City, University of London Institutional Repository

IR in the Archive: Uses of Sources in Historical International Relations

Jeppe Mulich

Faculty of History, University of Cambridge

jm2262@cam.ac.uk

ORCID: 0000-0002-7919-1836

Abstract

This chapter considers the ways in which the growing field of historical IR scholarship has been approaching historical source material, primary as well as secondary, and suggests some useful lessons from the methodological debates in disciplinary history. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the ways in which recent IR scholarship has approached the use of history in general and the use of historical sources more specifically. It then delves into a deeper discussion of the two main types of historical sources – secondary sources, or historiography, and primary sources, especially archival ones – showing the limitations, challenges, and benefits associated with the use of these materials. This section is followed by a conclusion that outlines some of the possible trends in the field and potential challenges associated with conducting this type of historical research in IR.

Introduction

The discipline of International Relations has gone through something of a historicist revival over the past two decades. A growing interest in history is changing the discipline, with more and more scholars engaging critically with history as a process, rather than as a passive repository of case studies and datasets. Curiously this emerging body of historical IR scholarship has had relatively little to say about how to do this type of work. With a few notable exceptions (e.g. Suganami 2008; Leira 2015; Cello 2017), the historical turn has largely left debates over methods and methodology to others, preferring instead to focus on theorizing world politics, analyzing historical patterns of interaction, and recharting the history of the discipline itself. The present chapter is in some ways an attempt to start a debate over these neglected topics by considering the ways in which historical IR scholarship has been approaching historical source material, primary as well as secondary, and suggesting some useful lessons from the methodological debates in disciplinary history.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of the ways in which recent IR scholarship has approached the use of history in general and the use of historical sources more specifically. It then delves into a deeper discussion of the two main types of historical sources – secondary sources, or historiography, and primary sources, especially archival ones. This is followed by a conclusion that outlines some of the possible trends in the field and potential challenges associated with conducting this type of historical research in IR.

Historical IR is composed of a very large body of diverse work, often only unified by a shared interest in the human past, and as such it is exceedingly hard to make generalizable statements about the scholarship in the field. It is therefore worth saying at the outset that the following sections will often make sweeping generalizations and paint crude typologies that do not do justice to the diversity of approaches and perspectives within the field. These

typologies are only meant to be useful in thinking through common trends and challenges, not to paint a comprehensive or accurate picture of all the work being done in the field.

Approaches to historical research in IR scholarship

IR scholarship can be said to display three different broad approaches to historical research – history as case study, history as dataset, and history as change over time. These perspectives are of course not mutually exclusive, and many works draw on more than one approach, but distinguishing between them goes some way towards illuminating the patterns of research in the field.

Most work that engages in theory testing or illustration through case studies necessarily rely on history as the main body of examples to draw on. This is true not just for IR but for any social science that makes heavy use of the case study as a research model. Anything that has happened, whether in the recent or distant past, is part of history and as such requires a certain sensitivity to historical context. This poses a certain challenge to theory testing via case study in IR, as much of the theory that has traditionally been put to the test is explicitly ahistorical or claims to be universally applicable irrespective of period.[1] In fact, many of the long-standing theoretical paradigms in IR have no inherent concept of historical time. Despite this conceptual problem, many case studies in practice show a great deal of sensitivity to the historical context of their cases, even when the theory they are testing seems to dismiss time as a relevant factor (e.g. Schweller 2006). Indeed, a major argument in the field has been whether or not case studies taken from different times and

---

[1] As IR scholarship has increasingly move towards middle-range theory, these universal theories have somewhat fallen to the wayside (Jackson and Nexon 2013). That has not solved the issue of historical time, however, as middle-range theory often operates in ways that ignore issues of change over time in favor of situated specificity.

3

places prove or disprove the viability of universal, seemingly ahistorical theories like the balance-of-power (Hui 2005; Wohlforth et al 2007). In this and other ways there has been considerable movement towards a more historically informed use of case studies in IR, especially when they are specifically employed to critique, subvert, or nuance the universalizing claims of existing theories (Nexon 2009; Phillips and Sharman 2015).

The second major approach is to see history as a repository of quantifiable data. Almost all quantitative work in IR starts with what is in one way or another historical material, in the sense of being aggregates of past events, but the extent to which this data is treated as *history* varies greatly. As with case studies, there is a spectrum of approaches from a more ahistorical mode of organizing and charting data drawn from an undifferentiated or generalized past to a much more granularly historical mode of inquiry that retains some degree of context. On the one end of the spectrum we find large-scale datasets like the Correlates of War project which seek to provide the tools to identify generalizable and, ideally, universal rules based on observable patterns in the aggregate. History as a source of Big Data, if you will. On the other more granular end are studies like Edward Keene's work on nineteenth century imperial treaties (2014) or Ryan Griffiths' study of twentieth century secessions (2014), both of which aggregate and quantify events across fairly broad swaths of time but do so with an explicit awareness of their historical context and while emphasizing the importance of seeing them as embedded within longer trajectories, rather than as abstracted data points.

The third approach is arguably the one closest to disciplinary history – namely to see history first and foremost as a process of change over time. This encompasses a broad set of works that ask actual historical questions or in other words seek to explain why and how certain aspects of international politics have emerged, changed, or disappeared over the course of history (Hobson 2004; Zarakol 2011; Leira 2011; Reus-Smit 2013; Buzan and

Lawson 2015; Halperin and Palan 2015). It also covers research that has focused on charting and explaining variation over time, whether in state forms, international systems, or specific practices (Spruyt 1994; Ferguson and Mansbach 1996; Buzan and Little 2000).

The English School in particular has a longstanding tradition of taking this approach to historical work (Bull and Watson 1984; Watson 1992; Keene 2002) and the same is true for constructivist studies of norm development (Bartelson 1995; Thomson 1994), but other schools of thought have tended to think less about history as a process of change and more as a relatively static series of events. This has arguably changed with the reinvigorated interest in historical IR in the past few years, and currently time and change are emerging as topics of fruitful discussion in their own right (e.g. Hom 2018; Younis 2018). These trends have gone some way towards moving the discipline beyond a narrow fixation on points of origin towards other ways of thinking through change over time (de Carvalho et al 2011; Buzan and Lawson 2014), exemplified by recent works that fuse together historical and IR perspectives in novel and conceptually productive ways (e.g. Anievas 2014; McCourt 2014; Bayly 2016).

As mentioned above, these three broad approaches are not mutually exclusive but can be combined in various ways. Work that explicitly theorizes change over time usually incorporates analysis based on datasets or case studies, and the move towards mixed methods in the field means that big-picture quantitative analyses are often supplemented by more in-depth qualitative case studies, and vice versa.

Uses of sources

All of the approaches outlined above can be based on primary or secondary sources or, as is increasingly the case, a mix of the two. While synthetic historiographical work was long the standard in IR, more scholarship is now being produced on the basis of primary source historical research. This work often relies on specific genres of sources, the choice of which

tend to correspond to certain historical subfields with their own internal debates and developments. Thus, changing methods in international history have been reflected in the way in which IR scholars have used official diplomatic correspondence and similar archival materials, and the fields of legal history and international law and organizations have developed in frequent conversation with one another. Meanwhile, other methodological trends and innovations in disciplinary history have been much slower to filter into historical IR work, for both good and bad reasons.

The most frequently used primary sources remain official government documents of various kinds, including diplomatic dispatches, policy white papers, parliamentary debates, and similar texts typically found in national and state archives. This body of material roughly equates to what international or diplomatic historians have been basing their work on since the birth of history as an academic discipline in the nineteenth century, and state archives remain the preferred repositories for a great deal of historians. As international history went through its own internal crises in the 1980s and '90s, confronted by mounting criticisms of parochialism and insularity posed by transnational historians, the solution was by and large to move towards a more global and multi-archival research program, rather than one rejecting the fundamental centrality of government archives (Iriye 1989; Westad 2000). IR scholars have found similar use for these types of official sources, which document the myriad ways in which states interact through diplomacy, military conflict, treaty negotiations, or aid programs. The reading of such officially produced texts has also been fruitfully combined with the personal papers of actors involved in the events being studied, whether they are diplomats, politicians, or other on-the-ground actors, in order to flesh out accounts that might otherwise appear as overly top-down narratives (Helleiner 2014; Barkawi 2017).

In a somewhat similar vein, IPE scholars make frequent use of historical sources in the form of statistics, trade data, and demographic information recorded by governmental and

non-governmental bodies. This type of information, the bread and butter of economic historians, might not always appear to researchers as an example of historical source material, but it is none the less subject to many of the same issues and challenges as other non-numerical sources are. Even when statistical yearbooks and similar reports are mined as input for aggregate data sets, as described above, good research practice is to submit them to a critical reading that pays attention to their historical context and potential distortions or limitations (Cipolla 1991). This is especially important since the creation of such sources was often quite a self-aware act of mapping out societies and economies, with the explicit aim of shaping their future trajectories (Tooze 2001).

A different body of IR scholarship, more broadly tied to the historical subfield of intellectual history, has relied on another type of sources – published theoretical, scholarly, or polemical texts. The intersection of political theory and intellectual history has long been a thriving area of study, and many IR scholars interested in subjects like war, peace, and sovereignty have at various times engaged with debates in this interdisciplinary field (Bartelson 1995; Teschke 2003). Such interactions have increased substantially in the past decade, as intellectual historians have engaged in a more sustained fashion with the global and international dimensions of their subjects (Moyn and Sartori 2013; Armitage 2013) and IR scholars for their part have reexamined the historical dimensions and trajectories of key theoretical concepts (e.g. Costa Lopez et al 2018; Rosenboim 2017). Because of the inheritance from both intellectual history and political theory, IR work of this type operates with what is arguably the most fully articulated methodological foundation in the field, even if it is largely characterized by a single approach – that of the contextualist Cambridge school (Skinner 1969). Perhaps because of its precarious relationship to neighboring academic fields, IR as a discipline has always seemed unusually obsessed with its own foundations and genealogy. In recent years, this longstanding meta-disciplinary work has been enriched

greatly by a growing literature on the intellectual history of IR, presenting close readings of momentous debates and uncovering marginalized bodies of work in the discipline's past (i.e. Ashworth 1999, 2012; Vitalis 2015). This more inward-looking historical work is somewhat distinct from the work on international political thought that traces the discursive genealogy of concepts and ideas, but it employs some of the same methodologies borrowed from intellectual history, often paired with theories taken from sociology and history of science.

Another set of sources frequently used by IR scholars are those of court cases and legal records, which not surprisingly implies a kinship with legal history. Scholars of international law and organizations have made use of a variety of legal sources to illuminate questions of norm development, institutional arrangements, and the transition from imperial to post-imperial international systems (Keene 2007; Kinsella 2011; Yao 2018; Mantilla 2018). These materials include treaty texts, charters, conventions and accords, and other sources of international law, alongside court transcripts and trial records, especially from international judicial bodies like the ICC and the ICJ. Legal sources that fall outside this body of well-established modern international law are still relatively underused in IR work, but there are some examples of emerging scholarship engaging with everything from medieval canon law to revolutionary constitutions and transnational legal debates (Becker Lorca 2014; Costa Lopez 2016; Mulich 2017). The broader field of international law has recently witnessed an interesting internal debate over the use of historical materials. Scholars like Anne Orford have argued that the use of historical methods in international law has by and large been for the purpose of "policing anachronism" with a narrowing and "conservative effect on international law scholarship." (2017: 301). This critique has been countered by legal historians, most prominently Lauren Benton, who argues that it is "based on a limited understanding of the historical approach it criticizes" and ignores what has in fact been a flourishing of different historical approaches and methodologies in recent years, most of

which are not just interested in contextualizing particular moments and texts but seek to add significantly to contemporary understandings of law and legal politics (2019: 2-3). This debate is illuminating because it points towards an issue in international studies more broadly, namely a tendency among some scholars to collapse differences and see history as a single perspective, more concerned with myth-busting or providing contextual correctives than with generating theoretical contributions of its own.[2] Such accusations of needless historicism risk stymying the growth of a subfield that is in some ways still germinating, blocking much-needed methodological debates rather than participating in them in productive ways.

Despite the flourishing of historical scholarship in the field, there are still many types of sources that have been put to comparatively little use. This is especially true for the broad swath of unconventional historical materials that have permeated disciplinary history since the cultural turn of the early 1980s, including visual sources, literary texts, and various examples of material culture. In part the explanation for the lack of engagement with this body of sources lies in the type of research questions IR scholars are traditionally interested in asking, including those associated with state power, inter-polity interactions, and large-scale organized violence. Nonetheless, as the cultural turn has shown even the most traditional political questions can be illuminated from non-traditional angles and sources that seem to belong in one domain often have a lot to say about other aspects of the world (e.g. Winter 1995; Cregan 2007; Eustace 2012). Indeed, some of these themes have begun to filter into IR scholarship, through recent engagements with cartographic sources and the spatial

---

[2] This distinction between IR as a theory-generating field and history as a space to craft narratives and provide context is present even in work that sets out to lessen the divide between the two, including several of the contributions to the pioneering volume *Bridges and Boundaries*. See Elman and Elman (2001) and, for a critique, Lawson (2010).

turn in history (Branch 2014; Goettlich 2018) or with the history of science (Caraccioli 2017), as well as via re-readings of well-known events through unexpected sources, including spiritual and religious texts (Shilliam 2013).

Finally, another welcome recent trend has been the gradual shift in chronological attention backwards in time. For a long time, the majority of historical IR work using primary sources focused on modern or contemporary history, seemingly satisfied with covering those periods that left easily identifiable ministerial and departmental archives behind, preferably of the sort containing mostly type-written pages. The reasons for this narrowed focus are manifold and arguably have as much to do with practical accessibility as they do with intellectual justification, but a growing body of literature shows that engaging with the world before the twentieth century, and beyond western states, can be immensely productive. This scholarship has covered topics ranging from the medieval origins of inter-polity systems to the political practices of early modern East Asia, but a common thread running through the work is that temporal or spatial broadenings of our research can lead to radical reimagining of what exactly constitutes international relations, and how the international itself came to be in the first place (for recent overviews, see Bain 2017; Brook et al 2018).

Engaging the historiography

The alternative to doing archival research is, essentially, to rely on the archival research of others. Using secondary sources as the main basis of historical analysis is not inherently problematic. Indeed, it can often be desirable or even necessary, either due to the scope of the project or because of linguistic or other barriers to work in primary sources. But doing this type of synthetic, historiographical work does present challenges different from those associated with archival research.

Perhaps the greatest challenge is to engage the historiography as a living body of work, rather than as a source of static information. History as a discipline is characterized just as much by debate, contestation, and revision as IR is, but too often historical works are approached with the presumption that they present largely agreed-upon narratives or uncontentious analyses (Lawson 2010). This is just as problematic as if one were to read a defensive neorealist account of nuclear disarmament, with the assumption that it represented the settled academic consensus in IR. The problem is only exacerbated when the historical works drawn upon are of an older date, representing perspectives that are not just parts of a multi-sided debate but also lag behind later revisions and discoveries.

In this sense, then, historiography is a moving target. Drawing on secondary sources requires a certain understanding of the ongoing debates of the field and relaying these contentions in some way is an important aspect of writing synthetic historical IR. Historical interpretations cannot and should not be treated as settled fact in the majority of cases. What is more, the debates in history might mirror some of the debates in IR, but others are wholly distinct and work under different logics and with different stakes. This makes the problem even harder and demands more of the IR researcher in terms of reading broadly in the historical literature (MacDonald 2009).

The work on China's historical role in world politics provides an illuminating example of this challenge. The long history of regional politics in East Asia has garnered renewed interest because of China's rise in the post-Cold War world, and a slew of work has been published on the topic within IR. The Qing Empire has been a particular focus of study, given its importance as an expansionist power in both East and Central Asia during its reign from the mid-seventeenth century to the Xinhai Revolution in 1911. However, much of this work has relied heavily on the so-called Harvard school of China scholarship, primarily associated with the late John K. Fairbank and his many doctoral students. This work was

especially influential in the United States from the 1950s to the 1970s, but it has continued to frame certain themes in Chinese historiography. These themes include the centrality of the Opium Wars as the origin point of "modern" Chinese history; the contrast between the pre-modern Qing Empire and the modern colonial empires of nineteenth century Europe and America; and the sinicization or integration of the Manchu ruling elite into the dominant Han Chinese culture, most closely associated with historian Ping-ti Ho (1967).

Around the same time that IR scholars began turning their eyes to China as a rising power, in the 1990s, a renewed interest in the Qing Empire reverberated through Chinese history. What became known as the New Qing History provided a strongly revisionist interpretation of the Manchu Dynasty, in large part because of a new focus on Manchu language sources, rather than the previous reliance on sources produced in Chinese (Waley-Cohen 2004). This shift in sources and methods led to a range of major revisions, including a move from the older sinicization thesis to one emphasizing the longevity and importance of Manchu identity; a reinterpretation of the nineteenth century as a moment of crisis and reform, rather than forceful modernization wrought by outside forces; and a global or comparativist turn, casting the Qing Empire as another example of a multicultural, expansionist colonial empire, alongside rather than contrasted with contemporary empires like the Ottomans or the British (Elliott 2001; Hostetler 2001; Perdue 2005). Unfortunately, these historiographical developments have taken a very long time to filter into the predominant IR narratives, which too often continue to rely on outdated and overly simplistic visions of China's historical role in East Asia (for recent critiques see Chong 2014; Phillips 2018).[3]

---

[3] The story is further complicated by the response to the New Qing History within the People's Republic of China. Many modern-day Chinese historians thus reject the revisionist take on the Manchu Dynasty, but from a very different standpoint than the older US historiography. Namely, the

At times the problem is less about overly complicated historiographies and more about underdeveloped ones. This was arguably the case when IR scholars rediscovered the history of mercenaries, as modern private military companies (PMCs) became a major topic of conversation at the turn of the twenty-first century. A slew of works were published, which in different ways interrogated the history of mercenary companies, public/private violence, and emerging state regulation of force, primarily in order to make statements about contemporary challenges posed by PMCs. But most of this work relied on secondary sources for their historical analyses, and these sources were in many cases really only one account – the work of Anthony Mockler. As Sarah Percy has convincingly shown, this reliance on a single secondary source led to the reproduction of what was essentially a flawed narrative about the history of mercenaries, with serious implications for the analytical and policy-oriented conclusions drawn (Percy, 2007). Relying on a single source is always problematic, especially when that source is rather spectacularly out of date.

Thinking through the archive

Perhaps the greatest limitation of relying solely on secondary sources is that it prevents us from answering questions we did not know to ask. Working with secondary sources sets up certain historiographical parameters, and despite our best attempts at reading the literature in creative ways we are still limited by the original research of others. The only solution, then, is sometimes to venture into the archives ourselves, not just to find answers that do not appear in other works but also to discover new questions. Historical hypotheses and research questions have to evolve in a hermeneutic way during the process of archival research. In this

notion of seeing China as a colonizer rather than a colonized power flies in the face of the official CCP narrative, as does the emphasis on expansionism and contestation rather than peaceful coexistence within Asia (Wu 2016).

sense the archive is not just a space for *answering* questions or testing hypotheses but also one for *generating* those very questions. The historical immersion associated with sustained archival work is, perhaps, the best antidote to presentism and ahistorical tendencies. But the archive is, of course, not without problems.

Archives can be understood in a narrow and a broad sense. The first, and perhaps the most common in the Anglo-American academy, is as organized collections of documents pertaining to the past. These are often created by government bodies, but can also be non-governmental collections associated with companies, universities, or other public or private organizations. In the broader sense, archives can be seen as repositories of information about the past. This is not limited to textual sources, official or otherwise, but can include everything from images, sounds, sculptures, and landscapes – natural as well as man-made (Boyer 1994; Hayden 1995; Stoler 2013). Even the bodies of historical subjects, living or dead, can be seen as archives in their own right, presenting physical maps of lived experiences (Newman 2003).

Archives composed primarily of textual sources remain the most commonly used ones, in history as well as in IR, and official state archives are chief among them. The move towards digitization means that more and more of these collections are now available remotely, at least selections of them, and along with published source collections and online databases of other primary sources, like The Avalon Project (at Yale Law School), the David Rumsey Historical Map Collection, or Early European Books Online, the twenty-first century scholar can do a great deal of international historical research from the comfort of a university office or a library work station.

Even if one uses online and digitized archival holdings, a certain level of immersion should still be the goal. This need not be a comprehensive commitment in the Skinnerian sense (Skinner 1969), a feat which is not just Herculean in scope but also runs the risk of

missing the tree for the forest, but it does require a critical and creative engagement with the archive and its materials. While it might be strategically useful, simply dipping into archives in order to pull out choice quotes and illustrative snippets does not provide much in terms of new discoveries, making it particularly hard to uncover things that you did not know to seek out in the first place. It also prevents one from engaging in a deeper reflection on the nature of the information stored in the archive, an exercise that requires more than just a brief visit or a keyword search, but which is crucial to fully comprehend the implications of the knowledge generated through archival research.

Archives are not uncontested or neutral spaces. Rather, they are sites of social and political authority and continued negotiation – manifestations of historical power and of narratives that stretch across time, often well into the present (Cook and Schwartz 2002). Knowledge is produced and stored in an archive through processes of selection and silencing, infused at every step with the power to narrate the past. This might seem like a commonsensical notion in a post-Foucauldian world, but the long shadow cast by Ranke and other empiricist nineteenth century historians means that too many scholars still think of the archive as a site of unfiltered truth, or at the least as a sort of neutral knowledge bank (Steedman 2001).

Awareness of the production of knowledge requires the ability to identify and read historical silences. According to Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly." (1995: 27). Archives have their own histories and silences are introduced throughout the process of archiving the past – both in the initial creation of files, in the subsequent selection of materials to preserve, and in later processes of revision, curation, and censoring. Not all sources survive, sometimes because of historical coincidences, when an archival site is struck by natural disaster, when a careless curator or

guest misplaces a file, or when a fire ravages a government building, and sometimes because of political or strategic choice. Such choices are often made in a deliberate effort to obfuscate and rewrite the past, making the work of historians difficult. This was certainly the case during the period of decolonization in the British Empire, from the 1950s to the 1970s, as the Colonial Office engaged in Operation Legacy – a massive effort to destroy or conceal any and all documents that might embarrass the imperial administration (Sato 2017). The British Empire was hardly alone in such efforts, making it challenging to get a full picture of a host of events even after purported declassification dates.

Imperial and colonial archives are perhaps the best example of the relationship between knowledge, power, and the selective preservation of the past. As Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler have pointed out:

> … it is clear that the colonial archives on which we are so dependent are themselves cultural artefacts, built on institutional structures that erased certain kinds of knowledge, secreted some and valorised others … We cannot just *do* colonial history on our given sources; what constitutes the archive itself, what is excluded from it, what nomenclatures signal at certain times are themselves internal to, and the very substance of, colonialism's cultural politics. (1997: 17-18).

Colonialism thus created its own archive, leaving behind vast amounts of information that are extremely hard to disentangle from their imperial origins and yet remain the most comprehensive source of information about those very structures we have available. Archives are not only examples of colonial and state power, but also of the sexual and gender relations

embedded into this power (Burton 2007).[4] The erasure of non-male subjects in so many archival records is but one example of an even broader gendering of archival materials that led nineteenth century pioneers of disciplinary history to characterize the practice of archival research as among the most masculine of academic activities (Smith 1998: 116-129). In the words of Leopold van Ranke, the task of the professional (male) historian was to seek out the sources locked away in the archive like "so many princesses, possibly beautiful, all under a curse and needing to be saved." (Quoted in Smith 1995: 1165).

While power relations thus infuse the archive at multiple levels, this should not prevent us from making creative use of the sources contained within it. Reading primary sources against the grain has long been a tradition in historical work, and it is often a necessary part of the process of archival research. Deconstructing the silences in the archive is, as Trouillot indicated above, one part of this task. But there are other ways to recover information that the archive was never meant to provide. Documents produced by courts, governments, and intelligence agencies can provide intimate windows into the lives of individuals swept up in the processes of governance and surveillance, whether in revolutionary Paris (Darnton 1983; Farge 2013) or in DDR-era Berlin (Ash 1997). Entire colonial archives can be read not as storehouses of facts but as ethnographic sites, revealing social epistemologies of force and governance from the past and present. Proclamations, trials, and decrees can be used to uncover legal, social, and political practices, when participants are no longer around to be observed or interviewed in person (Burbank 2004; Brown 2008). All of these approaches naturally require care, so as not to delve too far into

---

[4] On the broader relationship between colonial power, knowledge, and gender, see in particular the work of Anne McClintock (1995). For more recent historiography, see the edited volume by Stephan Miescher, Michelle Mitchell, and Naoko Shibusawa (2015).

speculation or unfounded conjecture, but they are none the less extremely useful when moving beyond the bare claims to historical truth presented in the archive itself.

All of this to say, then, that archival materials are extremely useful for those interested in historical IR, but they require careful reflection; close and sometimes unorthodox reading; and an appreciation of what is stored and said as well as what is silenced or left out.

Conclusion

The advice given in the preceding sections can be summed up as follows: see historiography as a living body of work, continually developing through ongoing debates and contestations; and think of the archive as a partially charted territory, requiring maps as well as a willingness to seek out still-unexplored corners with an open mind. As with most other methodological guidelines, this is of course easier said than done and conducting historical work within IR adds its own challenges.

There are major practical challenges associated with conducting immersive archival research. The very act of reading primary sources can demand particular skills, as many older documents require training in paleography or specialized language studies to be decipherable. Language itself is often a barrier to entry, especially when it comes to the type of multinational work that IR scholars typically engage in. Some of these linguistic barriers can be offset with translated sources, but that adds another layer of interpretation and selection between the researcher and the materials. Finally, there are the logistical challenges associated with spending weeks in archives across the world, something that is both costly and time-consuming – and which has led many a historian to focus on rather narrow questions, which can be comfortably answered from the convenient and air-conditioned reading rooms of the US National Archives in College Park or the British Library in London.

Yet the rewards of doing granular, multi-sited work are well worth the effort it takes to access these repositories, as long as one is conscious of their limitations. What is more, both linguistic and logistical challenges can be overcome to some extent by transnational collaboration between researchers, something historians have traditionally been rather hesitant to do, but to which IR is more accommodating.

A different obstacle to archival work in IR is the limit of space. IR is still predominantly a journal discipline, and work that makes extensive use of archival sources requires a significant amount of space.[5] This is arguably one of the main reasons why history is still one of the few disciplines overwhelmingly focused around the academic monograph. The limitations of journal word counts thus make it hard to produce the kind of work that draws extensively on original archival research and moves beyond a single case study, but recent trends might point toward some partial solutions. First and foremost is the Annotation for Transparent Inquiry initiative (ATI), which for all its potential issues does provide ways of adding further materials and deeper historiographical materials as appendices, annotations, and expanded discursive notes. For an interesting and promising example of this type of work in practice, see the online appendix to Paul Musgrave and Daniel Nexon's article in *International Organization* (Musgrave and Nexon 2018). Such additions to articles are still only partial solutions, however, and the fact remains that broad historical work still benefits tremendously from the expanded scope of monographs, a seemingly endangered genre within IR scholarship.

A challenge for those engaging in historiographical work is keeping up with parallel but not always overlapping or even mutually engaged literatures. Seeing historiography as a

---

[5] It is telling that many IR journals still do not have established ways of referencing archival materials in their style guides, leaving it up to individual authors and editors to handle something that ought to be determined by more universal standards.

moving target requires a type of sustained engagement with the literature that is hard enough to keep up with within one's own subfield, let alone in other fields. But it is a challenge worth taking up and perhaps an indication of a broader need for increased interdisciplinary engagement on issues and questions of common interest. This is not just a task that falls to the historically inclined IR scholar, however, as historians would do equally well to engage with the thriving field of historical IR despite the perceived barriers to entry.

As IR has once again become interested in serious historical work, the discipline of history has done disappointingly little to engage IR scholarship. While the dying breed of diplomatic historians have always been relatively happy to engage in conversations with IR scholars (e.g. Haber et al, 1997; Gaddis, 1997), newer currents of global and transnational history have been less involved in those types of cross-disciplinary engagements. This is a shame as the recent interest in historical work within IR provides a unique opportunity to foster dialogue between the fields, a dialogue that would no doubt be beneficial to both sides. While IR scholars have much to learn from historians at the methodological level, as has hopefully been made clear throughout this chapter, historians – and particularly global historians – have plenty to learn from IR as well. Even as global historians have done much to showcase how no historical processes or actors can be fully isolated from the transnational processes of the past two centuries, they have done relatively little to theorize these entanglements, leading to conceptual gaps in what are otherwise fascinating accounts of the history of globalization. In a similar vein, global historians can learn from IR scholars when it comes to thinking through the connections between the various levels of analysis they employ. Conceptualizing how micro- and macro-historical analyses of global and regional processes fit together is a question that historical IR is uniquely well-situated to answer, and

which global historians have avoided tackling for too long.[6] There is, in other words, plenty of room for further cooperation and mutual learning in the disciplinary space between history and IR.

---

[6] For a full discussion of these and other potential points of engagement, see Lawson and Mulich (forthcoming).

Suggestions for Further Reading

Arnold, J. et al (eds.) (2017). *History after Hobsbawm: Writing the Past for the Twenty-First Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burton, A. (ed.) (2005). *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Farge, A. (2013). *The Allure of the Archive*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Lawson, G. and J. Hobson (2008). What is History in International Relations? *Millennium*, 37(2): 415-435.

Sewell, W. (2005). *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Stoler, A. (2009). *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tilly, C. (2006) Why and How History Matters. In R. Goodin and C. Tilly (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 417-437.

Bibliography

Anievas, A. (2014). *Capital the State and War*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Armitage, D. (2013). *Foundations of Modern International Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ash, T. (1997). *The File: A Personal History*. London: HarperCollins.

Ashworth, L. (1999). *Creating International Studies*. London: Routledge.

Ashworth, L. (2012). The Poverty of Paradigms: Subcultures, Trading Zones and the Case of Liberal Socialism in Interwar International Relations. *International Relations*, 26(1): 35-59.

Bain, W. (ed.) (2017). *Medieval Foundations of International Relations*. New York: Routledge.

Barkawi, T. (2017). *Soldiers of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bayly, M. (2016) *Taming the Imperial Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bartelson, J. (1995). *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Becker Lorca, A. (2014). *Mestizo International Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bell, D. (2007). *The Idea of Greater Britain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Benton, L. (2019). Beyond Anachronism: Histories of International Law and Global Legal Politics. *Journal of the History of International Law*, 21: 1-34.

Blaney, D. (2017) Late-Victorian Worlds: Alfred Marshall on Competition, Character, and Anglo-Saxon Civilisation. *Political Power and Social Theory*, 32: 127-152.

Branch, J. (2014). *The Cartographic State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brook, T., M. van Walt van Praag, and M. Boltjes (eds.) (2018). *Sacred Mandates*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Boyer, M. (1994). *The City of Collective Memory*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Brown, V. (2008). *The Reaper's Garden*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Bull, H. and A. Watson (eds.) (1984). *The Expansion of International Society*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Burbank, J. (2004). *Russian Peasants Go to Court*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Burton, A. (2007). "Archive Stories: Gender in the Making of Imperial and Colonial Histories." In P. Levine (ed.), *Gender and Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 281-294.

Buzan, B. and G. Lawson (2014). Rethinking Benchmark Dates in International Relations. *European Journal of International Relations*, 20(2): 437-462.

Buzan, B. and G. Lawson (2015). *The Global Transformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Buzan, B. and R. Little (2000). *International Systems in World History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Caraccioli, M. (2017). The Learned Man of Good Judgment: Nature, Narrative and Wonder in José de Acosta's Natural Philosophy. *History of Political Thought*, 38(1): 44-63.

Carvalho, B. de, H. Leira, and J. Hobson (2011). The Big Bangs of IR: The Myths That Your Teachers Still Tell You About 1648 and 1919. *Millennium*, 39(3): 735-758.

Cello, L. (2017). Taking History Seriously in IR: Towards a Historicist Approach. *Review of International Studies*, 44(2): 236-251.

Chong, J. I. (2014). Popular Narratives Versus Chinese History: Implications for Understanding an Emergent China. *European Journal of International Relations*, 20(4): 939-964.

Cipolla, C. (1991). *Between History and Economics*. Walden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.

Cook, T. and J. Schwartz (2002). Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory. *Archival Science*, 2(1): 1-19.

Cooper, F. and A. Stoler (eds.) (1997). *Tensions of Empire*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Costa Lopez, J. (2016). Beyond Eurocentrism and Orientalism: Revisiting the Othering of Jews and Muslims through Medieval Canon Law. *Review of International Studies*, 42(3): 450-470.

Costa Lopez, J., et al (2018). Forum: In the Beginning There was No Word (for it): Terms, Concepts, and Early Sovereignty. *International Studies Review*, 20(3): 489-519.

Cregan, K. (2007). Early Modern Anatomy and the Queen's Body Natural: The Sovereign Subject. *Body & Society*, 13(2): 47-66.

Darnton, R. (1984). *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*. New York: Basic Books.

Elliott, M. (2001). *The Manchu Way*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Elman, C. and M. Elman (eds.) (2001). *Bridges and Boundaries*. MIT Press.

Eustace, N. (2012). *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Farge, A. (2013). *The Allure of the Archives*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Ferguson, Y. and R. Mansbach (1996). *Polities: Authority, Identities, and Change*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.

Gaddis, J. (1997). History, Theory, and Common Ground. *International Security*, 22(1): 75-85.

Goettlich, K. (2018). The Rise of Linear Borders in World Politics. *European Journal of International Relations*, OnlineFirst (2018): 1-26.

Griffiths, R. (2014). Secession and the Invisible Hand of the International System. *Review of International Studies*, 40(3): 559-581.

Haber, S., D. Kennedy, and S. Krasner (1997). Brothers under the Skin: Diplomatic History and International Relations. *International Security*, 22(1): 34-43.

Halperin, S. and R. Palan (eds.) (2015). *Legacies of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hayden, D. (1995). *The Power of Place*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Helleiner, E. (2014). *Forgotten Foundations of Bretton Woods*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Ho, P. (1967). The Significance of the Ch'ing Period in Chinese History. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 26(2): 189-195.

Hobson, J. (2004). *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hom, A. (2018). Silent Order: The Temporal Turn in Critical International Relations. *Millennium*, OnlineFirst: 1-28.

Hostetler, L. (2001). *Qing Colonial Enterprise*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Hui, V. T. (2005). *War and State-formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Iriye, A. (1989). The Internationalization of History. *American Historical Review* 94(1): 1-10.

Jackson, P. and D. Nexon (2013). International Theory in a Post-Paradigmatic Era. *European Journal of International Relations* 19(3): 543-565.

Keene, E. (2002). *Beyond the Anarchical Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Keene, E. (2007). A Case Study of the Construction of International Hierarchy: British Treaty-Making Against the Slave Trade in the Early Nineteenth Century. *International Organization,* 61:2 (2007): 311-339.

Keene, E. (2014). The Standard of "Civilisation", the Expansion Thesis and the 19th Century International Social Space. *Millennium*, 42(3): 651-673.

Kinsella, H. (2011). *The Image before the Weapon.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Lawson, G. (2010). The Eternal Divide? History and International Relations. *European Journal of International Relations*, 18(2): 203-226.

Lawson, G. and J. Mulich (forthcoming). Global History and International Relations. In M. Bukovansky et al (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of History and International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Leira, H. (2011). The Emergence of Foreign Policy: Knowledge, Discourse, History. PhD dissertation, University of Oslo.

Leira, H. (2015). International Relations Pluralism and History – Embracing Amateurism to Strengthen the Profession. *International Studies Perspectives*, 16(1): 23-31.

MacDonald, P. (2009). Those Who Forget Historiography Are Doomed to Republish It: Empire, Imperialism and Contemporary Debates about American Power. *Review of International Studies*, 35(1): 45-67.

McClintock, A. (1995). *Imperial Leather*. New York: Routledge.

McCourt, D. (2014). *Britain and World Power since 1945*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Mantilla, G. (2018). Forum Isolation: Social Opprobrium and the Origins of the International Law of Internal Conflict. *International Organization*, 72(2): 317-349.

Miescher, S., M. Mitchell, and N. Shibusawa (eds.) (2015). *Gender, Imperialism and Global Exchanges*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.

Mockler, A. (1969). *The Mercenaries*. New York: Macmillan.

Moyn, S. and A. Sartori (eds.) (2013). *Global Intellectual History*. New York: NYU Press.

Mulich, J. (2017). Empire and Violence: Continuity in the Age of Revolution. *Political Power and Social Theory*, 32: 181-204.

Musgrave, P. and D. Nexon (2018). Defending Hierarchy from the Moon to the Indian Ocean: Symbolic Capital and Political Dominance in Early Modern China and the Cold War. *International Organization*, First View: 1-35.

Newman, S. (2003). *Embodied History*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Nexon, D. (2009). *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Orford, A. (2017). "International Law and the Limits of History." In Werner, de Hoon, and Galán (eds.), *The Law of International Lawyers: Reading Martti Koskenniemi*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 297-3120.

Percy, S. (2007). *Mercenaries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Perdue, P. (2005). *China Marches West*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Phillips, A. (2018). Contesting the Confucian Peace: Civilization, Barbarism and International Hierarchy in East Asia. *European Journal of International Relations*, 24(4): 740-764.

Phillips, A. and J. Sharman (2015). *War, Trade and Rule in the Indian Ocean*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reus-Smit, C. (2013). *Individual Rights and the Making of the International System*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rosenboim, O. (2017). *The Emergence of Globalism*. Cambridge University Press.

Sato, S. (2017). "Operation Legacy": Britain's Destruction and Concealment of Colonial Records Worldwide. *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 45(4): 697-719.

Schweller, R. (2006). *Unanswered Threats*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Shilliam, R. (2013). Intervention and Colonial-Modernity: Decolonising the Italy/Ethiopia Conflict through Psalms 68:31. *Review of International Studies*, 39(5): 1131-1147.

Skinner, Q. (1969). Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas. *History and Theory*, 8(1): 3-53.

Smith, B. (1995). Gender and the Practices of Scientific History: The Seminar and Archival Research in the Nineteenth Century. *American Historical Review*, 100(4): 1150-1176.

Smith, B. (1998). *The Gender of History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Spruyt, H. (1994). *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Steedman, C. (2001). *Dust*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Stoler, A. L. (ed.) (2013). *Imperial Debris*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Suganami, H. (2008). Narrative Explanation and International Relations: Back to Basics. *Millennium*, 37(2): 327-356.

Teschke, B. (2003). *The Myth of 1648*. London: Verso.

Thomson, J. (1994). *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tooze, A. (2001). *Statistics and the German State, 1900-1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Trouillot, M. (1995). *Silencing the Past*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Vitalis, R. (2015). *White World Order, Black Power Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Waley-Cohen, J. (2004). The New Qing History. *Radical History Review*, 88: 193-206.

Watson, A. (1992). *The Evolution of International Society*. London: Routledge.

Westad, O. A. (2000). The New International History of the Cold War: Three Possible Paradigms. *Diplomatic History* 24(4): 551-556.

Winter, J. (1995). *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wohlforth, W. et al (2007). Testing Balance-of-Power Theory in World History. *European Journal of International Relations*, 13(2): 155-185.

Wu, G. (2016). New Qing History: Dispute, Dialog, and Influence. *The Chinese Historical Review*, 23(1): 47-69.

Yao, J. (2018). "Conquest from Barbarism": The Danube Commission, International Order and the Control of Nature as a Standard of Civilization. *European Journal of International Relations*, OnlineFirst: 1-25.

Younis, M. (2018). Race, the World and Time: Haiti, Liberia and Ethiopia (1914-1945). *Millennium*, OnlineFirst: 1-19.

Zarakol, A. (2011). *After Defeat*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.