1 INTRODUCTION

It is not controversial to say that a small group of mainly Western powers, plus Russia and Japan, have dominated world politics since the early nineteenth century (Buzan and Lawson, 2015). Neither is it controversial to say that the modern discipline of International Relations (IR), which grew up during that period, has been largely shaped by that experience (Acharya and Buzan, 2019). Much of its thinking rests on the assumption that, in all the ways that matter, Western history more or less is world history. It is a story, and a way of thinking, told by the winners, and that is the basis for the potent charge of Eurocentrism made against it. We take that charge seriously for two reasons. First, there are other stories and ways of thinking about IR that have been overridden by Western dominance. If we are to build a more properly global discipline of IR, or what we call Global IR, we need to bring those stories in. Second, the period of Western dominance is now coming to an end, and the fabric of the winners' story of IR is wearing thin not only around the edges but in the middle. Those with other stories are re-emerging as centres of wealth, power, and cultural authority. As they do so, they bring their own stories, concepts, and ways of thinking into the contemporary practice of, and thinking about, IR. These marginalized stories and ways of understanding are thus being reinserted into the contemporary world order, with China, India, and the Islamic world being in the vanguard.

The aim of this book is to uncover these marginalized stories by conducting reconnaissance missions into the thinking and

practice of international relations/world order in India, China, and the Islamic world. This aim can be understood in two ways. First, it uncovers what IR theory might look like had it been developed within civilizations other than the West. This is not just an eccentric, if entertaining, venture into alternative history. The main reason for attempting it is that, as we have argued at length in earlier works (Buzan, 2011; Acharya, 2014; Buzan and Lawson, 2015; Acharya and Buzan, 2019), this question has profound implications for both the contemporary practice of international relations and the academic discipline whose job it is to think about and theorize that practice. Second, it opens the door to rethinking the history, concepts, and theories of modern IR. Do these previously marginalized stories and ways of thinking share much common ground with modern IR, or do they challenge it in basic ways? Are concepts shared, and if so do they carry the same meanings, or is the existing repertoire destabilized by alternatives reflecting different histories?

In our understanding, the international system/society is now rapidly moving into a structure of *deep pluralism*. By this we mean that substantial parts of the former periphery/colonial world are successfully acquiring modernity on their own terms and catching up with the West not just in wealth and power but also in the wielding of cultural and political authority. In many places, that new wealth and power, and recovered cultural authority, are already significant enough to pose military, economic, legal, social, and political challenges to the West. In addition, they are widely linked to a still strongly felt postcolonial resentment: to get a measure of this one has only to look at the importance China still attaches not only to remembering its 'century of humiliation' but also to making it an active factor in its day-to-day foreign and domestic policy. By contrast, while public opinion in the West remains sensitive to racism in its domestic spheres and histories, it has largely forgotten about, or marginalized, the racism and coercion it exercised against other peoples during the imperial era, even though white nationalists within it are re-legitimizing racism

in relation to contemporary migration. When Hedley Bull (1984) worried about the Third Worlds' 'revolt against the West' nearly forty years ago, that revolt could still be, and largely was, ignored because the newly decolonized states and peoples behind it were mostly poor, weak, and culturally emasculated. The West largely satisfied itself with some commitment to give foreign aid to the Third World in the hope that development along liberal lines would somehow be easy and automatic. Modernization theory assumed that modernization effectively meant Westernization (Spruyt, 2020: 344–6). Now, substantial parts of the former periphery are growing strong and knocking on the door of the core. They are finding, or in some cases such as China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore have found, their own paths to modernity, and they are not clones of the West but distinctive syntheses between their traditional cultures and modernity. Their historical grievances against the West and Japan can no longer be sidelined.

The era of Western domination, when a handful of first-round modernizers, mostly white, European countries plus Japan, dominated the international system/society and shaped it for their own interests and preferences, is visibly coming to an end all around us. A new and novel international structure is emerging in which the homogenizing effects of shared modernity are accompanied by growing cultural and political differentiation. Capitalism won the Cold War, not liberal democracy, and all of the major powers are now capitalist in some sense. This outcome makes a big change from the world order before 1989. But that shared capitalism is differentiated into many political forms, ranging from democratic to authoritarian (Buzan and Lawson, 2014), and reflects different cultures across the spectrums from individualist to collectivist and from hierarchical to egalitarian. The resulting dialectics are embedded in the highly interconnected and interdependent world that the West created. The emerging world order of deep pluralism is not only powered by the spread and deepening of modernity but the very unfolding of modernity is now generating shared fate problems on a global scale from climate change

and disease control, through mass extinctions and pollution, to economic management, cybersecurity, and terrorism.

This transition of the global international system/society to deep pluralism poses profound challenges to IR as a discipline. As we argued in our recent book (Acharya and Buzan, 2019), modern thinking about IR over the last two centuries has quite closely followed the practice of international relations.[1] To be blunt about it, and as is often pointed out by postcolonial scholars, this has resulted in IR being a highly Eurocentric discipline. It is not just a notable irony that the discipline designed to study humankind as a whole should be so parochial in its perspective, it is an existential problem in urgent need of correction.

The reasons for this situation are clear. The modern discipline of IR was formed during the last two centuries, exactly coinciding with the time when Western civilization became dominant and imposed itself on all the others. That imposition created a kind of overlay during which, for the first time in history, one civilization became not only fully global but also hegemonic. The modern discipline of IR was developed precisely when the West had the whip hand over everybody else, and this conjuncture inevitably made it Eurocentric. From the mid-nineteenth to the early twenty-first century, it could plausibly be argued that Western history and particularly the political economy of modernity led by the Anglosphere had in important respects become world history and global political economy.

Whether that was true or not, what mattered was that it was widely believed to be true in the West and accepted as substantially true by many modernizers elsewhere, who saw their job as trying to acquire modernity in order to restore their wealth,

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[1] We make a quite sharp distinction between modern IR thinking, which got going during the nineteenth century, and pre-modern thinking about it, which largely reflected the concerns of agrarian, dynastic, and mostly imperial, polities. For the arguments supporting this view, see Buzan and Lawson (2015), Acharya and Buzan (2019), and Buzan and Lawson (forthcoming).

power, and status against the West. Speaking about nineteenth-century Japan, R. Taggart Murphy (2014: 63) brilliantly summarizes the extent of the challenge posed by the Western 'standard of civilization' to non-Western states and peoples:

> *The Meiji leaders faced three urgent and intertwined tasks. They had to build a military strong enough to act as a deterrent to Western imperialism. They had to assemble the capital and technology needed to turn their country into an industrial power sufficiently advanced to equip that military. And they had to create the institutions necessary not only to accomplish these other tasks but to convince the West that Japan had accumulated the prerequisites for membership in the club of countries that were to be taken seriously. That meant not only a credible military – preferably evidenced by victories in imperialist wars waged on weaker lands – but also such institutions as parliaments, courts, banks, monogamy, elections, and ideally, Christian churches, not to mention familiarity with Western ways and appearances in such matters as architecture, dress, sexual mores, and table manners. It was only by governing as leaders of a convincing imitation of a modern imperialist nation that these men could persuade the West to revise the Unequal Treaties and thereby wrest back control over their country's tariff regime and security apparatus from the Europeans.*

Modern IR was founded, and evolved, during this entirely singular moment in world history, and it is thus neither surprising nor a matter for retrospective moral condemnation that as a consequence the discipline was cast in a Eurocentric form. Under the circumstances of the time, it is difficult to imagine how things could have evolved otherwise. We see little point in condemning the past for not living up to the insights and moral values of the present. Now, however, it is more than past time to move on from these Eurocentric foundations, and to recast the discipline of IR in fully global terms. Failure to do so invites both academic and moral questions of a very serious kind.

Although an oversimplification, it remains broadly true that contemporary mainstream IR theory is still not much

more than an abstraction of Western history interwoven with Western political theory both classical and modern. Realism is an abstraction from eighteenth-century European balance-of-power behaviour combined with sixteenth and seventeenth century, and indeed ancient Greek, political theory. Liberalism is an abstraction from nineteenth and twentieth-century Western intergovernmental organizations and theories of political economy. Marxism is an abstraction from another branch of nineteenth and twentieth-century European theory of political economy and historical sociology. The English School is an abstraction from nineteenth-century European diplomatic behaviour and a long European tradition of legal theory resting on the assumption that all law, including international law, presupposes the existence of a society. Constructivism is not so obviously abstracted from Western practice but is drawn from Western philosophy of knowledge. Because IR came into being when the West quite literally either ruled or dominated the world, it has been largely built on the assumption that Western history and Western political theory *are* world history and world political theory. Now that those peculiar conditions are coming to an end, IR needs urgently to address itself to a much more pluralist world in which modernized cultures additional to the West are increasingly powerfully in play, both materially and ideationally. Whether IR could have, or should have, made this move earlier is, in our view, beside the point. It needs to do so now.

In this emerging world, several longstanding civilizations, most notably China, are steadily achieving the fusion between their traditional cultures and the revolutions of modernity that the West and Japan underwent during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Koyama and Buzan, 2019; Buzan and Lawson, 2020). This is not a revival of the pre-modern world of different classical civilizations but something quite different and new. Just as traditional Western and Japanese cultures were transformed by modernity into something very different, so too is modernity transforming other classical cultures. While

all will share a substrate of modernity, each will have blended modernity and its own culture in a distinctive way. The well-established idea of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt, 2000) is now reshaping both the distribution of power and the nature of global international society.

A useful theoretical framing for capturing this development is Justin Rosenberg's (2010, 2013, 2016; Buzan and Lawson, 2016) work on uneven and combined development (UCD), which stands as an alternative to Kenneth Waltz's (1979: 76) theory. Both Waltz and Rosenberg see 'socialization and competition' as consequences of 'combination' (i.e., units interacting within the same system). But they disagree about their effects: Waltz famously favouring homogenization into 'like units' and Rosenberg arguing oppositely that the particular timing and circumstances of socialization and competition necessarily produce variable outcomes. The extreme conditions created by macro-historical transformations such as the one that took place during the long nineteenth century expose the logic of the latter with great clarity. Major transformations of this kind have a distinct point or points of origin in which a particular configuration emerges and is sustained. This configuration is produced and reproduced through inter-societal interactions across time and space, generating diverse outcomes. These interactions can be coercive, emulative, and/or reactive, and each social order that encounters the new configuration has its own way of adapting to it. Some social orders do not take on the new configuration at all, either because of internal resistance to the changes it requires or because of attempts by leading-edge polities to maintain inequalities between them by denying access to elements of the transformation. Others succeed in developing indigenous versions of the new configuration. 'Late' developers are not carbon copies of the original adopters but develop their own distinctive characteristics.

In this sense, the interactions between different social orders produce not convergence but (often unstable) amalgams of new and old. For example, during the nineteenth century, the

German and the American industrializations were not replicas of British development but took distinct forms, even as they borrowed from the British experience. Likewise, Soviet and, more recently, Chinese development also maintained their own characteristics, combining new technologies and productive forces alongside inherited social formations. Through the analytic lens of UCD, it becomes clear that development is multilinear rather than linear, proceeds in fits and starts rather than through smooth gradations, and contains many variations in terms of outcomes. One indicator of the ways in which polities adapted in diverse ways to the nineteenth-century global transformation is the variety of ideologies that have emerged to define different assemblages of economy, politics, and culture in the modern world: liberalism, social democracy, conservatism, socialism, communism, fascism, patrimonialism, and more.

UCD underlines how and why the deep pluralist world order now emerging from the ongoing spread and deepening of modernity will be as much – or more – culturally, economically, and politically differentiated as homogenized. This new configuration will reshape not just the practice of international relations but also how IR is thought about and theorized. We need to get some sense of what kinds of thinking about IR these newly transformed civilizations will bring with them. How will their ideas and concepts fit with, and/or compete with, the highly West-centric theoretical construction that the discipline of IR currently reflects?

In order to get this process underway, we take a first look at the thinking and practice about 'international relations', or more broadly 'world order', that went on in three major centres of classical civilization: China, India, and the Islamic world. For this purpose, *world order* is a broader and more useful concept. It does away with the word 'international', which is closely linked to the Westphalian type of interstate order, and helps us analyse the wider range of polities and the relationships among them that characterized the five millennia of world history that preceded modernity. Studying how classical civilizations understood world

orders can broaden the study of IR in several ways. First, it helps us to understand, and if necessary challenge, the dominance of certain key ideas that claim to be universal and have largely been taken for granted in IR as such. This could be one way of addressing the problem of Eurocentrism in the discipline: for example, the dominance of Westphalian sovereignty, anarchy, and balance of power, which marginalizes other forms of statehood and international order building through history, such as empires or universal monarchy or universal peace.

Second, and conversely, the study of civilizations helps us to illustrate the multiple sources of key ideas such as human rights, international law, moral and functional norms, international institutions, and power politics. These concepts are often assumed to be derived from European history but may well have other origins. Understanding the global roots of key ideas in IR could make them appreciated as genuinely universal, and hence give them even greater importance and legitimacy. Third, the study of classical civilizations helps discover neglected or forgotten ideas, processes, and practices that have been ignored or understudied but are fundamental to understanding how the world works, past, present, and future. Examples of these are the Chinese *Tianxia*, Islam's synthesizing or bridging role between the East and the West, the Indian Maurya King Ashoka's idea of moral conquest, etc. While history may not repeat itself, it offers us a range of symbols and possibilities when we examine ideas and institutions of the past such as the hierarchical system/society, empires, sovereign systems, and the tributary system. These ideas and practices might facilitate a better understanding of the behaviour of rising powers such as China, India, Iran, and Turkey. Their current leaders are invoking the past to explain and legitimize their current foreign policy and strategic behaviour, which in turn is a key element of contemporary world politics. At the same time, uncovering these ideas and practices enriches the repertoire of theory and method in IR and comparative politics. IR is not just about relationships of power and wealth. It is also about the flow of

ideas and innovations. Studying IR from a historical-civilizational perspective opens the door to a greater understanding of relationships based on the creation and diffusion of ideas and innovations.

The idea of world order gives a central place to the diffusion of cultures, ideas, and innovations that no serious student of IR should ignore. A world order can be hierarchic, such as an empire; anarchic, like the warring states of China, the pre-Mauryan republics of India, and the Greek city-states; or somewhere in between, like the Chinese tribute system, where a leading state maintains a degree of control over other states' domestic and foreign relations but does not take away their sovereignty. Henry Kissinger (2014: 9) defines world order as a 'concept held by a region or civilization about the nature of just arrangements and the distribution of power thought to be applicable to the entire world'. Going by this definition, a world order is not the same as global order: it can be sub-global in scale. John King Fairbank (1968) coined the term 'Chinese World Order' on the grounds that the term 'international system' could not apply to China before the twentieth century when the country had not absorbed the notion of Westphalian sovereignty. Most world orders were created by civilizations that, while originating from a single country or region, achieved a transnational or transcontinental reach, whether through material (including conquest and trade) or ideational (often religious) means. A world order can be developed by any civilization that imagines its ideas and institutions to be universal and timeless. Moreover, a world order is not just about the 'power' and 'just arrangements' that a civilization possesses. It is also, and even more, about its identity and interactions, meaning how civilizations see themselves as distinctive entities and how they interact with both others seen as 'civilized' and others seen as 'barbarians'. Civilizations can be understood either as relatively closed, bounded, homogenous, exclusionary entities almost with actor quality or as relatively open, plural, fluid, inclusionary entities, with the former pointing towards othering, conflict, and war and the latter

towards peaceful interaction and multiple identities (Katzenstein, 2010; Rudolph, 2010: 137, 148). In what follows, we apply both understandings as appropriate.

Our method is comparative history and political theory intertwined with some geopolitics. We choose India, China, and the Islamic world partly because they are a good fit with our knowledge base but mainly for two other reasons. First, these three civilizations are differently placed geopolitically within the Eurasian system, and therefore had different kinds of encounters and experiences with the other peoples, polities, and civilizations around them. For all of them, the experience of 'the international' was a mix of internal dynamics and external encounters. Second, all three are still a major presence in the current international system/society. Their traditions of thought about international relations as filtered through their encounters with modernity are therefore likely to affect both how they behave and what kind of impact their increasing involvement will make on the study and theorizing of IR. Indeed, increasingly there is IR literature from these countries, particularly China, that draws on their own history and political theory to think about IR. We can use this literature to get insight into not only how non-Western histories and political theories might be brought into contemporary IR but also how they actually already are being brought in. We hope that we provide a template that could be used by others to bring additional civilizations into the argument should people find it interesting and useful to do that.

We are acutely aware that this is in some respects an insanely ambitious exercise. We are under no illusions that we can either capture fully the experiences and outlooks of historical cultures and polities or track precisely how those factors have filtered through the experience of encounter and modernity to the present day. That said, we take hope from the substantial role that pre-modern Western thinkers from Thucydides and Plato to Hobbes and Machiavelli play in contemporary Western IR theorizing, which if nothing else shows that the past remains active in the present in terms of both practice and

theory. The same could be said for the role of Confucius and
other sages in Chinese, and Kautilya in Indian, thinking about
world order. In what follows, we aim partly to locate and sketch
other similar potential links in India, China, and the Islamic
world but mainly to set up an agenda for further research by
those with greater specific expertise than we possess. Our ana-
lysis cannot pretend to be definitive, but we hope it will inspire
others to try to move it in that direction. We will next address
some problems intrinsic to such an exercise, then look at our
three cases, and finally draw some preliminary conclusions.