DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL HISTORY AND POLITICS
GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AND
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Writing Global History: Claiming Histories beyond Nations

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WORKING PAPERS
in
INTERNATIONAL HISTORY
AND POLITICS

No. 7 / April 2011

Working Papers
in
International History and Politics
Editor: Jaci Eisenberg
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http://www.graduateinstitute.ch/history-politics

Abstract

History is conventionally imagined and narrated in the context of nation, relating its stories and shaped by its imaginaries. To the extent the latter are invariant to the scale and space of narration, projects such as global history may be said with justification to be oxymorons. In surveying the various levels at which histories have attempted to be narrated purportedly beyond the boundaries of nations, this paper argues for a more consciously layered awareness of our multiple historical locations. Life unfolds at different levels and in different spaces between which exist complex overlays, complementarities, tensions, conflicts, and connections. Besides the conventions and expediencies of scholarship, often in practice historians too, will feel impelled to privilege one or another level or locus for their stories. However it is important to be aware of the reasons and limitations of such choices, and also recognize that no level or locus of analysis can credibly claim finally or definitively to subsume all others, much less render them redundant.

WRITING GLOBAL HISTORIES: CLAIMING HISTORIES BEYOND NATIONS

It is moot whether 'global history', etc. can ever avoid being an oxymoron. History is conventionally imagined and narrated in the context of nation, relating its stories and shaped by its imaginaries. Historians in the post-colonial world have long been aware of the nation's shadow even in purportedly transnational projects emanating from the North, yet many remain similarly in thrall to the nation. Indeed the nation is so possessive of history that no historian trying to shrug it off, whatever be his/her period or region, is likely to find the effort easily reciprocated.[1]

This is not to deny the importance of aspiration to narrate histories beyond nations, nor that historians and historical theorists have not meaningfully attempted to do so. Indeed most modern historical narratives including, perhaps especially, the most nationalistic or particularistic, are situated within temporal, normative, and behavioral frames derived from the Enlightenment, and therefore unavoidably for most nations, from 'outside'.

Much like the nation itself or national sovereignty, national/ist histories are not merely internal claims and stories for domestic consumption. They also represent a mode of conversation with the outside world. They serve furthermore as an indispensable modality for external affirmation. Both considerations hence dictate a normative and narrative strategy that reflect and affirm some universalist

[1] On the resistant presence of the nation in historical narratives ranging beyond it, see Antoinette Burton, "Introduction: On the Inadequacy and the Indispensability of the Nation," in *idem*, ed., *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 1-23.

conception of history and human progress. No national history is therefore wholly insular.

By 'history' is meant here narrations of the past. Modern historical narration has strong roots in realist politics. It may often be about creating or normalizing 'facts on the ground', or challenging whether something is indeed a 'fact'. Historians have thus never held a monopoly over the past. As well as being available to interpretation by anyone with an interest in them, pasts are also interpreted directly and indirectly into politics, programs, and policies, as well as mobilized to legitimize (or challenge) them. This is particularly the case in international relations where as recently as the early-2000s, we saw the mutual discursive reaffirmation of late-19th century imperialism and late-20th/early-21st century 'humanitarian intervention.'[2] Yet historians usually prefer complicating such narratives to overtly addressing or contesting them. This essay takes a wider view of historical narration to include not merely what historians do, but also how others construct and mobilize pasts. In other words it surveys the intersecting landscapes of the politics of historical production, the historiography of modern international politics, and the latter's premises, practices, and institutional articulations. It thereby complements related critical perspectives in international law, international relations, and anthropology.

'Global history' is not the first attempt to think history beyond the nation. The idea of a universal history has long captivated chroniclers and writers we might

[2] Or for that matter 'globalization': Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain made the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2003); on imperialism and intervention, see Robert Cooper, *The Postmodern State and the World Order*, 2nd edition (London: Demos and the Foreign Policy Centre, 2000).

refer to nowadays as historians, for many of whom trying to make sense of the present in relation to the past was part of a search for the meaning and purpose of human existence. Hence early conceptions of universal history were often religious. Many religious historical chronicles spoke of human progress in terms of the evolution of man's relationship with God. Since God's kingdom was universal, these chronicles' accounts of human progress also purported to be universal.

Whether and how far Enlightenment conceptions of human progress, and consequently of universal history, derived from religious ones remains a matter for debate. However, as even post-colonial skeptics of conventional Enlightenment claims would acknowledge, historical accounts of human progress by Enlightenment philosophers such as Turgot, Voltaire, and Condorcet were, 'secular', at least in the sense of being 'firmly set in the world'. Besides 'they all had man at the center'.[3]

Since the mid-19th century the idea of universal history has become indissolubly associated with Hegel for whom it represented the actualization of the "one universal Spirit" (*geist*), or the "destiny of Reason," as freedom. Ranajit Guha has remarked on the iron grip of determinism, rationalized as the "design of Divine providence," in Hegel's conception of history.[4] Moreover Hegel understood the actualization of the Spirit to proceed in stages, leading consequently to "various grades in the consciousness of Freedom." The latter were not merely "steps in the

[3] Ranajit Guha, *History at the Limit of World History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 28.
[4] Ibid., 30-32.

development of the one universal Spirit." They also supplied "the natural division of Universal History" and its "mode of … discussion."[5]

By the 1820s, when he delivered his lectures on history, Hegel had retreated from the radicalism of his youth. His universalist vision also grew more parochial and less hospitable to the actual variety of historical experience. The state as it was forming around him in North-Western Europe became for Hegel the most advanced form of the universal Spirit, with the other parts of the world occupying lower 'gradations' in the development of reason and freedom. Hewing to contemporary 'scholarly wisdom', he notably condemned sub-Saharan Africa and Africans to a state of nature and exclusion from the realm of reason, progress, and history. "In this largest part of Africa no real history can take place."[6] The Hegelian scholar Susan Buck-Morss minces no words in summarizing the parochial bearings for Hegel's purportedly universalist vision of this period: "What *is* clear is that in an effort to become more erudite in African studies during the 1820s, Hegel was in fact becoming dumber. …. It is sadly ironic that the more faithfully his lectures reflected Europe's conventional scholarly wisdom on African society, the less enlightened and more bigoted they became."[7]

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Quoted in Susan Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti," *Critical Enquiry* 26, no. 4 (Summer 2000): 859, note 118 (emphasis in the original). Also see here Guha, 32-33. Not much seems to have changed in the nearly two centuries since Hegel's lectures. For France's President Nicholas Sarkozy too, the 'tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history'! See his speech at the University of Dakar in July 2007: http://www.africaresource.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&catid=36:essays-a-discussions&id=437:the-unofficial-english-translation-of-sarkozys-speech&Itemid=346 (last accessed 14 April 2011).

[7] Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti," 863-64.

For several decades in the twentieth century Marxist historians seemed to offer the most productive and influential visions of a shared history of human progress. Marx's debt to Hegel and his critique are well known. By appropriating Hegel's master-slave dialectic in *The Phenomenology of Mind* into the idea of class struggle, Marx no doubt recuperated a human-centric vision of historical progress from the iron grip of divine providence into which Hegel had cast it. However, besides inheriting something of Hegel's determinism in the form of materialist causation, most historians deriving inspiration from Marx also adopted a teleological view of historical progress and a hierarchical ordering of contemporary human society not dissimilar to Hegel.[8]

The moral of this story so far may be said to be three-fold. Universalist claims about historical progression are nothing new. In the 19th and 20th centuries they became encoded into teleological visions of universal progress. The latter however were derived from and echoed parochial experiences and subjectivities whose narration as 'universal' in turn legitimized a hierarchy of modernity and historical progress imagined spatially as a world radiating outwards from a European/north Atlantic 'core'.

It is pertinent to ask in what ways 'global history' and variants thereof are immune to such limitations. If they are not, how do we justify current preoccupations with and in 'global history'? On surface 'global history' may appear to offer a plural platform to relate experiences and subjectivities for which earlier

[8] Ibid., 850.

modes of historical narration had no space. But new is not the same as distinct. Hence it is also necessary to be alert to whether, in encountering global history/ies, we are hearing distinct new voices narrating their own stories as they experience/d them. Or are we in the presence of a master ventriloquist re-telling a master narrative in several seemingly different voices?

The remainder of this essay is organized in three main sections. They deal successively with comparative and regional history, international history, and global history. A concluding section summarizes the promise and pitfalls of global history as seen through the historiography of late-19th century colonialism.

Comparative and Regional History

Until well into the 20th century the dominant mode of social analysis remained historical. Its aspiration to universalism also meant that Enlightenment and 19th century thought was framed in explicit or implicit comparative terms. As the Argentinian philosopher Enrique Dussel notes, European modernity was "constituted in a dialectical relation with non-European alterity that is its ultimate content."[9] This finds reflection in both the source disciplines of the modern social sciences, viz. moral philosophy and law. This was true for Adam Smith in the 18th century, Karl Marx in the mid-19th century, and Max Weber in the late-19th and early 20th centuries. This historical-comparative tradition also endured with a later

[9] "Eurocentrism and Modernity" in John Beverley, J. Oveido, and M. Aronna, eds, *The Post-modernism Debate in Latin America* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 65.

generation of scholars who rose to prominence in interwar Europe, most notably Joseph Schumpeter, Karl Polanyi, and Alexander Gerschenkron.

Hegel has already been mentioned. It is clear that in discussing say India, China, and their pasts, Hegel was contesting arguments by earlier writers such as Voltaire. He was thus continuing a tradition of debate and argumentation in which the world was viewed in a frame which, from a historical perspective, we may broadly term 'comparative'.

India's significance for the making of liberal European thought is now well known.[10] The image of primitive society was an important structuring element in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations.* India and the Levant are also argued to have been formative influences on the moral philosophy and political economy of James Mill, Robert Malthus, and John Stuart Mill (who worked for the East India Company), and Robert Nassau Senior who travelled extensively through Egypt.[11] There is no disputing that Marx, and with notably more explicit intent Weber, also adopted a strongly comparative-historical frame of analysis encompassing spaces of human habitation beyond nations, yet in which the nation marked a point of arrival.

Historical and social science scholarship grew exponentially after World War II. In the process it became more specialized and self-enclosed. At first orthodox economics, sociology, etc. did not abandon the historical mode as much as, betraying their eschatological influences, encode it into teleology. This teleological view

[10] Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth Century British Liberal Thought* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[11] Julia Elyachar, *Markets of Dispossession: NGOs, Economic Development, and the State in Cairo* (Durham: Duke University Press,2005), 21, 222-23 (n. 19).

justified constituting, mutually dis-embedding, and carving out 'economy', 'society', etc. as sovereign spheres of synchronic analysis conforming to endogenous motivations and 'laws' of behavior. Unearthing, normalizing, and designing laws, institutions, and policies to accommodate, nurture, occasionally to mobilize or regulate such motivations and behavior, consequently became major preoccupations in the fields of economics, sociology, and political science.

Yet even so self-consciously synchronic a discipline as economics cannot always sustain the pretense of turning its back on the past. The practice of economics, though less and less its 'orthodox' theory, in nations where 'economy' resists dis-embedding from 'society' remains 'aberrantly' yet resolutely diachronic. It is also more likely to be guided by the tenets of classical political economy with its pronounced emphasis on distributional conflict, and hence on history and politics. This generalization held true for India until the wave of liberal reforms initiated in 1991 (and remains true to some degree even today in fields such as macro-economics and public finance). Despite a theoretical and rhetorical tradition resistant to it, orthodox economists also find recourse to diachronic analysis unavoidable in fields such as international money, currency, finance, and macro-economics, where barriers in the form of nation-states or other loci of incommensurate values, meanings, logics, and interests interrupt the utopian landscape of economic theory. Nor can Economics avoid turning to the past during times of crises and transition such as the present. However it seems only capable of reading pasts, practices, and

politics translated into its own argot, and ordered according to its own incantations and rituals.

Historians and other scholars writing in the historical mode rediscovered comparative history in the 1950s and 1960s. A context for this was the rise of modernization theories which nourished stage-based models of social development laid out around a North Atlantic 'core'. In continuation of the comparative tradition of Hegel, Marx, and Mill, and in opposition to the more conditional and contextual comparative frameworks of Enlightenment writers such as Voltaire, an unconditional North Atlantic norm—or a 'Eurocentric' norm, in more conventional parlance—now supplied the benchmarks for studying non-Western societies, planning modernization projects, and measuring progress. The work of Alexander Gerschenkron, W.W. Rostow, and John Fei and Gustav Ranis exemplify this tradition of comparative historical work during these two decades of 'high' modernization.[12] Their critics, such as Andre Gunder Frank, challenged the possibility of development in the contemporary world system, but did not challenge its universality or desirability.[13]

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[12] Alexander Gerschenkron, "Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective," in Mark Granovetter and Richard Swedberg, eds, *The Sociology of Economic Life* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 111-30 (first published 1951); W. W. Rostow, "The Stages of Economic Growth," *Economic History Review* 12, no. 1 (January 1959): 1-16; John C.H. Fei and Gustav Ranis, "Economic Development in Historical Perspective," *American Economic Review* 59, no. 2 (May 1969): 386-400.

[13] Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America. Historical studies of Chile and Brazil* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971). More or less the same may be said of the completed volumes of Immanuel Wallerstein's *Modern World System*. See his *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), for an accessible, if somewhat revisionist, introduction.

In the wake of the collapse of Soviet-style socialism and the revival of modernization frameworks in various guises, comparative historical analysis staged a comeback in an exhortative millenarian mode. This was particularly noticeable in the writings of policy-oriented practitioners and 'public intellectuals' campaigning to restructure economies and societies in the third world and in countries like France and Italy where restructuring encountered greater resistance. And in fields such as institutional economics, and law and economics, which gained new prominence for their ability to supply arguments to justify legislating a moment of political triumph into institutional fact and permanent norm.[14] In much of this kind of history the past was of interest not for its own sake or in all its diversity and possibilities, but principally as a setting for a morality play culminating in the universalization of a particular style of Western liberal democracy as "the final form of human government," and of its correlative economic arrangements.[15]

Comparative history on a continental or global scale has also however served as an organizational frame and mode of research and argumentation for skeptics of conventional narratives of Western progress, not all of them again necessarily historians;[16] for a canonical historical work on modern nationalism;[17] and for scholars

[14] Douglass C. North, "Institutions," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (Winter 1991):97-112; for an example of this type of history, see Kenneth W. Dam, "Institutions, History, and Economic Development," John M. Olin Law and Economics Working Paper (no. 271, 2nd series, January 2006). Also more broadly, Dam, *The Law-Growth Nexus: the Rule of Law and Economic Development* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2005); for a pertinent critique see Marcus Taylor, "Conscripts of Competitiveness: Culture, Institutions, and Capital in Contemporary Development," *Third World Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (2010): 561-79.

[15] The quote is from Francis Fukuyama, "End of History?," *National Interest* (Summer 1989).

[16] Arno Mayer, *The Persistence of the Ancien Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism*,2 vols (London: Longman, 1993); Sandra

interested in the history of underdevelopment and determinants and processes of development.[18] Though it may have been mobilized at first to affirm a master narrative of modernization, comparative historical scholarship on European industrialization as evinced in 1970s debates on proto-industrialization, occurring in the background of earlier transition debates (from feudalism to capitalism) and alongside debates around Robert Brenner's essay on the origins of capitalist development, also helped destabilize this narrative. In particular by acknowledging the open-ended nature of industrialization processes and the role of human social agency and conflict in shaping outcomes, comparative scholarship opened up spaces for imagining historical change and transformation in new ways.[19]

Comparative historical projects have also attempted to go beyond (and beneath) the locus of the modular national form. Mendels' essay on proto-industrialization emphasized regional differences within nations and similarities across nations, rather than aggregated national experiences. This reinvigorated

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Halperin, *In the Mirror of the Third World: Capitalist Development in Modern Europe* (Cornell: Ithaca University Press, 1997); Ha-Joon Chang, *Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical Perspective* (London: Anthem Press, 2002).

[17] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991); *idem*, *Spectre of Comparisons: Politics, Culture and the Nation* (London: Verso, 1998).

[18] Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson, "Reversal of Fortune: Geography and Institutions in the Making of the Modern World Income Distribution," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 117, no. 4 (November 2002): 1231-94; Gareth Austin, "The 'Reversal of Fortune' Thesis and the Compression of History: Perspectives from African and Comparative Economic History," *Journal of International Development* 20 (2008): 996-1027; Alice Amsden, *The Rise of "The Rest": Challenges to the West from Late-Industrializing Economies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[19] Despite its conventional sounding sub-title (and Parsonian substance), proto-industrialization debates were set off by Franklin Mendels, "Proto-industrialization: The First Phase in the Industrialization Process," *Journal of Economic History* 32, no. 2 (1972): 241-61; for a compact survey of the main trends in this and overlapping debates, see Tessie P. Liu, *The Weaver's Knot: The Contradictions of Class Struggle and Family Solidarity in Western France, 1750-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 23-34.

Europe's pre-existing regional historiographical traditions within more explicitly comparative frameworks.[20] Regional settings allowed more attention to be paid to social actors, including notably women, whose interventions were invisible or liable to be misread on larger national canvases.[21] By enabling more textured readings of cultural and social influences, regional histories may have also seeded sensibilities receptive to historicizing modern divides between the economic, political, social, cultural, etc., and interrogating their claims to possessing endogenous and self-enclosed logics.

In historical writings regions may extend beyond and otherwise too interrupt imagined cartographies of nations. Definitions of regions of course raise important questions. Students of international relations can particularly ill afford to ignore the contextual, negotiated, and political determinants of regional definitions and affiliations.[22] Regional histories also serve several ends. Consequently the constitution, meaning, scale, scope, and relative salience of regions are no less important issues in historical writing.

At a practical level regional histories have been a convenient means to overcome difficulties of narrating conventional national histories. Given the mutual

[20] Mendels, 'Proto-industrialization'; Pat Hudson, *Regions and Industries: A Perspective on the Industrial Revolution in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[21] Perhaps not surprisingly prominent early feminist historians such as Joan Scott and Louise Tilly wrote regional or local historical accounts of industrialization and its impact. Scott, *The glassworkers of Carmaux: French Craftsmen and Political Action in a Nineteenth-century City* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1974); Tilly, *Politics and Class in Milan, 1881-1901* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[22] Illustratively, does India belong to South Asia, South-west Asia, or South-east Asia? Or is it an indispensable pivot of all three? For an illuminating essay on the naming and shaping of regions in post war and 1980s Europe, see Timothy Garton Ash, "Does Central Europe Exist?," *New York Review of Books* 33, no. 15 (9 October 1986).

salience of history and nation, we may speculate about the sources and implications of such difficulties. Pasts imagined on the scale of regions and continents, or indeed on a trans-continental scale, nourished radical nationalist or post-national aspirations.[23] They have also been expressed in historical and humanities scholarship.[24]

Among historians ecology now has an unrivalled pedigree as a stable basis for configuring regions. The best-known pioneer here is the French historian Fernand Braudel whose conception of the Mediterranean inspired similar conceptions of oceans and oceanic basins in the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific.[25] Ecology is also now a pronounced basis for defining terrestrial regions.[26] Ecologically comparable 'core' regions in Asia and Europe also form the basis of the "reciprocal comparisons." Kenneth Pomeranz makes to explain their divergent economic paths since the early 19th century.[27]

It has however been suggested that oceans, no less than oceanic basins, are historical constructions formed by changing "uses, regulations, and

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[23] C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Alison and Busby, 1938); also see his *History of Pan African Revolt,* first published 1938 (Washington, D.C: Drum and Spear, 1969).
[24] Penny M. von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism: 1937-57* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Paul Gilroy, *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* London: Verso, 1993); Prasenjit Duara, "The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism," *Journal of World History* 12, no. 1 (2001): 99-130; Cemil Ayadin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991).
[25] There is now a vast literature in this area. For a survey see the introduction and papers in the *American Historical Review* symposium (111, no. 3, 2006) on 'Oceans in History'.
[26] Ralph Austen, *Trans-Saharan Africa in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[27] *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

representations."[28] Similar arguments may be made about terrestrial and maritime ecologies, and the dangers of working with deterministic ecological conceptions which ignore the "people, communities and social relationships that produce, sustain and transform them."[29]

International History

International (and transnational) histories represent another set of claims to think history beyond the nation. Akira Iriye defines international history as an approach going "beyond the national level … to treat the entire world as a framework of study."[30] The practice of international history rarely measures up to this principle since international history mainly studies relations between nations, and therefore external relations and foreign policy. Diplomatic history is not surprisingly one of its strong suits. Besides looking out from nation, often through its lenses, international history has a strong bias towards states and statecraft.

Since all states are not equal, international history also suffers from a pronounced bias towards the study of 'great power' behavior. It may therefore serve to narrate the pasts of relations between nation states (or empires) in a realist mode, and from the perspective of the regnant great powers. Though their 'rise and fall' is an enduring if highly deceptive discursive rubric in the field, international history

[28] Philip Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 207.
[29] G. Balachandran, "Sovereignty, Subjectivities, Narrations: Nations and Other Stories from the Sea," *International Journal of Maritime History* 21, no. 2 (December 2009): 1-20.
[30] Akira Iriye, "The Internationalization of History," *American Historical Review* 94, no. 1 (1989): 3-4.

has tended so far to be framed conventionally within a telos that normalizes the international system as an expression of liberal ideals and affirms Britain and the United States (perhaps to a far lesser extent, selectively, and with severe qualification, France) as their principal protagonists.[31]

Disputes and wars between nations have inevitably been an important field of investigation in international history. With its history of recurring conflict between the 18th and 20th centuries, domestic and external politics were intimately linked in the emergent European system of nation-states. Indeed from one perspective the salience assigned to the Treaty of Westphalia as the source of modern national sovereignty may paradoxically serve to illustrate renewed anxieties about the meaning and nature of sovereignty in 19th century Europe. At a time of unstable empires, national wars, and revolutionary upheaval, sovereignty may have served as an idiom and instrument, however conditional or contextual, for managing Europe's multiple fissures, rather than the foundational or sacrosanct organizational principle it was later to become. Thus, as we know even from reading classical historians such as E.H. Carr and A.J.P. Taylor, historical accounts of intra-European relations have much to teach us about European national histories as well.

The sovereignty of the 19th century nation state was complemented in principle by the global sovereignty of 'liberal' norms, in particular the sovereignty of the market organized according to liberal principles. International politics in the last

[31] For classic illustrations of the deceptiveness of 'rise and fall' histories in the last two decades, see Paul Kennedy's *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), and Ferguson, *Empire* which also forcefully makes connected claims for the liberal nature of Victorian imperialism and the USA's global role.

two centuries may also be thought to have been driven by negotiation and conflict between these two levels of sovereignty whose meanings and protagonists have rarely been historically stable.[32] Besides in constituting the external relations of nations into an independent object of study, international history risks overlooking the mobilized and contested nature of the principles, ideologies, and meanings that scholars of international relations may (mistakenly) take for granted.

As an illustration, sovereignty was a principle that only applied to Western powers until World War I. Its meaning and nature also began to change in response to Western anxieties about the mobility of non-Western peoples and livelihoods unsettled by 19th century colonialism.[33] While formally affirming the "similarity and equivalence of nation-states," state sovereignty has also been argued to serve as a means to structure inequality "through the form of equivalence."[34]

Such arguments and perspectives illustrate a growing post-colonial challenge to the conventional boundaries not merely of international history but also more widely to the "boundary concepts of race, nation, and modern progress." 'Nation' and 'colonies', as Susan Buck-Morss reminds us in the context of the racialization of slavery, were spatial distinctions that also encoded "conceptual barriers," for

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[32] Compare for instance the policies today's advanced economies followed when they were industrializing, with their prescriptions for the rest of the world today: Ha-Joon Chang, *Kicking Away the Ladder* (London: Anthem Press, 2003).

[33] Radhika Viyas Mongia, "Race, Nationality, Mobility: A History of the Passport," *Public Culture* 11, no. 3 (1999): 527-56.

[34] Radhika V. Mongia, "Historicizing State Sovereignty: Inequality and the Form of Equivalence," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, no. 2 (2007): 384-411, quote on 388. For a broader account of the imperial origins of modern sovereignty norms and their discriminatory premises and application, see Anthony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

example between slavery and freedom.[35] Perhaps unsurprisingly therefore, until recently historiographies of modern overseas expansion and colonial rule exerted precious little impact on historiographies of the modern European nation.

This is slowly beginning to change. As illustration, 'new imperial histories' of Britain seek to situate colonies and the metropole in the same frame of vision.[36] This literature, which has been said to mark an 'imperial turn' in the historiography of the modern West, reflects growing recognition that rather than obeying purely endogenous logics, conceptions of race, class, sexuality, gender, citizenship, nation, freedom, and empire in metropolitan Britain (and other European colonial powers, notably the Netherlands but also in France) were polarized, destabilized, and reconfigured by anxieties provoked by rebellious colonial populations or domestically assertive classes.[37] In Paul Gilroy's words, "the empires were not simply out there—distant terminal points for trading activity where race consciousness could grow—in the torrid zones of the world at the other end of the colonial chain. Imperial mentalities were brought back home . . . and altered economic, social, and cultural relations. . . ."[38] Nevertheless, as Antoinette Burton has

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[35] Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 87-90. Buck-Morss's essay "Hegel and Haiti" (footnote 6) is also reprinted here.
[36] For an accessible set of essays in 'new imperial history', see Kathleen Wilson, *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[37] Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Pres, 1992); on race and sexuality, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).
[38] "Migrancy, Culture, and a New Map of Europe," in Heike Raphael-Hernandez, ed., *Blackening Europe: The African American Presence* (New York: Routledge, 2004), xii.

noted, rarely does new imperial history take the "'precarious vulnerability' of imperial systems" as their starting point. Partly in consequence, "the very concept of Britain" has come to possess a resilient "fantasy structure" that is affirmed as "home" even when marked out as an imperial space.[39]

Thus, for the most part in British (and one may add French, and settler colonial) historiography, colonial violence, genocide, and 'crimes against humanity' (to use a present-day expression) remain insulated from the histories of Britain or France proper. Thus destructive campaigns of unbridled violence in India in 1857 and 1919, the Caribbean in the 1860s, Kenya and Malaya in the 1950s; wars and 'sanguinary' campaigns in Africa and Asia; the despoliation of the lands and habitats notably of Australian aborigines, and the disappearance of their populations; the forcible abduction of aboriginal children for internment in special 'schools'; indeed even the related, post-World War II campaign to forcibly transport abandoned British children as 'orphans' to Australian 'foster homes' as a means to populate the 'empty continent' with white European stock—none of these have yet destabilized conventional conceptions of Britain as a worldwide bastion and beacon of liberal democracy.[40]

By contrast historians of Germany (which because of its history of Nazi rule is conventionally cast as an aberrant figure in Western European history with a unique propensity for illiberal behavior) have more readily made connections between

[39] Burton, ed., *After the Imperial Turn*, 5-6.
[40] If anything in recent years political leaders such as Gordon Brown in Britain ('It's time to celebrate the Empire, says Brown', *Daily Mail*, 15 January 2005) have attempted to push back against a rising tide of criticism by defending the civilizing impulses of the empire.

colonial violence and Nazi atrocities in Europe. Such connections in turn have begun to breach protocols of historical scholarship insulating metropolitan Europe from colonial contamination. For instance Mark Mazower suggests that the real horror of Nazi Germany from Europe's perspective was to breach its barriers with the colonies by "turning imperialism on its head and treating Europeans as Africans," and deploying in Europe, the coercion and violence Europe powers practiced in the colonies.[41]

For the US the domestic mainsprings of external policy have been explored in the revisionist historiography of US foreign relations pioneered by William Appleman Williams, with his preference for "reading America from the outside in."[42] There have also been many lively accounts of counter-hegemonic influences in the other direction, particularly in regard to popular culture.[43] Given the role of immigration in US history it could hardly have been otherwise. In particular historians draw increasing attention to the porous, unstable, and constituted nature of boundaries between inside and outside.[44] Their implications for the plurality of

[41] Mark Mazower, *The Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin, 1998), xii-xiii. Nazism ironically therefore destabilized overt sentiments of European racial superiority: Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London: Allen Lane, 2008), 592-94. In 2004, Germany was persuaded to apologize for the Herero massacre (1904-06) in South-West Africa (present-day Namibia). In contrast Britain and France have yet to apologize for their colonial-era atrocities and continue to defend their colonial empires as altruistic projects.

[42] Bruce Cummings, "Revising 'Postrevisionism', or The Poverty of Theory in Diplomatic History," *Diplomatic History* 17, no. 3 (1993): 539-69.

[43] Vijay Prashad, *Everybody was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Heike Raphael-Hernandez and Shannon Steen, *AfroAsian Encounters: Culture, History, Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

[44] For example, Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Mary Ting Yi Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery: Murder,*

our historical and analytical vision are not straightforward. For example how do the difficulties of meaningfully distinguishing or 'genealogizing' domestic and external influences complicate narratives of US exceptionalism?[45]

A growing strand in international history deals with multilateral institutions and international organizations. Some of these histories are official, i.e. they are sponsored by the institution and benefit from privileged access to its materials. The World Bank and the IMF set the ball rolling in the 1990s with their respective official histories. Though written by academic figures, not all however historians, they largely reflected the views of their sponsoring institutions.[46] The UN followed suit with its 'intellectual history project'. The approach here is to privilege the UN bureaucracy as a progenitor of ideas and policies, and except in the most general way abstract them from their political and other contexts.[47] Scholars have also tackled negotiations over the post-war security and monetary/financial architecture, notably at San Francisco and Bretton-Woods. Conventionally such accounts privilege the great powers.[48]

Miscegenation, and other Dangerous Encounters in Turn-of-the-Century New York City (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[45] Consider here Barack Obama's rhetorical attempts to reconfigure US exceptionalism as an ethic of openness, tolerance, and inclusion; for a recent historical perspective on US exceptionalism, see Thomas Bender, *A Nation among Nations: America's Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006).

[46] Devesh Kapur, John P. Lewis, and Richard Webb, *The World Bank: its First Half Century* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1987); Harold James, *International Monetary Cooperation since Bretton Woods* (Washington D.C. : International Monetary Fund and New York : Oxford University Press, 1996).

[47] For example see Louis Emmerij, Richard Jolly, and Thomas G. Weiss, *Ahead of the Curve? UN Ideas and Global Challenges* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001).

[48] For a recent example, see Stewart Patrick, *Best Laid Plans: the Origins of American Multilateralism and the Dawn of the Cold War* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009).

Whether or not international organizations individually represent subjects for meaningful historical analysis thus remains an open question. Scholars interested in the transformation of modern empires into a system of nation states have researched League of Nations and United Nations archives to advance our understanding of hegemony and sovereignty in the international system.[49] Given the centrality of law as a modality of international governance, it is perhaps not surprising to find legal scholarship taking a lead here. Reference has already been made to Anthony Anghie's work on the colonial origins of sovereignty. Anghie also deploys the mandates system of the League of Nations to illustrate the formative relationship between colonialism and international institutions and"'illuminate the operations and character of contemporary international institutions."[50] Another legal historian, Luis Rodríguez-Piñero, has drawn attention to the colonial trusteeship origins of the ILO's interest in indigenous and native labor.[51]

Historians have criticized legal scholars such as Anghie for failing to support their research with archival evidence.[52] They make a valid point. However mere empirical work is not in itself an answer. Research into archives of international organizations is still in its infancy; its methods and challenges remain under-

[49] Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).
[50] Anthony Anghie, "Colonialism And The Birth Of International Institutions: Sovereignty, Economy, and the Mandate System of the League Of Nations," *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics* 34, no. 3 (2002): 516. For other similar references and a short but instructive survey, see Mongia, *Historicizing State Sovereignty*, 395-97.
[51] Luis Rodríguez-Piñero, *Indigenous Peoples, Postcolonialism, and International Law: The ILO Regime (1919-1989)*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[52] For example, Susan Pedersen, "Review Essay: Back to the League of Nations," *American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (October 2007): 1104.

theorized. On surface documents in these archives may appear to reveal a new perspective on well-studied historical developments. Yet not everything new is necessarily significant, or justifies a diversion of context and conversation. For example often international organizations' documents assume the autonomy and disinterested expertise of their officials, whom historians reading such documents and their ideas out of context are liable to reinvent as the avant garde of a transnational 'epistemic community'. On the other hand documents from other provenances, say archives of governments or NGOs, may complicate such assumptions and help broaden our political, institutional, and intellectual framework of interpretation. Besides, after several generations of being in thrall to public records, the historical profession has increasingly turned its attention and energies to other repositories of historical memory. Uncritical reliance on the archives of international institutions risks putting international historians out of step with the wider profession.

Some recent critical historical accounts of international institutions and organizations however bring greater nuance to our understanding of their constitution and mobilization, and their political and public roles. As a result assumptions about these institutions being in the vanguard of post-war international idealism have grown more qualified. In its early years newly independent nations used UN platforms to denounce racism and colonialism. They also exploited the UN framework to mobilize against colonial powers and their allies attempting to subordinate these questions to the logic of the cold war. Conventional accounts of

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a triumph of liberal Western values have also come under challenge. Instead we are reminded that, wary of what the UDHR might mean for their racial and colonial policies, the USA, Britain, and other colonial powers fought to restrict its vision, scope, and legal application. Instead a loose alliance of newly independent states and anti-colonial and anti-racial movements in the metropolis became pivotal in advancing a human rights agenda and the UN's democratic potential in the 1940s and 1950s.[53]

Another growing area of interest is transnational history, about movements, institutions, etc. that cross national boundaries, yet are not palpably structured by/through states and governments, and that may even exist in some ambivalent relationship with them. 'Transnational' may thus describe a wide spectrum of movements and entities, from humanitarian NGOs such as the Red Cross and Amnesty International to trans-national corporations, offshore banking, and financial networks.

Rejecting state and nation, the history of 19th century anarchism may be an apt illustration of transnational history as a means to recover stories exiled from narratives of nation. Benedict Anderson has recently reminded us of the close links

[53] A conventional view is that the UDHR 'crystallized 150 years of struggle for rights': Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 205; see also 202-03. For more complex interpretations see Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace,* especially Ch. 4; Manu Bhagvan, "A New Hope: India, the United Nations and the Making of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *Modern Asian Studies* (2008): 1-37; on links between anti-racial and anti-colonial movements see von Eschen, *Race against Empire,* esp. Ch. 2; also Carol Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Chs. 2 and 5; for an important early essay, see Marika Sherwood, "India at the Founding of the United Nations," *International Studies* 33, no. 4 (1996): 407-28.

between militant anarchism and anti-colonialism in Asia and the Caribbean. In doing so he also reminds us of the trans-national pasts of anti-colonial nationalism.[54] Such perspectives enrich our understanding of politics and political mobilization in the 19th and 20th century by situating them, and through them the nation, in a wider ideational, historical, and geographical context. Yet it is worth a moment's reflection that while anarchist ideas and revolutionaries circulated freely in metropolitan Europe, their main targets and sites of action were mainly on its periphery.[55] The spectacular geography of transnational anarchism was not merely the converse of the political geography of 19th century liberalism. It also reflected the spatial hierarchies of the pre-World War I world: for instance Germany was not a site for spectacular anarchist actions between 1890 and 1914, nor were its nationals among their main plotters. Does this suggest another marker (can we call it military power and capability?) for the geography of transnational anarchism besides the liberal / absolutist divide? Does the uneven footprint of trans-nationalist projects and claims warrant closer focus on their relationship to states and nations? In short the 'transnational' world was not flat, and imbalances between transnational claims and transnational projects raise questions about the role of states, nations, and hierarchies in 'transnational' histories.

[54] *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London: Verso, 2005); apart from the references cited in note no. 24, also see Vijay Prashad, *Darker Nations: A Peoples History of the Third World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007).
[55] See Anderson's list and map of anarchist assassinations: *Under Three Flags*, pp. 75 and 76 respectively.

The last point may be illustrated by an implicit tendency even in international / transnational histories sympathetic to local colonized or third world subjects, to regard the latter's agency as recalcitrant or derivative, and deny them creative modern political capacity. For example in *Fatal Misconception,* Matthew Connolly's account of the worldwide population control movement, the third world is merely a site for action by great powers and international agencies in alliance with local elites. India looms large in this work which notes popular resistance to coercive birth control projects and their decisive repudiation in the 1977 elections. Yet the 'transnational' lens adopted here largely render invisible grassroots initiatives, negotiations, and practices involving women's resistance movements and organizations, family welfare professionals, and local governments in states such as Kerala, which inspired and shaped new perspectives and policies on population growth laying stress on women's agency, education, health, nutrition, and 'family welfare'. Instead for Connolly only the roles played by international agencies, conferences, and transnational professional networks seem to matter.[56]

Likewise Erez Manela's 'transnational approach' to Asian nationalism may help resist naturalizing the nation "as the skin that contains the experience of the past." Yet offered as a justification for arguing the significance of the 'Wilsonian

[56] Matthew Connolly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* (Cambridge, Mass: Bellknap, 2008). For a more nuanced argument about third world social movements and international norms, see B. Rajagopal, *International Law from Below: : Development, Social Movements, and Third World Resistance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

moment' in Asia, it risks doing so by clothing anti-colonial nationalism in the 'skin' of *Wilsonian* nationalism.[57]

World History and Global History

World history and global history are relatively new disciplinary fields that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. Their emergence was not accidental. As already noted until the 1960s the idea of modernization seemed to lend history an ecumenical meaning and purpose. While pluralizing the idea of civilization employed by historians such as Arnold Toynbee, the third and rather deterministic part of William H. McNeill's *Rise of the West* may be seen as a conventional historical view of the contemporary world from a modernization perspective, its invocation of US anti-colonial history and tradition serving to sequester and protect the idea of the West from its recent colonial past.[58] Within years of McNeil's book, however, an emerging scholarly consensus began to challenge modernization and other such grand narratives, leaving historians in particular in search of larger meanings for historical phenomena and processes.

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[57] Erez Manela, "Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East-West Harmony and the Revolt against Empire in 1919," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (2006): 1327-51; Manela evokes Prasenjit Duara, "Transnationalism and the Challenge of National Histories," in Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 25. However as Duara notes elsewhere, neither is nation the only 'skin' for grand identity imaginings in the 20th century: Duara, "The Discourse of Civilization."

[58] Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 12 volumes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934-1961); McNeill's *Rise of the West* was sub-titled *A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

World and global history fitted this breach by offering the luxury to imagine global connections at least at first without an overpowering teleological vision. Though not immune to criticisms for being Eurocentric and deterministic, world-systems analysis seemed to some to offer a logic for some of these connections. By drawing attention to the role of disease in human history and the impact on human societies of the rapid spread of virulently pathogenic diseases through trade and conquest, McNeill's *Plagues and Peoples* offered another way to imagine global connections, particularly from the early modern period onwards.[59] Alfred Crosby's hugely popular account of the worldwide spread of germs, weeds, and seeds as part of the 'Columbian exchange' precipitated by European expansion into America and Oceania, reinforced such connections.[60]

Historical appreciation of the inequality of trans-Atlantic exchanges following European conquest, wherein indigenous peoples surrendered their lives, lands, crops, and silver to European conquerors in exchange for disease or enslavement, resonated widely. Politically it seemed to offer a striking illustration of global inequalities. Within the historical profession it helped turn some long-held intuitions into historical insight and exerted a profound influence on research perspectives and agendas. For instance confirmation that Indians were felled by disease rather than technology challenged technological deterministic explanations of historical change, Western claims to technological superiority, and in general the role of technology in

[59] William McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (New Jersey: Doubleday, 1976).
[60] Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

the 'rise of the West'. It also contextualized and historicized European ascendancy—many American Indian cities were larger than all but the largest European cities at the time of conquest, their societies and economies as complex as any prevailing in Europe or Asia at the time—and drew attention to the contingent and embattled nature of this ascendancy.

This was not merely an 'emperor has no clothes' moment in the historiography of the colonial encounter. It also profoundly altered the significance of the colonial encounter for the history of the modern world and gave it global scope and meaning. It further encouraged ways of imagining historical connections through time and space in which the relationship between human societies and the environment became vastly more important.

The environment was no longer now something passive and out there, that 'Man' acted upon. Projects to remake the environment were increasingly seen to reflect appalling ignorance, their results more often than not challenging rather than affirming the claims of science and modern technology. New ways of thinking about relationships between human societies and their environments promoted greater respect for indigenous knowledge and greater awareness of the dense layering of pasts over the present. The latter, in particular, not merely disrupted millenarian, transformative models of modernity. It also drew attention to how people lived their lives and negotiated change, and how human agency interacted with and shaped structures.

In short greater sensitivity to the diversity of the ecological conditions of human existence nourished new hermeneutical perspectives motivating historians (and other scholars) to attend, loosely speaking, to differentiated social and cultural ecologies, their endogenous logics, practices, and institutions, porous boundaries and negotiations with inside-outside actors, networks, and influences, and consequently to imagining transcultural geographies in new ways.[61] It also enabled ideas, habits, and actions that might at another time have been labeled 'resistant' or 'aberrant', to be recovered and valued within the frame of the 'fragment'.[62] Staging the past on smaller, less vertically stacked stages or recovering new geographies also enabled historians to recover actors, voices, and sensibilities—women, dalits, people belonging to forest or foraging communities, the urban poor, transsexuals, etc.—that were liable to be suppressed on the grand stages and 'global' geographies of epochal historical transformation.[63]

Such insights paralleled and reinforced sensibilities, perspectives, and research and writing practices that, as we saw above with respect to comparative and regional histories, were also emerging from other directions and areas of historical enterprise. Secondly a major driving force in historical scholarship has

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[61] In different respects, see Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2006); Jeremy Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2008); James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[62] For a perspective on this see Dipesh Chakravarty, "Two Histories of Capital" in *idem*, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[63] For a self-reflective historical work offering complementary perspectives on agency and modernity, see Stephen J. Rockel, *Carriers of Culture: Labor on the Road in Nineteenth-Century East Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinneman, 2006).

always been a tension between time and diversity. As historians including those imagining the past on a world scale began to explore the internal complexities of diversity, time too began to appear less linear and more discontinuous and negotiated. All human beings inhabited the same planet and shared its destiny. But the world was not a single place, nor would the whole world ever occupy a single time.[64] Ideas such as "multiple modernities" gained currency.[65] In contrast to the metaphor popularized by Wallerstein, of modernity as a 'virus' spreading outwards from Europe, scholars began to view it more historically as a "global and conjunctural phenomenon" located in "a series of historical processes that brought hitherto relatively isolated societies into contact', and with 'roots in a set of diverse phenomena …."[66] The themes of interconnections and divergences across the world began to be explored even in undergraduate textbooks.[67]

These sensibilities and conceptions of 'world' and possibly 'global' were thrown into disarray, paradoxically enough, by the grip that 'globalization' began to exercise on the historical imagination. This is not the place to discuss the term's meanings, significance, deployments, and limitations.[68] But two points are worth making. First for many non-historians looking at the present in relation to the past,

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[64] Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, "World History in a Global Age," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 4 (1995): 1042.
[65] Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *Multiple Modernities* (Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005), originally published in *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 1-29.
[66] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Hearing Voices: Vignettes of Early Modernity in South Asia, 1400–1750," *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (1998): 75–104.
[67] Robert Tignor, et al, *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart: A History of the Modern World from the Mongol Empire to the Present* (New York: Norton, 2002).
[68] These are briefly addressed in G. Balachandran and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "On the History of Globalisation and India**:** Concepts, Measures and Debates," in Jackie Assayag and Chris Fuller, eds,, *Globalizing India: Perspectives from Below* (London: Anthem Press, 2006).

'globalization' seemed an apt metaphor lending meaning to historical progress and destiny, in other words the basis for a new teleology. Anxious not to be left behind many historians joined the unceremonious melée. In 1998 Bruce Mazlish criticized historians for being "slow to appreciate the importance of globalization" which he blamed on the profession's preference for the more plural and open ended possibilities offered by 'world history'. "Our 'imaginings' must leap from world history to global history," he urged.[69] Four years later A.G. Hopkins described "the analysis of the origins, nature, and consequences of globalization [as] (...) currently the most important single debate in the social sciences' and castigated historians for even failing to 'recognize the subject'."[70]

Such, quite undeserved, self-reproach illustrated just how much historians were still possessed by a sense of telos, if not of the modern at least of the present, and of the present as some kind of 'modern'. Hence for some historians it proved a short plunge from here to 'imagining' global history as the history of globalization. Though its future course could not be predicted, "one of the keys to global history" for Mazlish was to take "existing processes, encapsulated in the 'factors of globalization'" and trace them "as far back in the past as seems necessary and useful."[71]

Mazlish and other 'global' historians did not even pretend to define 'globalization' with any attempt at rigor, nor indeed to separate subjective faiths and

[69] Bruce Mazlish, "Comparing Global History to World History," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 28, no. 3 (1998): 385, 389.
[70] A.G. Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in World History* (London: Pimlico, 2002), 1.
[71] Mazlish, "Comparing Global History," 389.

fetishes from what purported to be an 'objective' view of the world and its past. For Mazlish, for example, "globalization" in 1998 meant "synergy and synchronicity," the "sum of the combined presences" of "basic facts of our time" catalogued as "our thrust into space," "nuclear threats" and environmental threats, multinational corporations, "global consumerism," human rights, globalization of music "and so forth." By 2005 "terrorism" had been added to this list.[72] With the historical profession confused or complaisant, the initiative for narrating modern history as the history of globalization passed to economists working with a narrow, yet coherent and seemingly quantifiable definition of globalization indexing the integration of commodity, labor, and financial markets. Economists wrote the canonical historical narratives of globalization many early versions of which appeared as US National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) working papers or conference proceedings, and occasionally as papers in economic history journals.[73] Focusing almost wholly on the north Atlantic world, these histories equated globalization with the spread of a narrowly defined set of liberal trading and financial arrangements measured by dispersions of commodity prices, wages, and interest rates between distant markets. Technological determinism, concepts such as the 'industrial revolution' under challenge earlier or elsewhere, and institutionalism

[72] Ibid., 390; Mazlish, ed., *The Global History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
[73] For example see Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1999); Richard Baldwin and Peter Martin, "Two Waves of Globalisation: Superficial Similarities, Fundamental Differences" (NBER Working Paper, 1999); Michael Bordo, A.M. Taylor and J. G. Williamson, eds., *Globalization in Historical Perspective* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003); Jeffrey G. Williamson, "Winners and Losers over Two Centuries of Globalization" (NBER Working Paper, 2002).

came back into vogue, in some instances also a stress on cultural beliefs and 'private order institutions'.[74] Colonialism did not figure in such narratives. Where it did, colonial rule was transformed, with contemptuous disregard for the accumulated historical research of the last three decades and the protocols of historical scholarship, into the bearer of liberal values *and* the engine of global economic and financial integration.[75]

Some historians bravely tried to catch up. But all they now managed was to inscribe their regions or periods into these narratives, at best claiming, as some historical writings focused on Asia did, that their region was at the forefront of 'globalization'. Some elements of idyllic liberal globalization narratives were debated on the margin, for example the contribution of colonialism, access to the new world, and slavery to globalization. But few of its core assumptions, including that of the remorseless increase of the size and scale of units and flows and the nature and determinants of technological change, were contested.[76]

Many historians rejected such simplistic accounts of globalization or refused to take them seriously. But few historians challenged the value of globalization as a

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[74] For example, Joel Mokyr, "The Institutional Origins of the Industrial Revolution," in Elhanan Helpman, ed., *Institutions and Economic Performance* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008), 65-67; Mokyr also describes the industrial revolution as the "central event of modern economic history to date." Also Mokyr, "Intellectual Property Rights, the Industrial Revolution, and the Beginnings of Modern Economic Growth," *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings* 99, no. 2 (2009): 349–355; for a particularly strident institutionalist argument, see Dam, "Institutions, History, and Economic Development."

[75] This is the thrust of the argument in Ferguson, *Empire.*

[76] Adam McKeown, "Global Migration, 1846-1940," *Journal of World History* 15, no. 2 (2004): 155-189; Andre Gunder-Frank, *Re-Orient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Kenneth Pomeranz, *Great Divergence: China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

framework for depicting the present or thinking about the past. A notable exception is the African historian Frederick Cooper who pointed out that vague and incoherent as they were, imaginaries of globalization drowned out or assimilated innumerable other spaces and levels of human activity and social exchange.[77]

In Conclusion: Colonialism, Anti-Colonialism, Post-Colonialism and Histories beyond Nation

The historiography of colonialism illuminates the uneven and uncertain openings, closures, paths, and barriers that a 'global' perspective can often occlude. It also argues the benefits of viewing national, regional and comparative, international/trans-national, and global, wherever so distinguishable, as complementary and intersecting tissues of historical narration often better able than any of them individually, to describe our connected histories.[78]

The late-1990s and early-2000s fashion for regarding *British* colonialism as the main vehicle for 19th century 'globalization' has already been noted.[79] The dominant imaginary here is of an insulated colonial world yanked out of pre-modern strife and stupor, and introduced to the advantages of trade and modern economic

[77] "What is the Concept of Globalization Good for? An African Historian's Perspective," *African Affairs* 100 (2001): 189-213.
[78] For an exploration of such connections, also inevitably across historical specializations, during the three centuries preceding British rule in South Asia, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[79] This argument was most provocatively made in Ferguson, *Empire*. Ferguson is a staunch defender of Anglo-American imperialism and 'globalization' which, ironically enough, their opponents are just as likely to regard as indistinguishable twins! For an argument focused on colonial law and institutions, see Dam, "Institutions, History, and Economic Development."

organization by the laws, institutions, and investments that British colonialism made possible.

However specialist historians of early-modern China and India, for instance, have largely come to reject the notion of uniformly inhospitable indigenous legal and institutional landscapes for property and accumulation. Nor do they accept that these landscapes were unwaveringly flattened to accord with liberal principles under colonial rule.[80]

Relationships between colonialism and pre-colonial economic and trading relationships and institutions were also more complex than arguments exaggerating the materiality of the 'global' allow. For example, whatever its eventual impact on trade volumes and values, at least at first and where India was concerned, colonialism did not create as much as displace trade (say from fine manufactures to coarser manufactures or raw materials) or divert it (from dense and somewhat more balanced regional and continental trading relationships to imperial networks centered on the metropole). The ownership of trade and investment followed similar patterns which were reinforced by politically-mediated (rather than spontaneous or 'market-driven') changes in the institutional organization of trade, banking, and other forms of intermediation.[81] The consolidation of British sovereignty did reconfigure the geographies of trade and capital mobility across Asia. However like

[80] David Washbrook, "Law, State, and Agrarian Society in Colonial India," *Modern Asian Studies* 15, no. 3 (1981): 649-721; more recently see Ritu Birla, *Stages of Capital: Law, Culture and Market Governance in Late Colonial India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); on China see Pomeranz, *Great Divergence*.

[81] G. Balachandran, "Introduction," in *idem*, ed., *India and the World Economy, 1850-1950* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Asian trade and finance, Asian traders and bankers too were subordinated to imperial and other metropolitan networks and institutions or forced into niches the latter could not fill, sometimes even as their intermediaries.[82] At the same time their role in late-19th and early-20th century trading and financial networks emblematized indigenous business's capacity for a broader response to competition from Europe and the challenges and opportunities of colonial rule, and its potential for autonomous expansion and diversification in the region.[83] In short a regional or continental perspective illuminates dimensions, agencies, and relationships that are likely to be missed by a purely 'global' or imperial view focusing on the metropolitan center and its relations with the 'periphery'.

Conversely a focus on individual colonial experiences, as was indeed the case with much historical work in the 1970s and 1980s, can detract from the dense inter-connections of the modern colonial project. One set of interconnections has been particularly prominent in the new imperial historiography, viz. racialized and sexualized Western fears and prejudices about colonial and indigenous populations, as well as about local blacks, Asians, and the working poor, especially women. At the same time the precise contexts for these fears and prejudices, the social and political responses fashioned from them, and their immediate and longer-term

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[82] Claude Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750-1947: Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); David Rudner, *Caste and Capitalism in Colonial India: The Nattukottai Chettiars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); see also Balachandran, "Introduction," 10-14 and the references therein.

[83] On the last point see K. Sugihara, "Patterns of Asia's Integration into the World Economy, 1880-1913," in Wolfram Fischer, R.M. McInnis, and J. Schneider, eds, *The Emergence of the World Economy, 1500-1914* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1986), 714-21.

consequences, also all bore the marks of the histories, trajectories, and complexities of individual metropolitan and colonial experiences. Thus as densely connected as the metropolitan experiences of, say, Britain and Imperial Germany or the colonial experiences of, say, India and Trinidad (or for that matter East Africa) may have been, their individual historical accounts will inevitably share and depart from each other, even if they may not always operate on registers that make the similarities and departures immediate or evident.

This generalization applies no less to anti-colonial resistance, to which brief references were made above, and for which the colonies were unsurprisingly the main sites. The nature of anti-colonial mobilization and leadership, and its programs and strategies were specific to individual colonies. This was the case even in Africa despite the recent and wholly colonial nature of the continent's 'modern' boundaries. Yet as much recent research reveals, anti-colonial resistance movements also nurtured and developed influential trans-continental connections. These were not only made, as sometimes suggested, at metropolitan centers such as London and Paris where colonial elites came to study or work.[84] They were also forged across Asia and North and South America through the spread of the written word of anti-colonial sentiment, and the spoken words of political leaders such as Sun Yat-Sen, writers and poets such as José Rizal and Rabindranath Tagore, and anti-colonial

[84] Richard Malley, *The Call from Algeria: Third Worldism, Revolution, and the Turn to Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 20-23, who, however, also notes that Europe curtailed the 'ecumenical promise' of third-worldism (29-30).

activists such as those of the *Ghadr* movement, traversing these continents.[85] African-American, Pan-African, and anti-colonialist movements also made many common causes.[86] More broadly anti-colonialism, anarchism, radical socialism, anti-racism, as well as hybrid resistant civilizational movements such as Pan-Africanism, Pan-Arabism, Pan-Asianism, Pan-Islamism which, to adapt Prasenjit Duara's remark on the complex relationship between Pan-Asianism and Japanese nationalism, both "fed and resisted" the pull of nation, all exchanged ideas and energies with one another to produce many heady and powerful ideological-political mixtures at various times and in various combinations.[87] The impact of these ideologies and ideological combinations was moreover not confined to anti-colonial mobilization. It persisted after independence in the domestic and foreign policies of many post-colonial nations. Bandung and its many 'afterlives' further speak eloquently to their impact on the international politics of the post-war era.[88]

In short then, politics like life unfolds at different levels and in different spaces between which exist complex overlays, complementarities, tensions, conflicts, and connections. Besides the conventions and expediencies of scholarship, often in practice historians too, will feel impelled to privilege one or another level or locus

[85] Cemil Aydin, *Politics of Anti-Westernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 83-89, 111-21; Anderson, *Under Three Flags*; Duara, "Discourse of Civilization."
[86] Von Eschen, *Race against Empire*; Prashad, *Everybody was Kung Fu Fighting*; Bill V. Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), Chs. 3 and 5.
[87] Prashad, *Darker Nations*; Prashad, *Everybody was Kung Fu Fighting*; Duara, "Discourse of Civilization," 110.
[88] Christopher J. Lee, *The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2010) for essays on 'connections within the global South' and post-colonial histories: *idem*, "Introduction—Between a Moment and an Era: The Origins and Afterlives of Bandung," 2.

for their stories. However it is important to be aware of the reasons and limitations of such choices, and also recognize that no level or locus of analysis can credibly claim finally or definitively to subsume all others, much less render them redundant.

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