensely interdependent system of global capitalism. The extension of capitalism brought new opportunities for accumulating power, not least because of the close relationship between industrialization and dispossession. Indeed, industrialization in some states (such as Britain) was deeply interwoven with the forceful de-industrialization of others (such as India). Indian textiles were either banned from Britain or levied with high tariffs – the British government tripled duties on Indian goods during the 1790s and raised them by a factor of nine in the first two decades of the 19th century (Darwin 2007: 195). In contrast, British manufacturing products were forcibly imported into India without duty. Between 1814 and 1828, British cloth exports to India rose from 800,000 yards to over 40 million yards; while during the same period, Indian cloth exports to Britain halved (Goody 1996: 131). For many centuries before 'the global transformation', India's merchant class had produced the garments that 'clothed the world' (Parthasarathi 2011: 22). By 1850, Lancashire was the new center of a global textiles industry. Within a generation or two, centuries-old south Asian proficiencies in cloth dyeing, shipbuilding, metallurgy and gun making had been lost (Parthasarathi 2011: 259).

Rational state-building signifies the process by which administrative and bureaucratic competences were accumulated and 'caged' within national territories (Mann 1988). During the 19th century, a number of states became staffed by permanent bureaucracies, selected by merit and formalized through impersonal legal codes. State personnel grew from 67,000 to 535,000 in Britain and from 55,000 to over a million in Prussia/Germany (Mann 1986: 804-10). Militaries grew at a comparable rate. These processes were fueled by infrastructural changes such as the emergence of railways, steamships and the telegraph. Communication times between Britain and India dropped from a standard of around six months in the 1830s (via sailing ship), to just over one month in the 1850s (via rail and steamship), to the same day in the 1870s (via telegraph) (Curtin 1984: 251-2). By the late 19th century, telephones began to succeed the telegraph, making communication instantaneous. Processes of rational state-building and imperialism were co-implicated. Between 1878 and 1913, Western states claimed 8.6 million square miles of overseas territory, amounting to one-sixth of the Earth's land surface (Abernathy 2000: 81). By the outbreak of the First World War, 80% of the world's land surface, not including uninhabited Antarctica, was under the control of Western powers, and one state – Britain – claimed nearly a quarter of the world's territory (Blanning 2000: 246). Imperialism 'over there' fed into rational state-building 'at home': the modern, professional civil service was formed in India before being exported to Britain; techniques of surveillance, such as fingerprinting and file cards, were developed in colonies and subsequently imported by the metropoles; cartographic techniques used to map colonial spaces were reimported into Europe to serve as the basis for territorial claims. Domestically, rational states provided facilitative institutional frameworks for the development of industry, technological innovations, weaponry and science; abroad, they provided sustenance for imperialism.

The rise of the rational state was underpinned by ideologies of progress. 'Ideologies of progress', such as liberalism, socialism, nationalism and 'scientific' racism, were rooted in ideals of progress and, in particular, associated with Enlightenment notions of classification, improvement and control. These 19th century ideologies contained an inbuilt drive towards the improvement of the human condition. This manifested in great international exhibitions that provided showcases for progress. In 1876, 10 million

people visited the international exhibition in Philadelphia to witness ‘the progress of the age’, including the first ever ‘Women’s Pavilion’ at an international exposition; in 1889, the Exposition Universelle in Paris welcomed over 30 million visitors and left an enduring legacy in the form of the Eiffel Tower (Osterhammel 2014: 15). New disciplines were established to systematize knowledge and ‘better’ society. Once again, there was a dark side to these ideologies – the promise of progress was linked closely to a ‘standard of civilization’ which served as the legitimating currency for coercive practices against ‘barbarians’ (understood as peoples with an urban ‘high culture’) and ‘savages’ (understood as peoples without an urban ‘high culture’) (Gong 1984; Suzuki 2009; Hobson 2012).

The three components of the global transformation were mutually reinforcing. European imperialism was legitimized by one or more of the ideologies of progress, and enabled through military superiority, mechanisms of state control and infrastructural developments that were enabled by industrialization. Taken together, the configuration that underpinned the global transformation produced a major shift in international order. For many centuries, the high cultures of Asia were held in respect, even awe, in many parts of Europe; the West interacted with Asian powers sometimes as political equals and, at other times, as supplicants (Darwin 2007: 117). Between 1600 and 1800, India and China were so advanced in manufacturing and many areas of technology that Western take-off is sometimes linked to its relative ‘backwardness’ – the desire to emulate Asian practices acted as a spur to European industrialization (Parthasarathi 2011: 10). Up to around 1800, there were no major differences in living standards amongst the most developed parts of world: in the late 18th century, GDP per capita levels in the Yangtze River Delta of China were around 10% lower than the wealthiest parts of Europe, less than the differences in the contemporary world between most of the EU and the US (van Zanden 2004: 120-1; Bayly 2004: 2). In 1750, the Yangtze region produced as much cloth per capita as Britain did in 1800 (Pomeranz 2000: 18). Overall, a range of quality of life indicators, from life expectancy to calorie intakes, indicates a basic equivalence between China and Europe up to the start of the 19th century (Hobson 2004: 76).

A century later, the most advanced areas of Europe and the United States held between a tenfold and twelvefold advantage in levels of GDP per capita over their Chinese equivalents (Bayly 2004: 2; van Zanden 2004: 121). Whereas in 1820, Asian powers produced 60.7% of the world's GDP, and Europe and its 'offshoots' (mainly the United States) only 34.2%; by 1913, Europe and its 'offshoots' held 68.3% of global GDP and Asia only 24.5% (Maddison 2001: 127, 263). During the 19th century, China's share of global production dropped from 33% to 6% and India's from 20% to 2% (Christian 2003: 463). During the same period, Europe's share of global manufacturing rose from 16% to 62%. Between 1870 and 1939, levels of life expectancy rose from 45 to 65 in north-western Europe and the United States; yet, there was no increase in life expectancy in Africa, Latin America or Asia, with the exception of Japan (Topik and Wells 2012: 602-3).

The 19th century therefore witnessed a huge change in global power, constituting a shift from a 'polycentric world with no dominant centre' to a 'core-periphery' order in which the centre of gravity resided in the West (Pomeranz 2000: 4). Acquiring the configuration of industrialization, rational state-building and industrialization meant undergoing wide-ranging political, economic and cultural transformations, and polities that underwent those transformations held enormous advantages over those that did not. Although oscillations of power are nothing new in human history, the global transformation opened up a vastly expanded pool of resources, making the power gap both much bigger and much more difficult to emulate. In this sense, as well as marking a shift in the distribution of power, the global transformation also changed the basic 'mode of power',[4] stimulating the emergence of global modernity.

Global modernity pulled the world into a single system. The world had been an economic international system since the European voyages of discovery during the 15th and 16th centuries opened up sea-lanes around Africa, and across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans (Buzan and Little 2000: 96). Eurasia had been an economic system for two millennia. But the global ties binding such systems were thin, slow and limited. Not

[4] 'Mode of power' means the social relations that are generative of both actors and the ways in which power is exercised. *Contra* most IR approaches, changes in the mode of power are more significant than changes in the distribution of powers, effecting not just outcomes, but the basis for how interactions take place and are understood.

until the 19th century did the world become a global system in which a handful of powerful polities could decisively project the new mode of power around the world. Multiple regional international systems became engulfed in a full international system in which all parts of the world were closely connected not just economically and culturally, but also in military-political terms (Buzan and Little 2000; Osterhammel 2014; 392-402).

If the first effect of the global transformation was to foster the emergence of a full international system, the second effect was to generate a host of new actors: rational nation-states, transnational corporations, and standing intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations became leading participants in international affairs. Taken together, these changes in global structure and international actors meant that 'the nineteenth century saw the birth of international relations as we know it today' (Osterhammel 2014: 393). None of the three components of the global transformation could have constituted such a change on their own. Rather, the global transformation was enabled by a specific configuration of all three dynamics; it was an interlinked set of processes that concatenated in historically specific form. This configuration produced a profound transformation, one that generated new actors, dynamics and structures that are still visible today: modern states, an interdependent global economy, great power management, positive international law, and more.

Taking the global transformation seriously helps to illustrate the importance of seeing IR as a historical social science. First, it makes clear that many of IR's core concepts and categories are rooted in late 19th and early 20th century developments. This opens up an understanding of IR as closely tied up with thinking about colonial management, the global colour line, geopolitics and law rather than the 'noble' vision of a discipline oriented around post-World War One peace research (Vitalis 2010). Second, writing new narratives of global modernity, whether these narratives concentrate on macro-dynamics or more granular accounts of particular events and processes, opens up a range of insights that reposition IR within the social sciences, not just as an adjunct to political science, but as a field closely related to history, law and sociology. Finally, beginning the study of contemporary IR with the global transformation provides a wider, more accurate reading of both the emergence of modern international order and

the shape of contemporary world politics. This, in turn, helps to shift IR away from a comfort story that explains Western power through unidirectional accounts of metropolitan superiority in favour of a view of IR as a genuinely international discipline, using diverse vantage points within a common experience (global modernity) as a means of decentring and pluralizing the discipline's operating assumptions.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that history and IR should not be considered as autonomous enterprises separated by virtue of distinct orientations, approaches and subject matters. Rather, history and IR are a common enterprise. By ordering and sequencing events into intelligible narratives, historical IR delineates a space in which theory and history are driven together rather than pulled apart. Theoretical concepts and categories are derived from history just as history is used to test these concepts and categories. Modes of thinking are necessarily conjoined with the histories in which they emerge. So too is IR, which is inseparable from the historical development from which it itself emerged.

Once this is recognized, several avenues for further research are opened up. One such avenue is the writing of new narratives that demonstrate the messy, entangled histories that have produced contemporary world politics. Nineteenth century histories of global modernity are one example of such narratives, introducing actors, issue-areas and dynamics that remain of significance to the contemporary world, such as the legacies of imperialism and racism – and the resentment produced by these legacies – that continue to mark north-south relations. There are many other such illustrations opened up by seeing IR as a historical social science. The promise of this ethos is only just beginning to be realized.

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