



## Constructing civilization: global hierarchy, 'gradated sovereignty' and globalization in international theory, 1760–2010

### Introduction

While the focus of [Chapters 2–12](#) zoomed in to unearth the details of the different variants of Eurocentrism and scientific racism, this chapter's first section zooms out so as to provide an overview of the changing architecture of 'Eurocentrism' in international theory in the 1760–2010 period. The [second section](#) provides a very quick overview of the 'polymorphous careers' of the three key theories of IR – Realism, Liberalism and Marxism – while the [third section](#) considers how international theorists have always developed *hierarchical* conceptions of world politics alongside their associated notions of *gradated* sovereignty.

### Constructing 'Eurocentrism' in international theory, 1760–2010

[Table 13.1](#) provides an overview of the changing architecture of 'generic Eurocentrism' in the last quarter millennium. Note that if we divide it into its four component periods, the architecture exhibits a 4×4×2×4 formation.

*1760–1914: two modes of manifest Eurocentrism,  
two modes of scientific racism*

Beginning at the bottom box of [Table 13.1](#) that covers the 1760–1914 era, it is noteworthy that these four discourses emerged at different times. Thus the anti-paternalism associated with the likes of Smith and Kant emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century, while paternalist Eurocentrism was consolidated as a key variant after about 1830 (though its distant and tentative origins stem back to the Spanish attempts at

Table 13.1 *Mapping the changing architecture of ‘Eurocentrism’ in international theory in the four key eras, 1760–2010*

	Pro-imperialist	Anti-imperialist
1989–2010		
Manifest Eurocentrism	<b>Paternalism</b> Rawls, Held, Tésou, Nussbaum, Fukuyama <b>Offensive Eurocentrism</b> Kagan, Cooper, Ferguson	<b>Anti-paternalism</b> (subliminal Eurocentrism) Neo-Marxism, <b>Defensive Eurocentrism</b> S. P. Huntington, Lind
1945–1989		
Subliminal Eurocentrism	<b>Paternalism</b> Gilpin, Keohane, (Waltz, Bull, Watson)	<b>Anti-paternalism</b> Carr, Morgenthau, (Waltz, Bull, Watson)
1914–1945		
Manifest Eurocentrism	<b>Paternalism</b> Woolf, Zimmern, Murray, Angell	<b>Anti-paternalism</b> (Subliminal Eurocentrism) Laski/Brailsford, Lenin/ Bukharin
Scientific racism	<b>Offensive racism</b> Wilson, Buell, Kjellén, Spykman, Haushofer, Hitler	<b>Defensive racism</b> Stoddard, Grant, E. Huntington
1760–1914		
Manifest Eurocentrism	<b>Paternalism</b> Cobden/Bright, Angell, Hobson, Mill, Marx	<b>Anti-paternalism</b> Smith, Kant
Scientific racism	<b>Offensive racism</b> Ward, Reinsch, Kidd, Mahan, Mackinder, von Treitschke	<b>Defensive racism</b> Spencer, Sumner, Blair, Jordan, C. H. Pearson, Ripley, Brinton

*Notes:*

1. All references to Eurocentrism are to ‘Eurocentric institutionalism’.
2. I have not included all the thinkers I consider in this book so as not to clutter the table.
3. Those who fit in more than one box have been placed in brackets.

'reading' the 'Indian natives', particularly that of Francisco di Vitoria's (1539/1991), in the wake of the 'discovery' of the Americas).<sup>262</sup> Although scientific racism emerged gradually during the eighteenth century, it only became a significant discourse in Britain, for example, after 1850. Indeed, it was only in the second half of the nineteenth century when scientific racism became a major epistemic force, and only after 1889 when racist-realism emerged.

Zooming in further it is instructive to consider the similarities and differences between the four variants on the vertical and horizontal axes. Turning to the imperialist discourses on the vertical axis, it is important to note that paternalist Eurocentrism for the most part entails a highly optimistic, and frequently triumphalist, 'progressive' politics. That is, such thinkers, who include Cobden and Bright, Angell, Hobson, MacDonald, Robertson, Mill and Marx, envisage imperialism as a civilizing mission. For these thinkers the *pioneering* agency of the Europeans in conjunction with *conditional* Eastern agency means that not only can the former promote the development of Eastern societies through the civilizing mission, but they have a 'moral duty' to do so (i.e., the 'white man's burden'). Although Mill and Marx envisage the process as requiring a certain amount of despotism (Mill) or coercion (Marx), others such as Hobson advocate the need for the Europeans to empathize with the non-European peoples and as far as possible to construct a system that will 'genuinely' help them.

By contrast, the offensive racist-realism of Mahan and Mackinder, as well as Giddings and Powers, is founded on a strong sense of Western anxiety. The idiom of the yellow peril is paramount in their thought and requires the Americans and Europeans to defend against this – principally through an Anglo-Saxon racial alliance. Such a defence takes the form of an imperialist offensive (on the basis that the best form of defence is attack). This approach grants the yellow races in particular high or very high degrees of agency, albeit of a regressive and predatory kind. However, another strand of racist-realism downplayed the barbaric threat and indulged in an unmitigated white racial triumphalism which effectively denied non-white racial agency altogether (e.g., Theodore Roosevelt, von Treitschke, von Bernhardt). But for the various differences it is important to note that some offensive racists drew close

<sup>262</sup> See especially: Pieterse (1992); Pagden (1995); Jahn (2000); Inayatullah and Blaney (2004); Anghie (2005); Pateman and Mills (2007); Bowden (2009); Blaney and Inayatullah (2010).

to the conception of the ‘benign civilizing mission’ of paternalist-Eurocentrism, most of whom were liberals (cf. Ireland, Sidgwick, Reinsch, Wilson). Moreover a good number of liberal racists, like the racist-realists, pronounced a triumphalist vision in which the natural expansion of the white race would deliver civilization to the dark places of the world (e.g., Strong, Fiske, Dilke, Seeley). Nevertheless, some liberal-racists, as did various racist-realists, advocated either an indirect exterminism (e.g., Kidd) or a ‘direct exterminist’ conception of imperialism (e.g., Ward) – as did various socialist-racists (e.g., Karl Pearson). And nor should we ignore the various socialist racists and paternalist Eurocentrics who embraced imperialism as a means to civilize the inferior Eastern societies (cf. Sidney Webb, Ramsay MacDonald, H. G. Wells and many, if not hundreds, more).

The ultimate upshot of this is to say that while there are clear differences between the offensive racist and paternalist Eurocentric approaches to imperialism, nevertheless the borderline between them is at times extremely fuzzy with a significant degree of overlap at the margins between liberal/socialist racist- and paternalist Eurocentric-imperialists. Moreover, we cannot simply assume that liberal or socialist imperial thought necessarily provides a softer conception of imperialism to racist-realism.

Turning now to explore some of the horizontal relationships between offensive and defensive racism on the one hand and between paternalist- and anti-paternalist Eurocentrism on the other, a series of similarities and differences become apparent. The conventional or popular assumption that scientific racism imposes fixed essences to the various races is, as I have argued in various chapters, highly problematic. In the ‘universalist’ strand of defensive racism, which I examined in [Chapter 4](#), Spencer believed that all races – including the negroes – were capable of auto-development such that they would break through to modernity of their own accord at some point in the future (even if this would take a matter of centuries in the case of the blacks). In this respect, Spencer and Sumner’s defensive racism overlaps very clearly with the anti-paternalist Eurocentrism of Smith and Kant, insofar as both variants award ‘derivative agency’ to the non-European peoples. Moreover, Spencer and Sumner also shared with Smith and Kant an aversion to Western imperialist paternalism on the grounds that this would disturb the natural developmental trajectories of both the European and non-European worlds. But where Spencer and Sumner depart from the anti-paternalist Eurocentrics and overlap directly with the offensive racists is in their

belief that races are best kept apart on the grounds that race-mixing (miscegenation) and the climate of the tropics leads only to white racial degeneration.<sup>263</sup> Interestingly, it was this problem that forced the offensive racists to find ways round the problem of tropical climatic trauma in order to justify and maintain their imperialist stance.<sup>264</sup> Moreover, the anti-miscegenationist rationale that underpinned anti-imperialism was taken further by Charles Henry Pearson and Lothrop Stoddard; while the climatic trauma rationale of anti-imperialism was advanced by the likes of Daniel Brinton, William Z. Ripley, Comte Arthur de Gobineau, Robert Knox, Ellsworth Huntington and Madison Grant (as well as Charles Henry Pearson).

The final comparison is that between paternalist and anti-paternalist Eurocentrism. The key difference lies in their conceptions of Eastern agency, where in contrast to the anti-imperialist conception of *derivative* agency, the paternalists awarded the East lower levels of agency (specifically 'conditional' agency). It is this difference which leads to the opposing claims that imperialism is either *not* required because the Eastern peoples will auto-generate (anti-paternalism), or *is* required because only in this way can the necessary rational institutions be delivered so as to kick-start Eastern development (paternalism).

*1914–1945: Two modes of manifest Eurocentrism,  
two modes of scientific racism*

Because much of the generic Eurocentric international theory in the period from 1914 to 1945 carries forward the story that marks the pre-1914 era I shall move quickly here. The paternalist-Eurocentrics were, for the most part, liberals as well as Fabians, who argued for the 'benign' civilizing mission. The key contrast with most of the pre-1914 thinkers of this category was that most embraced a conception of *international imperialism*; a formula that was, ironically, born in the 1902 work of J. A. Hobson via his concept of 'sane imperialism'. Thus Zimmern, Angell, Murray and Woolf argued that the imperial civilizing mission should continue but that it needed to be supervised by an impartial independent government – i.e., the League of Nations Mandate System. That said, though, some became highly critical of the League's

<sup>263</sup> Notwithstanding the point that Kant's anthropological and geographical writings – as opposed to his political writings – exhibited a similar racist predisposition.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. Giddings (1898); Kidd (1898); Pearson (1905).

workings,<sup>265</sup> thereby qualifying Carr's assumption that liberal 'idealists' staked all their political chips on the roulette wheel of the League. And, moreover as I explained in [Chapter 7](#) a number of these thinkers argued that the British Empire had to be maintained alongside the League if the latter was to operate effectively.<sup>266</sup> Accordingly, these thinkers maintained the paternalist-imperialism of their pre-1914 predecessors, even if the *form* of their prescription was different.

But once again, there is a notable overlap between the aforementioned paternalist Eurocentric thinkers and some liberal-imperialist racists, who included Wilson, Buell, and intriguingly, David Starr Jordan (1919) who had been a racist anti-imperialist before the war but joined the 'liberal-progressive' cause of international imperialism in its aftermath. Interestingly, a further overlap exists here with the racist-realist, Halford Mackinder (1919), who also embraced the idea of international imperialism and the League of Nations. Nevertheless, the majority of the racist-realists differed substantially to the liberals, all of whom advocated national imperialism as a means to enhance the power of a particular nation-state. Thus the American geopolitician, Nicholas Spykman, advocated American colonialism while the German racist-realists – especially Karl Haushofer, Richard Hennig, Heinrich von Treitschke, Friedrich von Bernhardt, Friedrich Ratzel and Adolf Hitler – advocated the expansion of German colonialism. Critically, though, the school of geopolitics embraced a brand of racism that differed to the genetic-determinist Eugenics of Hitler. Moreover, in the writings of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, von Treitschke, Hitler and, of course, the German racial hygienists, the Jews feature prominently and were awarded only moderate levels of agency that were inversely proportional to the size of the racial threat that they posed to the Aryan race.

Significantly, some of the defensive racists shared in common with Hitler a Eugenicist racism, though this was deployed to support a largely anti-imperialist politics (as in Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard). For the paradox was that Stoddard was highly critical not just of liberal internationalists and European imperialist movements but, above all, of the 'Prussian plotters of Weltmacht' who had committed one of the greatest disservices to the cause of white racial unity and had served only to enhance 'race suicide' (a term that was coined by the American racist, Edward Ross, in 1899). And Stoddard's arguments to an

<sup>265</sup> E.g., Hobson (1921, 1932); Woolf (1933); Angell (1933); Laski (1933, 1940).

<sup>266</sup> Cf. Zimmern (1934); Angell (1931, 1937); Muir (1917).

important extent provided the counter-position to the Nazi imperialist cause, given that his principal normative-political strategy was to batten down the hatches of the white 'inner dikes' and erect high walls around the white citadel so as to keep the contaminating virus of the non-white races out. Thus while the Jewish racial threat reached extreme proportions in Hitler's mind, it was the 'yellow-brown racial threat' that exercised Stoddard's anxious imagination. But the paradox was that the racist-Eugenics of Grant and Stoddard remained far closer to Hitler's approach than the latter did with the German imperialist geopolitikers.

Finally, the fourth perspective – that of subliminal anti-paternalist Eurocentrism – though complementing the likes of Smith and Kant in the critique of imperialism, nevertheless heralded a new form of Eurocentrism that would take off after 1945. This subliminal Eurocentrism underpinned the Marxism of Lenin, Bukharin, Luxemburg and Hilferding,<sup>267</sup> as well as the socialism of Brailsford and Laski. Though highly critical of imperialism, nevertheless these thinkers departed from Smith and Kant insofar as they reified Western agency but eradicated almost all traces of Eastern agency. But the paradox here, as I noted with respect to world-systems theory in [Chapter 10](#), is that this mode of Eurocentrism advances one of the lowest degrees of Eastern agency found anywhere, including many of the scientific racist theories.

#### *1945–1989: Two modes of subliminal Eurocentrism*

One obvious counter-response to my argument thus far might well be that even if Eurocentrism and scientific racism had been present in international theory in the period running up to 1945 – though notably this has not been conventionally recognized or accepted – nevertheless the discipline as well as the practice of world politics has moved away from such discourses since then. It is certainly the case, as I shall explain below, that by 1945 scientific racism had been discarded within IR theory, but this should not be taken to mean that the subsequent era of decolonization witnessed the replacement of racial intolerance with a more tolerant and benign discourse of racial equality, as many IR theorists assume.<sup>268</sup> For while such a claim presupposes a binary

<sup>267</sup> Nevertheless, though I see Trotsky's work as largely Eurocentric there are potential non-Eurocentric cues.

<sup>268</sup> See for example: Alexandrowicz (1967); Vincent (1984); Gong (1984); Klotz (1995); Finnemore (2003a, 2003b).



construction, where the alternative to racism is racial tolerance, this necessarily obscures the presence of a third discourse: subliminal Eurocentric intolerance. And it is precisely this, I argue, that came to underpin IR theory during the era of decolonization (1945–89).

The principal reason for the emergence of subliminal Eurocentrism lies with the West's 'colonial-racist guilt syndrome', or what has been termed 'post-imperial cringe'.<sup>269</sup> In turn, the emergence of this syndrome was due in part to a series of intra-Western developments, which comprised the internalist critique of scientific racism within the Academy,<sup>270</sup> as well as the revulsion that the Nazi atrocities invoked in the Western mind. But it also emerged as a response to the successful strategy of rhetorical entrapment that was deployed by the anti-colonialist nationalist movements, as they managed to discredit both scientific racism and formal empire.<sup>271</sup> Here it is noteworthy that characterizing the 1947–89 era as that of the Cold War, which was essentially an intra-Western civil war, deflects attention or focus away from the battle for decolonization between East and West. For it was this battle in particular that comprised an important milieu or backdrop in the development of subliminal Eurocentric international theory. In general, the upshot of the emergent Western racist-imperialist guilt complex was not so much a turn away from imperialism in practice, given that both the Western superpowers continued it in a variety of ways between 1945 and 1989 – even if it reined in Europe's imperialist ambitions – but a desire to hide or obscure imperialism from view in the body of international theory. Indeed in subliminal Eurocentrism all the monikers of manifest Eurocentrism are present but are obscured or hidden from immediate view. In essence, all talk of 'civilization versus barbarism' or of 'whites versus non-whites' was given a wide berth on the grounds that it smacked of the old racist idea of Western racial and imperial supremacy.

An excellent example of the elision of imperialism lies in Hans Morgenthau's principal work, *Politics Among Nations* (1948/1967) in which imperialism is reimagined not as a policy that the West had long deployed vis-à-vis the East but as a *normal* universal strategy of aspiring great powers in relation to each other. This process of what Frank Füre

<sup>269</sup> Sandbrook (2010).

<sup>270</sup> See Gossett (1997: ch. 16); Stocking (1982: ch. 11); Barkan (1992); Hannaford (1996: ch. 11).

<sup>271</sup> Tinker (1977: ch. 6); Hunt (1987); Füre (1998a, 1998b); Lauren (1996); Abernethy (2000).

(1994: ch. 5) calls the 'whitewashing of imperialism' also finds its expression in Hedley Bull's pluralist English School theory, where we encounter a retrospective justification of pre-1945 imperialism as a benign process that diffused civilization across the world. A further subliminal strategy that was often deployed was the advancing of a 'benign' *neo*-imperial politics that went by a whitewashed or sanitized name. Thus neorealism elevated the exercise of (Anglo-Saxon) *hegemony* to the implicit status of a civilizing mission, while neoliberal institutionalism did much the same with respect to the role played by Western international institutions, especially the IFIs. In both visions, the prime rationale of Western hegemonies and their international institutions is to culturally convert third world states along Western civilizational lines; the very essence of the liberal civilizing mission. And both approaches echo the manifest paternalist Eurocentric formula of awarding pioneering, progressive agency to the West and conditional agency to the East, though Gilpin adds into this mix the notion of predatory Eastern agency in his discussion of the decline of (Anglo-Saxon) hegemony.

Another generic property of subliminal Eurocentric IR theory in the post-1945 era is to shift focus away from direct attention to North–South relations, or what I have preferred to call East–West relations, in favour of a near-exclusive focus on intra-Western relations. In this vision the West is once again granted hyper-agency while Eastern agency is downgraded, if not erased altogether. That is, all developments within world politics are explained through Western hyper-agency, with the West being presented as the universal. This is a typical feature of classical realism and Waltzian neorealism, and is to an important extent reproduced in neorealist hegemonic stability theory. Indeed HST effectively instructs the student that she can learn all she needs to know about world politics/economics simply by focusing all her attention on the actions of the Anglo-Saxon hegemonies. And as noted in [Chapter 9](#), Keohane's neoliberal institutionalism explicitly focuses on intra-Western relations, even though East–West relations slip in through the subliminal Eurocentric backdoor, as noted a moment ago.

At this point, though, the sceptical reader might well object to my claim by offering up liberal modernization theory and dependency/world-systems theory as examples of theories that focus *explicitly* on North–South or East–West relations. But they, too, turn out to be the exceptions that prove the subliminal Eurocentric rule. The Eurocentric cues are found either in the guise of the reification of Western agency and the erasure of Eastern agency (as in WST), or in the point that the East is

awarded derivative agency insofar as it will replicate the Western development path, the five stages of which weave a linear line that begins with replicating British industrialization only to culminate with the age of high-mass consumption, US-style.<sup>272</sup> Moreover, the old explicit Eurocentric trope of ‘civilization versus barbarism’ effectively became replaced by the subliminal Eurocentric tropes of ‘tradition versus modernity’ and ‘core versus periphery’.

One particularly interesting aspect of post-1945 international theory involves the whitewashing of traditional pre-1945 racist thinkers. Thus Herbert Spencer’s theory is (re)presented (mainly by sociologists) as a universal theory of the rise of industrial society out of militant society shorn of all its racist aspects, while Mahan and Mackinder are (re)presented as geopoliticians whose leitmotif was ‘national realpolitik’, with any sign of their underlying ‘racist-realpolitik’ having all but magically disappeared through the performance of a Eurocentric sleight of hand. But the most egregious example of this was the recasting of Woodrow Wilson within the popular IR imagination. For he suddenly became the founding father of twentieth-century liberal internationalism, based as ‘it is’ on anti-imperialism and self-determination rather than on what ‘it was’: an ‘offensive racist’ vision based on the denial of Eastern state sovereignty and a pro-imperialist stance abroad coupled with strong racial immigration controls at home. And the same ‘sanitizing process’ has been applied to all the significant racist and Eurocentric international theorists of the pre-1945 era which, of course, provides a good deal of the rationale that motivated me to write the first half of this book.

All of which brings me to a particularly controversial issue; notably, that while Eurocentric readers will most likely reject my claims here, so too from the opposite extreme would a good number of ‘critical race scholars’. For these latter thinkers would most probably reject my claim that post-1945 international thought has taken a subliminal Eurocentric-institutionalist form, while simultaneously rejecting my more general claim that Eurocentric institutionalism and scientific racism can be significantly differentiated. Thus they argue that Eurocentric institutionalism or cultural Eurocentrism is merely racism masquerading as a more tolerant ‘culturalism’ – i.e., as ‘racism in disguise’.<sup>273</sup> Thus when

<sup>272</sup> Though Rostow (1960) notes that the replication process is not one of photocopying Britain’s industrialization given the role of state intervention in late-development.

<sup>273</sup> See especially: Barker (1981); Hunt (1987); Balibar (1991); Miles (1993); Malik (1996); Füredi (1998a); MacMaster (2001); Perry (2007); McCarthy (2009).

speaking of the post-1945 substitution of cultural difference for racial difference, one such thinker concludes that '[t]he terms may change, perhaps giving the impression that the old [racial] problems have disappeared, when in fact they have merely acquired protective coloration through semantic camouflage' (Perry 2007: 216). Or as Thomas McCarthy expresses it in his excellent book, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*: 'the demise of scientific racism in its evolutionary-biological form did not mean the end of racist thinking in scholarly discourse altogether. A new, post-biological modality of neo-racism is now widespread in social science' (2009: 91). Much is at stake, politically and analytically, in determining whether 'institutional Eurocentrism', let alone its subliminal form, is merely semantic camouflage for racism.

While Eurocentric institutionalism often echoes many of the prejudices of scientific racism and at times performs similar political tasks – as indeed I explained earlier – nevertheless to reduce them one to the other is problematic. Indeed it is my rejection of this conflation that comprises a key rationale of this book, and much of the justification for my claim has also been substantiated implicitly in this chapter. Nevertheless a few key points are worth emphasizing to consolidate my pivotal claim. In the first instance Eurocentric institutionalism contains no references to genetic/biological properties as a marker of ethnological difference. To conflate these would, I believe, constitute not merely an analytical but also a tactical mistake from a critical-emancipatory perspective, given that none of the post-1945 Eurocentrics, not even Samuel Huntington, would argue for non-white inferiority on racial/genetic grounds,<sup>274</sup> and would therefore dismiss outright the Eurocentric-cum-racist charge. It is also analytically problematic because Eurocentric institutionalism outside of the narrow genre that invokes a climatic determinism (i.e., List and Montesquieu), posits that *all* races and peoples are capable of developing, either spontaneously (as in liberal anti-paternalist Eurocentrism) or once the rational institutions have been delivered courtesy of the Western civilizing mission (as in paternalist Eurocentrism). By contrast many scientific racists are far more ambivalent in this respect with the majority denying black agency altogether, while equally many view yellow and sometimes brown agency

<sup>274</sup> Though of course his namesake, Ellsworth Huntington, made exactly this racist claim!

as particularly strong, albeit inherently regressive or predatory.<sup>275</sup> Moreover, as I also noted earlier, for the most part the imperialist visions differ substantially such that many paternalist Eurocentrics talk of the non-coercive civilizing mission while many offensive racists seek either to contain/exploit the barbaric Eastern menace or, at the extreme, to exterminate it. That said, though, as I noted earlier, various racists such as Reinsch, Ireland, Sidgwick, Wilson, and Buell echoed the paternalist Eurocentrics by arguing for a ‘benign’ civilizing mission. But when seen in the round, although there are clearly some significant overlaps between Eurocentric institutionalism and scientific racism, there are also some significant, irreducible differences.

One unequivocal difference, however, concerns the point that unlike the vast majority of scientific racists, Eurocentric institutionalists have no problem with blood-mixing.<sup>276</sup> Inter-relatedly, many racist theorists viewed non-whites, especially blacks, as virtual animals, with Comte de Buffon claiming that it was the Hottentot (the Khoi-Khoi of south-western Africa) who constituted the missing link between apes and humans. Indeed, no Eurocentric institutionalist would have thought it appropriate to exhibit a Black African pygmy alongside an ape, as happened to Ota Benga in the Bronx Zoo in 1906 at the ultimate behest of the arch-Eugenicist, Madison Grant. Moreover, Buffon’s argument meshed neatly with Edward Long’s racist claim that: ‘Ludicrous as the opinion may seem, I do not think that an orang-outang husband would be any dishonour to a Hottentot female’ (Long cited in Bhabha 1994: 91). While most of us today would find little with which to quibble concerning the [first part](#) of Long’s statement, certainly no Eurocentric institutionalist covered in this book would agree with the latter part. Nevertheless, the critical race theorists’ response would most likely be that cutting the Gordian Knot which links Eurocentric institutionalism with scientific racism lets the former off the moral hook. But this necessarily downplays the extent to which Eurocentric institutionalism, as well as subliminal Eurocentrism, are no lesser forms of bias.

<sup>275</sup> Even so, I readily concede that many offensive Eurocentric writers after 1989 make a similar claim – a point I made in [Chapter 11](#).

<sup>276</sup> And even when a few scientific racists approved of miscegenation it was supported as a means for the superior white race to conquer and eradicate the inferior non-white races (eg., Gumpłowicz, Ratzenhofer and Ward).

*1989–2010: Back to the future of manifest Eurocentrism*

One of the most profound paradoxes to emerge in this book concerns the point that the contemporary politics of Eurocentrism is whitewashed and consigned to history, removing it from the present and quarantining it alongside the racism of the nineteenth century. As I explained in [Chapter 12](#), this very Eurocentric sleight of hand is performed through the construction of a temporal binary, where the nineteenth century is (re)presented as more racially intolerant and imperialist than it was so that the post-1989 era could be portrayed as more tolerant, culturally pluralist and anti-imperialist than it is. For the contemporary era, much of international theory is no less intolerant than was its nineteenth-century ancestor and certainly no less imperialist. Indeed one of the more striking developments that I have examined in this book concerns the way in which international theory after 1989 has in fact returned almost directly to the manifest 'Eurocentric' forms that it took in the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth (see [Table 13.1](#)). While the discursive *form* of scientific racism has not re-appeared in international theory, it is nevertheless striking how much of its *content* finds its contemporary voice in offensive and defensive Eurocentric institutionalism.

Not only do we find a direct return to manifest Eurocentrism, but equally much of mainstream international theory has explicitly resuscitated the E-Words – 'Eurocentric Empire'. As one critical commentator puts it, '[o]ne way of dealing with the current return of civilization . . . is to show that it is indeed an embarrassing anachronism, harking back to a time when "civilization" was one of colonialism's most powerful ideological tools' (Neocleous 2011: 145). Indeed, as I explained in the previous two chapters, the Eurocentric standard of civilization is explicitly utilized by international theorists such that 'failed states' in the East find their nineteenth-century Eurocentric equivalent in 'savage anarchic societies', no less than the construction of contemporary Eastern autocratic states – often going by the euphemisms of 'rogue' and 'pariah', though sometimes grouped together into the collective term of the 'axis of evil' – reconvenes the nineteenth-century idiom of barbaric Oriental despotism. Moreover, the modern push to spread Western state forms via IMF programmes that impose 'good governance' models on Eastern debtors finds its nineteenth-century equivalent in the civilizing mission that sought to impose rational bureaucratic structures. Also noteworthy is that while Britain imposed free trade upon Eastern states in the



nineteenth century along with the unequal treaties, so after 1989 the Western free trade regime that imposes cultural conversion to Western civilizational principles was intensified as the hole-riddled GATT was replaced in 1995 with the more watertight and highly disciplinary WTO. And as I noted in [Chapter 8](#), the nineteenth-century system of ‘capitulations’ finds its modern equivalent in IFI structural adjustment programmes that require Eastern states to harmonize their domestic legal systems according to Western principles. Last, but not least, the push to humanitarian intervention followed by state reconstruction along Western lines echoes in spirit the essence of the nineteenth-century civilizing mission conception that liberal imperialists advocated.

What explains this shift to manifest Eurocentrism after 1989 and its simultaneous move back to the future of the pre-1945 era? I noted earlier that international theory shifted from manifest Eurocentrism and scientific racism to subliminal Eurocentrism after 1945 as a function of the emergent ‘colonial-racist guilt syndrome’. Moving forward in time I argue that after the end of the Cold War, Western international thinkers began to release themselves from the socio-psychological confines of this syndrome and began to proclaim in increasingly strident terms the inherent superiority of Western civilization once more. The awarding of sovereignty to the Eastern polities during the era of decolonization rested extremely awkwardly for many Western imperialist international thinkers who viewed this concession as a giant affront to the hyper-sovereign status of Western states. Nevertheless, the end of the Soviet Union and the simultaneous termination of the West’s third civil war of the twentieth century constituted an ‘intervening variable’ insofar as it furnished Western imperialist thinkers with the opportunity to openly reassert the West as the prime neo-imperial mover of world politics. And this in turn led much of mainstream international theory to effectively roll forward the conception of Western sovereignty so as to restore its imperial hyper-sovereign status, while simultaneously rolling back Eastern sovereignty into the neo-imperial conception of ‘conditional sovereignty’. In this way, the West could relegate in triumphalist fashion the ‘postcolonial interlude’ to a minor footnote in what was now portrayed as the long, normal Eurocentric history of Western supremacy.<sup>277</sup> Accordingly, post-1989 imperialist international theory returns us back to the pre-1945 conception of world politics as governed by formal

<sup>277</sup> See also Füredi (1994: 103).

hierarchy and gradated sovereignty, with the era of decolonization now happily but a faded memory.

However, that much of mainstream international theory has returned to the imperialist themes of pre-1945 thought should not obscure the anti-imperialist voices. Notable here, as I explained at the end of [Chapter 11](#), is the anti-imperialism of racist cultural-realism associated with Charles Pearson and Lothrop Stoddard that finds its contemporary expression in Huntington and Lind's defensive Eurocentric theory, albeit stripped of its scientific racist properties. For these latter thinkers, the end of the Cold War did not present itself as an opportunity to reassert Western hyper-sovereignty but instead led them to rue the good old days of the Cold War. For as I noted in [Chapter 11](#), now that the Soviet Other had gone so the West in general and America in particular had to find new enemies to construct so as to shore up Western identity. The result was a (re)turn to the East such that the Muslims and the Chinese were now constructed as the not-so-new Others against which American identity could be defined and defended.

### **Mapping the polymorphous/protean careers of liberal, realist and Marxist international theory, 1760–2010**

I now turn to provide a potted summary of the 'protean careers' of liberal, realist and Marxist international theory, the details of which were examined in [Chapters 2–12](#). As I explained in [Chapter 1](#), IR theory is conceptualized in much of conventional IR historiography through the ahistorical lens of the 'great tradition' narrative.<sup>278</sup> This takes a snapshot of the present and then extrapolates this picture back in time to an imaginary originary point. And from there we move forward in time along a uniform linear path upon which the various 'great theorists' are located. This produces an ahistorical take on each of the great theories, smoothing out any *major* differences or discontinuities to manufacture a pristine linear image whereby each member of the tradition is represented in isomorphic terms. This is not to deny the point that conventional narratives accept that there are different variants within each 'great tradition'. Liberalism, for example, is subdivided into liberal internationalism, liberal/neoliberal institutionalism, interdependence theory and cosmopolitanism. But in all cases, the conventional axiom posits that liberalism is committed to individualism, free trade, democracy,

<sup>278</sup> See especially Schmidt (1998a: ch. 1); Keene (2005: ch. 1).



self-determination, and peace and prosperity for all, with differences appearing only in terms of the *means* by which these outcomes or goals can be achieved. Put differently, this conventional narrative pays attention only to differences in *surface-type* forms.

By contrast, my objective is to explore each theory's 'polymorphous' or 'protean' career such that focusing on changes in *deep content* – specifically the relevant Eurocentric and racist metanarratives – necessarily disturbs the linear trajectory of the conventional ahistorical 'great tradition' approach. And thus by focusing on how each theory crystallizes in radically *different forms* over time as different imperialist and anti-imperialist 'Eurocentric' metanarratives cut in and out, so this necessarily reveals each international theory as highly promiscuous and multivalent.

*The polymorphous career of liberal international theory*

Figure 13.1 presents the conventional linear narrative of the liberal 'great tradition' which, though taking different forms through time, is grounded on a consistent anti-imperialist base in which individual autonomy, democracy and internationalism are vital baseline components. Distilling my claims made in Chapters 2–5, 7, 9, 11 and 12, I forward two alternative polymorphous liberal careers – the anti-imperialist tradition (Figure 13.2) and the imperialist tradition (Figure 13.3). Two key points are noteworthy. First, different Eurocentric metanarratives are situated not merely between the two trajectories but also within each of them. For if we combined the two

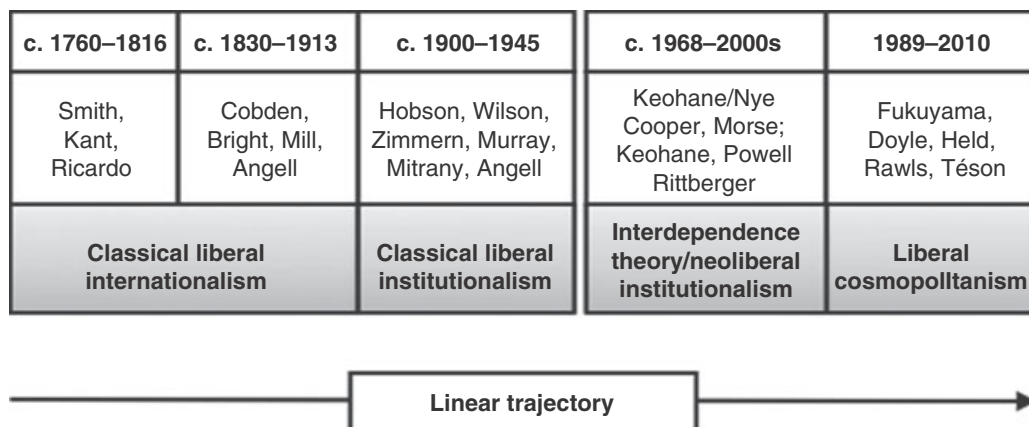


Figure 13.1 The conventional ahistorical 'great narrative' of liberal international theory

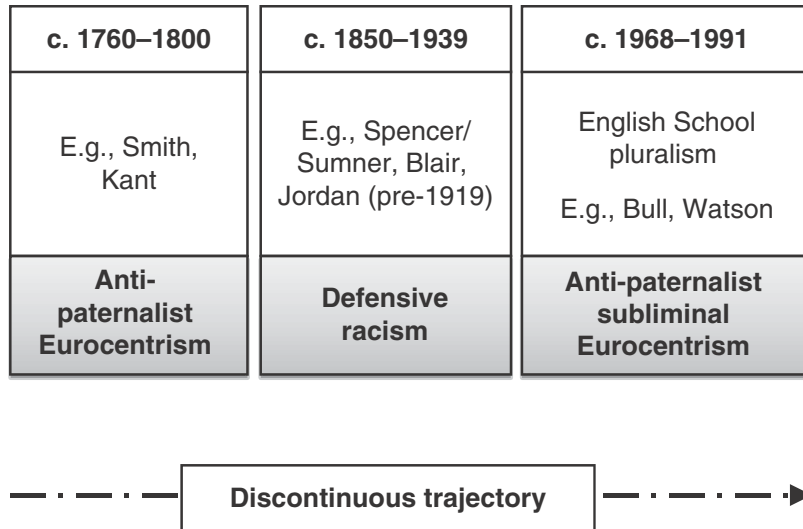


Figure 13.2 Alternative ‘polymorphous/protean’ career of anti-imperialist liberalism

in a single table, the discontinuities and ruptures would become yet more apparent. And second, while the imperialist tradition, based as it is on different ‘Eurocentric’ discourses, clearly undermines the notion of cultural pluralism, so the same is true of the anti-imperialist tradition. That is, even when liberals conform to anti-imperialism they do so for reasons that derive from their commitment either to Eurocentric institutionalism or to scientific racism.

Here it is interesting to note that within IPE it is commonly assumed that the Manchester School of liberal internationalism stood not merely for anti-imperialism but also for a cultural pluralism and cosmopolitanism. The paradox of my revisionist analysis is that Manchester liberalism reflected either a paternalist Eurocentrism (e.g., Cobden and Bright), or an offensive racist social Darwinism (Bagehot),<sup>279</sup> or equally an anti-paternalist Eurocentrism if we include Smith in this umbrella category. Finally, though, it is important to recognize that within the English School a non-Eurocentric approach has begun to emerge mainly since 2000 as I noted in [Chapters 1 and 9](#).

<sup>279</sup> Walter Bagehot, who was editor of *The Economist* (1861–77), was an important social Darwinian. And as I noted in [Chapter 5](#) in other writings he appeared to support British imperialism.

c. 1830–1919	c. 1860–1919	c. 1900–1939	c. 1914–1939	c. 1960–1989	c. 1989–2010	
<b>Liberal imperialists</b> E.g., Cobden, Bright, Mill, Angell, Robertson	<b>Liberal-imperialists</b> E.g., Dike, Seeley, Ritchie, Reinsch, Ireland, Bagehot	<b>International imperialists</b> E.g., Wilson, Feinsch, Buell, Jordan (1919)	<b>International imperialists</b> E.g., Hobson, Zimmern, Angell, Murray	<b>Statist liberals</b> E.g., Bull, Watson, Wight, Keohane	<b>Liberal cosmopolitans</b> E.g., Raws, Fukuyama, Held, Wheeler, Tésou, Nussbaum	<b>'Realist-liberals'</b> E.g., Ikenberry, Slaughter, Rothkopf, Cooper, Ignatieff
(MANIFEST) PATERNALIST EUROCENTRISM	OFFENSIVE RACISM	OFFENSIVE RACISM	(MANIFEST) PATERNALIST EUROCENTRISM	SUBLIMINAL PATERNALIST EUROCENTRISM	(MANIFEST) PATERNALIST EUROCENTRISM	(MANIFEST) PATERNALIST EUROCENTRISM



Figure 13.3 Alternative 'polymorphous/protean' career of paternalist-imperial liberalism

*The polymorphous career of realism, c. 1889–2010*

The conventional ‘great tradition’ narrative of realism is one that stems back to Thucydides in 431 BCE, and then moves forwards via Hobbes and Machiavelli in the sixteenth century, before re-appearing in its ‘classical’ guise in the aftermath of WWII, with Carr and Morgenthau, then proceeds on into its neorealist phase beginning with hegemonic stability theory in the 1970s and Waltzian neorealism after 1979, before culminating in the post-Cold War era with the likes of Mearsheimer, Grieco and Krasner. To this we might add the liberal-realists (especially the US neo-Conservatives) as well as, perhaps, the cultural-realists (Huntington and Lind). However, on the basis of the claims made in [Chapters 5–8](#) and [11](#), [Figure 13.4](#) presents my alternative discontinuous narrative of the development of realist international theory in the post-1889 period.

*The polymorphous/protean career of Marxist international theory, c. 1840–2010*

The conventional assumption holds that Marxism is anti-imperialist and anti-Eurocentric, given its inherent critique of Western capitalist imperialism. But distilling my claims made in [Chapters 2, 6](#) and [10](#), [Figure 13.5](#) produces my alternative reading of the polymorphous career of Marxist international theory.

Two key points are noteworthy here. First, while the anti-imperialist tradition within Marxism (Marx and Engels excepted) is clearly very strong, nevertheless the Eurocentric reification of the West as the supreme controlling subject of world politics coupled with the virtual denial of Eastern agency leads, albeit unwittingly, into an approach that *naturalizes* Western imperialism/neo-imperialism (see [Chapter 10](#)). And second, unlike liberalism and realism, since 1989 postcolonial and non-Eurocentric frameworks have certainly begun to emerge within neo-Marxism, as they have within the English School, thereby providing the exception to my general claim that IR theory seeks to promote and defend Western civilization (see the far right-hand box of [Figure 13.5](#)).

**Constructing civilization: deriving global hierarchy, ‘gradated sovereignty’ and globalization, 1760–2010**

Finally, to close this chapter and the book more generally I want to reveal how my arguments serve to produce a radically different take

1889–1945		Post-1945	Post-1973	Post-1989		
<b>Racist-realism</b> E.g., Mahan/ Mackinder von Treitschke, Spykman, Hauschofer, Hitler	<b>Racist cultural-realism</b> C. H. Pearson, Stoddard, Grant	<b>Classical realism</b> E.g., Carr, Morgenthau	<b>Neorealism</b> E.g., Gilpin/ Kindleberger, Kennedy, Krasner, (Waltz)	<b>'Western-realism'</b> E.g., Kaplan, Brzezinski, Ferguson	<b>'Western liberal-realism'</b> E.g., Kagan, Krauthammer, Boot	<b>Cultural-realism</b> E.g., Lind, Huntington
EXPLICIT IMPERIALISM OFFENSIVE RACISM	ANTI- IMPERIALISM DEFENSIVE RACISM	ANTI- IMPERIALISM? SUBLIMINAL EUROCENTRISM	IMPLICIT NEO-IMPERIALISM SUBLIMINAL PATERNALIST EUROCENTRISM	EXPLICIT NEO-IMPERIALISM OFFENSIVE EUROCENTRISM	EXPLICIT NEO-IMPERIALISM PART PATERNALIST/ PART OFFENSIVE EUROCENTRISM	EXPLICIT ANTH-IMPERIALISM DEFENSIVE EUROCENTRISM

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Discontinuous trajectory

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Figure 13.4 Alternative 'polymorphous/protean' career of realism

c. 1840–1895	c. 1910–1920s	c. 1967– c. 1989	Post-1989	
<i>Classical Marxism I:</i>  Marx & Engels	<i>Classical Marxism II:</i>  Lenin, Luxemburg, Hilferding, Bukharin	<i>Neo-Marxism (world-systems theory/ Gramscianism)</i> E.g., Wallerstein/ Frank; Cox	<i>Neo-Marxism (Gramscianism &amp; other variants)</i> E.g., Gill, Hettne, Robinson, Arrighi	<i>Postcolonial Marxism</i> E.g., Persaud, Slater, Pasha, Gills, Frank, Gruffydd-Jones, Matin
EXPLICIT IMPERIALISM  PATERNALIST EUROCENTRISM	ANTI-IMPERIALISM  SUBLIMINAL ANTI-PATERNALIST EUROCENTRISM	ANTI-IMPERIALISM  SUBLIMINAL ANTI-PATERNALIST EUROCENTRISM	ANTI-IMPERIALISM  SUBLIMINAL ANTI-PATERNALIST EUROCENTRISM	ANTI-IMPERIALISM  NON-EUROCENTRISM



Figure 13.5 Alternative ‘polymorphous/protean’ career of Marxism

on one of the most taken-for-granted axioms of the discipline of IR. As I noted in Chapter 1, for many IR scholars it is an unreflexive axiom of the discipline that the concepts of anarchy and sovereignty are not merely twinned but that understanding the anarchic world of sovereign state relations constitutes the prime focus, or *raison d’être*, of IR theory. Zooming in a little further, it becomes apparent that from this general axiom three cardinal IR principles flow. The first principle is that sovereignty is an objective and fixed defining property of that which constitutes the state *qua* state. This largely entails a black-boxing of the state such that its social domestic properties as well as the wider international or global social context become extraneous to the discipline’s remit (notwithstanding the Constructivist/Poststructuralist revolution that has disturbed this general axiom). The second cardinal principle is that sovereignty presupposes that all states are rational even if some are more powerful than others. And the third cardinal principle is that such a conception of world politics essentially rests on an anti-imperialist and cultural-pluralist base. That is, IR scholars take it as axiomatic not only that all states enjoy political self-determination but that they no less enjoy full *cultural* self-determination. Gerry Simpson refers to this latter dimension of sovereignty as *existential equality* (2004: ch. 2). More generally, this picture of the sovereignty discourse has usefully been termed an ‘equalitarian regime’ (Reus-Smit 2005). All in all, the assumption that IR theory enquires into the relations between fully self-determining and juridically-equal sovereign states under anarchy,

coupled with its three underlying cardinal assumptions, leads many IR scholars to assume that their discipline cannot be, by definition, imperialist or Eurocentric.

But do these interconnected assumptions in fact capture the scope of international theoretical enquiry? Edward Keene thinks not. In his important text-book he begins with the assumption that international political thought has more often focused on communities and their inter-relations and that in turn such communities have been defined by the application of the social standard of civilization. As he rightly points out, many thinkers in the nineteenth century, especially international lawyers,<sup>280</sup> believed that *civilized* nations should behave differently in their dealings with uncivilized peoples than they should with regard to one another. And he concludes that ‘the distinction between civilized and barbaric peoples was even more fundamental to [pre-1945] international political [and international legal] thought than the drawing of territorial boundaries between different sovereign states’.<sup>281</sup> While Keene believes that this bipolar or schizophrenic conception was critical to much of *historical* international political thought, my point is that it is precisely the civilizational definitions of sovereignty that have governed the vast majority of international theory throughout the 1760–2010 period. One of the principal claims that my book makes is that sovereignty never has been understood as an objective and universal fixed attribute of all states, but has always been constructed through an *inequalitarian* discourse depending on the particular Eurocentric/racial conception of civilization that underpins each theory. Moreover, these discourses focus principally on the domestic cultural/institutional or racial attributes of states at the domestic level, which is then carried over into the international realm to provide a picture of the social-civilizational or racial differences between Eastern and Western states.

While leading constructivists and poststructuralists have done much excellent work on revealing sovereignty as a discursive construct,<sup>282</sup> nevertheless I argue here that we need to go one step further by recognizing that within international theory sovereignty has been grounded in various Eurocentric metanarratives that place the standard of civilization

<sup>280</sup> For the imperial Eurocentrism of nineteenth-century international law see: Grovogui (1996); Simpson (2004); Anghie (2005); Kayaoglu (2010).

<sup>281</sup> Keene (2005: 11); see also Long and Schmidt (2005b).

<sup>282</sup> Most notably: Campbell (1992); Walker (1993); Weber (1995); Bartelson (1995); Doty (1996); Wendt (1999); Reus-Smit (1999); Malmvig (2006).

centre-stage.<sup>283</sup> And, no less importantly, because the various discourses of Eurocentrism/racism have changed through time so too has the discourse of sovereignty within international theory, thereby testifying to its highly protean and malleable nature. Accordingly we need to talk about the lineages, or changing discursive architecture, of ‘gradated sovereignty’ – or what has been called ‘stratified sovereignty’ (Simpson 2004: 85) – as it chops and changes in a discontinuist non-linear time sequence. Moreover, it is no less important to note that different conceptions of sovereignty cut in both diachronically and synchronically.

If the equalitarian conception of sovereignty is the flip-side of the anarchy coin, then the logical upshot of my focus on ‘gradated sovereignty’ must be an unequalitarian conception of civilizational/racial hierarchy within international theory.<sup>284</sup> While there is now a growing literature on hierarchy in the international system,<sup>285</sup> this has for the most part been applied either to the empirical practice of world politics or, if it has been applied to IR theory at all, it has been to critique neorealism.<sup>286</sup> Here I complement my discussion of gradated sovereignty with two main conceptions of civilizational hierarchy that find their place across the gamut of international theory – formal/manifest hierarchy and informal/subliminal hierarchy (see Figure 13.6).

Formal or manifest hierarchy is found within the imperialist theories where the West gains *hyper-sovereignty* to intervene in Eastern states and where the latter have their sovereignty either withheld (i.e., prior to 1945) or are granted only *conditional* sovereignty (mainly after 1989). By contrast, given the non-interventionist stance of anti-imperialist Eurocentrism, so hierarchy takes on a subliminal/informal modality, issuing the constructs of *full* state sovereignty in the West and *qualified* sovereignty or *sovereignty-by-default* in the East. And to the obvious objection that anti-imperialism implies non-intervention and, therefore, self-determination for all, it needs to be appreciated that Eurocentrism/racism of all persuasions denies cultural pluralism and thereby rejects

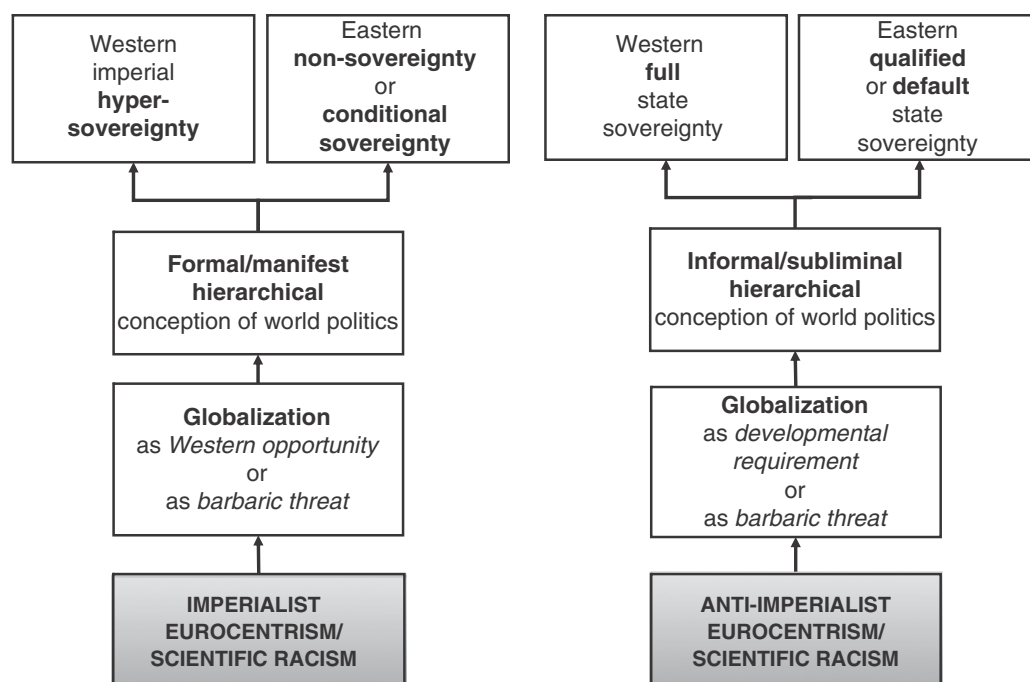
<sup>283</sup> See also Simpson (2004); Kayaoglu (2010); Bowden (2009).

<sup>284</sup> For an excellent analysis of the practice of gradated or ‘stratified’ sovereignty as it has played out in the practice of international law in the last two centuries, and which complements my analysis of international theory, see Simpson (2004).

<sup>285</sup> See, for example: Onuf (1989); Buzan *et al.* (1993); Lake (1996); Wendt and Friedheim (1996); Deudney (1996); Paul (1999); Hobson and Sharman (2005); Shilliam (2006); Donnelly (2009); Kayaoglu (2010).

<sup>286</sup> Partial exceptions to this are found in Kaufman *et al.* (2007); Kayaoglu (2010); Simpson (2004); with the former two focusing in large part on the English School.





**Figure 13.6** Civilizational hierarchies and gradated sovereignties in the Eurocentric and scientific racist mirrors

one of the key aspects of sovereignty – i.e., what Simpson (2004) calls ‘existential equality’. Thus, like imperialist Eurocentrism, so anti-imperialist Eurocentrism works within differing degrees of gradated sovereignty.

In recent years many scholars have argued that the practice of world politics has often contradicted the theory of sovereignty that allegedly underpins IR theory. This, of course, has been conducted in a range of areas, the headlining examples of which are those concerning subsystems hierarchies under anarchy and, more frequently, the sovereignty-dissolving effects of globalization. These analyses in turn issue decrees to drop IR theory’s apparent obsession with sovereignty, and to avoid the perils that are associated with ‘Westphalian common-sense’ (Grovoqui 2002) or equally with the ‘Westphalian blind alley’ (Paul 1999), the ‘Westphalian straitjacket’ (Buzan and Little 2001), or even the ‘Westphalian straitjacket’ (Hobson 2009). More generally it has also led some to argue that there is a now a clear divorce or ‘lack of fit’ between the theory and practice of sovereignty (Cutler 2001).<sup>287</sup> But when viewed through a non-Eurocentric lens this common assumption becomes

<sup>287</sup> Or what has been described by my PhD student as a ‘descriptive gap’ (Mathieu 2010).

inverted. Thus by arguing that Eurocentric international theory never has embraced a uniform equalitarian conception of sovereignty we necessarily confront the counter-intuitive and deeply paradoxical point that international theorists have failed to recognize why, in the end, it turns out that there is little or no gap between the theory of sovereignty/anarchy and the practice of graduated sovereignty/hierarchy. For this is precisely because all Eurocentric theories of sovereignty explicitly or implicitly invoke a hierarchical conception of world politics that entails the idea of graduated sovereignty. The purpose of the two following subsections is to reveal how and why this is the case.

Lastly, though, I want to argue that the apparent focus on anarchy and sovereign state relations within IR has served to obscure the process of globalization which, I argue, has underpinned much of international theory in the last 250 years. Such a claim, however, would appear to be counter-intuitive, if not perplexing, to many an IR reader. For it is, after all, an axiom of the discipline that the concern with globalization emerged initially with the rise of interdependence theory in the 1970s only to take off at the beginning of the 1990s when it became the buzzword of the decade. But in what follows I shall discuss how globalization has not only been an important aspect of a great deal of international theory since 1760 but how it has taken two principal discursive forms: either ‘globalization-as-Eastern barbaric threat’ or ‘globalization-as-Western opportunity’ to exploit, or more often than not, to civilize the East. How then does all this play out within international theory?

*Lineages of formal hierarchy, imperial hyper-sovereignty  
and globalization, 1760–2010*

Focusing on the left-hand side of [Figure 13.6](#) I want to begin by noting that many imperialist thinkers place a premium on global interdependence within their theories. It is well-known that Marx and Engels viewed the expansion of capitalism as akin to early globalization in *The Communist Manifesto* – even if they did not use the actual word – seeing in it a homogenizing process through which all societies would become attuned to the diktat and rhythm of modern Western capitalism. And as I argued in [Chapter 2](#), globalization – or the global primitive accumulation of capital – is for Marx the handmaiden of colonialism. But the idea of global interdependence also found expression in liberal imperial theory, which views it as issuing the opportunity for Europe to remake the world along Western civilizational lines. Thus, for example, from the

paternalist-Eurocentrism of J. A. Hobson's theory of sane imperialism to the offensive racism of Raymond Buell (1925), we encounter the paternalist assumption that under the 'strenuous conditions' of modern global interdependence it is impossible for even 'the most remote lands to escape the intrusion of "civilized" nations . . . The contact with white races cannot be avoided' (Hobson 1938/1968: 230, also 231). This, of course, also formed the imperialist lynchpin of the League of Nations Mandate System (specifically Article 22 of the Covenant). And this in turn rests upon the imperialist idiom of 'social efficiency' (see also Angell 1937: 50–2), which dictates that Europeans must colonize backward lands on behalf of global humanity should their inhabitants fail to autonomously develop their own resources. For the world is now a single economic unit and all peoples now reside in a global community of shared economic fate.<sup>288</sup> And, of course, for many offensive racists, globalization represents a white racial opportunity to colonize and thereby develop the resources of the tropics in order to enhance (white) civilization, though this simultaneously benefited the world since it was the means by which civilization would be diffused across the globe (even if for some of these thinkers the weakest races were to be selected out either by nature or by the guns of the white colonial overlords in the process). The upshot of this, of course, is the point that such international theory advocates a formal hierarchic conception of world politics; no more clearly summarized at that time than by the paternalist-Eurocentric liberal, Gilbert Murray:

With regard to the general hegemony of the white races, our Liberal position is clear. It is expressed in Article XXII of the Covenant. We do not believe in the equality of all nations; we believe rather in a certain hierarchy, no doubt a temporary hierarchy of races, or, at least, of civilizations.<sup>289</sup>

<sup>288</sup> One liberal even provides a definition of global interdependence in 1919 that bears an uncanny resemblance to the formulation that supposedly emerged first in the 1990s: 'On sea and land, distance has been annihilated and remote peoples are closer together today than were the various parts of a small kingdom a century ago . . . Furthermore, the extension of [communications] and banking service to all parts of the world has made the whole earth an economic unit. Currents of trade set far beyond national boundaries. Capital goes wherever it sees a prospect of profit . . . Information conveyed almost instantaneously around the world becomes common property . . . The interrelations of financial adjustment give to the economic world a sort of sensory system. Whatever affects one part of it is instantly felt by all the others (Jordan 1919: 102–3).

<sup>289</sup> Murray, 1925, cited in Morefield (2005: 215).

There were also some, though clearly not all, racist-realists who emphasized the opportunity or perils that globalization issued. Both Mahan and Mackinder placed a great deal of emphasis on 'globalization-as-barbaric threat', with the latter re-issuing this fear in his 1919 book: 'We are now presented with a closed system . . . Every shock, every disaster or superfluity, is now felt even to the antipodes . . . Every deed of humanity will henceforth be echoed and reechoed in like manner all round the globe' (1919: 40). And in the context of military security threats associated with the shrinking of the world, the racist-realist, Nicholas Spykman, also emphasized the perils of globalization (see Spykman 1942: 165, 166, 448). Notable too is Adolf Hitler's construction of global economic interdependence as issuing a particular threat to Germany – specifically the flooding of the German economy with American imports. As he put it: 'Through modern technology and the communication it enables, international relations between peoples have become so effortless and intimate that the European – often without realizing it – takes the circumstances of the American life as the benchmark for his own life' (Hitler and Weinberg 2003: 21).<sup>290</sup>

I have concentrated largely on the pre-1945 situation to make my case, given that the place of globalization in various post-1945 theories is widely recognized. Even so, it is worth noting that the imperialist side of classical English School pluralism as well as neorealist hegemonic stability theory embraces the 'Eurocentric big-bang theory' of world politics, focusing on nineteenth-/early twentieth-century European imperialism as the vehicle that globalizes the world and seeks to remake the East in the image of the West. Moreover, with respect to Hedley Bull, it is noteworthy that while he is famous for his argument concerning the 'anarchical society of sovereign states', it turns out that for the period of the late-eighteenth century through to 1945, only European international society was constructed as anarchic whereas, by contrast, he envisaged on normative grounds Europe's relations with the non-European world in terms of formal hierarchy. That is, he in effect adhered to the notion of the 'hierarchical global international society' as it emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. And, of course, neoliberal institutionalism and interdependence theory obviously presuppose a globalized world. Indeed all these aforementioned post-1945 theories essentially view

<sup>290</sup> And for a wider discussion of this see Anievas (2011: 175–80).

globalization-as-Western opportunity to ‘civilize the world’. This is a trope of the majority of post-1989 Western-liberal theories too, which contrast with the construct of globalization-as-barbaric threat that is invented within the neo-imperialist imaginary of most post-1989 Western-realists.

*Lineages of informal hierarchy, qualified/default Eastern  
sovereignty and globalization, 1760–2010*

While my conceptualization of formal hierarchy/gradated sovereignty might seem obvious and unproblematic in the context of imperialist/neo-imperialist international theory, nevertheless my reader might well have potential misgivings about extending this argument to the anti-imperialist literature. For one might well anticipate that the anti-imperialist thinkers would stand firmly for an equalitarian conception of sovereignty and would advocate self-determination as a universal principle. And this would be supported by the inter-related assumption that all states are equally rational, even if some are more powerful than others. The problem, though, is that in the racist and Eurocentric anti-imperialist conceptions of world politics the ideas of cultural pluralism and cultural self-determination simply fail to apply, while rationality is thought to be the monopolistic preserve of civilized Western states. It is for these reasons, I argue, that most of anti-imperialist theory turns out to invoke an *informal* hierarchical conception of world politics along with its associated idiom of gradated sovereignty.

While I argued in [Chapter 3](#) that both Adam Smith and especially Immanuel Kant were strong critics of European imperialism, nevertheless I also argued that they exhibited an anti-paternalist Eurocentric monism rather than a cultural pluralism. That is, they both insisted that non-European economies not only will but *should* or *must* evolve into an idealized Western civilizational form. Moreover, they constructed global interdependence in terms that were similar to the liberal paternalists, viewing it as bringing all societies – civilized, barbaric and savage – into a global community of shared economic and political fate. And it is this which feeds into their argument that globalization unleashes the ‘developmental imperative’ or ‘developmental requirement’ upon savage and barbaric peoples. For as I also explained in that chapter, Kant viewed cultural pluralism and full self-determination as possible *only* in a *pre*-global/interdependent world, where savages can move away from civilized societies if they wished to maintain their

uncivilized cultural autonomy. But under conditions of global interdependence that he observed in the second half of the eighteenth century, this exit option is no longer available. While he was unequivocal that Europeans *cannot* appropriate other peoples' lands through imperialism, nevertheless they *can* and *ought* to demand that savage and barbaric peoples become civilized by developing into an idealized Western civilizational form in the first instance precisely so that they could enter into the future cosmopolitan international legal state that would outlaw war in the last instance.<sup>291</sup> Accordingly, it is this 'inequalitarian formula' that issues a conception of informal hierarchy wherein European states enjoy *full* sovereignty while non-European polities are, in effect, awarded *qualified* sovereignty.

Much of defensive racism views emergent global interdependence as delivering the barbaric threat onto the doorstep of white civilization as, of course, it did for some offensive racists. Imperialism and global interdependence are particularly problematic because they create an open door for the non-white races to enter the white heartland; something that is greatly exacerbated by the pernicious effect of the Trojan Horse of liberal, multicultural politics within the Western citadel (as in the anti-imperialist racist cultural realism of the likes of Charles Pearson and Lothrop Stoddard). At first sight, defensive racism, which insists that Eastern races should be left alone and should be free of Western imperialist intervention, would appear to support an equalitarian regime of sovereignty and hence self-determination for all. But not much below the surface lurks the conception of 'residual sovereignty' or 'sovereignty-by-default'. For it is not that Eastern polities should be awarded sovereignty and be treated *on a par* with Western states, but rather that they are deemed to be unequal according to the application of the racial standard of civilization. Accordingly, defensive racism entails an informal civilizational hierarchical conception of racial apartheid such that the West *must* break off all direct contact with the East in large part so as to insulate the West from the contaminating effects that contact with the inferior races would inevitably bring. Thus anti-imperialism abroad coupled with strong immigration controls at home is the basis of their 'racial-apartheid conception of world politics'. Accordingly, sovereignty

<sup>291</sup> The development of global interdependence played a key part in Kant's theory of cosmopolitan right. Here he claims that '[t]he peoples of the earth have thus entered in varying degrees into a universal community, and it has developed to the point where a violation of rights in one part of the world is felt everywhere' (Kant 1970b: 107–8).



is not awarded to Eastern polities according to a cultural pluralist sensibility but is *derived through default*, as a contemptuous residue of this racist-apartheid politics that in turn implies an *inequalitarian* regime of gradated sovereignties.

But even if the reader accepts these arguments vis-à-vis pre-1945 Eurocentric and racist international theory, she might well question its salience in the post-1945 context. Indeed, she might cite the example of the English School, especially its pluralist wing, wherein one of its cardinal political values is precisely that of sovereign equality within international society. Two responses are pertinent here, both of which emanate from pluralism's Janus-faced, or schizophrenic, posture. Thus while I mentioned the imperialist side of pluralist thought in the [last subsection](#), here I consider its anti-imperialist side. The critical point is that even this anti-imperialist position fails to embrace an equalitarian sovereignty regime. Here the issue at stake lies with Bull's belief that cultural self-determination for Eastern polities is the very cause of instability in modern global international society, precisely because these states lack the fully rational institutions of the West. Moreover, as with the anti-paternalist Eurocentrism of Smith and Kant, so Bull argued that global order and stability could only be achieved once the recalcitrant Eastern polities had undergone a full cultural conversion to the trappings of Western civilization. And Bull echoed their logic by refusing to countenance Western imperial/neo-imperial intervention in the East so as to effect this transformation in the post-1945 period, while advocating that the Eastern polities must conform to the 'developmental requirement'. Accordingly, because Bull denies full cultural self-determination to Eastern polities so he ends up by subscribing to an informal hierarchical conception of *qualified* sovereignty in the East and *full* sovereignty in the West.

But the reply might be that even if this is true for the classical pluralist wing of the English School, surely anti-imperialist realism and anti-imperialist Marxism are consistent with a fully developed universalist conception of sovereignty? Certainly the neo-Marxists would not hesitate in advocating sovereignty for all states.<sup>292</sup> But, I argue, the logic of their Eurocentrism leads them to adopt an *informal* civilizational hierarchical conception of world politics. In the first instance they judge or

<sup>292</sup> With the exception of Bill Warren (1980) who, like Marx and Engels, subscribes to a *formal* hierarchical vision of world politics.

read all societies according to a subliminal standard of civilization.<sup>293</sup> Thus world-systems theory views capitalist globalization as akin to the, albeit lamentable, triumph of the West and reconvenes the nineteenth-century three-worlds metageographical trope of civilized/barbaric/savage societies through its tripartite hierarchical vision of Western core, Eastern semi-periphery and Eastern periphery. Much the same is true of Gramscianism which views Anglo-Saxon hegemony and capitalist globalization as the, albeit lamentable, triumph of the West and reconvenes the tripartite metageography of the first world of advanced (civilized) Western capitalist states, the second world of Eastern (barbaric) neo-mercantilist states, and the third world of Eastern (savage) proto-states. And in the second instance, as explained in the [first section](#) of this chapter, they almost entirely deny agency to the East. Thus while this in no way returns us back to a hidden imperialist politics – even if it unwittingly naturalizes Western imperialism/neo-imperialism – nevertheless we encounter a conception of informal hierarchy and gradated sovereignty that creeps in through the subliminal Eurocentric backdoor. And moreover, their conception of globalization, which is grounded in the ‘Eurocentric big-bang theory of world politics’ that accords the West hyper-agency merely reinforces this problem. But what then of anti-imperialist realism?

It is certainly the case that neither Carr nor Morgenthau advocated an imperialist politics as part of their normative armoury.<sup>294</sup> However, Morgenthau’s ‘anti-imperialist’ stance is to an important extent compromised by his desire to sanitize Western colonialism from the conceptual map of world politics, while also presenting decolonization as a gracious gift of the West. This forms an important prong of his deployment of the ‘Eurocentric big-bang theory of world politics’, in which the big bang of modernity explodes in Europe and then expands outwards to incorporate the rest of the world; or, what amounts to the standard Eurocentric trope of ‘first the West, then the Rest’ (cf. Chakrabarty 2000). And as was explained earlier, his reification of the West as the universal in world politics, coupled with his elision of Eastern agency means that he elevates the West to the highest normative referent in world politics, in effect awarding it full sovereignty and granting Eastern

<sup>293</sup> Notwithstanding those exceptional Marxists who draw on postcolonial or non-Eurocentric approaches (as mentioned earlier).

<sup>294</sup> And here I shall ignore Carr’s approval of the nineteenth century Pax Britannica as a guarantor of order and progress (see especially Carr 1945: 13–17).



states ‘qualified sovereignty’. As I also explained in [Chapter 8](#), the same is true for E.H.Carr and Kenneth Waltz, notwithstanding the latter’s residual paternalist-imperialist Eurocentric support for US hegemony at the very end of his book.

Finally, a softer test case for my argument lies with the defensive Eurocentric cultural realism of Huntington and Lind, who are explicit both in terms of their critique of imperialism and their celebration of Western civilization as the highest normative referent in world politics. Interestingly, their construct of ‘globalization-as-barbaric threat’ returns us directly to the arguments of the racist cultural realists, especially Stoddard and Charles Pearson. For these reasons it seems clear that they invoke an informal hierarchical conception that implies a sliding scale of gradated sovereignty.

**Conclusion: ‘To be or not to be a positivist – is that the question?’**

All of which brings me to my final concluding point. For the upshot of the analysis of this book is that IR theory fails to deliver on one of its key promises – specifically to produce positivist, value-free analyses and universalist theories of world politics. Rather, it turns out that what we encounter in the vast majority of international theory is the provincial or parochial normative purpose of *defending and celebrating the ideal of the West in world politics*, whether this takes anti-imperialist or predominantly imperialist/neo-imperialist forms, expressed in either scientific racist or manifest/subliminal Eurocentric institutional guises. Accordingly, the message of this book provides a key dual challenge to the discipline of IR. First, we need to ascertain the extent to which IR scholars can concede the Eurocentric foundations of their discipline and, if so, we need to ascertain whether this is or is not a problem. For it may turn out that some Eurocentrics might wish to ‘come out of the closet’ and openly defend or even celebrate their Eurocentrism. If, however, the preference is to resist this manoeuvre then we need to work out how a non-Eurocentric foundation for IR theory might be reconstructed. But to those who wish to defend or celebrate their Eurocentrism the logical conclusion is that they have little choice but to accept that IR theory can no longer be represented as positivist, objective or value-free. In which case, the key question is no longer ‘to be or not to be a positivist’ but ‘to be or not to be Eurocentric – that is the question’.