

to the liberal, rule-of-law state. His criticisms of the internal contradictions of the illegitimate, unaccountable, historical Chinese state, anchored in a society that has not shaken off patrimonial social forms, seem equally apt for the China of today. There might be multiple modernities, but only one of them will be orderly in this account. Fukuyama has set up the

reader for a sequel in which history will have a happy ending only if it is liberal. Stay tuned.

—JACK SNYDER

Jack Snyder, the Robert and Renée Belfer Professor of International Relations in the political science department at Columbia University, is the author of Power and Progress: International Politics in Transition (2012).

The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations, Andrew Linklater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 320 pp., \$102 cloth, \$30.99 paper.

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There are few books that both change our field of vision and open up a new and far-reaching research agenda. This is one of them. Linklater here engages in a sustained reflection on the core theoretical issues surrounding the problem of harm in world politics. His goal, as he puts it, is to theorize harm, not to develop a theory of harm. This is the first of three projected volumes. As he writes at the outset, “A central aim of the overall project is to understand whether, or how far, the modern world has made progress in making harm a key moral and political question for humanity as a whole” (p. 5).

There are two primary intellectual inspirations for his approach. The first is English School writing on international society, and especially Martin Wight’s work on the cultural and moral underpinning of comparative international societies. The second is the process sociology of Norbert Elias, especially his work on “the civilizing process,” but seen through the

eyes of someone with a long-term engagement in critical social theory. One of Linklater’s core aims, therefore, is to “combine Wight’s analysis of statesystems with Elias’s comparative approach to civilizing processes in a higher synthesis” (p. 234).

Linklater describes this book as a ground-clearing exercise, and in some ways it is, albeit a highly original and sophisticated one. The first part of the book unpacks the concept of harm: conceptualizing harms, classifying harms, considering how they may be applied to international politics. The core chapters of the book then look at harm in the context of global ethics, international relations theory, the sociology of the civilizing process, historical sociology, and, finally, English School writing on comparative state systems. Much of the writing in these chapters has a probing and sometimes exploratory quality, the main purpose of which is to trace parallels

and to explore connections between these bodies of literature and ideas about harm. And each chapter ends with a discussion of the implications for the sociology of cosmopolitan harm conventions. The range of scholarship is astonishing, the level of intellectual engagement is of a very high order, and the writing is always thought-provoking, shifting our angle of vision even on well-trodden subjects.

One of the great attractions of harm as a subject is that it allows Linklater to build bridges between those pluralist accounts of international society concerned with mere coexistence and those that seek to ground and develop broader solidarist moral commitments. On the one hand, "Every functioning society must possess some concept of harm in an inventory of moral concepts that address the problem of how to regulate social behaviour" (p. 6). Harm is part of the universal grammar of social life. It is one element of what H. L. A. Hart called "the minimum content of natural law." Thus, the near universal recognition of the idea of harm can unite those who disagree profoundly on many other matters. On the other hand, harm provides an analytical and evaluative tool to investigate social and sociological change. Thus, we can identify and compare the enormous range of harm conventions: how they have changed through time in response to growing human interconnectedness and the ever-tighter webs of interdependence; and whether there might be a link between the foundational quality of harm and the past and potential advances in human solidarity and the emergence of more secure global and transnational harm conventions. As Linklater writes, "The principal sociological objective is to understand the extent to which different international systems

made progress in institutionalizing a harm principle that can be said to be immanent in all societies because they all have mechanisms for protecting (at least high status) members from unnecessary harm" (p. 23).

For those concerned with global ethics, the claims are ambitious and far-reaching. They center on the transcultural potential of the concept of harm as a way of grounding shared moral beliefs "that have proved elusive when the preferred starting point has been the quest for a potentially universalizable notion of the good life" (p. 4). Harm, one might say, has a lot more transcultural potential than Western ideas of rights or democracy, let alone conceptions of the good life that arise directly or indirectly out of particular religious traditions. Central to Linklater's normative project is the writing of alternative narratives of universal significance designed to show how global attachments and understandings of harm have changed over time in ways that might come to support a kind of negative utopianism. "The 'harm narrative' that may come to command greater support in different parts of the world tends towards a negative utopianism—to the aspirations to see an end to particular systems of domination, oppression and exploitation rather than to try and breathe new life into one of the discredited visions of human reconciliation that depended on a naïve faith in perfectibility" (p. 264).

Linklater's frequent references to the sociology of global civilizing processes might suggest that the book has a strongly progressivist flavor, perhaps chiming with Steven Pinker's recent account in *The Better Angels of Our Nature*. Linklater is certainly keen to defend what he calls a "narrative of partial progressions over the

past two centuries,” and his empirical story does place significant weight on the self-restraint that has accompanied increased interconnections and functional democratization. “Different forms of harm have encouraged the development of universal structures of consciousness with significant cosmopolitan potential” (p. 261). Yet throughout the book he also examines the limits of ideas of collective learning and the abuses to which progressivist narratives have so often been put. In terms of process sociology, he stresses Elias’s overriding concern with the interplay between civilizing and de-civilizing processes, and adds a further critical edge by “incorporating the moral dimensions of Horkheimer and Adorno’s writings that found only muted support in Elias’s analysis of global civilizing processes” (p. 23). And in terms of the English School, he invokes Wight’s realism and

his awareness of the Janus-faced nature of the state (underappreciated in Pinker’s account of the decline of violence), and the extent to which any civilizing processes within international society have been rendered precarious by recurrent struggles between major powers.

Established ways of thinking about ethics and international affairs are coming under increasing challenge. This major study opens up a fascinating range of historical and conceptual perspectives and interconnections that should be of great interest both to political theorists and to all those concerned with the changing normative character of international society.

—ANDREW HURRELL

Andrew Hurrell is Montague Burton Professor of International Relations at Oxford University and a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford.

The International Human Rights Movement: A History, Aryeh Neier (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 379 pp., \$35 cloth.

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Aryeh Neier has written a fluent and engaging “history” of the international human rights movement, of which he is a senior statesman. Neier, following a prominent career in advocacy, most recently as president of the Open Society Institute, has successfully summarized his own understanding of the movement for a lay audience of those—and I would think they are many—who might like to hear his thoughts on where things stand today.

At the moment of his retirement, at seventy-five years of age, it is generous of Neier to offer up this volume to mark the occasion.

I wish, however, that Neier had not presented his book as a history. It is really a series of essays, only a couple of which offer deeper historical context for the American branch of the human rights movement—which Neier helped launch in 1978 when he participated in the founding