

book, and for a more in-depth treatment of them one must turn elsewhere. Gunneflo, however, provides some important historical backdrop to these timely and pressing issues.

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The Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations, Barry Buzan and George Lawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 421 pp., \$29.99 paper, \$98 cloth.

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This important and impressive book argues that international relations as we know it today was born in the nineteenth century. Buzan and Lawson argue that both the substance of, and theories behind, Western conceptions of international relations are the product of “global modernity,” which they characterize in terms of three processes—industrialization and the extension of the market to a global scale; the reconstitution of the power sustained by processes of rational state-formation; and the new ideologies of progress (liberalism, nationalism, socialism, and scientific racism)—and the way in which these changes combined to generate a Western-dominated, core-periphery global order.

The synthetic power of the book is immensely impressive, and the coherence of the story that it presents will force others to rethink their own view of the making of modern international society. Although it suggests—perhaps rather too insistently—that academic international relations has ignored or downplayed the nineteenth century (compared, say, to Westphalia or Paris 1919), it builds on a considerable body of work that has been developing over the

past twenty years not only in global history, the history of international law, and historical sociology but also within academic international relations itself. In addition to the major argument of the book, outlined above, *The Global Transformation* also provides countless examples of extremely productive engagement with particular literatures and debates: Western modernity vs. global modernity; the role of geopolitics in state-formation and capitalist globalization; and the emergence of Western disciplinary knowledge, especially within the social sciences. Equally, the book reinforces the importance of particular subjects (race, most obviously) whose roles have been increasingly recognized, but which remain on the margins of many accounts of the field.

There are, inevitably, a number of difficulties with the overall argument, some of which follow from the structure of the book. First, page one introduces the idea of a new mode of power that, on the authors’ account, lies at the heart of global modernity and hence of the global transformation. However, although the phrase is repeated, the book does little to elaborate on and then apply this core concept. By

the end the reader can certainly see that power has both shifted and changed in character, but without any well-elaborated understanding of what is involved conceptually or theoretically. Or, to take another example, the authors talk repeatedly about how we live with the “downstream consequences” of nineteenth-century global modernity. The metaphor works very well, but we are left a little uncertain about how best to conceptualize the links between the past and the present.

Second, the book is far stronger on the material side than on the ideational side of the global transformation. Chapter 3 on “Shrinking the Planet” is excellent, and the latter chapters deal expertly with demographic inequality, economic inequality, and changes in military technology. As noted earlier, nineteenth-century ideas focused on various “ideologies of progress”: nationalism, socialism, liberalism, and scientific racism. These were, of course, fundamental, and Buzan and Lawson rightly emphasize their legacy in both the great ideological divide of the global cold war and the post-cold war world. But their account seriously underplays the deep crisis of reason in nineteenth-century Western thought, and the way in which the forces that drove the global transformation were the direct product of the crisis of Western liberal modernity.

The book’s account of religion is emblematic of this shortcoming: Toward the end the authors note the “reappearance” of religion and suggest that “religions have fused with, and to some extent been empowered by, modernity” (p. 294). But this surely ignores the centrality of religion to the very modernity that they describe, especially what Charles Taylor calls the Western “Modern Moral Order.” Similarly, Wilsonian liberalism—perhaps the most powerful example

of a self-described progressivist and globalizing ideology—is difficult to understand from a global perspective without understanding the impact of Christianity and without seeing it, to borrow from Milan Babik, as secularized eschatology.

Third, the book’s lack of chronological organization works partly against the authors’ core argument that international relations needs to take history more seriously. The first part of the book does an excellent job both in presenting a view of global modernity and in showing how it created a global order characterized by inequality and a “centred globalism.” Eschewing chronology, the authors then look at how contemporary global international society has evolved into a “decentred globalism.” The categories they use—different dimensions of material power; the variations in, but also the successes of, state-making across the non-Western world; and the various dimensions of political, legal, and institutional hierarchy—are certainly crucial in making this kind of comparison across time. But by downplaying chronology, many aspects of the historicity of the globalization of international society, especially the tremendous social struggles and deep political contestation involved, remain either off-stage or in the background.

As a result, there is too little in *The Global Transformation* on the diffusion of political agency across the non-Western world. Of course this did involve nationalism and state-formation, but also new understandings of global connectedness, new forms of cosmopolitan and internationalist ideas and practices, and a transformed awareness of the possibilities of political agency. On the side of the dominant West, not enough is made of the ways in which policies aimed at preserving dominance often led, in unanticipated

ways, to its erosion. This has become a theme of historical work on the League of Nations and the United Nations, where finding new forms of justifying empire opened up normative and institutional spaces in which the non-Western world was able to mobilize and to oppose.

Equally, by jumping so directly from the nineteenth century to the present day, the authors downplay earlier phases in the challenge to Western power even when they are crucial to understanding how we have arrived at the decentered globalism of the present day. For example, the 1970s were characterized by a deep-rooted crisis at the core of the capitalist system, by waves of revolutionary upheaval across the developing world, by the emergence of new global issues (such as the environment), and by a concerted set of challenges from the Third World coalition.

Led by the United States, the West responded to these challenges by inaugurating a far-reaching new wave of financial and

economic globalization and by extensive military intervention, especially in the Islamic world. Together these helped secure the “triumph of the West” at the end of the cold war, but simultaneously fueled the forces of challenge and directly contributed to the decentered globalism that Buzan and Lawson see as marking the post-Western world in which we live. There is, then, a great deal more social struggle, political contestation, and nonlinearity in the process by which we got from the global transformation in the nineteenth century to the far more global order of today.

In sum, *The Global Transformation* is an important step in understanding that process, and it provides an invaluable guide to many of the crucial questions and debates. It is also an invitation to further reflection and research.

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Blood Oil: Tyrants, Violence, and the Rules that Run the World, Leif Wenar
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In 1865, upon witnessing firsthand the destitution of the urban poor of Moscow, Leo Tolstoy felt compelled to write *What Then Must We Do?* He was concerned that the condition of the poor was inextricably linked to the actions of others, including his own; and he became determined to pursue self-reliance, convinced that such a way of life would have the least harmful impact on others. In *Blood Oil*, Leif Wenar asks an

updated version of Tolstoy’s question: What should we as consumers do, knowing that our thirst for natural resources contributes to the suffering of citizens in resource-dependent countries?

Wenar’s primary audience is the citizens of Western industrial nations, whose consumption of imported natural resources is prodigious. Ultimately, Wenar does not advocate for the scaled-up version of

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