

enue/spending ratio cannot replace the causal effects coined by Ross's 2001 article. On the issue of authoritarianism, that article should still be read and taught as an addendum to the book.

The Oil Curse is a landmark book that brings together explanations about the impacts of oil on various key issues from authoritarianism to patriarchy, from conflict to development. It combines qualitative and quantitative methods in a truly interdisciplinary *tour de force* of political,

economic, and social analyses. The book is an excellent source for policy makers as well as scholars of various disciplines, especially Middle East studies.

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Endnote

1. Michael Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy," *World Politics*, April 2001.

Global Perspectives on Global History: Theories and Approaches in a Connected World

By **Dominic Sachsenmaier**

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 331 pages, ISBN 9780521173124.

What is global history? How does one study it? These are the main questions Dominic Sachsenmaier wants to answer. "It depends" seems to be his answer. Essentially, he argues against a single definition, rationale, and method for global history and shows the presence of multiple and equally valid global, historical perspectives. Debates in the United States, Germany, and China on global history all exemplify this variation.

For Sachsenmaier, strong forces have propelled the study of global history. To start with, an increasing number of historians have illustrated the inadequacy of the dominant Westphalian and Eurocentric paradigms which academia has taken for granted since the 19th century. Moreover, the forces of globalization, like immigration and global civil society, challenge historians to find new ways of understanding historical interdependencies. Luckily,

these same forces provide historians with easier travel and communication opportunities that enable collaborative research extending beyond national boundaries.

Yet, no consensus exists on what global history entails. Confusingly, Sachsenmaier uses the term four different ways. First, global history is simply a historian's work on a country other than her own. Second, it is a study that focuses on cross-regional interactions. Third, it is a work that goes beyond the dominant, simple national narratives; it "complexifies" the historical record by bringing in marginalized voices. Finally, it is the recognition of diverse traditions of historiography in different parts of the world.

Human interest about the past is as old as antiquity, but the organized study of the past as an academic discipline is rather recent. Sachsenmaier traces the academic discipline of history to the nineteenth

century. Before that, the writing of history was done with an unapologetic ethnocentrism in the name of one's religion, culture, or state. With European colonization, the spread of the Westphalian nation-state model, and the emergence of modern universities in the 19th century, historians have focused on European categories, perspectives, and epistemologies. As a result of this myopic focus, the nation- and state-centrism dominated the academia. Additionally, as state rulers controlled the purse, the majority of university-based historians embraced the ideals of the nation-state and wrote histories that were nation- and state-centric.

In almost every corner of the world, academic historians have presented the nation as the main container of history (a community whose existence can be unproblematically projected back onto history), the state as the most civilized reflection of the nation's aspirations, and the West as source of unquestioned dynamism in world history. Even if nationalist, Marxist, or liberal scholars differed in particulars, according to Sachsenmaier almost all of them accepted the notion of "scientific progress" and used European categories, concepts, and benchmarks as universal. These historians have largely molded history to fit into the narratives of nation, state, and European superiority.

Sachsenmaier describes how the aforementioned orientation started to decline in the 1970s. Scholars coming from different critical perspectives—dependency theory, subaltern studies, and postcolonial theory—started to object to premises privileging the nation and the state. The emergence of global history as an academic trend has been closely tied to these criticisms but has been also shaped by local factors.

In Sachsenmaier's account, three factors are behind the rise of interest in global history in the US. First, the post-WWII preeminence of the US in world politics was associated with the funding of an array of area studies programs in American universities. Second, critical perspectives have been enormously influential in American academia. These critical voices questioned basic nation-state premise; this began with feminist theorists and critical race theorists, followed by dependency and postcolonial theorists, like Edward Said. Finally, in parallel with the pluralization of the American society, academia witnessed increasing racial and ethnic diversity and members of these groups pushed for a new understanding of history, one compatible with global history.

Compared to the US, the influence of global history in Germany has remained limited. Departing from the path of Weber and Spengler, the academy in post-WWII Germany turned inward. Sachsenmaier argues that this isolationist approach fit well with German academia's strong tendency to thinking about history in national terms. Five factors have challenged this national focus: the interest in Germany's brief—yet consequential—colonial adventure; Holocaust scholarship; the pluralization of German society; the interest in comparative history (which challenges the German self-understanding of *sonderweg*, special path); and interest in and available funding for interdisciplinary work.

Finally, Sachsenmaier discusses how the Century of Humiliation (1842-1949) shaped the Chinese mental map, fostering a keen interest in European, American, and Japanese histories. Following the Chinese Revolution, Russian history was added to the list and Marxist history dom-

inated Chinese academic perspectives. Following the death of Mao, three factors changed the practice of academic history in China: an increase in Chinese academics with foreign PhD; the rise of Chinese economic and political prowess; and, less significantly, the influence of new critical perspectives, like dependency and subaltern theories. These influences led Chinese scholars to embrace global history and move away from Eurocentrism. Yet, these forces also strengthened the nation- and state-centric narratives.

Sachsenmaier also elaborates on how the intellectual benefits of global history can be realized. He offers three: 1) focus on multilateral instead of nation-centric visions of the past; 2) the use of multiple perspectives, carrying an interdisciplinary ethos, and engaging in self-reflection; and

3) fostering cross-boundary academic collaboration. If all these are done in with changing academic structures and mental maps, interest in global history will provide new intellectual possibilities.

The weakening of the nation state, the decline of Eurocentric versions of history, and the increasing pace of globalization have all invited a reexamination of the past. These three case studies on global history illustrate uneven, complex, and varied understandings of global history. A global convergence on a single understanding of global history is unlikely. By analyzing these debates and presenting them clearly, Sachsenmaier provides a great service to historians and social scientists.

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US Presidents and Foreign Policy Mistakes

By Stephen G. Walker and Akan Malici

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Socrates' pupil Chaerephon once asked an oracle "who is the wisest of all men?" The oracle responded that Socrates is the wisest of all because of his self-awareness. According to philosophers from Socrates to Montaigne, Spinoza, Kant, true wisdom and full knowledge may be a utopian fantasy. In a world of uncertainty where mistakes are unavoidable facts of daily life for citizens and politicians alike, how politicians will be able to avoid foreign policy mistakes is the main concern of this book. There are some other questions of crucial importance which the book deals with: What are foreign policy mistakes

and how and why do they occur? The answers to those questions are available in this book and it concentrates on the concept of power. Regarding the concept of power, the main question is "kto-kovo?" (Lenin's famous question, "who controls whom?") The answers to the question "what are foreign policy mistakes?" and conceptualizing foreign policy mistakes are quite blurry and complicated. There may be lots of different kinds of mistakes, such as violating moral rules, lack of cognitive judgment, and policies costing too much and having unanticipated and undesirable results. The mistakes can be