International
Theory

SYMPOSIUM: A SYMPOSIUM ON GLOBAL IR

Three visions of the global: global international relations, global history, global historical sociology

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Abstract
Global international relations (IR) generates space for theoretical expressions drawn from outside the experiences of the modern West. Alongside these demands for theoretical pluralism can be found a concern for widening IR's historical frames of reference. Yet, to date, the relationship between global IR and history is the least developed part of the project's agenda. This article suggests two ways in which this relationship can be strengthened. One draws from global history, shows how transboundary connections and relational dynamics forge the units used by advocates of global IR in their analysis: West and non-West, core and periphery, metropole and colony. The other draws from global historical sociology as it advances the role of power asymmetries for understanding the patterns and entanglements in transboundary connections. Connecting global IR to global history and global historical sociology can help produce a fuller understanding of the interactive connections and asymmetrical entanglements between peoples, places, ideas, and institutions that drive historical development. We illustrate this potential through a brief analysis of the rise of the West. This, in turn, demonstrates the ways in which three visions of the global – global IR, global history, and global historical sociology – can be mutually beneficial.

The project to establish a global international relations (IR) is intended to foster space for forms of knowledge production, lived experiences, and theoretical expressions that derive from beyond the confines of the modern West. Not only do proponents of global IR reject the claim that the West provides the only legitimate source for theorizing about world politics, they also seek to integrate 'local' sites of knowledge production into disciplinary debates.[1] Alongside these demands for theoretical diversification can be found a concern for widening IR's historical

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[1]Acharya 2014, 649.

frames of reference. As a number of global IR texts note, Western history is often considered to be the single point of empirical reference for the development and testing of IR theory.[2] Yet, as these texts also make clear, the West is not synonymous with either the international or the global. One of the challenges presented by global IR is to downsize the supersized role of the West in IR's historical imagination and, in the process, provide sturdier, non-Eurocentric foundations for its theoretical debates.[3] This suggests a point of obvious connection between global IR and global history, both as a means of testing theory against a wider canvass and also as a means of, potentially, generating new concepts and theories.[4]

To date, however, the connection between global IR and global history is the least developed aspect of the global IR agenda.[5] Indeed, it is striking how few global IR texts refer to global history given the impact of the latter over the past two decades. During this period, global history has fundamentally challenged the way history is written and helped to reshape much of the discipline.[6] Global history covers a range of approaches that share an interest in transboundary connections: of capital and commodities, weapons and technologies, cosmologies and institutions, and more. The unifying factor within these approaches is a shared critique of the 19th-century approach to thinking about history through national containers, which still characterizes the way history tends to be organized as an academic field. In contrast, global history is concerned with the development and impact of global processes, including those that led to the creation of national units. By decentring the nation-state as the primary unit of analysis, global history seeks to move beyond the Eurocentrism that has been an ingrained feature of the modern discipline of history.[7]

From this starting point, global historians have produced agenda-setting work on subjects that should be of considerable interest to global IR, from the emergence of international law as a global process to the global development of scientific ideas.[8] This interest in substantive historical processes is matched by conceptual innovations. Most notably, the 'connected histories' approach developed by Sanjay Subrahmanyam,[9] and the related notion of *histoire croisée*,[10] have shown how traits taken to be emblematic of a national, regional, or civilizational DNA are the product of transboundary connections between peoples, places, ideas, and

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[2]E.g., Acharya 2014; Acharya and Buzan 2019, 2021.

[3]On Eurocentric histories, see Kang 2020. On Eurocentric theories, see Bell 2020.

[4]The term used in global IR texts is usually 'world history' rather than 'global history'. Despite the somewhat different genealogies and substantive agendas that lie behind these terms, any hard-and-fast distinction between the two is difficult to sustain, and it is telling that pioneering work in the 1990s tended to use the terms interchangeably. See, e.g. Bentley 1990. Given this, we use the terms synonymously. For more on this point, see Lawson and Mulich 2023.

[5]'World history' is one of the six research agendas proposed for global IR in Acharya 2014, 652. For previous attempts to link global IR and global history, see Bilgin 2016; Phillips 2017; Powel 2020.

[6]A useful introduction is provided by Conrad 2016. For a recent debate about the potential and limits of the approach, see Drayton and Motadel 2018.

[7]Zemon-Davis 2011.

[8]On international law as a global process, see Benton and Ford 2018. On scientific knowledge-production as bound-up with global flows, see Ogle 2015.

[9]Subrahmanyam 1997.

[10]Werner and Zimmermann 2006.

institutions. These substantive and theoretical insights have helped to orient global historical work around mobilities (e.g. migration), flows (e.g. of capital), circulations (e.g. of commodities), and exchanges (e.g. of ideas, between transnational networks of experts, across diasporas, and more).

This interest in mobility, flows, circulations, and exchanges generates, in turn, a concern for relationalism. As one prominent global historian writes,[11]

> [G]lobal histories are inherently relational. This means that a historical unit … did not develop in isolation but can only be understood in interactions with others. In fact, many groups only jelled into seemingly fixed units as a response to exchange and circulation. Attention to the relationality of the past also challenges long-accepted interpretations of the history of the world such as the 'rise of the West' and the 'European miracle'.

It is here that tensions between global history and global IR begin to emerge. As pointed out in the introduction to this symposium, in contrast to global history's concern for connections and relationality, global IR has a tendency towards essentialism and its auxiliary claims: substantialism, internalism, and methodological nationalism. This tendency is also apparent in the ways in which advocates of global IR approach history, which is often premised on binary modes of enquiry (e.g. 'Western' and 'non-Western') in which distinct units of analysis (e.g. nations, regions, civilizations) are considered to have developed through separate, internal logics. The vision of the global that emerges from this space is a sparse environment made up of connections between pre-formed entities, which are infused with distinct cultural traits that are, in turn, drawn from 'local' historical experiences. This contrasts with the approach taken by global historians, who seek to unpack the ways in which entities are forged through transboundary connections of multiple kinds and various intensities.

The first aim of this paper is to demonstrate the ways in which an attentiveness to transboundary connections and relationalism can contribute to the global IR project. In the first section, we outline the vision of the global that underpins global IR, arguing that it is premised on an essentialist reading of history. The second section uses insights from global history to develop a relational rather than essentialist basis for analysis of the global. Although global IR is premised on a view of entities before relations, we follow global historians in seeing relations as prior to entities. This move from global IR to global history, and from essentialism to relationalism, is linked to the paper's second aim – to show that a concern for relationalism should be supplemented by analysis of power asymmetries. To this end, the third section of the paper draws on global historical sociology in order to show that the accounts of transboundary connections should be allied to analysis of how, where, and when these connections matter.[12] We outline the core agenda of global historical sociology – the interactive connections and asymmetrical entanglements between peoples, places, ideas, and institutions that drive historical development –

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[11]Conrad 2016, 65.
[12]Go and Lawson 2017.

and use the illustration of the rise of the West to outline its vision of the relationship between the global and history.

The purpose of this exercise is not to place global IR in a winner-takes-all gladiatorial cage match against a tag-team of global history and global historical sociology. Rather, we suggest that global IR can advance its agenda by combining the relational commitment fostered by global history with a concern for power asymmetries drawn from global historical sociology. This combination is, we argue, best captured by the notion of 'structural entanglements': patterns of transboundary connections, structured by asymmetrical power relations, which are generative of global order. As we note in the conclusion, one pay-off of this move is to provide global IR with additional substantive and theoretical resources. A second benefit concerns its normative agenda, shifting emphasis away from points of essential difference to dynamics rooted in shared, if uneven, historical experiences. In this way, the paper outlines what is at stake, both intellectually and normatively, in how three visions of the global – global IR, global history, and global historical sociology – approach history.

The first vision of the global: global IR

For advocates of global IR, the discipline has been tone-deaf to histories from outside the West and dismissive of thinking about IR that has emerged from non-Western spaces.[13] The Western-centrism of the discipline has, in turn, affected what questions are asked, how they are asked, and who has the authority to answer them. This has produced a sense of IR as a gated community, one characterized by insularity, cognitive bias, and unrecognized normative commitments.[14] The consequence of this is the shutting out of forms of knowledge production, histories, and experiences that can widen the source material for a more pluralistic field. A range of concerns follow from this starting point. If IR was opened up, it is argued, it would spend less time on the Cold War and more on colonial wars. It would stop venerating Thucydides, Hobbes, and Kant, and pay more attention to Ashoka, Khaldun, and Fanon. And it would take seriously 'worldmaking' projects that emerge from outside the modern West.[15] In this way, the historical and the epistemological are entwined.

Despite this conjoining of the epistemological and the historical, global IR tends to work with a historical sensibility that reinforces the status quo. Take, for instance, the maintenance in prominent global IR texts of Western-centric 20th-century forms of periodization: pre-First World War, inter-war, Cold War, and post-Cold War.[16] If the goal of global IR is to pluralize disciplinary spaces, it is surprising that this ambition is not matched by a pluralization of its main temporal frames of reference. For many parts of the world, their primary historical points of reference are not well captured by Western-centric periods. In the Middle East, for

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[13]The first explicit call for a project of global IR was made by Amitav Acharya in his 2014 International Studies Association (ISA) Presidential Address, a version of which was published in *International Studies Quarterly* the same year. See Acharya 2014.

[14]Colgan 2019, 307.

[15]Acharya 2014, 648–49. On 'worldmaking' projects, see Getachew 2019.

[16]E.g. Acharya and Buzan 2019.

example, more significant temporal landmarks include the various punctuation marks (1948, 1967, 1973, 1987) provided by the Arab–Israeli conflict and the onset of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary regional projects (1979, 2011). Elsewhere, histories of Western imperialism take centre stage in their temporal imaginations: 1492 for many in the Americas, 1857 for South Asians, and the 'Century of Humiliation' for Chinese publics. Rather than take up this more global optic, global IR stays within a Western-centric framework.

This conventional set of temporal markers is matched by an equally conventional set of theoretical and conceptual markers, most notably the maintenance of a foundational binary between a Western 'core' and a non-Western 'periphery'.[17] This faultline between Western and non-Western is hard to sustain historically, not least because the idea of a singular West is a recent invention. It was only during the 19th century that European thinkers began to trace a linear trajectory from Ancient Greece to modern Europe in which 'progress' was considered to be self-generating through characteristics internal to the West: its pacific nature, its enlightened ethics, its liberal character, and so on.[18] Later in the century, colonial and imperial connections racialized the West as a distinctly White space.[19] In the contemporary world, the notion of the West is a lumpy category, usually a shorthand for north-western Europe and North America, at times including offshoots within the white Anglosphere (e.g. Australia, New Zealand), and at other times extending to a handful of Asian (e.g. India, Japan), and Latin American (e.g. Brazil, Chile) democracies. This suggests that taken-for-granted forms of boundary demarcation deployed in global IR, such as the West and non-West, are not natural, but historically contested constructions forged through transboundary connections.

The same can be said of theories and theorists, which are also given one home by prominent global IR texts: 'core' *or* 'periphery', 'West' *or* 'non-West'.[20] But many elude this positionality. Marxism, for example, began in the West, albeit as a theory written from and for 'backward' parts of the West,[21] but became a global project thanks to Mao, Castro, Cabral, and others. Figures often used by proponents of global IR to represent the 'periphery', such as Raúl Prebisch, Mahatma Gandhi, Benoy Kumar Sarkar, and W.E.B. Du Bois, developed their insights in multiple, international contexts. Prebisch's ideas of dependency were premised on the necessary interrelationship between North–South capitalisms, Gandhi's views of non-violence were formed in opposition to the violence of British rule, in part through his experiences in colonial South Africa, Sarkar drew from Indian political thought as he engaged Western traditions to forward a hybrid view of IR, and Du Bois's global colour line was an extension of his work on American race relations and Jim Crow in the United States. These were figures whose thinking pulled from different worlds, and their ability to be both insider and outsider was an important source of their intellectual and practical creativity, as well as their global influence.

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[17]See, e.g. Acharya and Buzan 2007, 2019, 2021.
[18]Bernal 1987; Morefield 2014.
[19]Lake and Reynolds 2008.
[20]E.g. Acharya and Buzan 2019, 2021.
[21]Shilliam 2009.

This essentialist approach to temporality, theoretical traditions, and historical figures is even apparent in global IR work that explicitly sets out to be relational, exemplified by Qin Yaqing's attempt to construct a Chinese School of IR through the framework of global IR.[22] China, Qin argues, has a distinctly relational culture, one with three dimensions. First, ontologically, relationality is concerned with interconnected events and actors, encapsulated by the concept of guanxi.[23] Second, epistemologically, relationality supports a 'Chinese dialectics' (zhongyong) that is based not on contradictions, as in Western conceptions, but complementariness – a 'both–and' logic oriented at 'coevolutionary harmony' rather than an 'either–or' logic rooted in fundamental antagonisms. The final element of relationality is a distinct subject matter: a 'balance of relations' oriented around reciprocity, exchange, and obligation. Once again Qin contrasts this approach with a Western IR oriented around balance of power considerations measured through material capabilities. For Qin, recognition of a distinctly Chinese worldview is the first step towards constructing a multi-civilizational world that sustains multiple social theories.[24] In this understanding, global IR theorizing is a two-stage process: first, of local meaning-making; and second, of inter-cultural conversation.[25]

Although Qin sees his theory as based on a relational ontology, his two-stage argument places him closer to substantialism. For Qin, local, national, state, and civilizational culture is fixed and unified. And this culture determines understanding and meaning. As discussed in the introduction to this symposium, this view is common within global IR, which often contains the assumption that states, regions, and civilizations are unified and internally integrated.[26] These units, in turn, are associated with a culture that is developed through 'domestic' histories and fixed by territorial boundaries. From this culture can be derived identity, interests, and foreign policy practices. This is an essentialist reading of history and culture, one that neglects contestation and change, and the debates over meaning and significance, which comprise all social orders. Indeed, perhaps the common denominator within social orders is the management of diversity rather than the requirement of homogeneity.[27] In this way, the Qing adopted the 'Eight banner' system as a means of binding imperial elites, the British authorized caste differences as a mode of rule in 19th-century India, and the Ottomans formalized the millet system to recognize and incorporate minority groups in the 18th century. These 'diversity regimes' are bundles of stories, rituals, symbols, and narratives that are not imbibed from the past, but reinterpreted, fought over, and frequently overturned.[28] Some of the most violent conflicts in world history have taken place *within* cultural groups, whether these groups are associated with religions (Sunni and Shia, Catholic and Protestant), regions (Europe's many centuries of inter-polity wars), or political ideologies (Marxist and Anarchist). Cultural groups are not, therefore, 'integrated wholes', but webs of experiences that are forged and reforged, updated and

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[22]Qin 2007, 2016, 2018.
[23]Ibid., xii.
[24]Ibid., 57.
[25]Ibid., 72.
[26]Acharya and Buzan 2007.
[27]Phillips and Reus-Smit 2020, 24–25. Also see Abu Lughod 2008.
[28]Swidler 1986, 277.

mobilized according to changing histories, contexts, and political projects.[29] Social orders are both the producers and the products of inter-cultural relations. And these inter-cultural relations are forged through connected histories.

This is as true of China as it is of any state, culture, region, or civilization. China has had several periods in which it was more like a patchwork of provinces than a functioning central state: the Warring States period, the Yuan and Manchu conquests, and the revolutionary upheavals of the 20th century. At times, this patchwork has been ruled by peoples, including the Manchu and Mongol dynasties, who did not speak Chinese. At other times, minority groups helped to maintain the central state. In this way, Tibetans, Uighurs, Mongols, and other peoples from 'beyond the pass' were central to how China functioned: its military personnel, its symbolic infrastructure, its forms of governance, and more.[30] Settlement and extraction were combined with the incorporation of local elites and practices in an 'intimate dance of diplomacy, coercion, and exchange'.[31] Although court documents were written in Chinese, the Emperor was presented as a clan leader amongst the peoples of the inner-Asian steppe, as a patron of Buddhism in Tibet, and as a khanate amongst Islamic communities in East Turkestan and Xinjiang.[32] It was these frontier zones, as is the case in many empires, which stimulated new ideas and practices, from cartography to administrative reforms, taxation to military tactics.[33] These creative entanglements forged a conglomerate empire rather than a singular order based on cultural homogeneity. Like other social orders, China has been forged and reforged through transboundary connections.

To date, therefore, global IR has tended to operate through an essentialist approach to history. Advocates of the approach see historical development as the product of processes drawn from *within* a particular unit, whether this unit is a culture, nation, region, or civilization – the approach contains an internalist reading of history. Global IR treats these units of analysis as sealed and cohesive – it adopts a substantialist understanding of fixed entities. And these entities, it is argued, contain particular ecologies of concepts and traditions that mark them out from other entities – global IR supports an essentialist reading of natural units that contain immutable properties. In this way, a relational superstructure is grafted onto a substantialist base.

The second vision of the global: global history

The tendency within global IR towards an internalist, substantialist, essentialist view of history is challenged by global historical work oriented around transboundary connections and the relational dynamics that generate units through processes of emergence, reproduction, and contestation.[34] In this way, global history

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[29]Reus-Smit 2018, 37.
[30]Millward 1998, 2020.
[31]Purdue 2005, 544.
[32]Crossley 1999.
[33]Purdue 2005, 392; Kwan 2016.
[34]It is worth noting that ideas of relationality can be found in many cosmologies around the world: amongst peoples in the Pacific (e.g. *whakapapa*), in Latin America (e.g. *Pachamama*), Africa (e.g. *ubuntu*), and elsewhere, including the West.

generates a second vision of the relationship between the global and history, one premised on the ways in which major processes that have forged the modern world contain a relational back-and-forth between entities: West and non-West, core and periphery, metropole and colony.

This relational dance is evident in a range of substantive studies into processes ranging from industrialization to imperialism, and from warfare to world order. Work in global history has demonstrated, for instance, the ways in which British industrialization was intimately bounded up with imperial wars. From 1688 to 1815, around 80% of Britain's public expenditure went on military purchasing, much of it earmarked for the company-states, such as the East India Company, which were the vanguards of imperial expansion.[35] These expenditures were closely connected to textile production, engineering, and similar processes that were, in turn, fundamental to industrialization; the result was a 'military-industrial' society.[36] Comparable work has shown how China's 'Gunpowder Empire' pioneered advances in weapons and tactics alongside the development of banknotes, printing, textile production, and more.[37] Many of these advances spread to Europe; at other times, techniques and strategies of war-making travelled in the opposite direction.[38] These forms of relational exchange affected not only the formation of global order, but the idea of the West itself. If world-order projects have been articulated by Western liberals and socialists, they have also been forged by pan-movements of various kinds, 'Third-World' revolutionaries, Islamists, and more. Ideas of world order do not just speak with just a Western accent. And nor do they originate from *within* the West before diffusing outwards. Rather, processes of capitalism, imperialism, warfare, and world order-making have, however unevenly, tied different parts of the world together through complex processes of tracking and retracking *between* 'Western core' and 'non-Western periphery'. Nations, regions, and civilizations are not substantialist containers, but units that are created, sustained, and contested through transboundary connections.

Contra many of those who write from within the global IR project, therefore, the world has not recently become global.[39] And nor is it the accumulation of interactions between pre-formed entities. Rather, global historians have shown that the modern world is premised on transboundary relations between polities, peoples, institutions, commodities, ideas, and more. These insights are not intended to deny the existence of different national and regional traditions in which IR has been embedded: Scandinavian peace research, Japanese diplomatic history, Latin American de-colonial theory, and more.[40] But these traditions are not particular, internally produced vernaculars. Rather, they are the product of shifting state-society complexes, institutional settings, and transboundary connections. Quite often, these ecologies shift, causing dramatic changes to national traditions. To take one example, German IR shifted from a Realist, geopolitical core before the

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[35]Satia 2018, 7.
[36]Ibid., 107.
[37]Andrade 2016, 19–23.
[38]Ibid.; McNeill 1990.
[39]Acharya and Buzan 2019, 319–20.
[40]On national and regional differences, and similarities, in forms of IR around the world, see Smith and Tickner 2020.

Second World War to a predominantly liberal, human rights focus after it. From a global conflict came a national reorientation. It follows that proponents of global IR should be mindful of seeing either disciplinary traditions or history itself as rooted in internal developments carried out by pre-existing units. Entities emerge from, rather than are produced by, global connections.

The vision of the global offered by global historians reflects advances in scholarship, from work on the formation of international orders to the emergence of disciplinary traditions, which could be of considerable benefit to the global IR project. That said, there are three questions that can be asked of work in this genre. First, global historians have not always matched an interest in connections with a concern for places that are either sparsely connected or not connected at all. In the words of Frederick Cooper, 'the world (…) is filled with lumps, places where power coalesces surrounded by those where it does not, where social relations become dense amidst others that are diffuse'.[41] Second, and linked, global history has paid relatively slight attention to the role of nodal points, such as states, which direct connections or provide limits on them.[42] Third, and most centrally for the purposes of this article, global historians have done relatively little to theorize connections. It is fairly straightforward to demonstrate that the modern world is the product of connected histories. It is more difficult to show that modern global order was *predicated* on transboundary entanglements: the sugar in the English cup of tea,[43] the shock troops that expanded imperial projects into 'unruly' spaces,[44] and the techniques of surveillance that were tested in the colonies before being imported into the metropole.[45] If it is right to say that modern global order emerged from heightened interconnections, it is more powerful to show that it is *rooted* in structural entanglements, by which we mean the ways in which transboundary connections are patterned, routinized, and institutionalized.[46] This provides the basis for a third vision of the global, one that allies a global historical account of the generative role of transboundary connections in the forging of units to a theorization of why, how, where, and when these connections matter. This is the terrain of global historical sociology.

The third vision of the global: global historical sociology

Historical sociology is a long-established interdisciplinary field concerned with incorporating temporality in the analysis of social processes.[47] In its most recent

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[41]Cooper 2001, 190.

[42]Adelman 2015; Meier 2012.

[43]Hall 2021/1991, 48.

[44]Bayly 2004, 256.

[45]Ballantyne and Burton 2012, 351.

[46]As a term, 'entanglement' originated in quantum studies of what Einstein called 'spooky action at a distance': the intertwining of two or more forms in an integral connection, often over long distances. This article makes no claims about quantum entanglements. Rather, we join attempts to deploy the term in the social sciences and humanities, including in: geography (Hecht 2011); sociology (Therborn 2003); history (Cañizarez-Esguerra 2018); anthropology (Tsing 2005); law (Duve 2014); and IR (Zanotti 2019).

[47]For collective statements of intent, see Adams *et al.* 2005; Go and Lawson 2017; Hobden and Hobson 2002. For illustrative examples within IR, see Anievas and Nisancioglu 2015; Buzan and Lawson 2015; Hobson 2020; Lawson 2019; Phillips 2021; Rosenberg 1994; Ruggie 1986.

iteration, 'global historical sociology',[48] the approach emphasizes the necessarily co-constitutive, if uneven, relationships between north–south, colony–metropole, and core–periphery that generate entities: states, empires, regions, and more.

The approach to the global advocated by global historical sociology is premised on two moves. First, with global historians, it seeks to replace the substantialist assumption of separateness that underpins global IR with a focus on relational, transboundary connections. Second, it supplements this vision of the relationship between the global and history with a concern for power asymmetries. As noted above, connections on their own tell us relatively little: they may be fleeting or enduring, deep or superficial, direct or indirect, mono- or multi-directional, inter-personal or impersonal, intimate or bureaucratic. To realize the impact of global historical work on transboundary connections, we need to know which connections matter for which processes. This requires attention to *patterns* of connections, in other words the structural entanglements, premised on asymmetrical power relations, which can be used to explain processes of historical development. This approach points to the incorporative character of historical development. Places, regions, institutions, peoples, and ideas are entangled all the way down. And the patterns generated by these entanglements forge international orders, orders that are sustained and challenged by power asymmetries.

In this way, this third vision of the global asks global IR to make two moves: first from substantialism to relationalism, as advocated by global historians; and second, from transboundary connections to structural entanglements, as advocated by global historical sociologists. The rise of the West, perhaps the core dynamic that underpins modern global order, illustrates how this two-step works.

The rise of the West

Perhaps the pre-eminent explanation of the rise of the West in IR is 'the military revolution' thesis.[49] This thesis argues that, from the mid-16th to the mid-17th centuries, the frequency of European inter-state wars led to a series of tactical and strategic advances, ranging from the development of volley fire to the advent of drill. As armies increased in both professionalism and size, states needed to raise extra revenues, which they accomplished through increased taxes which, in turn, prompted the development of centralized administrations and permanent bureaucracies. The need for revenue required by the intensity of inter-state competition also led European states to support financial institutions that, in turn, delivered the investment required for state-building and advances in armaments, navigation, and shipbuilding.[50] Hence, European states are said to have held a dual advantage: high levels of competition produced innovations in both land armies and naval power. More or less permanent 'war and preparation for war' gave European states a decisive advantage over polities in other parts of the world through a positive feedback loop of competition, innovation, learning, and emulation.[51]

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[48]Go and Lawson 2017.

[49]The original version of the argument is formulated in Parker 1988 and Roberts 1995/1955. For a well-known extension, see Tilly 1990.

[50]Burbank and Cooper 2010, 176.

[51]Tilly 1990, 31.

The problem with the military revolution thesis is that almost none of it is right. Most obviously, by focusing on Europe's internal dynamics as the sources of their strength, advocates of the military revolution have missed the ways in which European powers interacted with, and learned from, polities outside the region. Innovations in volley fire, gunpowder weapons, fortifications, and cavalry did not stem from dynamics internal to Europe, but were part of Eurasian processes of transfer, exchange, and adaptation.[52] The Chinese invented gunpowder, and developed forms of volley fire and fortifications able to withstand considerable bombardment, centuries before their arrival in Europe.[53] And it was the Mongols, at one time the world's largest empire, who pioneered advances in cavalry, using warhorses at the frontline of their raids and conquests. At the same time, the wars that Europeans fought in Asia and the Americas were largely conducted by small expeditionary forces, adventures, and chartered companies that did not use the same tactics or weapons used in intra-European conflicts. Cortes commanded just 900 conquistadores at the Battle of Tenochtitlan; Pizarro even fewer in his campaigns in Peru.[54] For the most part, these forces relied on local allies to do much of the fighting. And the weapons they used were usually swords and armour rather than artillery. As Jason Sharman puts it, 'The way the West fought in the wider world in the early modern period was almost entirely different from the way they fought wars in Europe with respect to nearly every one of the criteria that define the military revolution thesis'.[55]

Perhaps most importantly, the states that were forged in Europe during the early modern period did not lead to the development of sovereignty in a modern sense – European order after the mid-17th century remained a patchwork of marriage, inheritance, and hereditary claims rather than constituting a formal states system.[56] As has been frequently demonstrated,[57] the Peace of Westphalia was less of a break-point than is often considered to be the case. Imperial rivalries, hereditary successions, and religious conflicts remained at the heart of both intra- and extra-European conflicts over subsequent centuries. As such, the Westphalian settlement that marks the end of this period was less a watershed than an affirmation of existing practices, including the centrality of imperial confederation, dynastic order, and patrimonial rule.[58] Indeed, it was just this maintenance of imperialism, dynasticism, and patrimonialism that enabled Europeans to gain a foothold in imperial orders around the world, particularly in Asia. Because Europeans and Asians shared ideas of personalized sovereignty and non-exclusive territoriality, they were able to accommodate each other, as in the Asian maritime

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[52]Andrade 2015.

[53]Ibid., 5–7. For Andrade, outside naval power, the military gap between Europeans and East Asians only emerged in the middle of the 18th century. Headrick 2010 largely agrees. Phillips 2021 sees the military revolution as occurring only in the 19th century with the advent of new technologies such as breach-loading rifles, quick firing artillery, and machine guns on the one hand, and logistical improvements through steamships, the telegraph, and related developments on the other.

[54]Sharman 2019, 35.

[55]Ibid., 34.

[56]Nexon 2009, 265.

[57]E.g. De Carvalho *et al.* 2011; Nexon 2009.

[58]Nexon 2009, 278–80.

entrepots where Europeans leveraged their naval strength into trading and customs rights.[59] Europeans also used high-value commodities extracted from the Americas, such as silver and tobacco, to buy their way into local trading circuits. The super-profits available from these commodities bought them local patronage. In return, Europeans were largely happy to perform the 'cultural statecraft' required to appear as vassals (in south Asia) or as 'stranger kings' (in southeast Asia), using these forms of symbolic obeisance as a means of securing their positions and revenues.[60]

The meeting of peoples from around the world in coastal entrepots and frontier zones led to the formation of hybrid orders. Far from kicking down the front doors of rival empires, Europeans tended to enter regions quietly, through the back door, gradually extending their influence through alliances with local allies: brokers, accountants, civil servants, merchants, fixers, gang masters, artisans, overseers, and the like.[61] The Europeans' naval advantage, based on stout, heavily armed ships built to endure the tough conditions found in the Atlantic, allowed them to extend their reach well beyond their immediate maritime environment.[62] But until the 19th century, for the most part, Europeans remained mainly on coastal fringes, or as one amongst many actors within cosmopolitan centres such as Constantinople, where local powers were usually content to grant them concessions in return for formal submission and the extra revenue that flowed from trade. At other times, Europeans were tasked with pacifying frontier zones, operating 'protection rackets' in return for privileged access to regional trading networks.[63] Whichever strategy they pursued, for many centuries, Europeans were not the central actors in Asian empires; rather, they operated largely around their edges.[64]

These opportunities for arbitrage were vital because, for many centuries, Europeans were often weaker than their adversaries, particularly in Asia. Indeed, there was probably more Asian expansion into Europe between the 16th and mid-18th centuries than the other way around.[65] Whether measured by population, wealth, or military might, Europeans were puny in comparison to the Ottomans, the Safavids, the Mughals, the Ming, and the Qing. In 1600, the Mughal Empire was richer, had more military muscle, and had a higher population that all of Christian Europe combined. At the height of its authority in the late-17th century, its empire incorporated 150 million subjects from Afghanistan to the Bay of Bengal, and produced around a quarter of the world's economic output.[66] At its peak, the Qing empire covered 10% of the world's land surface and incorporated over a third of its population.[67] The Mughal military census in 1595 counted 384,000 cavalry and 4.66 million infantry; the Ottoman fleet that sailed to India in 1538 was larger than anything Europeans could muster for a further two centuries; in 1595, Japan invaded Korea with 158,000 troops, more than European powers could logistically

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[59]Phillips 2017, 2021.
[60]Phillips 2017, 204, 213–19.
[61]Drayton 2019, 344.
[62]Headrick 2010, 51, 73.
[63]Phillips 2021, 182.
[64]Fernandez-Arnesto 2007.
[65]Sharman 2019, 99–100.
[66]Phillips 2021, 123.
[67]Ibid., 146.

manage until the 19th century.[68] In comparison, from the mid-16th to mid-17th centuries, the high-water mark of the military revolution, no European power could maintain a force of more than 150,000 troops.[69] Unsurprisingly, therefore, European powers rarely took on the Asian empires head-on. Rather, they were content to acquire toe-holds within existing imperial orders, either accepting their position as supplicants or settling for complementarity: the Asian empires were the 'lords of the land', the Europeans were the 'masters of water'.[70]

The early modern period, therefore, sustained a 'polycentric world with no dominant center'.[71] Until the final quarter of the 18th century, the principal points of wealth differentiation were within rather than between societies.[72] During the 19th century, things changed radically. By the early part of the 20th century, 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 Asian equivalents.[73] The rapid turnaround during the 19th century represents a major shift in global power. It was enabled by a range of structural entanglements, some of which have already been highlighted: the emergence of military-industrial societies; Eurasian practices of transfer and emulation; incorporative logics of sovereignty, and more. One further example underlines the point: the necessary conjoining of British industrialization with the de-industrialization of its colonies, particularly India. After 1800, the British government ensured that British products undercut Indian goods and charged prohibitive tariffs on Indian textiles. By 1820, British products were being exported in bulk to the subcontinent. By 1850, Lancashire was the centre of a global textile industry, reversing centuries of subcontinental pre-eminence in this area.[74] Within a generation or two, the deindustrialization of India meant that centuries-old skills in 'strategic industries' such as cloth dyeing, ship-building, metallurgy, and gun making had been lost.[75]

The rise of the West is not, therefore, a product of the advantages of intra-European competition. Rather, the rise of the West was sustained by incorporative logics in which sporadic transboundary connections became, over time, patterned, routinized, and institutionalized, constituting structural entanglements. No convincing account of global historical development can proceed from the standpoint of a West conceived as a pre-formed unit defined by internally produced histories. In this sense, West and non-West, core and periphery, and metropole and colony are neither analytically separable, nor empirically discrete. Places, regions, institutions, peoples, and ideas are structurally entangled. And the patterns generated by these entanglements forge international orders, orders that are sustained and challenged by power asymmetries. In this way, the focus by global historians on transboundary connections provides a first step in overcoming the essentialist vision of the global provided by global IR. The vision of the global offered by global

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[68]Sharman 2018, 505–6; Sharman 2019, 170–71.
[69]Parker 1988, 45.
[70]Sharman 2019, 5. Also see Chaudhuri 1985; Subrahmanyam 2012; Pardesi 2017.
[71]Pomeranz 2000, 4.
[72]Van Zanden 2004, 120–21; Bayly 2004, 2.
[73]Bayly 2004, 2; van Zanden 2004, 121.
[74]Parthasarathi 2011, 151–53.
[75]Ibid., 259.

historical sociology delivers a second suite of analytical resources and historical explanations.

The promise of global historical sociology

Like the other contributions to this symposium, this article has examined the ways in which global IR is rooted in essentialist, substantialist, internalist commitments. These commitments are, in turn, premised on historical claims that have been significantly reevaluated by global historians over the past two decades. Not only have global historians provided new substantive accounts of the rise of modern global order, they have also provided novel theoretical insights, most notably the notion of connections. This focus on connections is given extra weight when allied to a global historical sociological account that shows how international orders, both past and present, are produced by interactive connections *and* asymmetrical entanglements. This is not just a question of getting history right for its own sake. Rather, because history is the only 'data' we have, it is crucial that we give a good-enough account of it. And because all theoretical claims rely on assumptions about history, all theorists are also, up to a point, historians. It is time for IR scholars writ large, including those working on global IR, to recognize that how they approach history is just as important as how they approach theoretical work. With this in mind, a concern for transboundary connections and structural entanglements should, we think, be at the heart of the global IR project.

Not only do global history and global historical sociology provide firmer historical foundations and novel analytical resources for analysing contemporary global order, they also serve as a means of linking the intellectual and normative dimensions of global IR. For advocates of global IR, the global is a plural kaleidoscope of cultures, nations, regions, and civilizations. At root, the approach is premised on an ethos of separation: it seeks to situate separate cultural units on a level playing field. This view, in turn, rests on an assumption of transhistorical continuity in which history, culture, and geography play determining roles. However, as the introduction to the symposium warned, this view of historical continuity can serve as the basis for provincial, even chauvinistic, projects.[76] If advocates of global IR cannot effectively counter accounts of eternal historical continuity and essential cultural differences, they run the risk of legitimating them. Global history and global historical sociology demonstrate that 'our' story cannot be delinked from 'their' story. West and non-West, metropole–colony, and core–periphery are unitary fields of analysis that are deeply co-implicated. This does not mean flattening or disavowing experiences of radical inequality – engagements with these experiences are 'awkward' rather than easy.[77] But it does point to a deep-lying, if asymmetrical, interdependence that lies at the heart of modern global order.[78] Interdependence is not envisioned as a consensual category. Rather, it is premised on the friction that emerges from hierarchical patterns of exploitation, dispossession, and debasement.[79] However asymmetrical, these structural entanglements point towards the

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[76]Goswami 2004, 1.
[77]Tsing 2005, xi.
[78]Zanotti 2019, 378.
[79]Tsing 2005.

possibility of 'thinking together',[80] and fostering reparation and restoration, in a way that logics of substantialist separation struggle to sustain.

The mandate that emerges from this analysis has a dual focus: first, writing new histories of transboundary connections; and second, demonstrating the ways in which these connections forge patterns of structural entanglements of multiple kinds and various intensities. History, of course, can reinforce, distort, or silence the past.[81] But it can also recover and demystify it, providing insights that fuel new histories, conceptual innovations, and novel theoretical analysis. The structural entanglements that tied the world together in the past live on in the present: in academic scholarship and teaching that denotes only the West with epistemic authority; in patterns of migration and border practices that see non-white immigrants to Western states demand recognition on the basis that 'we are here because you were there'; in the disdain by former colonized peoples for 'neo-colonial' Western attitudes; in the ways in which periods of world history are organized, regions demarcated, alliances conceived, and more. This article centres these histories as a means of highlighting the ways in which the past is reproduced *and* contested in the present. This, in turn, provides a different set of foundations for those working both within and for a more globally attuned IR.

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[80]Kurki 2022, 834. Also see Niang 2020.
[81]On silencing, see Trouillot 1995.

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