The impact of the 'global transformation' on uneven and combined development

Book section

The Impact of the 'Global Transformation' on Uneven and Combined development

Barry Buzan and George Lawson

For:
Alexander Anievas and Kamran Matin,
Historical Sociology and World History:
Uneven and Combined Development over the Longue Durée

Abstract

This paper focuses on the impact of the 19th century 'global transformation' on uneven and combined development (UCD). It argues that the intensification of UCD by the global transformation led first to a much more uneven and more combined world order, and subsequently to a less uneven but increasingly combined world order. The consequence of this intense period in the history of UCD was a highly centred, core-periphery global order during the 19th century and much of the 20th century. However, since the middle part of the 20th century, and more obviously since the early part of the 21st century, this is giving way to an increasingly decentred global order, still highly combined, but with a marked diffusion in the distribution of the modern 'mode of power'. The result is a reduction in the extreme unevenness of power, wealth and status that characterized the initial phases of global modernity.

About the Authors:

Barry Buzan is a Fellow of the British Academy, Emeritus Professor in the LSE Department of International Relations and a Senior Fellow at LSE IDEAS. He was formerly Montague Burton Professor in the Department of International Relations, LSE. Among his books are, with Richard Little, *International Systems in World History* (2000); with Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers* (2003); *From International to World Society?* (2004); with Lene Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies* (2009); and *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations* (2014).

George Lawson is Associate Professor in International Relations at LSE. His books include: *Global Historical* Sociology, edited with Julian Go (Cambridge, 2016); *The Global 1989: Continuity and Change in World Politics*, edited with Chris Armbruster and Michael Cox (Cambridge 2010); and *Negotiated Revolutions: The Czech Republic, South Africa and Chile* (Ashgate 2005). He is currently working on a monograph entitled *Anatomies of Revolution*.

Together they have written *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations* (2015), and several related articles.

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the ways in which the 19th century 'global transformation' impacted on uneven and combined development (UCD).[1] The first section sets out our general understanding of UCD. The second section argues that the intensification of UCD by the global transformation led to a highly centred, core-periphery global order during the 19th century and much of the 20th century. This was expressed first as a *Western-colonial* international society lasting up to 1945, and subsequently by a *Western-global* international society. The third section sketches briefly how since 1945, and more obviously since the early part of the 21st century, world politics is increasingly characterized by a decentred international order, still intensely combined, but also demonstrating a marked diffusion in the distribution of power, status and wealth. The result is a less uneven, but more intensely combined world order.

In general terms, this chapter supports two of the main contributions made by this book. First, as with the volume as a whole, our account rejects an emphasis on, let alone any autonomy of, either 'inside-out' or 'outside-in' explanations. All the sites where modernity took root were particular combinations of local and global dynamics – as discussed below, British industrialization was fuelled by the de-industrialization of India, while imperialism 'over there' fed into state-formation 'at home'. The relational sensibility that underpins this chapter – and this book – sees social sites such as 'foreign' and the 'domestic', 'East' and 'West', and 'metropole' and 'colony' as neither analytically separable, nor empirically discrete (also see Go and Lawson 2016).

Second, like many other contributors to this volume, we enlist uneven and combined development in order to generate a non-Eurocentric account of macro-historical change. We examine the inter-societal interactions, especially trade, technology transfers, imperial extraction, and exchanges of ideas, which generated the global transformation. And we stress the 'entangled histories' and 'multiple vectors' that combined to vault Western states into a position of pre-eminence during the 19th century (De Vries 2013, 46). Such an account stands in contrast to Eurocentric approaches, which see the emergence of modernity as conditioned by forces both internal and unique to Europe (Jones, 1981; Landes 1998; North et al. 2009). In our view, modernity was not self-generated through the unfolding of particularly European economic practices (such as double entry bookkeeping), institutions (such as representative governance) or symbolic schemas (such as the Enlightenment). Rather, modernity was forged through the co-constitution of local and transnational, and its core vectors were inter-societal, from capitalist expansion to imperialism. From the 16th to the 19th centuries, a relatively thin international

---

[1] In this chapter, 'global transformation' is used synonymously with 'global modernity'. For a full discussion of these terms, see Buzan and Lawson (2015, 1-10).

system sustained forms of interaction that were crucial to the development of global modernity (Anievas and Nisancioglu 2015). From the 19th century onwards, global interactions became more unbalanced as a major mode of power gap opened up between the European (and later American and Japanese) 'leading-edge' and most other polities.[2] These dynamics allowed a small number of mostly Western states to project their power around the world. But this power projection did not produce a world of homogeneous social orders. Rather, as we explore below, it led to diverse amalgams of old and new, and indigenous and foreign (Anievas and Nisancioglu 2015, 48-53). Core and periphery were intensely locked together even as their entwining fuelled a stark unevenness in terms of power differentials and in terms of how social orders were constituted. Modernity was a global process both in origins and outcomes.

In one important way, however, we depart from most other contributions to this book: our use of UCD is analytical-heuristic rather than causal-explanatory. Using UCD as a framing device allows us to construct a relatively straightforward account of macro-historical periodization: during the early phases of the global transformation, development became both much more uneven and much more combined; in recent years, there has been a (partial) reduction of the former and a (powerful) intensification of the latter. We are not concerned with deploying specific causal dynamics associated with UCD theory. Rather, we see global modernity as generated by the *interplay* between three macro-dynamics: industrialization (and associated processes of de-industrialization); rational statehood (and imperialism); and ideologies of progress (liberalism, socialism, nationalism, and 'scientific' racism). It is the configuration generated by the intersection of these three macro-dynamics that produced the global transformation, not any specific causal wager associated with UCD. For our purposes, UCD is most usefully seen as an analytical shorthand rather than as a theoretical schema containing a set of auxiliary causal claims.

Uneven and Combined Development

Like Justin Rosenberg (2010, 2013), we understand 'unevenness' to be a basic fact of historical development, even if degrees of unevenness vary considerably across international orders. There are three drivers that lie behind the universality of uneven development: first, the diversity of geographical endowments; second, the physical separation of political units; and third, the differential impact of 'combination', whether this takes the form of the spread of ideas, the transfer of technologies, trading networks, security alliances, or practices of subjugation and emulation. 'Combination', by which we mean the

---

[2] By 'leading-edge', we mean those polities in which the configuration of the modern 'mode of power' first assembled. We discuss the concept of the 'mode of power' below.

ways in which social orders trade, coerce, emulate, borrow and steal from each other, is also intrinsic to any international order and, like unevenness, can vary greatly in degree. Before the 19th century, degrees of combination varied mainly with geography, which facilitated deep connections in some environments (most notably where there were available sea and river routes), but obstructed it in others (particularly in the case of land barriers). Available technologies, most notably the quality of ships and knowledge of navigation, and up to a point the construction of roads, also made a major difference to degrees of combination. By contrast, degrees of combination since the 19th century have been heavily determined by industrial technologies. Under the impact of steamships, railways, highways, aircraft, spacecraft and electronic means of communication from the telegraph to the internet, the importance of geography falls away, and combination intensifies rapidly, and probably permanently. Combination therefore increases directly with the third element of UCD: 'development'. Combination is both a homogenizing force, as seen in pressures to conform with, or measure up to, standards of 'modernization', 'Westernization' or 'civilization', but also one that promotes differentiation, as in the multiple responses around the world to these pressures.

In this perspective, UCD stands as an alternative to Waltz's (1979, 76) formulation of homogenization into like units through 'socialization and competition'. Both Waltz and Rosenberg see socialization and competition as consequences of combination. But they disagree about their effects, with Waltz favouring homogenization into 'like units', and Rosenberg stressing that the particular timing and circumstances of socialization and competition produce variable outcomes. The extreme conditions created by macro-historical transformations such as the one that took place during the long 19th 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. Morris (2010, ch.2), for example, charts how in an earlier macro-transformation, settled agrarian communities spread from the hilly flanks of Mesopotamia northwest into Europe, and from other originating cores, as in China, to wider zones. Further changes spread outwards from this leading-edge (or edges). The pace of spread varied according to the mediating effects of social and physical environments. Agriculture was slow to spread to less productive soils and climates, and some modes of social order were more receptive to it than others. If unevenness was – and is – a basic fact of historical development, different peoples and places encounter macro-transformative pressures at different times and under different circumstances (Rosenberg 2010, 2013).

The spread of a new 'mode of power' thus produces diverse outcomes.[3] Each social order that encounters the new configuration has its own way of adapting to it. The 'whip of external necessity' (Trotsky 1997[1932], 27) produced by a new mode of power is often coercive, occurring through force of arms. But inter-societal dynamics also take the form of imitation. 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 19th century, German industrialization was not a replica of British development, but took distinct form, even as it 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 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 19th 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. These 'contradictory fusions' aver that historical development is jumbled, and often compressed (Rosenberg 2010).

Because global transformations are generated through multiple revolutions from new political formations to the advent of new technologies, they amplify the link between development and combination. Such transformations typically generate increases in productivity and population, plus increases in the complexity of social orders and physical technologies, consequently producing a denser, more deeply connected international order. The expanded scale, complexity and technological capacities of agrarian polities meant that they had more intense relationships with both their neighbours and peoples further away than their hunter-gatherer predecessors.

---

[3] By 'mode of power', we mean the material and ideational relations that are generative of both actors and the ways in which power is exercised. As we note above, during the global transformation, three dynamics (industrialization, rational statehood and 'ideologies of progress') combined to generate a new basis for how power was constituted, organized and expressed – we refer to this as a shift in the 'mode of power'. *Contra* most IR approaches, changes in the mode of power are more significant than changes in the distribution of power, affecting not just outcomes, but the basis for how interactions take place and are understood.

Those relationships were military, political, economic and cultural, or some mixture of these. In this way, the scale and intensity of combination within the international sphere increased, meaning that every society became less self-contained and more exposed to developments elsewhere. As social orders became larger in scale and more complex in terms of their internal organization, differences between them were accentuated and interactions between them intensified. Late developers cannot escape the influence of earlier adopters, but neither do they reproduce them. The mutual constitution of unevenness and combination is thus intensified by development, producing larger, more complex and more diverse social orders bound together in denser, more interdependent ways.

Centred Globalism

During the 19th century, a 'global transformation' intensified the meaning of development, and therefore the logic of UCD, to an unprecedented degree, resulting in the formation of a highly centred core-periphery international order. As discussed above, we see the global transformation as constituted by a concatenation of three interlinked processes: industrialization, the rational state, and ideologies of progress. Once this concatenation had formed, it constituted a new mode of power with massive transformative potential. Some of the roots of this mode of power went back centuries. But it was only in the 19th century that the whole package coalesced in a small group of polities from where both its effect (a revolutionary configuration in the mode of power) and its challenge (how other societies responded to this configuration) became the principal dynamic through which international relations was conceived and practiced. In this context, development not only took on a new form and meaning, but also became highly dynamic, driven by seemingly endless cycles of technological innovation.

Because the global transformation initially took root only within a relatively small number of polities,[4] and because its new, complex, and highly dynamic mode of power was extremely difficult to copy, global unevenness was intensified to an unprecedented extent. During the 19th century, the development gap between societies opened more widely than ever before. Global modernity encountered peoples living in a variety of political, economic and cultural formations, from hunter-gatherer bands to city-states and empires.

---

[4] As already suggested above, this is not to say that the sources of the global transformation were endogenous to these polities. To the contrary, global modernity was forged from inter-societal, often coercive, interactions between 'core' and 'periphery'. To take one illustration, Indian textiles were either banned from Britain or levied with high tariffs, while British manufacturing products were forcibly imported into India without duty. Between 1814 and 1828, British cloth exports to India rose from 800,000 yards to over 40 million yards, while during the same period, Indian cloth exports to Britain halved (Goody 1996, 131).

In size, these social orders varied from groups of a few dozen to empires consisting of tens of millions of people. This variety meant that the power gap between core and periphery, and the challenge posed by the global transformation to those in the periphery, prompted quite different experiences of modernity. A relatively even distribution of global power amongst several, mostly lightly connected, agrarian empires was replaced by a radically uneven global distribution of power in favour of a handful of mostly Western polities. Some peoples and polities were able to resist or adapt to the global transformation's multiple assault; others were consumed by it. At one end of the spectrum were the many indigenous peoples in settler colonies who were all but obliterated; at the other were those like the Japanese who adapted the modern mode of power to indigenous social formations.

The Japanese case is particularly interesting because for a century it was the only major example of a non-Western people acquiring the revolutions of modernity quickly, and using them to overcome the power gap established by the global transformation. With the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902, Japan formally joined the ranks of the great powers, and its development went on to outpace many European laggards. In effect, Japan was the first mover in what we now think of as the 'rise of the rest' that began in earnest during the 1970s. Why Japan was able to do this so early is as difficult a question as why modernity first took root in northwest Europe. Allinson and Anievas (2010, 479-85) offer useful explanations in terms of a conjuncture of: an unusual Japanese class structure (especially the fluid position of the samurai); fortuitous timing (having a first encounter with the West in the 1850s rather than the 1880s); being less attractive than China and India in terms of extractable resources; and being able to turn the multiple challenges of global modernity into the stimulation of a developmental state rather than a retreat into feudalism. Japan also had some other notable advantages. Unlike China, it was able to provide a cultural bridge between 'modern' and 'archaic' by retaining its emperor and its Shinto religion. When the Qing dynasty collapsed in 1911, China's political continuity was broken and the country fragmented into decades of warlordism and civil war. And again unlike China, Japan was able to appropriate nationalism as a unifying idea to help it through the turbulence of modernization. Because the Qing were Manchu, they could not use nationalism without threatening their ruling position in relation to the Han majority. Japan, of course, also had the advantage of warning time. A decade before it was forced to respond to Commodore Perry's black ships, it could observe closely what was happening to China during the Opium Wars.

The extremely rapid emergence of a modernizing core, including both Western powers and Japan, during the 19th century meant that never before had unevenness been felt on this scale, with this intensity, or in a context of such close, inescapable interdependence. Those convinced of their cultural superiority and with access to advanced weapons, industrial production,

medicine, and new forms of bureaucratic organization gained a pronounced advantage over those with limited access to these sources of power. After around 1800, these dynamics fostered a substantial power gap between a small number of Western polities and other societies around the world (Buzan and Lawson 2015, ch. 1). In principle, this power gap could be closed: those with access to the configuration that sustained the global transformation could move from periphery to core. In practice, this move was made exceptionally difficult not only by the depth of the transformative package, but also by practices of imperialism and other forms of interventionism that reinforced the advantages of the established core. Japan was the exception that proved the rule. The result was a shift from a 'polycentric world with no dominant centre' to a core-periphery international order in which the leading edge was located in the West (Pomeranz 2000, 4). This hierarchical international order lasted from the early 19th century until the early years of the 21st century.

The first phase of this centred global order took the form of a *Western-colonial international society*, and this form remained dominant until 1945. Western-colonial international society was global in scale, but extremely unequal. Its core comprised most European states, their now independent former settler colonies in North America, and from the late 19th century, Japan. Its periphery was a mixture of colonies, largely absorbed into the sovereignty of their metropoles (most of Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia), the decolonised polities of Latin America, and a handful of classical agrarian powers still strong enough to avoid colonization, but weak enough to be treated as unequal (China, Iran, Egypt, the Ottoman Empire). Although there was a trickle of erosions of inequality between core and periphery before 1945, Western-colonial international society broadly endured until the end of the Second World War.

Western-colonial international society was the starkest possible expression of the uneven and combined character of global modernity. Because imperialism was the outward expression of the new mode of power, it exemplified the unevenness between the haves and have-nots of the global transformation. At the same time, imperialism was one of the principal means through which polities and peoples were combined on a global scale. During the long 19th century, European powers sought to exert control, both directly and indirectly, over most of the globe. If the bulk of European imperialism took place during the 'Scramble for Africa', which saw European powers assume direct control of large parts of Africa, the extension of imperialism went well beyond the 'Scramble'. Between 1810 and 1870, the US carried out 71 territorial annexations and military interventions (Go 2011, 39). The US first became a continental empire, seizing territory from Native Americans, the Spanish and the Mexicans. It then built an overseas empire, extending its authority over Cuba, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines, Samoa and the Virgin Islands. Other settler

states also became colonial powers in their own right, including Australia and New Zealand in the Pacific. Japan, the only non-Western state to fully incorporate the revolutions of modernity during the 19th century, constructed an empire in East Asia. Russian expansionism accelerated during this period, both southwards to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, and eastwards to Sakhalin and Vladivostok. Imperialism, therefore, was a central vector within the uneven and combined character of global modernity and an equally central tool of the core-periphery international order that arose from it. Politically, militarily, economically and demographically, a relatively small group of mostly Western polities created a colonial international order that privileged their treasuries, their strategic interests, and their people. They subordinated the rest of the world while, at the same time, coercively extending to planetary scale the configuration that underpinned global modernity.

A central feature of Western-colonial order was the uneven extension of industrialisation, production and finance, which generated a core-periphery order in which the ebbs and flows of metropolitan markets, commodity speculations and price fluctuations controlled the survival chances of millions of people around the world. The global transformation produced a single, highly combined, world economy for the first time. This global economy was enabled by improved technologies of transportation and communication, technologies that also made war and politics global, producing an integrated, yet hierarchical, global order. Accelerating market integration amplified both unevenness and combination (Bayly 2004, 2). On the one hand, commodities increasingly flowed from the periphery into the core: by 1900, Britain was importing 60% of its total calories and the average distance travelled by the fruit, vegetables and animals it imported was 1,800 miles (Schwartz 2000, 105). At the outbreak of the First World War, Britain imported 87% of its food and a similar proportion of its raw materials (Ruggie 1982, 401, fn. 69). On the other hand, capital and manufactured goods flowed from the core into the periphery. These two-directional flows, however unequally constituted, could increase both trade and growth. West African trade, for example, centred on palm oil, groundnuts, timber and cocoa, increased by a factor of 4 between 1897-1913 (Frieden 2006, 74). In Latin America, economies grew at four times the rate of Asian polities and at six times the rate of Central and Eastern European states between 1870-1913 (Frieden 2006, 73). In some sectors, peripheral states led the world: by 1900, Brazil produced 80% of the world's coffee exports; by 1913, Chile provided half of the world's copper and Malaya produced half of the world's tin (Frieden 2006, 73-5).

During the initial phase of the global transformation, therefore, the development gap between polities opened more widely than ever before and, at the same time (and for the same reasons), the planet was bound together more tightly than in previous eras. This dynamic vaulted a few Western states into a period of unprecedented, if temporary, dominance over other parts of the

world (Hobsbawm 1962, 15, 44). On the basis of the new mode of power, the West became hegemonic over many aspects of international relations, projecting new forms of organization and new ideas that destabilized existing social orders, both at home and abroad. During the 19th century, the West broke open and overwhelmed the remaining bastions of the classical world (the Ottoman Empire, China and Japan), and overcame the environmental barriers both of disease (that had restricted Europeans to coastal enclaves in Africa) and distance (through the advent of railways, steamships and the telegraph). As Hobsbawm (1962, 365) notes, 'nothing, it seemed, could stand in the way of a few western gunboats or regiments bringing with them trade and bibles'. This configuration enabled new organizational forms to emerge such as the nation-state, the modern firm, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and, more broadly, proto-global civil society in the guise of transnational social movements ranging from anti-slavery campaigners to advocates of free trade. For better or worse, and often both together, the long 19th century saw the transformation of the daily condition of people nearly everywhere on the planet. The 19th century was, therefore, the beginning of what we might call 'the Western era', setting loose revolutions in terms of both material capabilities and symbolic schemas.

Rosenberg (2013) argues that the Great War of 1914-18 was the culmination of the uneven and combined development of global modernity, and the industrialization of violence that had been unfolding for more than eight decades. There is some truth in this claim. But the highly unequal Western-colonial order nonetheless endured throughout the interwar period, after which it gave way to *Western-global international society.* By adopting the term *Western-global*, we take a position on how to understand contemporary international society and how to deal with the legacy of its colonial origins. The idea that there is a global international society rests on the view that it emerged from the expansion of Western international society to planetary scale, with decolonization producing states that were homogenous, if only in the sense of being sovereign equals. The price of independence, or for those not colonized the price of being accepted as equals by the West, was the adoption of Western political forms and the acceptance of the primary institutions of Western international society: the market, the legalized hegemony of great power management, positive international law, and suchlike. 'Modernization theory' held out the prospect of the 'Third World' becoming more like the 'First World' (Rostow 1960), while polities around the world were categorized as 'developed' and 'developing', or 'advanced' and 'emerging'. In each of these classifications, the Western mode of economic, political and cultural organization was taken to be both natural and pre-eminent. In significant respects, therefore, the post-1945 era saw the maintenance of a hegemonic, core-periphery structure in which a Western core

was surrounded by regional international societies that existed in varying degrees of differentiation from, and subordination to, that core.

This second phase of centred globalism was defined by the delegitimation of racism and colonialism, the abandonment of divided sovereignty in favour of sovereign equality, and the dismantling of empires. Yet many features of Western-colonial order remained, from the discourse and politics of development, aid, intervention and migration, to structural inequalities in the world economy. During this period, the mode of power that underpinned the global transformation remained predominantly sited in a small number of mostly Western states plus Japan, and later South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, thus perpetuating a core-periphery order, albeit with a reduced degree of formal imperialism. The end of the Cold War even strengthened the position of the Western core by valorising economic strands of liberalism (reconstituted as 'neo-liberalism') as the prototypical feature of modernity (Lawson 2010).

Such dynamics, along with rapid technological changes, helped to foster increasing levels of combination. Yet while the shift from Western-colonial to Western-global international society still reflected a centred global order, this period also saw the beginning of a decline in levels of unevenness. The shift from divided sovereignty to formal sovereign equality reduced differences in political and legal (and racial) status, and this shift was reinforced by a proliferation of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). In some ways these IGOs perpetuated the core-periphery inequality of status by legitimising what Simpson (2004) calls the 'legalised hegemony' of the great powers. But, in general, they supported sovereign equality, and the great power principle saw a non-Western state (China) take up a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. Several other states, most notably the Asian Tigers, developed rapidly. So too, from the 1980s onwards, did China, thereby greatly expanding the core of the modern global economy. The military gap narrowed in a number of ways, particularly with the widespread diffusion of light infantry weapons (making territorial occupations extremely expensive), and the much narrower diffusion of nuclear weapons to some developing countries (Buzan and Lawson 2015, ch. 8).

These first two phases of the global transformation brought to an end the long period in which human history was mainly local and contact between distant polities mostly fairly light. From the 19th century on, human history became increasingly global, contact among far-flung peoples intense, and development both more uneven and more combined. Driving these changes was the global transformation from predominantly agrarian to primarily industrial societies, and from absolutist orders to rational states, along with the emergence of novel symbolic schemas sustained by ideologies of progress.

Decentred Globalism

The revolutions of modernity are still spreading and intensifying – 'globalization' refers to their outward expansion (Giddens 1990, 45-54). As modernity continues to spread and intensify, Western dominance is being increasingly challenged. In the early 21st century, we are living in the beginning of the end of this highly unequal phase of the revolutions of modernity: *centred* globalism is giving way to *decentred* globalism. Decentred refers to the ways in which the configuration that marks the global transformation is no longer concentrated in a small group of polities, but is increasingly dispersed. Globalism marks both a basic continuity and an intensification of earlier phases of the global transformation in which the configuration of modernity assumed planetary scale. In the contemporary world, power and development are increasingly less unevenly concentrated and more combined than in previous periods of global modernity. Those polities that were once on the receiving end of the global transformation are employing its mode of power to reassert their position in international society.

Slowly and unevenly, but at an accelerating pace, the massive inequality across the planet that was established during the 19th century is being eroded. The mechanism behind this closing of the power gap is the same one that created it in the first place: the revolutions of modernity. Politically, legally and demographically, the gap has narrowed significantly; economically and militarily it has narrowed less, but still appreciably (Buzan and Lawson 2015, ch. 7). This is both changing the composition of the core (making it larger, more diverse and less white/Western) and changing its relationship to the periphery (as the core and semi-periphery get bigger, and the periphery smaller). The revolutions of modernity began by producing an unprecedented degree of inequality in a context of highly uneven and combined development. Development remains highly combined and that is likely to increase rather than decrease. It is still uneven, but in many key respects that unevenness is diminishing. Some parts of the former periphery have either caught up with and joined the old core, or are on their way to doing so. However, as noted above, combination is both a homogenizing and differentiating force. So while the diffusion of modernity reduces unevenness in some respects (most obviously power, status and wealth), it sustains it in others. For example, while there has been a narrowing of ideological bandwidth compared to the 20th century – virtually all states around the world are now organized around capitalist logics – this homogenization comes with what looks like a quite stable diversity of political forms, from 'liberal democratic' (e.g. US, UK), through 'social democratic' (e.g. Germany, Japan) and 'competitive authoritarian' (e.g. Russia, Malaysia) to 'state bureaucratic' (e.g. China, Saudi Arabia) (Buzan and Lawson 2014a). The diffusion of modernity is only homogenizing up to a point. Thereafter, it is diversified by distinct cultural and political formations.

The economic crisis that began in 2008 may well come to be seen as the tipping point at which the extreme unevenness and centredness of the period of Western domination began decisively to give way to a less uneven, more decentred global order (Buzan and Lawson 2014b). The distribution of power, status and wealth in the contemporary world is becoming less uneven and more diffuse *among* states (though not necessarily or even probably *within* them). In general, this means that the West will lose its privileged position in international society. This is already visible in the emergence of new sites of global governance (e.g. the G20), economic formations (e.g. the BRICs), and security institutions (e.g. the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation). The diffusion of power is being accompanied by a diffusion of legitimacy, making it difficult for the US to hold onto its sole superpower status.

The age of superpowers was a particular consequence of the highly uneven distribution of power created by the Western-colonial phase of global modernity and sustained by its Western-global phase. During these two periods, polities like Britain and the US amassed sufficient relative power to be world dominating. That level of capability is no longer possible. With many states becoming wealthy and powerful, no single polity will be able to accumulate sufficient relative power to dominate international society. Decentred globalism will remain highly combined but will also be increasingly less uneven in terms of power, status and wealth. It is both the successor to the Western dominated era of the 19th and 20th centuries and, in a way, marks the restoration of the classical order in which the distribution of power was fairly even. The difference between the contemporary era and that before the 19th century is that, whereas much of the world before the 19th century was only lightly combined, the contemporary era is one of intense – and intensifying – combination.

Conclusion

To sum up, our argument is that the global transformation strengthened the impact of UCD in two ways. First, the global transformation opened up a very large and difficult to close gap between those in possession of the modern mode of power and those without access to it. Second, the global transformation hugely increased degrees of combination. The new mode of power largely swept away the geographical-environmental determinants of unevenness and combination, replaced them with a redefined version of development. By producing massive increases in both unevenness and combination, the global transformation generated an international order characterized by centred globalism. In the early years of the 21st century, a more decentred global order is emerging in which unevenness is diminishing but levels of combination are intensifying. This is not to say that unevenness will disappear – it was both produced by the global transformation and also

productive of it in that a much smaller 'core' appropriated the vast resources of the 'periphery'. But in the contemporary world, the Western-led order enabled by the early unevenness and combination of global modernity is beginning to erode. In its place is emerging a more decentred and more globalised order, one that comes clearly into view when viewed through the analytic of uneven and combined development.

References

Allinson, Jamie C. and Alexander Anievas. 2010. "The Uneven and Combined Development of the Meiji Restoration: A Passive Revolutionary Road to Capitalist Modernity." *Capital & Class* 34(3): 469-90.

Anievas, Alexander and Kerem Nisancioglu. 2015. *How the West Came to Rule: The Geopolitical Origins of Capitalism*. London: Pluto.

Bayly, Christopher A. 2004. *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Buzan, Barry and George Lawson. 2014a. "Capitalism and the Emergent World Order." *International Affairs* 90(1): 71-91.

Buzan, Barry and George Lawson. 2014b. "Rethinking Benchmark Dates in International Relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 20(2): 437-62.

Buzan, Barry and George Lawson. 2015. *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

De Vries, Jan. 2013. "Reflections on Doing Global History." In *Writing the History of the Global,* edited by Maxine Berg, 32-47. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Frieden, Jeffrey. 2006. *Global Capitalism: Its Rise and Fall in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Norton.

Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.

Go, Julian. 2011. *Patterns of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Go, Julian and George Lawson. 2016. "For a Global Historical Sociology." In *Global Historical Sociology*, edited by Julian Go and George Lawson, forthcoming. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goody, Jack. 1996. *The East in the West*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 1962. *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848*. London: Abacus.

Jones, Eric. 1981. *The European Miracle: Environment, Economies and Geopolitics in the History of Europe and Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Landes, David. 1998. *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*. New York: Norton.

Lawson, George. 2010. "The 'What', 'When' and 'Where' of the Global 1989." In *The Global 1989: Continuity and Change in World* Politics, edited by George Lawson, Chris Armbruster and Michael Cox, 1-20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Morris, Ian. 2010. *Why the West Rules for Now*. London: Profile.

North, Douglass C., John Joseph Wallis and Barry R. Weingast. 2009. *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pomeranz, Kenneth. 2000. *The Great Divergence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rosenberg, Justin. 2010. "Problems in the Theory of Uneven and Combined Development Part II: Unevenness and Multiplicity." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 23(1): 165-89.

Rosenberg, Justin. 2013. "Kenneth Waltz and Leon Trotsky: Anarchy in the Mirror of Uneven and Combined Development." *International Politics* 50(2): 183-230.

Rostow, W.W. 1960. *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ruggie, John G. 1982. "International Regimes, Transactions and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order." *International Organization* 36(2): 379-415.

Schwartz, Herman. 2000. *States and Markets*. Basingstoke: MacMillan.

Simpson, Gerry. 2004. *Great Powers and Outlaw States: Unequal Sovereigns in the International Legal Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Trotsky, Leon. 1997[1932]. *The History of the Russian Revolution*. London: Pluto.

Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading Mass.: Addison-Wesley.