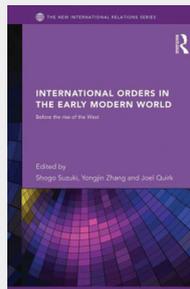


International Orders in the Early Modern World Before the Rise of the West

Edited by Shogo Suzuki, Yongjin Zhang and Joel Quirk
London: Routledge, 2014, xviii+214 pages, \$140, ISBN 9780415626286.

Reviewed by Sung Hee Ru

THIS BOOK is an in-depth study that investigates the international relations between the western and non-western world while challenging the Eurocentric ideas of modern international relations. Significantly, all authors demonstrate how non-western countries' international relations are important to understand global history and why Westphalian-oriented international relations are misunderstood in the early modern era. The main idea in this book that contemporary international relations theories found it difficult to stand their fundamental ground on the notion that western countries are so dynamic, as western-centered global dominance is natural and eternal while non-western countries are static and passive that they do not play a leading role on the international stage. By analyzing not only "cross-cultural interactions" before the rise of the west but also various regional international orders in non-western regions, this volume convincingly shows there had been "lopsided," "unilinear," and "myopic" views of the international relationship context unlike the dominant IR theory of "cohesive," "homogenous," and "evolutionary" views. In this context, this book basically challenges the main ontological assumptions of Eurocentric IR scholars. As Ayla Göl argues, it is time to remove the "iron curtain" of misunderstanding of international relations between the west and non-western countries.



The book has nine chapters, covering international relations of non-western countries in the early modern period. Each part describes how western countries had relations with non-western countries, such as Mongolia, the Ottoman Empire, China, Japan, India, America, and Africa until 1850 and how Mongolia, the Ottoman Empire, China, and Japan held a superior position on the international scene than western countries. Iver B. Neumann, Ayla Göl, Yingjin Zhang, and Shogo Suzuki highlight "the existence of plural international order" and break of "government by a single set of norms and institutions of the European world." Essentially, they aim to debunk Eurocentric historiography of how Europeans have tried to bury the fact that non-western countries had controlled western countries.

In addition, Darshan Vigneswaran and Charles Johns raise questions about English school approaches that focus on the contributions of "the expansion of a European society of states" and "a standardized norm and institution" of the western-oriented world. Darshan Vignesqaran insists English school approaches provided us with few resources to understand the Indian conquest of England because they not only disregarded the "corrupt culture" among British and Indian rulers but also misrepresented primary actors in the British-Indian relations. Charles Johns cast

doubts on “a single set of norms and institutions” of the European world. Johns argues that the international relations of America was compromised not by a single rule of imperial sovereign states but by organized colonial communities and indigenous polities, including imperial sovereign states. In other words, international relations in America were organized by various groups and are not understood as a convergence of an idealized set of modern norms or institutions.

Joel Quirk and David Richardson assert that different types are necessary to understand the patterns of the early modern cross-cultural exchange between Europe and Africa, in contrast with modern IR scholars, who tended to focus “narrowly upon a specific subset of cases associated with the history and theory of European imperialism and colonialism.” For Quirk and Richardson, it is important to rediscover neglected elements of cross-cultural exchange and open different approaches and interpretations about international relations between European and Africans.

I agree that Eurocentric IR assumptions have established distorted and biased views about non-western regions. In this sense, the book asks substantial questions about modern IR theories. But I raise two questions about this book. First, all the authors in this book basically accept the “early modern world” as non-western regions’ golden age before the rise of western expansion. Indeed, the title of the book is “International Orders in the Early Modern World.” However, the concept of the “early modern world” was defined by precisely this western-oriented standard. Just to underline the point again, the “modern age” originated from a western-world standard. The modern age is the time period when Western countries expanded their power to

the non-western world on the basis of the superiority of the Western world’s presumed linear and evolutionary European standards. It is ironic that all of the authors in the book embrace European-based period classification while at the same time they strongly criticize Eurocentric IR theories. We consider the origin of the concept of the “early modern world” as a period classification. If non-western areas have their own golden age and unique modernized age, as the book insists, it would be more relevant to redefine the scale of the time periods rather than to use the “early modern world” based on the Eurocentric reference.

Second, as Yongjin Zhang insists, it is true that western countries first approached China to gain favor from the Qing government before the nineteenth century. And existing IR scholars pay little attention to Sinocentric international relations before the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, the one-way relationship on the basis of a sino-centric world order is not very convincing. For instance, as Yongjin argues, it may be true that Western countries were more active and aggressive in terms of commercial trade with China. But China was as desperate as the western countries. China needed international trade with the west because of the dwindling Qing silver deposit; the Qing government had to import massive amounts of silver through international trades after establishing a silver standard for tax payments. From 1500 to 1800, China imported about 85 percent of the world’s silver, which was mainly produced in Mexico or Peru. Without intermediate trade with western countries, China would have had difficulty importing silver from America and sustaining a silver-based tax system during the Qing regime. Considering the fact that China also had its own desperate reason to open ports, international re-

lations based upon the China-centered world seems exaggerated.

Although there are some issues with the book, no one can deny its contribution to reconsider “conventional thinking in the study of international relations.” Obviously, this book’s

overall aim of reassessing European thinking in the study of international relations is well represented. The sharp but productive criticisms of contemporary international relations theories offer valuable insight into future studies focused on historical approaches in a non-European/Eurocentric context.

The United States and Great Power Responsibility in International Society

Drones, Rendition and Invasion

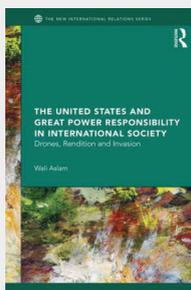
By Wali Aslam

Abingdon: Routledge, 2013, 174 pages, \$145, ISBN 9780415644686.

Reviewed by Dimitrios Anagnostakis

THE MAIN AIM of this book is to evaluate from a normative perspective the foreign policy of the United States (US) and, in particular, US conduct of the “war on terror.” The central research question that the author seeks to answer is whether US behavior is close to the behavior one would expect from a responsible great power. The US has justified and supported the invasion of Iraq, the use of drones for targeted killings, and the extraordinary rendition of terrorist suspects claiming that these actions were necessary for maintaining international order, peace, and stability. The US’ position was that it was within the responsibilities of great powers, such as the US, to preserve this order and stability. According to the author, the above justifications beg the question of whether the US has indeed behaved responsibly.

To answer this question Wali Aslam employs a normative framework based on the English School of international relations theory.



According to this framework, the benchmarks for evaluating great power responsibility are three-fold: legality, legitimacy, and prudence. While legality is related to the compliance of states with international law, legitimacy is related to whether there is an international consensus about the appropriateness of a state’s measures or actions. With regard to prudence, it concerns the consequences of an actor’s actions and it is linked with the concepts of deliberation and foresight. The author employs the above framework in three cases: the US operation “Iraqi Freedom,” the US drone strikes in Pakistan, and the US practice of extraordinary rendition. His central argument is that in the three cases, which were examined, US foreign policy was not responsible; in other words, the US actions were not legal, they lacked legitimacy, and they lacked the element of prudence.

Starting from the author’s methodological approach, the rationale for choosing the cases