Interlingual Relations

Global Politics in a Polyglot World

Mauro José Caraccioli and Einar Wigen
EDITORS

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To our families and friends,
who in migration and imagination,
inspire us to speak in multitudes.

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Acknowledgments

The COVID-19 pandemic that put the world in lockdown in early 2020 fundamentally halted the forward momentum that we, as editors, had been developing since 2018 to draw attention to translation not just as a fruitful area of inquiry, but as a fundamental space where contemporary IR scholarship could fulfill at least some of the promises articulated by the linguistic, practice, cultural, historical, and reflexive "turns" of earlier generations. The pandemic halted much of the sense of what difference scholarly work could make in a seemingly indifferent world, prompting us to first and foremost acknowledge the great patience, perseverance, and understanding from our families, friends, colleagues, and editors, as well as ongoing mutual enthusiasm that has sustained our friendship and camaraderie throughout years of significant personal and collective challenges. This work simply would not have come to fruition without those human virtues that have helped us to endure our failings.

Over various years, the conversations we have had as friends and colleagues have brought out a panoply of shared experiences and aspirations for thinking about interlinguality as an interface for various groups of scholars to come together in community and bear witness to the work we have all already been doing. Beginning with a rollicking roundtable at the 2018 meeting of the International Studies Association in San Francisco (which would go on to be published as Mauro J. Caraccioli, Einar Wigen, Julia Costa Lopez, Amanda Cheney, and Jelena Subotic, "Interlingual Relations: Approaches, Conflicts, and Lessons in the Translation of Global Politics," in *International Studies Review* 23 (3) (September 2021): 1015–1045, through the Pre-Conference Workshop at the 2019 ISA meeting in Toronto made possible by a Catalytic Workshop Grant, we wish to first thank all of the contributors to this volume and the colleagues who along the way encouraged us on this path. Far too numerous to include all of them, we wish to highlight the support of Dan Brunstetter, Alvina Hoffmann, Elif Kalaycioglu, Halvard Leira, Amanda Murdie, Iver Neumann, Andy Paras, Vincent Pouliot, and Monika de Silva, among many others, for their engagement and contributions to our past and ongoing efforts.

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Preface

Iver B. Neumann

The last three decades has seen rapid growth in the number of states and universities that offer degrees in International Relations, with a corresponding growth in scholarly output and channels through which it may be published. This development has dovetailed with, and probably even stimulated, a widening of theories used and phenomena addressed. It is often argued that the result is a decentered discipline. While this may be true, it is also true that the resulting widening and deepening of our common investigation of phenomena that are relevant to international and global life means that future successful synthesizing exercises will rest on firmer foundations than previous ones. It follows that we should continue to widen and deepen our scope of inquiry, and we should do it in such a way that we speak to the discipline at large.

By bringing previously neglected tasks of translation into the remit of IR, this book succeeds in doing exactly that. While it is true that poststructuralists have done work premised on the idea that we may understand the words "global" and "international" as language, and also on both textual and nontextual semiotic systems, the editors are right in arguing that the acts of translation themselves, as well as the social apparatuses that have been there to facilitate and execute it, have largely escaped our attention. I write that this is largely the case, for there is some work on issues such as intentionally noncorresponding versions of treaties, but as we see from the sources drawn upon in this volume, IR has come late to this particular ball. However, given that translation and translators are certainly part of those relations that we claim as our object of study, the important thing is that we are now finally joining the dance.

Translation spans from trafficking in simultaneous interpretation and period interpretation (spoken language), via translation in the narrow sense (written language) and translation of specific semiotic systems (interaction understood as intertextual), to attempts at making entire cultures legible to one another. Usage changes continuously: some languages have their span of usage reduced (e.g., Latin), others go through a revival (e.g., Hebrew), while yet others experience changes in annotation (e.g., Kazakh). An utterance is a piece of language that does a job in a context, so such processes involve translation.

This book is an agenda-setting one. It is therefore appropriate that phenomena of all these kinds receive attention. It is probably also appropriate that philosophical issues, such as the extent to which the categories of a language determine the worldview of its bearers (the Sapir-Wharf hypothesis), what it means that language gains its meaning in its use (Wittgenstein,) or whether language is best understood as referential or relational (de Saussure), take a back seat to concrete issues, such as the specific problems and effects of rendering a concept like sovereignty in a new language, or how different practices regarding the status of translators color political outcomes. These are perennial issues. While it is a proven fact that some kind of communication will eventually materialize among the different detachments of our species, it is also impossible to imagine a world where problems of translation do not exist. I hope and believe that the scholarship on display here will inspire more IR scholars to do further empirical research on such matters, and that these studies will in turn inspire new syntheses regarding the role of language in relations between polities, as well as the structural roles that language plays for international relations.

Introduction

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By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands;
every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

—Genesis 10:5 (King James Version)

The fate of Gentiles seems like an odd place to begin. As much biblical commentary has established, part of the resonance of our opening epigraph is the way it connects the dispersal of Noah's descendants across the world to the events surrounding the rise and failure of the Tower of Babel (Steiner 1975; Britt 1996; Thompson 1999). Both narratives are part of the great origin myth whereby nations are distinct because of their linguistic differences. Yet as we shall maintain here, the politics behind that myth could easily serve as an analogy for the contemporary state of International Relations (IR) as a scholarly field. Indeed, the frameworks of global politics seem just as old as the accounts comprising Noah's Table of Nations as the genealogy of his descendants and their dispersal. But what does it take to establish and retain that kind of enduring meaning in the hallowed halls of academic inquiry and scholarly reflection?

In this book, we provide a framework for the study of global politics in a polyglot world. Just as the rise and fall of the Tower of Babel illustrates the ways in which language and identity are intertwined, so too do we find that international relations (and how IR scholars aspire to study these) is an inherently *interlingual* realm. What we aim to highlight is how that interlingual dimension is neglected within IR as a field and what difference a systematic understanding of translation in global politics would make for how IR is defined, practiced, and studied. Specifically, we see the task of defining interlingual relations as part of the politics of linguistic difference: What standards, metrics, norms, and conventions allow for some to speak about global politics at the expense of others? What is constructed and lost in the two-way exchange between linguistic and political diversity? And more critically, on whose behalf does a hegemonic form of IR claim to speak to (and about) the rest of the world?

Translation lies at the core of international relations (Stritzel 2014; Wigen 2018; Caraccioli et al. 2021). Building upon an emergent literature on translation in IR, we argue that a focus on the social constructions of linguistic reality has the potential to become a much needed corrective to IR's Anglophonic bias (Chan 1993, 2017). To accomplish this goal, IR needs to go beyond translation in diplomatic affairs to making sense of global politics as inherently interlingual. What we gain in return is a more truly global perspective on international affairs, going both beyond the hegemony of English and seeing the interconnectedness between "high" politics and everyday life. Beyond the task of meaning-making (Neufeld 1993; Wendt 1999), we understand the role of translation in global politics as one of *world-making* (Onuf 2012; Jordheim and Wigen 2018), whereby social roles, rules, and responsibilities are dramatized under narratives that establish the semblance of order, but which do not sound or mean the same to all actors. By increasingly looking beyond the West to integrate more global human experiences into their theorizing (Sajed 2013; Tickner and Blaney 2013; Shilliam 2015), IR scholars have in recent years more forcefully reengaged the links between *interpretation* and translation. In Lily Ling's (2002, 16) apt phrasing, "international relations . . . caters to a parochial, almost precious, view of the world," reflecting an understanding of global politics that "claims to apply across all time and space, eradicating in the process any mediation of world politics by race, gender, or other kinds of historical/cultural difference."

Many of the recent efforts to disentangle the linguistic and interpretive connections informing the field's paradigms are grounded in these earlier critiques of hegemonic meaning-making (Spivak 1990). Ignoring moments of mutual interrogation between interlingual encounters hence risks further miring IR scholarship in linguistic bias, exclusively to our detriment (Bertrand et al. 2018). While much has been written on interpretation, translation studies have yet to rupture IR's status as an "American" social science (Hoffman 1977; Barder and Levine 2014; Oren 2016). Yet, as we argue here, translation is the unacknowledged core not only of social scientific research on how politics takes place in languages other than English but also of global politics itself. Our argument in this introduction develops in three parts: first, we describe *interlinguality* as a mode of agency for different polities coming together, serving also as a conceptual frame through which translation acts as the centerpiece of global political exchange; second, we examine the extent to which contemporary IR scholarship accounts for the interfaces at which languages meet, focusing on the role of intermediaries—that is, translators, as well as agents of commerce, ideology, and cultural exchange—within contemporary IR theories, practices, and conceptual processes that are key to studying global politics; lastly, we reflect on interlinguality as an everyday thickness of global interactions, the glue that makes social worlds meaningful. What makes the trajectory of interlinguality doubly relevant for contemporary IR scholars is its long-standing subjugation to the ends and means of empire, a relationship that we conclude remains evident today in the hegemony of Anglophonic reading, writing, and research.

Who Gets to Speak in/for International Relations?

In a polyglot world, global politics is inherently interlingual. Yet in the context of contemporary IR scholarship, the world is made legible through translation: via political processes occurring in other languages that are translated into English by journalists, bureaucrats, and various outlets of popular culture, using Anglophone concepts. At the interface of one or more languages, we find someone doing the work of translation. But when it comes to producing knowledge about all aspects of these exchanges, there is but one mother tongue. Even though it is an everyday practice of global politics, translation is a muted part of the method that English-writing scholars employ when studying politics taking place in other languages. Scholars in the so-called linguistic turn of IR never drew the obvious conclusion that if different political communities use their political languages differently, then the interface of international politics involves mediation between different languages (see Debrix 2003; D'Aoust 2012). Translation is typically glossed over in IR's scholarly writings, where politics is always already made legible in English, reflecting the overlap between linguistic and institutional hegemony (Ruggie 1998).

Whether the task is to decolonize the curriculum, to bring a wider set of human experiences into our theorizing, or simply to study politics taking place in any language other than English, translation is by necessity part of what makes these goals attainable for IR scholars. Any intellectual engagement across a linguistic boundary involves translation. Because no two languages are the same, meaning changes in translation. More critically, however, meanings change in politically significant ways, often to the strategic advantage (and disadvantage) of the actors involved (see, e.g., Cohen 1997; Davison 1976). The politics of linguistic difference is therefore important for understanding how claims to political legitimacy and negotiations take place across linguistic boundaries. In European nation-states, the ideal has been for linguistic and political communities to be coextensive, in which case domestic politics would take place in the national language and international politics (for a very select few) would involve more deliberate translating across linguistic differences.[1] As the aftermaths of globalization, imperialism, and the spread of global capitalism have shown us, however, these linguistic ideals often come at the price of violence, exclusion, and ultimately subjugation or even annihilation (Steinmetz 2007).

Reality is, of course, more complex than what the myths of 1648 and the normalization and idealization of the European nation-state tell us, with some countries sharing languages and others using multiple languages for domestic politics. But this complexity does not belie the need for taking *interlinguality—the interface between languages*—seriously. Elites in former British colonies may communicate with other such elites in English. Beyond settler colonies, however, postcolonial elites need to translate, interpret, or simply reformulate their political messages, not just when conducting international relations, but when engaging domestic constituents who do not use English (or another dominant language of colonialism) as their primary language (Kalaycioglu 2025). Although state-to-state interfaces are often monolingual, global political configurations are typically interlingual. While it may not seem that way when privileging relations in the Anglosphere, conducting international politics in a single language is more of an exception than a rule. Interlingual relations are everywhere to be found, and although the labor expended to maintain them is seldom rewarded, they are an inescapable part of the everyday conduct of international relations.

As recent critical histories have offered, much of the canon of IR scholarship in the twentieth century was initially developed by fundamental drives to translate the demands of world powers to an ascendant Anglosphere—by colonial administrators as much as by diplomats, envoys, and intellectuals (see Schmidt 1998; Morefield 2014; Vitalis 2015). Despite this increasing scholarly self-awareness, in practice the intertwining of knowledge production in English with American imperial power remains undisturbed. Indeed, a cursory look at the leading journals of global politics reveals two ingrained scholarly trends that merit interrogation: first, the domination of research based on English-language sources and presented in English; and, second, the instrumentalization of language as a mere means to a (prelinguistic) end, specifically the ends of states. Below we question the value of both.

To Have and to Hold: What Languages Do in/for Politics

The incommensurability of languages is at the heart of any inquiry that highlights the importance of translation for the practice of international relations (and scholarly inquiry into such relations). Due to the uniqueness of historical experiences and how these have shaped language and culture, concepts in one language hardly ever mean *exactly* the same as those in another language (Wigen 2018, 43–49). Across languages, we can speak of these parallels as "translation equivalents" rather than synonyms. Our claim is not that language determines human cognition and human behavior. Rather, we claim that if languages are not made up of identical elements, then the discourses that are possible to formulate in one language may not necessarily be identical when translated into another language. Following propositions from the "practice turn" in IR about the interconnectedness of discourse and practice (Neumann 2002; Leira 2019), we see discourses as setting different boundaries for acceptable practices in different languages. Since discourses are uniquely contingent upon historical and contextual factors, they are instantiated differently in each of the languages in which politics is conducted. Therefore, translation happens *at the interface between individuals and between communities* (including states). Translation is thus a key practice in the conduct—discursive and otherwise—of international relations.

An emphasis on interlingual relations rather than relations between states offers a shift in perspective. Yet it would be of little use if we substituted *languages* as organic wholes where before we had *states* (something that the parable of Babel easily invites). We therefore also aim to disaggregate the analysis of *where* to study languages (i.e., to decenter the state or foreign ministries) and focus instead on the everyday relations of language as it is used by individuals. All states have individuals who engage in interlingual practice, and international relations, as well as international organization(s), always have some component of interlinguality to them. Even where a state appears to operate in a single language, the study of international relations is the study of interfaces. Bilingualism and multilingualism are therefore key abilities of those tasked with conducting relations and interfacing with other polities.

Indeed, these are such important features of international relations that they also impinge on the workings of monolingual functionaries, statesmen, diplomats, and politicians—perhaps without their direct awareness. The importance of translation and interlinguality often gets obscured by the fact that in many international arenas, the people involved will have a single language imposed upon them by the context. Such a power differential, as Hans-Georg Gadamer once put it, has more than just practical consequences:

> It is well known that nothing is more difficult than a dialogue in two different languages in which one person speaks one and the other person the other, each understanding the other's language but not speaking it. As if impelled by a higher force, one of the languages always tries to establish itself over the other as the medium of understanding. (Gadamer 2004, 386)

To speak of languages in the plural easily reifies "a language" as a self-contained, finished whole. This is of course not the case, but for the sake of simplicity, whenever we use *language* in the plural we tend to speak of "natural languages" that develop in use. The fact of having to formulate one's thoughts, make one's claims, and legitimate one's position in a language other than "one's own" hence overlaps with Antonio Gramsci's definition of hegemony (Gramsci 1971, 12; Wigen 2018, 64).[2] This hegemony is typically invisible for those who enjoy its privileges and can ignore the politics of linguistic difference. Hegemony, moreover, not only makes a particular interpretation authoritative but also mutes other forms of meaning that can only be made understandable as knowledge through translation, with the "best" translators covering their tracks and any of the negotiation that needs to occur (Ives and Lacorte 2010). The ubiquity of the English language in IR should not prevent us from studying how this works in politics. Though hegemonic languages have been important in the development of political cultures and academic vocabularies, IR scholars need to broaden our scope of inquiry to understand how that position is established and maintained.

Beyond the broad concerns of Anglocentrism and the manipulation of cultural meaning in languages other than English, the study of interlingual relations aims to guide IR scholars interested in the polyvocality of language beyond the space where two vernaculars meet. More provocatively, we seek to demonstrate that interlingual exchanges formulate the conditions through which inquiry and policy itself take place. It is no accident that the English language's centrality as the lingua franca of IR scholarship corresponds with passing of the baton from British imperialism to American hegemony. All empires aim to make the world in their own image; less clear is why some imperial idioms grow, while others purposefully constrain their linguistic diversity. Put more bluntly, why should territorial and commercial dominance foreclose how other languages and ways of knowing conceive of the world? Unless that is precisely the point.

Our hypothesis would be that linguistic hegemony is not maintained by monolinguals, but by those who use a dominant tongue deliberately (and often inevitably) as a second language. Hence, linguistic outsiders acquire a stake in a language's hegemony, as well as both its literal and figurative reproduction (Picq and Cottet 2019). Yet our motivation is not merely about linguistic representation. Rather, what we aim to show is that translation takes place at all levels of global politics: from the procedural logics of international summits to the lives and encounters of translators themselves with other ways of being. The consequences of such moments are also rife with interlingual meaning: who speaks first, or second, at a summit often carries more weight than where it takes place; similarly, whom a translator speaks for can cause or be a cause of enduring legacies of conquest, conflict, and communion. In all, the vitality of language resides both in who speaks and whom they speak for, both of which are relationally configured.

Speaking about something as *inter*lingual presupposes that languages are concrete things that can have relations. They are not (Derrida 1985, 225). Languages are abstractions, having no existence prior to our grouping different lexa together and calling them "language x." The obvious move is to draw upon Patrick Jackson and Daniel Nexon (1999) and go straight for a "speakers before languages" approach to interlingual relations, acknowledging that languages in themselves are not things or actors that can have relations. Individuals engage in relations with other individuals. These individuals are the ones who make meaning and therefore the rules of language use. It would be conceptually easier if we could say that individuals *have* a language, thus rendering linguistic politics as mere matters of instrumentalism. But there is a lack of common ground for discussing these phenomena and hence no proper analytical vocabulary that can be picked apart and critiqued. Translation and related phenomena are opaque and nebulous enough to speak and write about without introducing very circumspect ways of describing them. We believe, therefore, that it is useful to develop terms for discussing *roles* and *practices* in interlingual relations. To speak of interlingual exchange in such purposefully relational terms conveys not only what translation does, but what it creates from context to context. If nothing else, it illustrates how translation serves as a baseline of disagreement in political relations and can provide a background against which a more refined approach to their study may develop.

Limits to Intelligibility and the Global Politics of Linguistic Difference

Linguistic boundaries are based on mutual unintelligibility between speakers. They may simply emerge because a group of people over time does not interact with another due to geographic distance and isolation. But unintelligibility may also be produced deliberately. A blatant example of the latter is that between Arabic and Hebrew, a tension that has emerged through deliberate Israeli settler colonialism that sidelines the language of Arabic-speaking Israelis (Levy 2014; Abboud et al. 2018). Although also a Semitic language that could potentially have had many commonalities with modern Hebrew (depending on how Hebrew was shaped in Israeli nation-building), the Arabic language is associated with Israel's Other. Despite the fact that many Jewish Israelis have or had Arabic as their mother tongue, and that Arabic is one of Israel's two official languages, its separation and distinctness from Hebrew is expediently politicized and policed.

Language is the primary medium of social interaction between humans and it is difficult to envision a relationship without some mutual meaning-making practices. Mutual intelligibility has to do with the potential for getting an intended outcome—be it simple, such as getting the food you ordered in a restaurant, or more complex, such as keeping a state of peace. As the social complexity of the intended outcome increases, the need for mutual intelligibility increases. The pictures in a cheap restaurant menu may fully serve the purposes required to achieve the goal of "getting a spaghetti bolognese," even if one does not speak Italian and the waiter speaks no English. At the other extreme, getting what one really intends in a marriage may require a mediator even when both spouses speak "the same" language. What qualifies as "mutual intelligibility" therefore varies with the degree of social complexity and intimacy of relations. At the very extreme we run into the profound philosophical question of whether one ever really understands another human being; whether "my meaning" can ever be fully translated, or is at all commensurable with another person's meaning.

Our ontology thus aims to account for instances and processes of (un) intelligibility in global politics. Where incommensurability is about whether translation is *possible* on a more fundamental philosophical level, intelligibility is about whether translation is *necessary for mutual interaction* in a particular relationship. In other words, the latter is a practical question of whether translation is required for "getting on with it." If translation is required for ensuring the flow of social or political interaction between specific dyads in a network, then a pragmatic definition of interlinguality would entail attending to the dealings within a multi*lingual* network (Hellmann 2009). We certainly borrow from insights developed by (post)structuralist IR scholarship, linking conceptions of global political power to reification processes by states, institutions, and armies (Der Derian and Shapiro 1989; Doty 1996; Epstein 2008). However, we go beyond these contributions by not only interrogating what people do with language to also how linguistic practices used by allegedly unitary political actors are in fact what make them seem impermeable. We maintain that the main way to recover the "lost voices" of international relations is through translation and trying to make sense of what this entails for the practice and production of politics. By paying particular attention to the relational vibrancy that determines who has the authority to speak in IR, we also seek to show how translation is an *exercise of power* in the social world—hence, whoever controls its instantiation wields power over its dissemination.

In actual practice, there are many interlingual boundaries that cannot be sharply delineated—such as between Hebrew and English speakers—because of the density of bilingual proficiency. This does not mean that there is no linguistic boundary, but rather that such a boundary is difficult to pin down as an illustrative example. The boundaries of incommensurability and unintelligibility are not inherent in "a language," nor do they spring from language as such. Rather, unintelligibility is an aspect of how a group of speakers relate to speech, utterances, statements, and symbols that are different from that which they themselves would use. Whether a speaker is understandable to me does not only depend upon some absolute measure of whether she speaks the same way I do, but how I have been trained to understand variation in linguistic expression. Hence, while Turkish speakers of Turkey typically are not trained to understand Azeri, Azeris will typically have no problem understanding Turkish. Likewise, someone who speaks Received Pronunciation ("the Queen's English") is easily understood by a Glaswegian, but seldom the other way around—even though the latter also speaks "English." Although Castilian is the flagship language of the "Spanish" nation, its multiple dialects are not equally intelligible (or recognized) across the Iberian Peninsula, to say the least of its inheritors in the Americas and the multiplicity of ways Creole Spanish is spoken.

One-way unintelligibility is thus sometimes produced by a group for the purposes of not having outsiders understand what the in-group says, most notably representatives of the state. It is also the product of received and established norms of intellectual production, for example, whereby attaining bi- or multilingualism is often regarded as a heroic feat in one place, but the default situation across others. What we are ultimately interested in, then, is *language-in-action*; not just that language constitutes meaning, but also that *how* people do things with language is part of the constitutive process. Perhaps it is the closest thing we have to a pragmatist sense of truth.

Mediation and Interlingual Method

We have so far sketched some of the broad, everyday life dimensions of translation. Now we turn to more systematic examinations, particularly those by IR scholars who implicitly rely on translation and the politics of linguistic difference in their work. Most of what has previously been done in IR on the matter of translation has approached the languages of politics rather than the politics of languages. The weak point here has been that *doing* translation in a metaphorical or conceptual sense (Best and Walters 2013; Bilgin 2016; Georgi 2019; Jackson and Nexon 2019; Minami 2019) has stood in the way of studying or listening-in on translation (Liu and Ricks 2012; Kratochwil 2014; Donnelly 2015; Wigen 2015; Subotic 2019). So what is missing in the study of interlingual interpretation is the study of interpretation unfolding in practice, or rather, interpretation as an *intermediary practice*. How do we make sense of the difference between operating in one language and relating that exchange to someone else in another? This is very different from being a field interpreter dealing with tactical, logistic, or even existential challenges that leave little room for reflection. It is also a task aided, to be sure, by proficiency in a second (or more) set of languages, but also the disposition to know the difference.

Translation as Mediation in International Relations

The underlying conditions for the binary treatment of translation—as metaphorical at one end and interpretive at another—are relevant at three levels in contemporary IR theorizing, specifically through the kind of works concerned with a broader, more "global" IR. We see our approach as drawing out the potential of translation as mediation found in the following examples, hence furthering the study of interlinguality. First, there is Amitav Acharya's (2018) claim that we should draw upon non-Western scholarship for our theoretical takes that better explain certain phenomena, and thereby destabilize and challenge the Eurocentrism and Anglocentrism that suffuses the social sciences. Reformulating non-Western propositions into a social scientific language, and particularly into English, is translation in a metaphorical or conceptual sense: *doing, but not reflecting*. The second level is translation as an implicit and unacknowledged part of IR's method, applied when scholars deal with non-English material, which sees translation as a pragmatics: *doing, in order to better understand difference*. Works in IR's "linguistic turn" that look to non-English discourses for their material, such as *Russia and the Idea of Europe* (Neumann 1996), are feats of this second kind of translation—Russian meaning is re-rendered and explained in English. There are a handful of linguistically substantive works in this vein (Jackson 2006; Rumelili 2007; Sajed 2013; Shilliam 2015), but none of these scholars explicitly reflect upon how translation is part of their own research method. There is, moreover, surprisingly little assessment or discussion of English-language IR works translated into nondominant languages. Translation remains a practice, but not one that reflexively shapes the world of the translator. The third level is where IR scholars study actors who engage in interlingual practice, yet choose not to theorize that aspect of their material.

On this last point, IR discussions have increasingly come to use the two concepts of "the international" and "the everyday" (albeit not always in the same work) in a similarly unreflective manner. We are supportive of a shift in scholarly attention toward more micropolitical dynamics, where putting these two frames together actually shows how the everyday practices of an international sphere are frequently interlingual. When they are not, relations can hardly be said to be truly global. Studies of monolingual relations tend toward the parochial, whether they take place in the hegemonic languages of international politics, such as English—with French, Russian, and Spanish trailing behind—or in smaller languages like Norwegian, isiZulu, or Wolof. Attempts to theorize relations beyond the Anglosphere or decolonize academic knowledge—which are, in practice, two different ambitions—cannot do without critically reflecting on interlingual relations.

Informants and Intermediaries

Although global politics tends to shift attention both from Euro-America and from the state as the sole political actor, any take on the relationship between interlingual relations and global politics needs to posit how the state fits into the picture. We do not intend this as a means of reproducing

IR's state-centric bias, but rather as an acknowledgment of the untoward hegemony that states hold in our linguistic imaginaries and the obstacles to decentering that influence. States may be involved in interlingual relations in two ways: either horizontally, in relations with other states, or vertically, at the interface between state and subjects. In addition to this, there are the horizontal connections made by subjects who, for example, create transnational social movements and "peoples' diplomacy" that are also often configured in interlingual relations (Hoffmann 2024). These are attempts at mobilizing across linguistic boundaries and in opposition to states and governments "above" them. Where elites speak a different language from the commoners, *domestic governance takes the form of interlingual relations*. Where each polity is monolingual in different languages, *international politics takes place in interlingual relations*. World politics is neither purely one or the other of these ideal types, but a combination of the two—with some more complexity thrown in. Global politics is not only the sum of state governance domestically, foreign policy conducted "outwards" from the state, and that which takes place in international organizations. It is itself the result of the politics of linguistic difference as played out across these spheres.

Except in a relatively small set of dyads (in global terms), state elites either have to translate when interacting with foreigners or when facing their own citizens or subjects. Moreover, subjects typically have to translate their interaction with people from other communities—often users of other languages—whether those are within the same polity or abroad. If we see relations between individuals as a social network, some individuals are bound to end up as bridges between different clusters. This is merely a feature that crops up in almost any network. As Marc Granovetter (1973) has pointed out, such bridges are particularly valuable and can profit from their ability to connect clusters. Let us for now call these linguistic vectors "organic" intermediaries. These include diaspora and border populations who engage in what is called *translanguaging*—that is, pragmatically combining different languages—on a near-daily basis. In some cases, this is sustained over such a long period of time by such a large group that the practices result in what may be called a new language.

The other value along this axis is more formalized intermediaries, who neither officially represent their own polity nor are involved in brokerage as part of a network, but who are hired to serve as a temporary bridge. As intermediaries are positioned differently within power hierarchies over time, they not only have to apply their linguistic skills differently, but increasingly provide a scaffolding for thinking about how translation is conducted by people embedded in relations of power. Accounting for broader networks of intermediaries, such as the ones that encompass the massive formal channels of global politics, requires making sense of those actors who facilitate mediation at the interface between collectives, groups, cultures, or languages, but who are not official state representatives. In sum, interlingual mediation takes place across spaces, places, times, and polities, as a feature of what the polity does at the interface between the state apparatus and its subjects, as well as at the interface with other polities. We turn now to unpacking how the fluidity between intermediaries, polities, and the interlingual relations they facilitate serves as the glue between global polities.

Brokerage and Liminality

The tasks of translation and interpretation typically fall to someone who has some bilingual (or multilingual) proficiency, who ends up playing the role of mediator either by design or by default. This is in some ways a privileged position in that it entails being a bridge tying together network clusters. Yet this is also a role fraught with risk and demanding labor whose value is seldom recognized (de Jong 2018). Though merchants use this role specifically for profit, it is seldom the labor of translation itself that is profitable. While not anyone can play the role of mediator, mediators are no homogeneous category of people. There are certain skills required of them and what is called *brokerage* often gives a mediator personal competitive advantage (Granovetter 1973; Burt 2011). Some act as private individuals, others act in their capacity as state representatives. Some act as informal mediators to help out in everyday life, others are formally hired to interpret or translate.

What is quite common, though, is that the work of the mediator is usually only visible when he or she fails and communication across the linguistic boundary breaks down, resulting in misunderstandings, confusion, or outright hostility between individuals or groups. Successful mediation is *invisible* mediation. Mediation and translation happens, by definition, at some kind of boundary. Without the boundary, there would be no need for mediation. Boundaries are often contested, and contestation imbues them with particular importance—what Slavenka Draculic called "being pinned to the wall of nationhood" (Brubaker 1996, 20). Many social boundaries are therefore the result of deliberate boundary-making and boundary-maintenance. This is what makes the mediator's position so perilous. By transcending a social boundary that is imbued with much political significance, a person playing the role of mediator can easily become considered a *liminal*: someone who is "betwixt and in-between" and whose identity within either of the groups is questioned (Rumelili 2007, 64–94). This, however, does not need to be the case, especially since modern states started educating "their own" as translators (as well as some premodern polities; see Fausz 1987; Scully 2005). Liminality was significantly reduced for those occupying formal mediation roles on behalf of the state. Yet their interlingual labor is no less crucial.

All communication entails some loss, distortion, and transformation of meaning, but the transformation of that meaning typically increases in interaction across social boundaries. Social communities are often associated with a particular set of meaning-making skills, in-group expressions, and specific symbolism. All contact between political and social communities therefore involves some degree of mediation. Nation-states typically spring out of and consider a particular social group its primary constituency. Hence, the constituencies of nation-states also have their group-specific sets of meaning-making practices. Since the late nineteenth century, states have often tried to impose this common language upon the whole political community through education, as well as restricting state services and rights to those who can claim them in the state's preferred language. For a nation-state, mediation and translation is primarily legitimate in its interaction with resident noncitizens and with representatives of other states, using other ways of making meaning (de Jong 2016). The bulk of work entailed in a future interlingual relations research program would be exploring the archive of ways in which states capture, engage, and codify their interactions with both internal and external noncitizens. This positions research in interlingual relations as a parallel endeavor to efforts in genealogy, historiography, and historical institutionalism, among other cognate fields overlapping with IR (Vucetic 2011; Fioretos 2017; Schmidt and Guilhot 2019). While we can ground the existence of interlingual exchanges historically, the true litmus test for IR's own particular need for an interlingual relations research program will become clearer as the field reconciles its imperial origins with the coming transformations of the twenty-first century.

Translation before Relations: Imperial Entanglements of the Linguistic Kind

As historians of international political thought have shown, the metaphorical translation of the imperial past is fundamental for understanding the origins of IR's linguistic norms. Empires have accelerated vast encounters central to the development of concepts, theories, and paradigms in global politics (Jahn 2000; de Carvalho, Leira, and Hobson 2011; Caraccioli 2021).

Yet as that same scholarship shows, these translations are usually in the service of a political (and linguistic) status quo, regardless of how an interlingual encounter between one or more vernaculars took place (Cheney 2017; Caraccioli 2018). Put more succinctly, imperial knowledge production has been doubly attentive to translation—first, as a means of establishing dominance over others, and second, by naturalizing subjugation via hierarchy.

There is an unevenness, however, in the application of this relational principle, one that we argue follows linguistic preferences before cultural ones. A brief example of this selective privileging of translation can be found in narratives of imperial decay and decline. Recent work in the political theory of empire has excavated the ways intellectuals of statecraft in the Anglo-American empires, as well as prominent thinkers and commentators more generally, have deflected attention from their society's imperial projects in times of crisis (Rana 2014; Immerwahr 2019). Imperial decline, they argue, is always accompanied by tropes and narratives about how one state's behavior toward the peoples of other states is not a reflection of "who we are" but rather a deviation from some set of originalist beliefs. As Jeanne Morefield describes it:

> Calling the empire something else, or encouraging an empire that has refused to say its name to do so, are both salvage efforts, attempts at repair and recuperation, despite the fact that the thinkers who theorize these transitions often do so in the name of innovation and a canny break with the past. . . . When the linguistic status of the word empire itself was and is in flux and decline seems to loom ominously on the horizon, imperialists turn to narratives that both consolidate and legitimate the empire's power and naturalize its liberal character, at the same time they deflect attention away from its violence and illiberalism. (Morefield 2014, 7)

And while Morefield and others draw attention to how intellectuals behave and perform their rhetorical deflection for domestic audiences, the broader interlingual context of imperial ascendence and decline is left untheorized. That omission is common across critiques of liberal imperialism, the result perhaps of being in the same Anglophonic context of production whereby British and American intellectuals (as well as everyone else who might want to weigh in) debate the impact of their political hegemony. Even scholarly work that attends to the rhetorical dynamics of global politics must do so under the hegemony of the English language.

Indeed, the challenge we are raising here is the product of disputes and debates too far-ranging to adequately address in their entirety. Yet one way in which we can make sense of them is through the phenomenon of *imperial hitchhiking*: taking advantage of preexisting relations of power so as to avoid the burdens of managerial responsibility (Macallister 2018). In a scholarly context, imperial hitchhiking is what allows thinkers, institutions, and governments across the world to "have their say" in the marketplace of ideas without having to build up the networks of power that support knowledge economies (Kamola 2019). More specifically, the hegemony of the American academy is the price of academic imperial hitchhiking. Whether knowledge is produced in one vernacular or another is secondary; what matters is the accessibility and distribution of the intervention for an English-language market. To that end, the stigma of multilingualism needs to be addressed somewhere, particularly as that bias generates and foments distinct in-group and out-group alignments across the field (Adler-Nissen 2014). All of us in the periphery fit into the broader field of Anglophone global politics only on very specific terms (i.e., monolingualism); and once we highlight knowing multiple languages, there is a certain unease within that same field, an unease from the fact that we know things other people don't know and experience the politics of translation at its most literal sense. Hence the question facing the study of interlingual relations past and present is, How do you speak to an audience that sees translation as merely functionalist, without your out-group alignment breaking apart?

Chapter Roadmap

The book is structured along three sections, each reflecting intersecting axes that we see as essential to disclosing the importance of interlingual relations across various approaches within International Relations: theory, history, and order. In section I, "Translation (and) Theory," the chapters develop a conceptual, ethical, and methodological vocabulary for studying interlinguality.

Beginning with Einar Wigen's chapter, "The Interlingual Configuration of International Politics," Wigen introduces the notion of interlingual configuration of networks, and provides a catalog of interlingual configurations and their relationship with international relations. Arguing that polities have been polyglot since the emergence of conquest-based large-scale polities some 5,000–7,000 years ago, it also takes on the eighteenth-century idealization of the polity as monolingual. Following this, Patrick Thaddeus Jackson's chapter, "Translation and Explanation," focuses on the relation between explanation and context, whether translations are mere descriptions (presuming a shared practical context) or productive of new meanings. Jackson specifically illustrates what sort of practical capacities translation augments or inculcates in its recipient, and what counts as a similar capacity in recipients outside of that initial context. Anatoly Reshetnikov's chapter, "The Hidden Politics of Translation: On Interpreters' and Translators' Agency in International Relations," offers a comprehensive analysis of the role of the political translator by historicizing his or her agency along a visibility/invisibility nexus. He argues that translators in diplomatic matters, though subjected to an array of explicit and implicit demands, retain significant political agency, acting variously as gatekeepers of national legacies, conflict managers, and even guardians of global hegemony.

In section 2 of the volume, "Translation (and) History," we turn to five case studies employing the tools of interlingual analysis across various themes central to the study of historical IR. Alireza Shams-Lahijani's chapter, "Interlingual Relations in a Persianate International Order," is concerned with understanding the decline of Persian as a lingua franca with a hegemonic status spanning from Bengal to the Balkans and as a story of the transformation of the international order. The expansion of Persian is marked by linguistic encounters/fusions with other languages and its transformation into the language of politics and culture. The chapter argues that the linguistic encounters of Persian as the lingua franca and its subsequent decline, coupled with translation into Persian and then translation from Persian, captures a distinct story of transformation of the international order. Amanda Cheney's chapter, "Translation Power: Rethinking the Evolution of the International System with Insights from Sino-Tibetan Relations Surrounding the 1914 Simla Convention," takes on the classic formulation of the "expansion of international society" through a case study of contestation over Tibet's international status at the turn of the twentieth century. She considers the failure to translate Tibet's historical status into independent sovereign statehood from the perspective of linguistic-conceptual translation and analyzes the proceedings of the 1913–14 Simla Conference between China, Tibet, and Britain in light of the commensurability of concepts across languages—what she terms "translation power." In Senem Aydın-Düzgit and Bahar Rumelili's chapter, "Transversing Civilizational Hierarchies? The Introduction of the Latin Alphabet in Turkey," the authors deal with the symbolic and practical significance of the Turkish alphabet reform of 1928, replacing the Arabic letters used to write Ottoman with Latin letters to write "modern" Turkish. The alphabet reform was seen as a deliberate effort by the Turkish government to Westernize/Europeanize Turkish society and detach from the Orient, and proved to be one of the most vibrant cultural drivers of the period, trigger-ing intensive debates on Turkish identity in both Turkey and Europe. Mauro Caraccioli's chapter, "*Historias* for the Empire: Indigenous Translators and the Reproductions of Linguistic Conquest," unpacks the interface at which languages meet as a feature of historical relationality. Rather than thinking of imperial encounters as unidirectional moments, he turns to the memory of conquest and its reproduction in distinct linguistic and rhetorical settings to interpret an empire's evolving meanings. Specifically, Caraccioli considers the extent to which the question of domination in the Spanish conquest of the New World was a problem of language as much as one of violence. Looking at the competition between linguistic meanings in their historical context instead shows how different communities rely on those exchanges in crucial ways. Hence taking apart the historical contingencies of interlingual relations helps interrogate why concepts such as relationality are regarded as always progressive. Closing out the section, Julia Costa Lopez's chapter, "Kidnap Yourself a Translator: The Social Embedding of Translation in First Encounters," examines the politics of translation surrounding a quintessential case for the problem of a language barrier: first encounters. Although most of the IR literature has focused on the exceptionality of the "discovery of America," encounters between peoples who did not previously know one another repeatedly occurred both before and after 1492. Specifically, she focuses on the African Atlantic region in the century and a half preceding the Columbian travels. Drawing on encounters between European sailors, merchants, missionaries, and locals along the African Atlantic coast, she highlights significant communication challenges, and how these led to the development of a historically specific set of translation practices.

In section 3, "Translation (and) Order," we turn toward the use of interlinguality as a tool for micropolitical analysis of the intersections between the everyday and international. Beginning with Filipe dos Reis and Oliver Kessler's chapter, "Morgenthau in Translation: On Languages, Academic Environments, and the Making of International Relations in the United States and Germany," the authors discuss the notion of translation as transformation, focusing on recent contributions on the emergence of realism through émigré scholars. Through a reconstruction of the work of Hans Morgenthau, dos Reis and Kessler argue that it is possible to zoom into the dynamics of translations where translation is not merely a one-to-one practice. Instead, they argue IR needs a better understanding of how ideas developed in the Weimar context had to operate in the US. Finally, they reconstruct the retranslation of Morgenthau's work and ideas from the US into (West) German academia in the context of the so-called Munich school of synoptic neorealism, which was established by Gottfried-Karl Kindermann from the 1960s onward. In the following chapter, "Constructing Incommensurables: Hebrew's Machiavellian Moment," Daniel Levine aims to reconstruct the encounter between linguistic and Zionist political emancipation in the formation of the Israeli state. Drawing on diasporic writings and the construction of an epistemic community of strategic studies, the chapter examines the evolution of Hebrew as a literary language into a vernacular one that could then serve the purposes of Israeli statecraft. Jewish national politics, he maintains, emerged in the midst of a variety of reactionary modernisms. Levine concludes that the various responses to moments of linguistic crisis make the vernacularization of Hebrew into a kind of Machiavellian moment. In Jelena Subotic's chapter, "Interlingual Politics of Linguistic Choice," the monolingual practices of IR scholarship are examined as deeply affecting its future as a discipline. She examines the methodological roadblocks, professional and scholarly networks, failed innovation, and constraints over everyday ethnographies generated by the field's Anglophonic biases. Subotic counters these trends by presenting illustrations from multilingual ethnographic IR research to demonstrate the richness and promise of true linguistic engagement and the theoretical payoff multilingual analysis can bring to IR's scholarly enterprise. From here, Sara de Jong's chapter, "'The Most Important People Here Are Not Us—It's Those Translators': The Hidden Labor of Afghan and Iraqi Local Interpreters," takes as its vantage point that interpreters' and translators' role in international relations has largely been overlooked in IR scholarship. Through extensive interviews with locally employed interpreters in Iraq and Afghanistan, she situates translators as key agents in international relations by showing how they balance formal and informal brokerage, act as cultural advisors, and mediate at the core of unequal power relations. Her chapter contributes to bridging the disciplinal gap between language and translation studies and International Relations. Finally, in the closing chapter, "Interlingual Relations and the Limits of Hegemony: US Public Diplomacy in the Arab World (2002–2003)," Jane Darby Menton focuses on linguistic hegemony and its limits. By analyzing how American officials tried—and failed—to sell the War on Terror to an Arab audience, Menton shows how hegemony can create blindfolds that work contrarily to stated intentions. She explores the translation errors that can occur when monolingual politics are conducted in a multilingual world, thereby providing an illustrative example of the feasibility of interlingual relations as an analytical approach.

The volume's conclusion brings Wigen and Caraccioli back to reflect on the implications of the volume's contributions, particularly for a discipline whose everyday aspirations for globality are cut short by its refusal to acknowledge the power and value of interlinguality.

Coda: Coming to Terms with Translation

> And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.
>
> —Judges 12:5–6 (King James Version)

Interlingual relations is the unacknowledged core of global politics. In this volume, we set out a new research agenda for how to study this phenomenon and to bring its problems and insights into dialogue with questions of International Relations. To see interlingual relations as the intertwining of language and identity is by itself not a new contribution. But if we attend to the *relational* portion of the term—that is to say, the politics of linguistic difference—we attend to a dynamic that is political because it is translational. Interpretation and translation have both been studied academically, or, if you will, scientifically. There already exist degrees in interpretation and translation studies. Yet the questions that are asked are often specific to this field, which to some extent emerges out of either comparative literature or linguistics.

The study of translation has gone through a sequence of turns worthy of a slalom course, with a cultural turn, a discursive turn, a practice turn, and a postcolonial turn—turns that should be familiar to theoretically sophisticated scholars of global politics (for an overview, see Venuti 2000; for a postcolonial interpretation, see Bassnett and Trivedi 1999). For all these developments in translation studies, however, there is little reception of this scholarly literature in the study of global politics, let alone IR more narrowly conceived. That is to say, few scholars have brought this literature into conversation with IR concerns, and almost none have sought to answer research questions emerging within an IR context of an empirical material consisting of interpretation or translation. Our primary concern here is to lay out a program for how to do the latter: *how and why we should seek to answer questions of global politics by reference to translation and interpretation*. In the process, we draw upon and aim to further engage literature already concerned with translation within other contexts, particularly at the micro-historical levels and the exchanges of intermediaries within global politics.

In trying to capture what happens at the interface between different linguistic groups and relate that to questions of International Relations, the above observations are themselves reflections on *the global politics of translation*. Whether it is about whose voices get included in conquest narratives, whose civilizational culture gets privileged in the history of international order, or the very ethos under which scholars and practitioners alike labor to understand the intricacies of everyday words, the power of translation does not lie in its utility as the background or setting through which global exchange and action happens, but *as the means through which global politics makes any sense at all.*

It is a founding myth of European (i.e., Christian) diplomacy that diplomats do the work of angels, trying to create peace between God's children after they are scattered across the globe and divided by language (Neumann 2012). Yet language and linguistic difference is a constitutive part of how nations across the world have understood relations between peoples, communities, and states. The insight is at once fundamental and easily overlooked, as linguistic difference is both difficult to speak about—we have no meta-language from which to study it—and is itself obscured in translation. Apart from foreign policy analysis, which tends to study the domestic pathways to making a particular state decision, IR is a discipline devoted to the study of the interface and to the practices of those who act on behalf of and mediate between states. By ignoring the interlinguality of this particular setting and of relations between these individuals and communities, IR scholars fail to study what we argue is the unacknowledged core of international relations—namely, *interlinguality*—and hence we continue to reproduce a parochialism suitable only for scholarship that chooses to close itself off to the world. Interlinguality can only be ignored by people who take Ludwig Wittgenstein's (2001, 68) proposition that "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world" literally to the point of satire. In practice, it is to say that the limits of IR's world are the limits of the Anglosphere. As the study of global politics moves both beyond state-centric approaches and beyond the Anglosphere, it cannot do without a theoretical reflection upon the importance of interlinguality.

Notes

1. In the case of the United States, for instance, this ideal is visible in settler-colonial technologies like cartography and boundary making through ideologies like Manifest Destiny, where both Native American and former subjects of the Spanish Empire were met with overt threats of linguistic (if not visceral) extermination. See Mackenthun 1997.

2. Hegemony is "the ensemble of organisms" comprising the complex relation of domination exercised by civil society and the state.

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SECTION I

Translation (and) Theory

CHAPTER 1

The Interlingual Configurations of International Politics

Einar Wigen

Interlingual and international relations are distinct but related phenomena. Relations may be inter*national* without being interlingual (e.g., between diplomatic representatives of Britain and the United States), or inter*lingual* without being international (e.g., between a Flemish-speaking and a French-speaking Belgian). These are different kinds of boundaries, and political boundaries do not necessarily follow linguistic boundaries. Interlingual boundaries have to do with mutual intelligibility of individual language skills, while international relations are the result of political boundary-making and divisions of authority.[1] Individuals may base their political identities on language, but since the two are not the same, it is useful to keep them analytically separate. Only that way can we start to unpack the complexities of how interlingual and international relations impinge upon one another.

Whether international or not, interlingual relations are made possible by boundary-transcending practices of translation and interpretation. They involve the reinterpretation, reformulation, and displacement of meaning.[2] Reinterpretation is typically an act that involves some degree of agency and power over the formulation of statements—and it is at the core of contestation for power (Garsten 2006). This can be conceived, as Amanda Cheney does in this volume, as "translation power." Moreover, translation is an everyday practice engaged in by individuals ranging from immigrant menial workers, who may need their foreman's instructions interpreted by a colleague to do their job, to diplomats and employees of international organizations (for everyday IR, see Solomon and Steele 2017). Interlingual relations are ubiquitous in the world, and thus a more comprehensive phenomenon than state-to-state interaction. These other, domestic or apolitical relations may seem of little consequence to IR, but they are part of a wider network of relations that serve to stabilize translation equivalents by embedding the interlingual language games "at the top" in a much wider set of relations. A broader catalog of interlingual configurations can therefore be useful for specifying which are of political significance for international relations.

International Relations theory often takes states to be social wholes (Jackson and Nexon 1999; Parsons 1949, 67–69). They may be warranted to do so in certain contexts (such as Wendt 1999), but the extent to which this analytical move has become hegemonic tends to overshadow important social and political dynamics. In its idealized form, this social whole is tied to a single, distinct language whose speakers form the basis of a nation-state. Claims to political sovereignty have often been articulated through claims of the unique character of an ethnic and linguistic group and its connection to a particular, bounded territory. Following from these claims, idealized political boundaries are those that correspond with the territorial extent of an ethno-linguistic group's distribution. Yet despite at least a century of state-sanctioned violence partly aimed at aligning linguistic and political boundaries, global politics is not configured this way. Individuals move. Ethnic groups still straddle state boundaries. Different states share a language. People engaging in international commerce need to interact. Scientists and scholars engaging in knowledge sharing and international collaboration interact across linguistic boundaries. State elites need to speak multiple languages to engage in politics with other states. Postcolonial states often operate in a language different from that of their subject populations. Localized cultural production is disseminated across the globe. Moreover, human curiosity drives people to travel and learn foreign languages. As a result, language use never stops at the border.

In this chapter, I will trace how interlingual network configurations have intersected with and transcended political boundaries over human history. These are the configurations that routinely create contexts for *political* interaction across linguistic boundaries. This is meant as a historical introduction for discussing interlingual relations without resorting to a crude domestic/international dichotomy where translation and interpretation happens at the boundary between the inside and the outside of the polity. I end the chapter with a case taken from the linguistic aspects of how language intersected polities at the frontier of Europe during the period of nation-building and early linguistic nationalism.

Translation before States

Even social scientists who have studied nation-state formation in nonessentialist ways have typically taken the end result to be social wholes that are coextensive with the particular language used to conduct politics (Anderson 2006). This *organicizing* of the nation-state, whereby the language of politics, education, and the public sphere becomes, and often is made, coextensive with that of the polity as such, is taken to be *the* key process of nation-building. Although she does not deal with language, Stefanie Fishel has taken on this perspective, arguing that the body metaphor and an organicist view of the state as something to be "uncontaminated" by foreign, and hence "invasive," elements is both politically problematic and shows a poor understanding of biology (Fishel 2017). Likewise, assuming monolingualism in states shows a poor understanding of politics. As I will try to show in the next section by way of a detour into deep human history, polities are likely to have been polyglot ever since conquest and large-scale political organization emerged around 7,000–3,500 BCE. The fact that some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophers came up with the ideal of "one polity, one language" and then assumed this to be not just a (very dangerous) ideal to be striven for, but somehow a primordial foundation for political communities, does not make it empirically correct. Wherever polities have been engaged in conquest or become imbricated in sustained long-distance trade, they have had individuals and communities speaking other languages.

Regardless of the fact that there are multiple languages used within one polity, analyzing the discourse of the elite that runs the government is still rather important—and a key task of International Relations. In order to explain how different states understand their place in the world (which has consequences for how they represent threats and formulate policy preferences), IR turned to discourse analysis, privileging the uniqueness of language use in a particular setting as a system of meaning-making (Connolly 1991; Campbell 1992). In most IR versions of this, that linguistic setting has implicitly become more or less coextensive with the polity as such. Yet these boundaries are merely implied, and not investigated empirically. Pioneering the study of non-English-speaking polities in this vein, Iver Neumann's study of *Russia and the Idea of Europe* offers an excellent example, where Russian politics implicitly equals Russian language and vice versa (Neumann 1996). Whether one takes this as an analytical move or sees the world in such terms,[3] what happens at the boundary between differently constituted linguistic "worlds" still needs to be further explored.

To formulate a more sophisticated take on the configuration of political and linguistic boundaries, I will here work from two propositions. The first is Patrick Thaddeus Jackson and Daniel Nexon's proposition that since states have no existence prior to the individuals acting in their name, it makes sense to take relations between these individuals to be ontically prior to states (Jackson and Nexon 1999). In other words, for some analytical purposes, we are better served by treating states and their interactions as made up of networks between individuals acting in their name. These individuals are obviously also embedded in other networks, of varying density, involving both domestic subject populations and "foreign" interlocutors. The second proposition I will work from is Hans-Georg Gadamer's claim that in a conversation between two people—even when each knows the other's language well enough to understand it, but not speak it—one language tends to become established as the primary medium of understanding and communication (Gadamer 2004, 386). This does not only go for this specific situation, but is a more general feature where individuals who have overlapping multilingual skills interact. Which language they use may be context specific, so that two individuals who conduct business in one language will then engage in other matters using a different language, but for a given field of activity or context, there is typically one language that is asserted as primary. Which language each dyad operates in is typically established through prior interactions, so that the choice of language becomes first routinized and then potentially institutionalized.

While each dyad may operate primarily in a single language, a network may be made up of dyads operating in different languages. This is the key characteristic of an interlingual network configuration.

As can be seen in fig. 1 diagram, a network may be interlingual even if not every single individual in it is functionally bilingual or multilingual. Furthermore, following from Gadamer's claim about a single language establishing itself as the main mode of communication in a conversation, it is the *dyadic tie* that is associated with a language, and *not each individual*. The individual may master more than one language, but it is rare for a tie not to be dominated by a specific language.

The monolinguals in an interlingual configuration may have the illusion that translation is unimportant. After all, it does not seem to matter *for them*. However, looking at the schematic representation of an interlingual configuration in fig. 1, it is clear that the two English monolinguals in the right and lower right corners may think the whole world speaks English, but this is an illusion that is sustained by others learning their language. As Jane Darby Menton deals with in her chapter in this volume, this illusion blinds Anglophone monolinguals to the political significance of what lies beyond the limits of their language. In a world of English hegemony, Anglo-

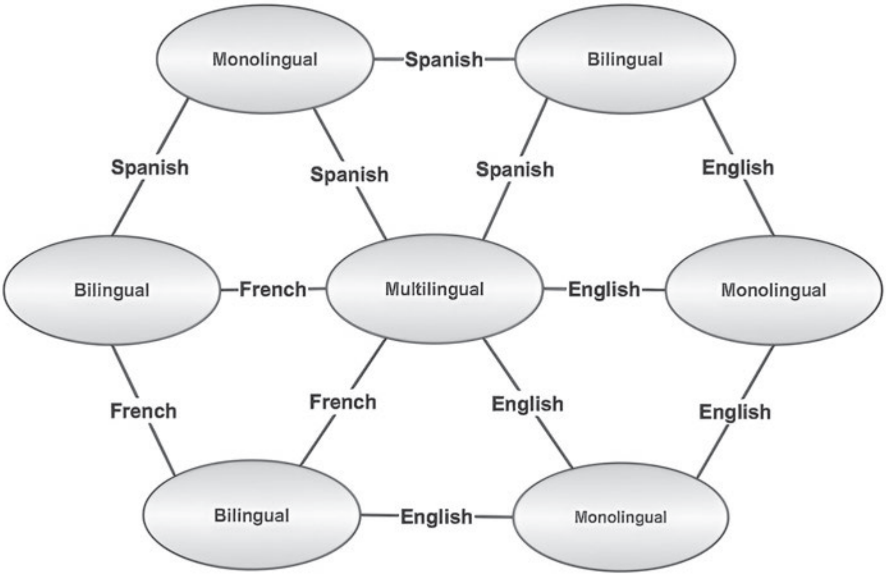

Figure 1. Interlingual networks

phone monolinguals may travel across much of the globe with this illusion intact. Not having to interact in more than one language also limits the need to reflect upon the importance of translation, and indeed to relegate it to political insignificance. However, any international organization is likely to be made up of hundreds or thousands of dyads similar to these, but with much added complexity. For the purposes of a truly global study of politics, scholars need to analyze the interlingual configurations of such networks.

First Contacts

When scholars theorize translation and interpretation in the abstract, there is often a desire to reach for a neat, “first contact” kind of situation as the stylized setup of how mediation between groups using mutually unintelligible languages happens (Everett 2008). In this volume, Julia Costa Lopez does a good job of showing the actual messiness of how this happened in one historical situation, and Mauro Caraccioli in another. In the time span that humans have had language, or even the period in which there has been large-scale political organization, both of these cases are fairly recent and relatively rare phenomena. We may imagine that it was a more frequent occurrence earlier on. However, this is very difficult to ascertain, as there is a limit to how often there can be a "first contact" between groups speaking different languages—once contact is made, it is unlikely to happen a second time unless the groups are yet again isolated from one another for millennia. First contact, then, is more typically a feature of philosophical constructs than an actual interlingual situation people have found themselves in. Rather, languages typically come "pre-entangled," and relationships between speakers of different languages also come with histories of interaction (Wigen 2018). In other words, although common language is a prerequisite for social interaction, the fact of a linguistic difference does not mean an absence of interaction or that an ideal type based on "first contact" assumptions is particularly useful for dealing with interlingual relations. Moreover, this pre-entanglement between languages is the basis of much international relations, with interlingual relations being routinized and institutionalized to such an extent that they seem politically irrelevant.

Before Empires

Linguistic boundaries are likely to have existed since soon after humans developed language. The linguistic estrangement of human groups from one another can originally be seen as a function of geographic separation, which again is necessary for survival. As groups grow, the area needed for their sustenance increases. Living and moving across larger areas, what was once one group turns into two or more because of physical separation. The commonly accepted claim here would be that hunter-gatherers live in bands, "a small group of bands comprise a community of about 150 people, and communities are nested in a small-scale society," a population of around a thousand people (Bird et al. 2019, 97). Bird et al. argue for

> an alternative model for hunter-gatherer group formation in which fluid groups of co-residing/co-working individuals are not drawn from a small well-defined community or ethnolinguistic group, but rather from networks of social organization maintained in relational, rather than material, wealth accumulation. (Bird et al. 2019, 96)

At what point they become separate groups is an empirical question—one where we do not have much empirics. Since language is social and the specific pattern is learnt from others around oneself during childhood, group socialization matters a great deal.[4] Moreover, linguistic patterns are never fully stable. Given time two separated groups will increasingly speak two different variations until they become two different languages. Hence, groupness and linguistic variation are intertwined. On the other hand, it is not given that a group will speak a language different from their neighboring group. Regular interaction across the group boundary may not only maintain existing linguistic compatibility but also develop it anew.

Human migration on a global scale—and hence the potential for linguistic fragmentation—predates large-scale political organization by hundreds of thousands of years. Whether we had language for all or just some of that time is up for debate. Whereas migration left human remains that can be dated and hence a timeline that can be used by archaeologists, linguistic variation across space and culture in the present is all we have to go on for the history of its geographic fragmentation in the past. Going back to Noam Chomsky, the capacity for learning a system of speech appears to be something humans are born with, indicating a shared genetic mutation (Chomsky 1968). The component parts of language are fairly flexible and exhibit great variation across languages, but it is acquired through socialization at an early age. There is a clear tendency for humans to learn one language better than others—the one that is acquired first tends to be acquired better than the others—and as the human adolescent comes of age the window of opportunity for acquiring fluency tends to close. These are general patterns and not law-like propositions. However, it follows from this general tendency that any group has a limited number of languages they speak among themselves.

Homo sapiens entered the field some 200,000 years ago, and with a set of minor mutations and changes occurring around 100,000 years ago, we seem to have been more or less the same species, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, since then. There are, however, some very significant changes in the use of symbolism and tools occurring around 50,000 years ago, which would fit with R. C. Berwick and Chomsky's argument that language emerged through a single mutation some 70–100,000 years ago (Berwick and Chomsky 2016). Steven Mithen (1996) argues that *Homo sapiens sapiens* developed language through an increased number of connections between synapses in the brain and correlates this in time with the increased complexity occurring 50,000 years ago. This, however, is complicated by a similar complexity in *Homo erectus*, whose use of tools—and not least the making of the tools themselves—indicate that they also had linguistic capacity for relaying rather complex instructions from one individual to another over generations (Everett 2017).

Based on this evidence, American linguist Daniel Everett argues that language was invented by *Homo erectus* between one million years ago and 1.8

million years ago, and that consequently both Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens* were "born into a linguistic world." Political organization does not happen in a vacuum, and the earliest systems of polities that we have in evidence is the Mesopotamian one emerging about 3,500 BCE (Neumann forthcoming). Whether we date the emergence of human language to 50,000 years ago (halfway into the lifetime of *Homo sapiens sapiens* as a species) or to more than one million years ago (whenever it may have developed with *Homo erectus*), it is clear that it predates political organization by at least 40,000 years. To point out the obvious, language is a necessary, but perhaps not sufficient,[5] factor for large-scale political organization. It seems at any rate not to have co-occurred in time, and that there is a significant interval in between.

Polyglot Polities

As soon as one group subjugated another politically or through conquest—we may see this as one of the marks of large-scale political organization—there is more than one language spoken within the polity. If interlingual polities did not emerge earlier, then at least from this point on the interlingual and the "international" boundaries are no longer coextensive. In most cases where one has a polyglot polity one also has the capacity to engage in relations with (some) other polities without necessarily engaging in interlingual relations. The flip side of this is that interlingual relations become a feature of "domestic" politics, at least for a time. Scaling up over the millennia, we get empires. I do not mean to imply that conquest did not sometimes spell absorption into a language group, but that polyglotta is likely to remain a feature for at least a period of time and sometimes becomes a permanent feature. As argued by David Anthony:

> Military conquest, another vector of language expansion, carries the language of the conquerors only when it provides the defeated access to the new prestige system at a relatively low social cost—in other words, when there is both little negative shame or humiliation for a person's family if that person cooperates with the conqueror, and widespread positive public recognition or reward for most who cooperate, including the opportunity for their children to advance to higher social positions. . . . Rome provided those opportunities at a low social cost, particularly in the Roman army, and as a consequence many conquered peoples adopted Latin. The Norman lords in Eng-

> land did not [provide such opportunities at a low social cost], and their language was not widely adopted. (Anthony 2008, 3)

Absorption may, however, be partial and context-specific. Guy Halsall argues that following conquest (mostly Germanic) tribes simply added a "Roman" identity to a multifaceted and context-specific set of identities already in play. Judging by the way that the Roman Empire fell apart, their Roman identity was emphasized only in specific relational dyads, and it did not supplant other identities entirely (Halsall 2007, 45). Similarly, the Latin language only partially displaced Germanic languages, and there were linguistic substrates for Latin that resulted in a multiplicity of Romance languages. Political absorption into the Roman Empire, then, did not mean discarding existing language practices and their supplanting by Latin. Rather, the subjects of the Roman Empire, like those of the Ottoman that succeeded it in the east and which I will deal with later, used a multiplicity of languages.

Until at least the early nineteenth century, this kind of polyglot entity often also came with a crude functional differentiation of groups, where some attended to agriculture, some were merchants, others dealt with military matters, and so forth. While people speaking a specific language may attend to multiple functions within an empire and more than one group may for example be merchants, it is rare that there is not some form of correlation between language and role in an imperial society (to the extent that we may call an empire a society, but that is a different matter).

If we follow the propositions of the linguistic and practice turns that political practice is imbricated in language (e.g., Hansen 2006), political organization and language were deeply intertwined from the start, that is, when political organization emerged. The question of when that happens is not an easy thing to date, but far easier than dating the emergence of language itself. Because geographical separation spells social separation in premodern history, and social separation is likely to spell linguistic variation, by the time humans came to inhabit most parts of the world except those permanently covered in ice, there must already have been a great deal of linguistic variation. We cannot know for certain to what extent this coincided with political boundaries, but it would be uncharacteristic for humans not to sometimes impose and enforce linguistic boundaries as social boundaries, and sometimes transgress and transcend them. As noted by Iver Neumann and Håkon Glørstad, proto systems emerged as early as the seventh millennium BCE, as evidenced by massacres of whole communities in central Europe (Neumann and Glørstad 2022, citing Wild et al. 2014). Rather than being evidence of incorporation of groups speaking different languages—rather the opposite—this does show the capacity for the kind of conquest that would spell such incorporation. Although the earliest system of polities interacting is the Mesopotamian system of city-states (Neumann forthcoming), archaeological excavations of *tells*[6] around much of what is today the Balkans and the Middle East indicate structured settlements and defensive fortifications back to 5,000 BCE (Bailey et al 1998). Where there is archaeological evidence of defense, there is likely to have been war, and where there is war there is likely to be conquest. Intermarriage between groups probably has an even longer history than conquest and subjugation of other groups. DNA analysis suggests that the interpolity systems that emerged on the Atlantic seaboard from 4,500 BCE onward "were descendants mainly of Europe's first farmers that had trekked north, but with a marked genetic presence of the indigenous populations that they met en route" (Neumann and Glørstad 2022, citing Haak et al. 2015). Hence the story of people speaking multiple languages within a single polity under the same political leadership must have lasted at least seven millennia. This may seem trivial compared to the history of language, but it is nevertheless crucial for how we theorize the relationship between interlingual and international relations.

Why is this longer history important? First, it provides some historical criticism of the Babel-like myth that political entities are primordially constituted as homogeneous linguistic entities. This myth can also be associated with German Romanticism, namely that a *Volk*, or people, is somehow the ideal and natural political entity, and that the essence of that *Volk* is a *Geist* (spirit), closely associated with a single language as the basis for the political community. Whether linguistic nationalism is a by-product of state-making and state centralization is a recurrent topic in the literature on the nation-state. What is clear is that it is idealized to the point where it is taken for granted that a political community *should also* be a linguistic community. Political organization is in this perspective seen as a by-product of linguistic community. While we may speculate about the situation between the emergence of language and the emergence of large-scale political organization—and perhaps also idealize that as the somehow natural state of things—there is a period of perhaps seven millennia where there have been polyglot political entities. Over the last two millennia, the largest and perhaps most ubiquitous polities have been empires, which are by their very nature polyglot ventures. Second, who speaks what language in the contemporary world is by and large a political question. People migrate, intermix, intermarry, and learn new languages. Which languages their offspring speak is a result of socialization, training, political affiliation, and norms and values. It is also closely associated with how outsiders and newcomers to a group deal with stigma. Those who choose what Erving Goffman called an "out-group" strategy, basically meaning to hide, play down, pretend their stigma is irrelevant and embrace the view of the stigmatizing majority, are likely to lose their linguistic distinctiveness over a generation. Those who choose an "in-group" strategy, turning to one's fellow stigmatized individuals for group identity, are likely to maintain linguistic distinctiveness and separateness over generations (Adler-Nissen 2014). Language use over time is therefore imbricated in the ways people and groups handle relational identities.

Foreign Policy in Polyglot Empires

In this section of the chapter, I turn to the potted historical example that follows from the longer historical exposition. Rather than turning to the cases that make for easy pretense of monolinguality, like Iceland, I take the position of Greek speakers in the Ottoman Empire. They are interesting because they showcase the interlingual configurations that made up Ottoman-Greek relations during a time when Greek nationalism was associated with the Greek language and in a complex relationship with both the Greek Orthodox Church and Hellenic antiquity. If we are to understand Ottoman, Greek, and Turkish foreign policy and position in international relations, it is worth looking beyond the various nationalisms' state = nation = language idealizations. The point is then to illustrate the utility of an analysis of interlingual configurations, not to argue that every emergent nation-state case is the same.[7]

The imperial structure through which much Ottoman "foreign policy" was conducted was peopled by middlemen. This meant that the central state, by definition, could not maintain a monopoly on political relations with other powers. For some of its relations with other rulers, the Ottoman palace relied on those called the *phanariot* Greeks, namely an elite living in the neighborhood of Fener/Phanar, physically and socially close to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate but serving as the nodes in an empire-transcending network.

> The well-known story of the Greek merchant diaspora, operating from London to Marseille through Odessa, which amassed the capital, built the information networks, and imported the ideas necessary for a secessionist revolution and the establishment of an independent Greek state obscures the fact that there was also a Greek-identified

> elite who were the products and agents of Ottoman governance. This was an elite that can hardly be termed part of a diaspora, for its members were increasingly involved in the work of Ottoman governance and were concentrated at the Ottoman metropole, which had, of course, once been the chief city of Byzantium. (Philliou 2011, 6)

These were actors in their own right. Phanariot *voyvodas*, governors that the Ottomans appointed to the Danubian Principalities, were sent off from Istanbul in a ritual mimicking those of foreign envoys, and they received envoys from other rulers (Philliou 2011, 22–23).

> Phanariots did not belong to the imperial ruling house, nor did they share the dominant religion of Sunni Islam. And yet, while other transregional networks of "middleman minorities" could be deeply involved in the political economy of the states that gave them shelter, phanariots went well beyond this arena to serve as functionaries—governors and diplomats—for the Ottoman state, and thus confound the national and diasporic frameworks. (Philliou 2011, 6)

Here is an institutionalization of practices that had emerged over millennia, with the roles of "middlemen minorities" becoming formalized with attendant titles and ceremonies.[8] The backbone of what Philliou terms "the Phanariot house" were the two *voyvoda* governorships of Moldavia and Wallachia (with taxation rights), and two supreme positions of *dragoman*, or interpreter.

> Back in İstanbul, the dragoman of the court was the liaison between European envoys and the sultan and his inner circle, as well as between the Orthodox patriarch (and his lucrative empire wide ecclesiastical administration) and the court. The dragoman of the fleet, the final office to be created and granted to phanariots, was second in command to the *kapudan paşa* (Ottoman admiral) and was de facto the administrator for many Aegean islands and Anatolian coastal localities. He was also responsible for naval operations, including shipbuilding and warfare. In order to be translators, they were required to be proficient in European languages (usually Italian and French) in addition to the *elsine-i selase*, or the Three Languages—Arabic, Persian, and Turkish—that constituted Ottoman Turkish. (Philliou 2011, 11)

The collapse of the *phanariot* house following the 1821 Greek revolt brought up several institutional dilemmas, including whom to appoint as *voyvoda* to the Danubian principalities, how to fill the position of the patriarch, and how to handle "foreign affairs." This was not a matter of political philosophy, but rather a practical issue that urgently needed solving, because Sultan Mahmud II realized that "*there was no one to read incoming documents* from foreign states" (Philliou 2011, 91, emphasis in original).

What we see here is the unraveling of a very elaborately institutionalized form of interlingual imperial governance, as the loyalty of those tasked with carrying out the work of translation in relations with other empires was called into question for reasons closely associated with their language skills and networks. The empire remained a polyglot affair, and the establishment of a sovereign Greek state did not at all imply a neat delineation between Greek speakers and others. The initial strategy of the Ottoman center was to turn to "unaligned" Greek Orthodox subjects—people whose loyalty to the sultan was not directly in doubt because of their association with the house of *phanar*. The severing of those associated with the house of *phanar* from imperial service was seen as a punishment for their disloyalty and a measure to curtail their influence, but the fact that their former roles as interpreters gave them privileged access to Ottoman state secrets did not seem to feature as a major concern. The Ottomans gaining better control over information seems more a by-product of the punishment of disloyal subjects than a concern of its own. In fact, the marginalization of this network of go-betweens meant that the Ottoman palace and Porte cut itself off from one of the most valuable information networks it had. While the palace and Porte might have been concerned about where their secrets made their way through the *phanariot* network, Philliou points out the problems of being shorn of rumors and news about its own provinces in the Balkans, as well as goings-on in courts in Vienna and St Petersburg.

Language and Loyalty

The ideal of single-language-based political communities is one that political science typically traces back to Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) and associates with nineteenth-century Romanticism. I would claim that the period that E. J. Hobsbawm has called "the Age of Nationalism," where many of these ideals were contested and put into practice, has four distinct political aspects or strategies. The first is the unification of all polities using the same language, where the German unification project and the Italian Risorgimento are the primary examples. The second is the "liberation" of smaller language groups *qua nations* from polyglot empires. There are many such examples, but Greece was an early and important one. The third is the process of linguistic assimilation and standardization within a territory (the project described by Eugen Weber in the case of France is a major example). Fourth and finally, there is the process of vernacularization or the use of commoners' language for political purposes.

The Italian Risorgimento, leading to the unification of Italian city-states, and the German unification leading up to the Peace of Versailles in 1871 are both thought primarily of as bringing *all* the Italian-speaking and German-speaking people, respectively, into two different polities. This meant the shifting of the *international* boundaries, without the shifting of *interlingual* boundaries. As the locus of politics shifted, we may say that the interlingual configuration of politics in Europe was transformed. There were fewer dyads of polities that conducted relations in "the same language," but the linguistic plurality of Europe did not disappear. It was simply consolidated into fewer states, and remained a feature of domestic politics.

The second strategy was "national liberation" as a separate language group seceding and becoming an organic whole. Romanticism, both as a philosophical and literary project, was particularly interested in the Greek Revolt of 1821 (Beaton and Ricks 2009). Cast in French, English, and German discourse as an attempt at national liberation from the Turkish yoke, with roots back to the greats of Hellenic antiquity, this was one of a number of rebellions of peasants in the Ottoman provinces in the Balkans (Anscombe 2014). What was different about this was that it was also supported by Greek Orthodox *phanariot* elites, which were centrally placed in the Ottoman capital and with a well-developed political network across the empire. The project of aligning Greekness with the boundaries of the Greek state that emerged from the revolt took roughly one century, by and large ending with the population exchange with Turkey in 1924–27. However, the identity criterion decided upon for *belonging* was not that of language, but that of religion (see Çağaptay 2006), with Greek Orthodox subjects to Greece, and Muslims to Turkey. Rather than *the basis of* identity, what language they spoke was then something thought to *follow from* political identity, and both Turkey and Greece started projects to make sure that their new citizens spoke their respective languages (Wigen 2018).

Third, if we follow Eugen Weber, who has documented this process, it was not until after the First World War that French villagers—through the increased reach of schooling and conscription—increasingly came to speak a language that could be understood as French. Before this, representatives of central authorities in Paris would need translation in order to interact with peasants in the periphery. This was not simply a matter for linguistic minorities such as the Breton speakers in France's northwestern corner, Basque speakers in the southwest, German speakers in Alsace, or Provençal speakers in Provence, but more of dialect variations of that Germanic-infused Latin spoken across much of the country. In other words, interlingual relations was a feature of domestic politics in the "Hexagon" up until perhaps the First World War. As a consequence of Paris's overseas imperial aspirations, just as the citizens of the Hexagon became increasingly monoglot, the interlingual feature of the polity was reproduced through, amongst other such events, the large number of people fleeing the war in Algeria. Interlingual relations, then, seems to have always been a feature of domestic French politics.

Prior to the emergence of the "one state, one language" ideal, and in practice long after, there was no reason political elites and subjects of the king should speak and use the same language. In different configurations around Europe, aristocrats and royals would to a greater extent share a language with one another than with their subjects. In parallel with the emergence of the Romantic ideal of the alignment of political and linguistic boundaries, there is the process of *vernacularization*, which means that politics came to be increasingly carried out in "the language of the commoners." Whether it is the cause or the effect of mass participation in politics is an open question, but the two processes are closely associated. Early mass participation in politics is typically found where there is early vernacularization of political language. This is a process that took place both across Europe, albeit unevenly, and in the dynastic empires on its periphery. In contrast with this, there was in the Ottoman Empire a clearer tendency for *diglossia*, that each language would have a high register, associated with religion and the elites, and a low register, used by common folk. From Armenian, via Greek, through Ottoman/Turkish and Georgian to Arabic, most Ottoman languages had this, and Arabic has retained it to this day (Strauss 2003). Hence, not only were there interlingual boundaries to be transcended in interactions between these groups (which again should not be conceived as social wholes coextensive with their associated languages), but there was a crucial linguistic boundary dividing the upper and the lower echelons of society, associated with prestigious and mundane affairs. In the cases of Turkey and Greece, the hegemony of the low register as the main political language emerged as a result of the discarding of imperial aspirations with the 1919–22 war. Greece had been pursuing the *megali idea*, an ideal closely intertwined with the memory of the Byzantine Empire, the Greek Orthodox Church, and *katharevousa*, the high register of Greek associated with these institutions. With the loss against the Turkish nationalists, *demotic* Greek came to be the language of politics. In the case of Turkey, the Ottoman language had been simplified for a decade or so, but as the chapter by Rumelili and Aydın-Düzgit in this volume shows, following the establishment of the republic, the political language was further anchored in the low register (cf. also Lewis 1999). Yet, with all of these efforts, both states still have major groups of speakers of other languages, and while interlingual configurations may have been displaced from being a feature of the center, it is now more of a feature of the peripheries.

Conclusion

Interlingual configurations have been part and parcel of domestic politics in most places for most of human political history, and the most common situation in contemporary global politics is postimperial and polyglot, emerging out of a long-term process of conquest and only partial linguistic incorporation of linguistic communities. There are examples where human groups have set off into geographies that could not sustain many of their numbers—such as the extreme north of the temperate zone and subarctic areas of Scandinavia. The study of global politics does of course need to incorporate such cases as Iceland and the Scandinavian countries in its theorizing, but it cannot take the linguistic situation there to be the political ideal and theoretical assumption upon which to theorize the postimperial world that is the political reality across most of the globe. Using the case of the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire, I showed how an analysis of interlingual configurations can highlight relations and histories that nation-state ontologies cannot. My proposition would be that while the situation of the Greeks may be unique—"we are all individuals!"—most groups whose nationalism envisions themselves to be primordially constituted around a single language are in historical fact emergent in interlingual configurations. Moreover, this is not a mere feature of history, it is the situation also today. Greeks and Turks may no longer be as closely intertwined linguistically, but even the most monolingual of Turkish (and Greek) presidents are nevertheless part of configurations where meaning in English, Russian, Bulgarian, Persian, and Arabic shapes his or her scope for political action.

Over a longer human history, we may say that the relationship between language and politics has shifted significantly. From a situation where there were more social groups than languages—multiple groups being able to interact in "the same" language—to one where conquered peoples lived under fewer imperial authority centers, and hence there were more languages than polities, and with little illusion that linguistic group and political authority should coincide. Then finally one where there are still many more languages than there are states, but where the nation-state ideal is that of "one language, one state." Neither of these three situations should be taken as somehow more natural than the other, but should serve to highlight how fraught the relationship is between linguistic identity, language practice, and political authority. It is in fact the idealization of the linguistic community being coextensive with the political community that is a historical rarity. Recognizing that most polities are already polyglot is a first step for understanding the interconnections between interlingual and international relations.

Notes

1. The latter conceptualization rests on Abbott 1995, where social entities are created through boundary-making practices.
2. While one may reinterpret and reformulate without transcending a linguistic boundary, it is impossible to transcend a linguistic boundary without reinterpretation and reformulation. See also Jackson's chapter in this volume.
3. Neumann clearly falls on the former end of the scale.
4. While the "language differentiation" of social groups through acquisition does not work the same way for most animal species, this is an effect that is known also in whales. Thanks to Aike Rots for alerting me to this fact. See Whitehead and Rendell 2015.
5. Remember the whales.
6. Tells are archaeological mounds that have accumulated vertically through the process of repeatedly building and demolishing mud-brick houses over long periods of time.
7. Halvard Leira's exposition (2019) of European aristocrat diplomats being not only metaphorically kin but also relatives in a nonmetaphorical way, may make for an interesting analysis of the interlingual configuration of early modern European diplomacy.
8. "Middlemen minorities" is perhaps a misnomer because empires do not have a logic of a simple minority/majority distinction, but rather a hub-and-spoke system. This kind of logic of a majority and a minority is a feature of nation-states idealizing homogeneity, not of empires using diversity as a feature of rule.

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CHAPTER 2

Translation and Explanation

Patrick Thaddeus Jackson

"Here in the United States, we drive on the right side of the road."

What would it mean to *translate* that sentence?[1] And why would the translation of such a seemingly banal, everyday sentence be at all relevant to international studies?[2]

First things first. If I use the *Oxford English Dictionary* as a rough guide, I learn that the "chief current sense" of the transitive verb "to translate" is "to turn from one language into another; 'to change into another language retaining the sense' (Johnson); to render; also, to express in other words, to paraphrase."[3] So in order to translate the sentence, I would first need to determine what its sense was, so that I could make sure to retain it when producing a sentence that used "other words."

At first glance, at least to me, the sentence appears to state a fact, or, better, to make a claim about which side of the road we drive on in the United States—a claim that can be evaluated as impersonally true or false, with that determination being made through the judicious use of appropriate empirical evidence.[4] Call such a claim *factic*, perhaps: a claim aspiring to factuality, such that its correctness would be a function of the proper use of words, particularly the application of accepted definitions and standards to observations. A fact, after all, is a statement with which a competent speaker of the relevant language *cannot* disagree, because if someone *did* disagree, we would wonder if they were a competent speaker at all: if the correct word to describe the shape of this street sign is "triangle" and you disagree with my claim that this sign is a triangle, then perhaps you don't know how to correctly use the word "triangle."[5] Perhaps the sense of the sentence is this factic claim, and translating the sentence means making the same claim in a different way.

However: "The limit of language is shown by its being impossible to describe the fact which corresponds to (is the translation of) a sentence, without simply repeating the sentence" (Wittgenstein 1980, 10).[6] The factic sense of the sentence "Here in the United States, we drive on the right side of the road" is, then, that here in the United States we drive on the right side of the road. How can I possibly make the same claim "in other words"? What would it *mean* to "make the same claim in other words"? What does "same" even mean here?

As for the relevance of these considerations to international studies, we need look no further than the provocative claim of Justin Rosenberg (Rosenberg 2016; Rosenberg et al. 2023) that the conceptual heart of international studies is *multiplicity*—or, as I myself would prefer, the encounter with difference across boundaries. Hence issues of similarity and difference are fundamentally constitutive of anything meaningfully *international* at all, and questions of equivalence and the lack thereof are intrinsic to all sorts of relations between selves and others (Walker 1993; Bartelson 1998; Inayatullah and Blaney 2004). Although we traditionally restrict the application of such notions to empirical settings that unproblematically conform to a narrower definition of international relations (e.g., war, diplomacy, trade), even everyday, ordinary activities have their international aspects (Ree 2015). But translation from one language into another is even more closely connected to international studies, inasmuch as to translate is to engage in "interlingual relations" (Wigen 2018) and to confront the practical challenges of meaning-making across communities and polities. Translation, then, *is* international affairs, and we can perhaps see this most plainly in quotidian, commonplace examples of the sort that I will be exploring here as a contribution to providing a conceptual architecture for analyzing the politics of translation.

Looking at the Words, and beyond Them

In order to translate any sentence, I first need to figure out the sense of the sentence, so I can retain it. That in turn means that I need to know precisely what the sentence says, because the same words that appear in the sentence itself appear in my statement of what the sentence says: its sense. Maybe I should use the dictionary, and precisely decode each of the component words of the sentence. Perhaps that is a way around the problem.

But I can stare at the words of the sentence for days, and get no closer to its meaning. Indeed, the closer I look at the words, the more the sentence dissolves into a myriad of potential meanings. Which meaning of "drive" is meant?[7] Which meaning of "right"?[8] Who are "we" and what is their relationship to "the United States"? And so on.[9]

Looking for meaning in the words themselves—seeking the sense in the words of the sentence—doesn't get me very far at all. Perhaps if each word only had *one* meaning? But this is belied both by the dictionary definitions themselves, and by the sheer "multiplicity of the tools in language and the ways they are used" (Wittgenstein 1958, para. 23).[10] No word, no sentence only ever means *exactly* one thing, the *same* thing, whenever it is used, whoever uses it—despite this being the dream of positivist partisans of technical language everywhere.[11]

What I need is some way to cut through the semantic chaos and anchor the act of translation in some sense of the sentence that I could retain as I use other words. To do that, I have to lift my eyes from the page, and dispense with the demand that words and sentences have some sort of clarity and purity *on their own*.

> The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our demand. (Indeed, the crystalline purity of logic wasn't something that *just happened*; it was a demand.) The conflict becomes intolerable; the demand now threatens to become empty.—We have come across slippery ice where there is no friction; therefore the conditions are in a certain sense ideal, but just because of this we can't walk. We want to walk; therefore we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground! (Wittgenstein 1958, para. 107)

The path that was supposed to lead to an anchor by precisely defining the words of the sentence does not actually do so, because the meaning—the sense—of the sentence isn't *in* the sentence on the page or discoverable through "a retrospective, decontextualized concern with the characteristics of 'already spoken words'." But perhaps "a focus upon the use of 'words in their speaking' in a context" (Shotter 1993, 43) can escape the indeterminacy of language that was bringing the attempt to translate the sentence to a halt. After all, in ordinary speech, in ordinary contexts, the chaos of potential semantic multiplicity seems to be at least provisionally resolved or deferred, as speakers grasp and act on some possible senses of the sentences uttered, ignoring or suppressing others.

Indeed, I'd already made this move, or something like it, by reading the sentence as making a factic claim. What I said a few paragraphs ago was that the sentence appeared to me "at first glance" to make a factic claim; I would wager that it may well have appeared that way to you as well. But not because of anything intrinsic to the sentence itself, in isolation! Even a signpost that is supposed to point the way is in important respects *incomplete* or *indeterminate*: "where is it said in which sense I have to follow it; whether in the direction of its finger or (e.g.) in the opposite one?" (Wittgenstein 1958, para. 85) It is, rather, in the way that we approach or encounter the signpost and act on it that the "sense" of the signpost is to be found: "The sign-post is in order—if it, under normal circumstances, fulfills its purpose" (para. 87).

Now, this does not mean that you or I *under normal circumstances* decide to approach the signpost, or the sentence, in whatever arbitrary way we want to. Under normal circumstances, we don't make a decision, or spend time in deliberation. What stops us? Not the object, but the practice into which we have been socialized, and which has become habitual (Dewey 1985). It does so not as an external imposition, but rather as something internal and definitional: "One doesn't *take* what one knows as a knife and fork at a meal *for* a knife and fork; any more than one ordinarily tries to eat as one eats, or aims to eat" (Wittgenstein 1990, vol. 1, para. 536). The act of sitting down to the table to eat *discloses*, so to speak, these things in front of us as equipment for eating,[12] and we have little need or opportunity to make a choice in the matter as long as we are competently engaging in the normal, ordinary practice of dining.

Likewise, in such circumstances, saying "pass the salt" is expected to result in the saltshaker being handed along the line of diners to the speaker, rather than the salt being poured out of the saltshaker into the speaker's hand (because after all, the speaker did not ask for the salt*shaker*, but for the salt). Against the background of the normal, ordinary practice of dining, the sense of the sentence is clear—clear enough that its speaking can achieve a practical result. And clear enough that someone who reacted differently, for instance, tossing the saltshaker (or just the salt!) overhand to the speaker, drawing on a different potential sense of "pass," as in "pass the ball," would attract notice and perhaps censure.

Despite the potential semantic chaos that *might* ensue if we lifted words and sentences from the practical contexts of their speaking and tried to make sense of them in isolation, things are resolved in practice, and that chaos does not normally dawn. The anarchy of possible meanings "is only possible as a state of affairs 'in theory,' that is, within a theoretical system unaware of its own social conditions of possibility (intelligibility). In practice, the dilemmatic themes intrinsic to our ways of talking and knowing *are* resolved; that is what the practical politics of everyday life is about" (Shotter 1993, 220). Words on their own, in isolation from practice, are *always* indeterminate; determinate meaning is *produced* (Onuf 1989), regardless of whether that production involves a collaboration of equals, or an imposition by one party onto another, or something in between. Determinate meaning is never just a straightforward logical derivation from a set of words.

So perhaps I could translate the sentence by looking more closely at the circumstances of its delivery, so that I could determine which meaning the sentence had in those circumstances. If the sentence were spoken, say, by a police officer talking to a driver who was not a US citizen after having pulled the driver over to the side of the road, it might well mean something very different than the same words spoken by a highway engineer talking to another highway engineer at an international planning meeting. A grasp of the circumstances might allow me to figure out the sense of the sentence.

Grasping the Circumstances

But this only opens up another problem: What does it mean to "grasp circumstances"? What holds a practical context together is not any set of formal rules, but "an agreement in judgments" (Wittgenstein 1958, para. 242).[13] The relative stability of a practical context comes from that agreement—an agreement that is not displayed merely in the pattern of judgments that people have already made as part of that context, but in the ways that they "go on" into the future. To become a competent participant requires that I learn that agreement, so that I too can "go on" appropriately. Which is how I know not to toss a handful of salt, or not to reply to the officer with statistical data about vehicular motion.

This is a thorny problem, though, because the stability of a practical context and whatever local and contextual "semantic determinacy" it generates is never a one-and-done event, but an ongoing "*pragmatic achievement*" (Medina 2004, 364). Actual practical contexts are not, and cannot possibly be, exhaustive volumes of rules specifying every possible contingency and how to "go on" in the face of it. Formal rules might constitute part of a practical context, but knowing how to follow those rules appropriately or properly remains distinct from knowing those rules themselves (Tanney 2000, 206–7). For me to know what the sentence "here in the United States, we drive on the right side of the road" means in context, it is not enough for me to know some general rules about word use in that context. (And where would I even find the rule "don't throw salt at the table," or "don't reply to the officer with statistical data"?)[14] Instead, in some sense I have to *become a* *participant* in the practical context in question, or at least become *capable of participating* in that practical context. Then, because I know how to "go on," I can use the words appropriately, and because I know what the sentence means in context, I can perhaps translate it.

There is, however, a very subtle philosophical trap lurking here, as though the "agreement in judgments" that upholds the relative stability of a practical context were some sort of solid epistemic foundation, a kind of subtle displacement of a Kantian a priori (and its kingdom of individual rational subjects) that nonetheless would provide just as fixed and firm a basis for knowing and acting as Kant hoped would emerge from the critique of pure reason (Medina 2003, 304–5). To note or notice a practical consensus does *not* mean that one can simply extrapolate that consensus out into the future and presume that it will remain constant; languages change, practices change, and the rules of acceptability and propriety change. Competent speakers are *continually* negotiating meaning, by using words and responding to others' uses of those and other words.

My effort to fix the meaning of the sentence so that I can translate it—say it "in other words"—is, simultaneously, an attempt to fix the practical context by imagining that it is no longer in motion: as though the rules of correct usage that I might use as clarifications of what the sentence means in context were, in effect, transcendentally stable. As though I were not stabilizing the context by explicating the rules it sustains.[15] And if I am doing *that*, how can I possibly be retaining some sense that the sentence *already* had?

Fortunately, there is a way around this impasse. In many ways, a translation aims to *bypass* the source language, allowing the recipient of the translation to share the situation of a competent speaker of the source language as much as possible *without* becoming such a competent speaker. With a factic claim—that is, with a claim that can be factually true or false—the aim is to put the recipient in a position to be able to make the same kind of evaluation about the truth and falsity of the claim that a listener would be in if they spoke the source language: to figure out how to make the same factic claim in different words, such that the truth-values of the claim are similar if not identical.[16] This presumes that all languages are ultimately translatable into one another, not because all languages agree in their conceptual content, but because a factic claim that is true in one language cannot be false in another one—unless we have mistranslated the sentence in which the claim is expressed (Davidson 1973). But it might still be the case that a factic claim that was true in one language was simply *inexpressible* in another language; that might even be an occasion for the translator to modify the target language a bit, in an effort to bring out, say, etymological connections that might otherwise not be apparent. But even with these difficulties, translating a factic claim seems more or less straightforward, since the relevant context for such a claim is that the speaker and the listener are, so to speak, looking at the same thing and agreeing on the proper use of the words used to describe it. The test here is not whether the recipient of the translation can state the rules of correct language use, but whether they make the same evaluations about truth and falsity as a native speaker of the source language does.

Consider, for example, a situation in which I am measuring an object and reporting the results to you. It is, as Wittgenstein comments, "one thing to describe methods of measurement, and another to find and express the results of measurement" (1958, para. 242). If I am standing here with a ruler laid against an object, it's a reasonable surmise that I am intending to say how long the object is, and my saying "about thirty centimeters" in that situation provides you with a potentially useful piece of information. Unless you don't understand me, because you don't measure things in centimeters, but you still need the information I was attempting to provide; now our practical context shifts to one of the translation of a factic claim, and the existence of well-established conversion equations allows me to say "which is about twelve inches," so we can proceed. When I am measuring, or speaking, or in general *acting* in a practical context, the intention of my action is to bring about an envisioned future state, comprehensible to other participants in the relevant practical context (Anscombe 1963, 45–46), and knowing that intention allows me to determine how to translate the claim.

To translate from centimeters to inches, I step away from actually measuring and into something more like describing methods of measurement. My translation says, in effect, that if I'd used a ruler marked off in inches, I would have obtained the result I communicated to you; in so saying I presume a constancy in the method and results of measurement, and extrapolate a presumptively shared pattern of normal practice.[17] If "measuring" meant something quite different to you than it did to me, the translation would not be an especially good one, if its intent was to tell you how long the object was. And if I am measuring an object and telling you how long it is, the standard for a good translation is whether it gives you some information that you can work with—just the same as it would be if I were a third party, not doing the actual measurement, but simply translating from centimeters to inches.[18] The practical context of the measurement-situation—a factic situation in which the truth or falsity of a claim is determinable with empirical evidence—makes possible this relatively seamless translation of a *descriptive statement* from centimeters to inches, just as long as I am able to presume the stability of that context.

Things get more complicated when the claim being translated is itself an explanation, rather than a factic description. Explanations of all sorts always aim to provide their recipient with some kind of capacity for action, which is lacking; that lack is integral to the definition of the problem-situation to which an explanation seeks to provide a solution (Dewey 1985).[19] The distinctive quality of an act of explanation, as opposed to other modes of training or instruction that are intended to develop novel capacities, is that the provision is supposed to be effected through the use of symbolic media: words, pictures, signs. I give you the recipe in order that you might acquire the capacity to bake the cake, and the sheet music in order that you will acquire the capacity to perform the piece, but of course in so doing I am taking advantage of other capacities that you *already* have; if you did not have those prior capacities, the recipe or the sheet music would not make sense, as you wouldn't have the ability to follow it in the first place.[20]

Some recipes are causal explanations, in which the capacity to be developed involves *making something happen* (as in Woodward 2005). Interpretive explanations, by contrast, respond to a problem-situation in which the challenge involves "going on" in a broadly acceptable way. Explicitly telling someone the rules can sometimes be a means to that end, helpful insofar as it equips the recipient with a sense of what to do next. As I explain later, when entering and inhabiting a novel situation—attending a formal dinner party, say, or joining a new academic department—the end is for the recipient to be able to successfully navigate that situation, and this provides a practical standard for the rules specified and the explanation given: either it enables the person to act appropriately, or it does not.[21] Because the recipient of the translation is attempting to make their way in the practical context in which the original sentence was uttered, the translation has to focus on the kind of practical capacity that speakers of the sentence in the source language were addressing and intending to develop in their listeners. What is retained in the translation, then, is not so much a property of the sentence itself as a property of the practical capacity that the explanatory sentence in context aims to augment or enhance. What a translation says "in other words" is a way of developing a practical capacity for recipients who do not speak the source language.

One immediate consequence is that it is fanciful to imagine a translation that *doesn't* emerge from a practical context. In order to know how to translate a sentence, it is not sufficient to know what that sentence means in context, so that I can "retain" that meaning when using "other words." I need to know *why the translation is happening*, who the audience of the translation is, and what the translation is intended to do. Indeed, that's the only way I can determine how much of the practical contexts I am translating *from* and *into* I can presume, how much needs to be made explicit in the form of rules of appropriate use, and in general how reasonable it is to temporarily arrest the movement of the ongoing practical negotiations in the community (and therefore summarize things in the form of static rules of use). If we are all on the same (figurative) page when it comes to “measuring,” translating the centimeter results into inches doesn’t require much if any explicitness about the rules of measurement; our shared procedures of measuring provide an effective check on potential semantic anarchy already, so there is little danger of someone in that situation hearing the word “inch” and responding to a meaning involving moving by small amounts.

In other translation situations, however, I may need to be a good deal more explicit about the rules of appropriate word use in order that the recipient of the translation can understand why I have rendered the sentence in the way that I have. But such explicitness is *not a free-standing explanation*, because it does not intend to make the recipient a more competent speaker of the source language. Instead, it contributes to the explanation that the translated sentence itself is providing just enough context that the recipient of the translation can grasp the sense of that *particular* word or sentence or work as a whole. The marginalia and the scholarly apparatus, then, can help guide the recipient of a translation, making it possible for them to play the same language-game as a native speaker of the source language would: not to experience the same effects, because different readers always approach texts with different assumptions and so may experience the text differently, but to be able to use the text in the same ways (Wilson 2016, 56).

Translating Explanations

One especially revealing place to see these issues play out is in controversies over the translation of presumptively sacred texts, since such texts are regarded as foundational by members of the relevant community.[22] Take, for example, a phrase that often shows up in Christian scripture: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear,” as it is rendered in the King James Version of the gospel text. In the gospel narratives, Jesus often uses this phrase after he explains something to his disciples; biblical scholars suggest that it wasn’t a particularly unique phrase “and so could have been said by any sage,” so it’s likely a general admonition to pay attention that was probably inserted by scribes when the text was written down (Funk and Hoover 1993, 55). When the Jesus Seminar—composed of the world’s most eminent biblical scholars—sat down to produce their "scholars version" translation, they noted that the King James Version translation of the phrase "is the rendition of a beginning Greek student who wants to impress the instructor by reproducing the underlying Greek text in English."[23] One of the translators suggested something more idiomatic: "A wink is as good as a nod to a blind horse."

> The panel [of scholars] agreed that this English proverb was an excellent way to represent the sense of the Greek text. However, the translators *did not want to substitute an English expression for one in Greek*. They decided, rather, to represent not only the words, phrases, and expressions of the Greek text, but to capture, if possible, the tone and tenor of the original expression. As a consequence, SV [the Scholars Version] translates the admonition: "Anyone here with two good ears had better listen!" (Funk and Hoover 1993, xiv, emphasis added)[24]

The reason why these scholars "did not want to substitute an English expression for one in Greek" is, perhaps, indicated by the subtitle of the book: "The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus." One of the key features of the book is that phrases attributed to Jesus in the five gospel texts[25] are printed in various colors, corresponding to the vote totals that members of the Jesus Seminar cast on the issue of whether those phrases were actually spoken by the historical Jesus or whether they were interpolated at some later date by various scribes and chroniclers.[26] Given this framing, the decision to forego the idiomatic translation is at least plausibly justifiable.

A translation like that of the SV gospels is intended to make possible something that readers without competence in the language of the original text[27] would be unable to do: to read and understand the text's instructions, to *listen to Jesus speaking* as much as possible, without requiring the reader to learn a foreign language. Jesus's instructions are ethical; as a charismatic figure, in the stories told in the gospels he is perpetually giving some variant of "it is written . . . but I say instead . . ." and the intent of his admonitions is, pretty clearly, to reorient his followers' and disciples' moral worldview. Jesus, like most charismatic religious figures, offers answers to the questions of how his listeners should "go on" if they want to do so in accord with the morally ordered cosmos presented in the text; he is thus proclaiming particular kinds of interpretive explanations, specifying how we *ought* to "go on," and not simply telling us how we do "go on." The SV translation, like other translations of the gospel texts, intends to make those answers available to readers of other languages, and to thus deliver instructions outside of the original linguistic context.

The difference with the SV translation is that it seeks to do so as transparently as possible, by rendering the text in a way that a reader could almost imagine that she was sitting with Jesus and listening to him speak—which is why Jesus in the SV translation doesn't say things like "woe unto you," since in our context, that would be a very eccentric way of speaking. The fact that the SV does have an extensive scholarly apparatus—including the discussion of "he who has ears to hear" that I mentioned above—shows the limits of that transparency. If we know that "a wink is as good as a nod to a blind horse" captures the *sense* of the phrase, that can shape and color how we read it in translation. The discussion of the phrase takes us out of the situation into which the transparent translation intends to put us. Whether the move is justified depends yet again on references to, and discussions of, the purpose of the translation itself.

Along these lines, consider the SV translation of another part of the Christian scriptures: the letters of Paul. The translators make considerably more extensive modifications to the ordinary biblical text of these letters than they did to the gospel texts, rejecting several of the canonical letters as likely not written by the historical Paul "by focusing on the vocabulary, phrases, social situation, Christology and ecclesial understanding" across different letters (McGaughy et al. 2011, pt. 173).[28] They also excise passages that they regard as likely interpolations by later scribes, in part by placing Paul's letters in the context of contemporary personal letters: an established rhetorical genre of which there are numerous examples in the ancient Roman world (pt. 422). This is part of their overall strategy of reading Paul as "not dictating to but attempting to persuade" the communities to whom he writes, and as such, recognizing that Paul's "authentic letters" are "personal, rather than general epistles to no one in particular" (223, 539). The overall aim is to place the reader in the position of the recipients of Paul's letters, who are looking for advice on how to live in community rather than seeking clarification on points of Christian doctrine—largely because such doctrine postdates the composition of the letters by several centuries.

This contextualization of Paul leads to a series of important translation decisions at the level of individual words and phrases. The SV translators generally avoid the word "sin," opting for "the seductive power of corruption," because the modern notion of sin has become so personalized and individualized that it no longer carries the sense of publicness that Paul's word would have had for his audience. More strikingly, the SV translation takes sides in a long-simmering controversy about how to translate a Greek phrase that occurs several times in Paul's letters, a genitive construct that could either be a subjective or an objective genitive: it could mean "the faith of Jesus Christ" or it could mean "faith in Jesus Christ" (Hunn 2006). The grammar is ambiguous, and the implications of either translation are theologically profound—and have enormous practical political consequences. The latter translation was first introduced with the 1881 British Revised Version and the subsequent American Standard Version that was largely based on it; prior to that time, English translations had consistently used some variant of the former.[29] The SV translators argue that this shift represented the victory of "a theological agenda, focusing on a propositional theology" and "a later theological orthodoxy," rather than an appropriate rendering of what Paul was saying to the communities he addressed (McGaughy et al. 2011, 222). Since the notion that Christians are saved by believing in the divinity of Jesus is a much later development, they reason, that cannot be what Paul was saying—and indeed, the subjective genitive "faith of Jesus Christ" makes Paul's argument in the letter to the Galatians the precise *opposite* of the argument that human beings can do anything to affect their own salvation (Martyn 2000). As such, the subjective genitive translation goes along with the reading of Paul as primarily concerned to give advice to communities struggling to come to terms with the message of salvation in and through Jesus, rather than providing doctrine for individuals worried about their own status in the eyes of God.[30]

There is another theological point to the SV translation, albeit a more subtle one: it generally translates the Greek word *christos* not as "Christ," but as "anointed," thus calling attention to Jesus's role as messiah: "the Greek term *christos* is a translation of the Hebrew term *meshiah*, and refers to one appointed and empowered by God to carry out a special task" (McGaughy et al. 2011, pt. 4533). Part of the translators' justification for this is that Paul couldn't have believed that Jesus was divine in the sense that was made orthodox at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, long after Paul had died; hence Paul wouldn't have used Christ as a *title* for Jesus the way that later Christians tended to (even to the point of making "Christ" into, in effect, Jesus's last name). Whether or not this was what Paul himself believed, in contemporary context *not* referring to Jesus as "Jesus Christ" has the effect of shifting attention away from the divinity of Jesus and toward a more human Jesus. In this context it may not be irrelevant that Robert Funk, one of the founders of the Jesus Seminar, was a strong proponent of the quest for the historical Jesus and deeply skeptical of later Christian theology: "The Jesus of Nazareth discovered by the Jesus Seminar was a wisdom teacher whose parables proclaimed the arrival of God's kingdom. He was not, in the judgment of the Seminar, the messiah of the end-times" ("Bob Funk, Founder of the Westar Institute" 2020).

All of which is to say that it is impossible to translate Paul's letters without making *some* substantive judgments about what Paul's theology was. The SV translation prefers a version of Paul that adheres more to a "low Christology," but this is certainly not the only way to read and translate Paul.[31] Determining what Paul really said, or really meant in context, is a very tricky endeavor, requiring careful judgment about the overall intention of the text—which in turn informs judgment about which parts of the text don't really belong in the category of "authentic" letters of Paul. None of this is possible without cutting into the hermeneutic circle at some point and developing the account from there; one cannot resolve these issues by simply looking at the words on the page, and there are no living members of the communities addressed in the letters to consult when translation ambiguities arise. If "a translation can be said to be successful when it can be used the same way as the source text" (Wilson 2016, 66), in the absence of living uses and users to engage, the best we can do is reconstruct a plausible contextual use—in this case, including a reading of Paul's theology as expressed in the letters—and stick with that.[32] The resulting translations can be (and are) very different, because they express different senses, even while each regards itself as being a (and perhaps *the*) correct translation.

By contrast, consider Ken Liu's discussion of his translation of Liu Cixin's Chinese-language science fiction novel *The Three-Body Problem*. Although the translator used some "explanatory footnotes" to bring non-Chinese readers up to speed on some of the allusions to events in Chinese history, and also judiciously added "a few informational phrases in the text (all approved by the author)" for the same purpose, he also tried to stay as close as possible to the text, but not for the same reasons as the Jesus Seminar translators did:

> In translating, my goal is to act as a faithful interpreter, preserving as much of the original's nuances of meaning as possible without embellishment or omission. Yet a translator must balance fidelity to the source, aptness of expression, and beauty of style. *The best translations into English do not, in fact, read as if they were originally written in English.* The English words are arranged in such a way that the reader sees a glimpse of another culture's patterns of thinking, hears an echo of another language's rhythms and cadences, and feels a tremor of another people's gestures and movements. (C. Liu 2014, 398, emphasis added)

Liu's translation offers an opportunity to the non-native speaker that is in some ways different from the opportunity offered by the SV translation of the gospels. Because of Liu's choices as a translator, the resulting text feels in important ways *foreign*, despite being written in English. This is in turn linked to the somewhat different purpose of Liu's translation. The translators of the SV presume that readers of the Christian scriptures come looking for moral instruction from a presumptive authority on the issue, which is why getting the authentic words right is such an important priority for them—even as different translators disagree about precisely what those authentic words are. Liu, on the other hand, presumes that readers of *The Three-Body Problem* come wanting to experience the novel, and to respond to its depictions of a fictional context in ways that bear a family resemblance to how others respond.[33] If the Jesus Seminar/SV standard is "you heard this from Jesus/Paul," the Liu standard is "you read the same book that others read."[34] The subject-position of the idealized novel-reader is different from the subject-position of the idealized Jesus-listener or Paul-reader insofar as the former remains aware of foreignness in a way that the latter does not.

But common to both of these translation situations is the notion that the work being translated intends to bring about some sort of novel capacity in its audience. In both cases, the kind of capacity in question is interpretive rather than causal: at issue both for readers of the novel and for readers of scripture were questions about how to "go on," how to most appropriately live in the world—whether our world or an alien world.[35] So a good translation has to preserve that intention, without thereby seeking to make the reader of the translation into competent speakers of the source language. And it has to do so in such a way that the reader of the work in translation is able to converse, or reflect together with, other readers of that work, whether in the source language or in translation.[36] There are no fixed and firm rules for accomplishing this feat in a way that is appropriate for all communities of readers; what a group of scholars looks for in a translation, and therefore what their discussions of the work with scholars who have read it in other languages or translations will focus on, is not the same as what a book club or Bible study group might look for. It would therefore not be at all inappropriate to say that the unity of a work—whether sacred scripture or speculative novel—is endogenous to the way that it is translated, and subsequently discussed. And there is precisely *no* way to say of a translation that it is flawed or misleading or betrays the heart of the work without further specifying the audience for the translation and paying close attention to the conversations and practical negotiations *within* that community about what "counts" as a good translation and what is, say, parody or homage or a parallel work inspired by the original (Jackson and Mandaville 2006).

The unity of the work is thus *performed* and *practically negotiated* in the act of translation, in much the same way that the unity of the work is performed and practically negotiated whenever the work is discussed and debated and analyzed and interpreted. Whenever we seek to say "in other words" what some sentence—or some group of sentences, some work—says in its original setting, *regardless* of whether we are using a "different language" to do so (and anyway, isn't saying "in other words" *by definition* the use of "different language," anyway?), we are practically negotiating and performing the unity of the work by the choices we make in selecting new words (Bannet 1997). Each time we put forward a word, we are (re)negotiating its meaning, whether our usage falls within the already-existing practical consensus about appropriate use or not (Medina 2004, 356–59). Continuity of meaning, and the unity of the work, is an endogenous consequence and a practical achievement, not something that can stand outside of the act of translation and dictate its parameters. Whether you and I have read the "same" work because we read different translations is only something that we can determine practically—and, in particular, that determination depends on the use we make of those translations.[37]

Which in turn underscores how much of an irreducibly *creative* act translation is. Even the act of remaining within the "normal" parameters of word use and re-rendering some sentence according to already-established conventions is an exercise of agency, as it helps to shore up those parameters for the community in question.[38] A speaker who deviates from the conventional, already-established-as-normal use of a word takes on themselves a "burden of eccentricity," as a result of which they have to demonstrate "exactly how the new use or behavior is a legitimate extension of the prior consensus of action, and a continuation of the practice that is worth pursuing, a productive and rich way to go on" (Medina 2004, 367). Such a demonstration arises in context, and a good demonstration is one that the community of speakers practically accepts.[39] None of these things can be decided in advance, because they arise in process, as situated speakers do things with words. With living groups of speakers, at least, bilingual individuals can pass back and forth between languages, checking their understanding of the sense of a text by seeing precisely what people do with it on each side of that boundary. This keeps the translation grounded: not in some intrinsic meaning of the text, but in the ongoing practices of the communities in question.[40]

But we should not conclude from this discussion that the question of which intention to preserve in a translation, and which intention a translation itself should adopt, is a matter of unconstrained individual choice. Nor should we conclude that the practical efforts in a community to lock down the meaning of particular words and phrases are carried out by autonomous individuals who are all on a level playing field with one another, determining how they ought to "go on" together through some kind of ideal-speech-situation-like meeting of the minds.[41] The SV translators, and Liu, did not make their determinations in a vacuum, and regardless of the ways that they arrived at their positions on what kind of translation to produce, an entire infrastructure of publishing, promotion, and production is required in order to bring those translations into being. That infrastructure itself is in turn not neutral; not all possible translations and not all intentions get produced and disseminated, and the reasons why have—as I have endeavored to show in this chapter—little or nothing to do with the words themselves. Explaining why we get certain translations and not others therefore has to abandon any simple notion of a single "correct translation" in favor of a more nuanced approach to contexts and intentions.

Back to the Driving

Which is not to say that there aren't standards that we can and should use to evaluate translations. It's just that there are many such standards, and no single compelling way to select among them. By way of illustration, let's return to the sentence with which I began this essay: "Here in the United States, we drive on the right side of the road." Imagine that the sentence occurs in a novel, or a newspaper story, about a nationalist rancher; perhaps the correct translation is "We Americans make our animals walk on the correct side of the street." Imagine that the sentence occurs in an encyclopedia, on paper or online; perhaps the correct translation is "U.S. law specifies that cars are to be driven on the right-hand, not the left-hand, side of the street." Imagine that the sentence is said by a car rental company employee to a renter who has used a non-US passport as an identity credential; perhaps the correct translation is "Here in the US, you should drive the car on the right-hand side of the street." There is no way to determine how to best translate the sentence unless we specify what sort of claim it is: a factic description, in which case the standard is whether the resulting translation has the same truth-values as the original; or an explanation seeking to augment or inculcate certain practical capacities in its recipient, and—the most challenging, impossible-to-resolve-in-advance bit—what counts as a similar capacity in recipients outside of that initial context. The capacity to engage in a conversation about the story? The capacity to make inferences about traffic patterns in the US? The capacity to maneuver an automobile so as to avoid a head-on collision? The translation weighs in on what counts as similar, and what the original statement meant in context; how the readers of the translation receive it and what they do with it determines whether it was a good translation or not.

There are no mechanical answers to these questions. There are only ongoing practical negotiations that reach approximate stopping-points for a time. Why we end up with particular relative stabilities, and whether those are the stabilities we ought to end up with, is never reducible to a question of logic or of literal meaning; it is invariably, ineluctably, a political question.

Notes

1. This chapter was originally prepared for the Interlingual Relations workshop at ISA 2019; thanks to all the participants and the co-organizers for their helpful feedback. Special thanks to the students in Miles Evers's fall 2023 proseminar on international relations theory for a rousing discussion of the penultimate version of this chapter.

2. With apologies to Charles Manning, I continue to insist that the better name for the multidisciplinary field that others call "international relations" or "IR" is international studies. Some of my reasons for doing so can be found in Jackson 2017.

3. Why the OED? Because I learned as an undergraduate student that the OED was the place to go to start investigating the meanings and etymologies of English words, and subsequent experiences haven't led to me revise that view. The online edition of the OED (www.OED.com) is protected behind a subscriber paywall. Merriam-Webster (www.merriam-webster.com), which is not, gives "to turn into one's own or another language" as its principal definition, and "to express in different terms and especially different words: "paraphrase" shows up a bit further down the definition. Whether these differences are significant enough to warrant the subscription fee—paid, fortunately for me, by my university library—I leave as a spur to further thinking.

4. On the *impersonality* of such claims, see Rescher 1997.

5. Yes, this means that the realm of facts is a good deal smaller than we sometimes think it is. Space does not permit me to go into the further implications of the position I am articulating here, but suffice to say that once we get out of the realm of ordinary-everyday descriptions, facts in this sense are few and far between. For an elaboration, see Jackson 2024, chaps. 1–2.

6. Because this is not intended as a contribution to "Wittgenstein studies," I am not using the standard abbreviations for Wittgenstein's major works, and am instead citing them in regular citation format. For Wittgenstein scholars, the reference is to CV.

7. Per the OED: "To force (living beings) to move on or away"; "To impel (matter) by physical force"; "To impel forcibly to action, or into some state; to constrain, compel"; "To prosecute vigorously; to bring to a settlement"; "To go through, endure, pass, prolong"; "To infer, conclude, deduce, derive"; "to move with vehemence or

energy"—and those are just the *major* headings for the groupings of the twenty-seven clusters of meanings identified in the entry.

8. The OED lists four different entries for "right": a noun, an adjective, an adverb, and a verb. In the sentence, the word "right" appears to be an adjective modifying "side of the road," but the adjective entry alone has sixteen clusters of meanings, plus fifteen clusters of idiomatic phrases and several dozen "special uses."

9. Compare Derrida's (1987, 57–64) discussion of the impossibility of definitively determining the boundary between the frame and the thing framed as long as one is simply looking at the (framed) artwork itself.

10. I have slightly modified the English translations of most of the quotations from this work (PI).

11. "Democracies don't go to war with one another" might be the closest thing to an empirical law in international studies, but whether it is true depends on the precise operational value that we give to "democracy" and "war"—and even its strongest advocates sometimes use the claim in a normative sense (Oren 1995). This in turn raises some pressing questions about precisely *how* this claim became enshrined as a piece of conventional wisdom in IR (Ish-Shalom 2008)—questions that cannot be reduced to technical issues of definition and operationalization, but involve broader political configurations.

12. Echoes of Heidegger here are quite deliberate. See also the discussion of this parallel in Shotter 1993, 70–71.

13. Also Wittgenstein: "there is a way of grasping a rule that is *not* an *interpretation*; rather, it shows itself in actual applications which we call 'following a rule' and 'going against it'" (1958, para. 201). Of course, that "grasp" is shown not merely by the person following or going against the rule, but also by observers ("we") characterizing the act as either rule-following or rule-violating. Indeed, no small part of Wittgenstein's case against "private languages" is built on this foundation: one cannot follow or go against a rule in private, just because of the irreducible *publicity* of a rule—including a rule specifying the correct use of words in context.

14. That said, I'm confident that every parent has at least one story of having to specify a rule that they couldn't have imagined themselves having to specify before they had kids. For my wife and I, that rule was "don't lick the tree!," which promptly became a part of family lore, a piece of the "living tradition" (Shotter 1993, 170–71) on which we draw to shape future joint action. Is "don't lick the tree!" correctly translated, then, by whatever rule *you* never foresaw yourself having to specify until *you* had kids? And what if you have not had kids—what then?

15. The only way this would *even in principle* be possible would be if there were no longer active speakers of the source language in question, so that all we had were rules of usage ossified into patterns of already-spoken words. When Thomas Kuhn (2000, 85) points to passages of text that "strenuously resist elimination by any translation or paraphrase that uses the historian's own lexicon, the one he or she initially brought to the text" as a way of operationalizing "incommensurability" more precisely, he is dealing with *past* articulations of knowledge and *past* scientific communities that no longer exist, so there are no active speakers ongoingly engaged in interactive stabilizations of their contexts. If there were such active speakers, then possibilities would almost certainly exist to reshape the rules and negotiate an effective translation.

16. "Factic" is an archaic English usage that I am using in large part because of the parallel with "aesthetic" as designating a way of construing a claim. I am modifying ordinary English in order to translate something that Heidegger (1927) would have called *Faktizität* and many English renderings have as "facticity"—which just seems too clumsy to me. Bernardo Teles Fazendiero's (2023) distinction between "factual" and "meaningful" truth is an effort to get at this issue as well, although I worry that "factual" still suggests that a claim *is* true rather than designating a way that a claim *might* be true.

17. As Wittgenstein might say, this tells us something about the *grammar* of "measure," which is itself enmeshed in the normal practice of measuring. Someone who didn't measure the way *we* measure wouldn't use the word "measure" in the same way, after all.

18. Whether "about twelve inches" is precise enough for our purposes depends, unsurprisingly, on what our purposes are. Perhaps we need a much more fine-grained measurement. But this technical wrinkle does not alter the fundamentals of the case.

19. This distinction between factic description and explanation (which can only ever be fact-adjacent, and not itself factic), and the link between explanation and practical capacities for action, is central to the argument I make in Jackson 2024.

20. How are you able to follow the recipe or read the sheet music? In virtue of your prior training, the practical "bedrock" that grounds all of your possible answers for how you know what the instructions mean. "I am then inclined to say: 'this is simply what I do'" (Wittgenstein 1958, para. 217).

21. Yes, I am still presuming that "acting appropriately" is the normative standard. This is because there is a presumption of normalcy in our language-games, such that someone acting differently assumes a "burden of eccentricity" (Medina 2010). This does not mean that such "appropriateness" is in any way devoid of power and hierarchy.

22. Similar issues present themselves in the "translation" of an older foundational document into a contemporary situation, even though we conventionally regard this as a situation not of translation but of elaboration or interpretation. Constitutional law is in this sense not especially far removed from the hermeneutics of sacred texts (Cover 1993), and struggles over the meaning of, say, key global human rights declarations and global governance institutions (Troy 2020) feature just the sort of puzzles and ambiguities I am discussing here with this example of Christian scriptural translation.

23. Alfred Marshall's interlinear Greek text confirms that "who has ears to hear let him hear" is the literal translation of the Greek into English (Marshall 1993, 110).

24. The translators also tried to capture the *sound* of the Greek—"here"/"hear" picks up something of the assonance of the Greek text, apparently—while still coming up with something that one might actually say in ordinary English. "The panelists were not always this successful," the editors admit, but this "does illustrate what they were trying to achieve" (Funk and Hoover 1993, xiv).

25. The book is called *The Five Gospels* because of the inclusion of the "sayings Gospel" of Thomas, part of the manuscripts discovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, alongside the more canonical-traditional foursome of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John.

26. Funk and Hoover (1993, 36–37) gives details of the voting procedures.

27. The situation with the gospels is of course even more complicated, since the

gospel texts are in Greek (or, in the case of Thomas, in Coptic), while the historical Jesus almost certainly spoke Aramaic, perhaps with the occasional Hebrew thrown in—but in any case, neither Greek nor Coptic. So providing the reader the opportunity to listen to Jesus speaking and respond accordingly always comes with at least one additional linguistic jump.

28. Note that these references are to Kindle locations.

29. To make this explicit: the objective genitive translation of this phrase goes along with a project of compelling as many people as possible to declare that Jesus Christ is their personal Lord and savior lest they be cast into eternal damnation, and as such harmonizes with—and perhaps even helps to make possible—a kind of imperialism that emphasizes doctrinal conformity. Space does not, unfortunately, permit a fuller exploration of this elective affinity.

30. The objective genitive translation of a passage like Galatians 2:16 makes it appear as though human beings can guarantee their own salvation by an act of belief, rather than through traditional religious observances. The subjective genitive translation, on the other hand, suggests that human beings *have already* been saved by Jesus's faith (the SV prefers "a confidence in God") and that this makes traditional religious practices irrelevant. The difference is subtle, but highly significant, as the reliance on an act of will to achieve salvation stops short of the kind of "unitive knowledge of the Ground" that is characteristic of the world's wisdom traditions (Huxley 1944, 207–11).

31. On high vs. low Christology, see, e.g., Gaston 2014.

32. Note that the quotation from Wilson here is lightly amended, because in the text as printed it says "when it can be used the same way at the source text." This seemed odd. I contacted the author and he confirmed that, yes, this was a typo. Even in the absence of that communication I would likely have made the emendation, based on my understanding of the sense of Wilson's argument; the fact that the author confirmed my suspicions doesn't relieve me of the burden of producing a plausible reading and using that to guide my use of the text.

33. In a nontrivial sense, a piece of narrative fiction is an interpretive explanation, albeit one that occupies a different position than a piece of scripture. In scripture, the reader is part of the context to which the text addresses itself. In narrative fiction, as in much ethnographic scholarship, it is the context of "those people over there" that is being explicated and made comprehensible to the reader. Hence the persistent foreignness of a novel is not a problem, and could actually be an asset.

34. This despite the fact that a degree of moral evolution relevant to "going on" in our world might come from conversations among readers of Liu's novels (which are, after all, about the catastrophic effects of alien contact) as easily as they can come from hearing Jesus's or Paul's words; it's just that most of Liu's readers probably do not come to the text expecting a charismatic authority to make moral pronouncements, but most readers of the Christian scriptures do expect precisely this.

35. In saying this, and in choosing a *science fiction* novel as my example, I am also trying to correct a prominent misunderstanding about that genre. Science fiction novels are not recipes for producing a future, despite the general requirement that the technology on offer be at least in principle commensurate with our best contemporary physical science; if an author is *too* flagrant with violations of that rule, she will quickly

find herself writing fantasy, where "magic" is a perfectly acceptable component of the story without needing anything like a disenchanted explanation of how it works. Instead, as Ursula LeGuin perceptively notes, all that authors of fiction—not just science fiction—are "trying to do is tell you what they're like, and what you're like—what's going on—what the weather is now, today, this moment, the rain, the sunlight, look! Open your eyes; listen, listen. That is what the novelists say" (LeGuin 1976). Treating novels *on their own terms*, I would argue, means regarding them as something other than causal recipes, and remaining attentive to the way that their authors are seeking to tell the truth through lies.

36. Note that I am subsuming individual/personal reflection on a text under the capacity to have a conversation about the text, because (as Wittgenstein taught us) there are no such things as private languages and therefore personal reflection is more like a conversation than it is like something purely subjective.

37. As Philip Wilson comments, sometimes the best translation of a joke is an entirely different joke, if the point is that a joke was told at this point in the story (Wilson 2016, 63).

38. Specifying the extent of that community is critical, though, a point that often gets blunted in scholarly debates; the only people who care about most scholarly negotiations of appropriate use are other scholars, and presuming that a scholar's use of a word or a sentence makes a direct contribution to normalizing that usage in the broader public seems a bridge too far. On the multiplicity of gaps between scholarly and policy practice that make translations challenging, see, most recently, Hom 2017.

39. Wittgenstein again: "'So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?'—What human beings *say* is true and false, and they agree in the *language* they use. This is not an agreement in opinions, but in form of life" (1958, para. 241). Practical consensus, not explicit and idiosyncratic articulation, is the key here.

40. The absence of any living group of speakers of the languages in which the Christian scriptures are written contributes, perhaps, to the tremendous difficulty and ongoing controversy involved in those translations.

41. Yes, I have Jürgen Habermas in mind here.

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CHAPTER 3

The Hidden Politics of Translation

On Interpreters' and Translators' Agency in International Relations

Anatoly Reshetnikov

On April 12, 2017, after Russia yet again vetoed a UN Security Council resolution condemning the war crimes of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria, the representatives of Russia and the UK clashed in a heated rhetorical exchange.[1] After the British representative, Matthew Rycroft, accused Russia of undermining its own credibility by protecting the Assad regime, Russia's Vladimir Safronkov delivered a speech full of blunt accusations, wagged his finger at Rycroft, and raised the tone of his voice to a manifestly undiplomatic level. Safronkov's "Don't you dare insult Russia again!" sounded like a direct threat, while his invective "Look at me! Why are you looking away?!" instantly became a meme and a scandal in both international and Russian domestic contexts (Roth 2017). Certainly, Safronkov's harangue required interpretation to make sense to others. It also required transcription and translation to stay on the record. While simultaneous interpretation into English (Rycroft's main language) was extremely accurate, it naturally failed to convey the crux of the insult: the informal address (ты) chosen over the formal one (вы), which happens to be an irrelevant distinction in English grammar. Yet it is the transcript of the speech and its translations where the most interesting transformations took place. Apparently, many stylistic and semantic elements of Safronkov's rhetorical attack were either completely lost or significantly altered in transcription and translations.[2] Thus, the most transgressive elements of his presumably deliberate provocation were subtly erased from history.

As the case above demonstrates, few other actors directly involved in political communication are as fundamentally important *and* virtually invisible at the same time as political interpreters and translators. On the one hand, these professionals, be they staff employees of governments and international organizations (IOs) or freelancers, (re)create exceptionally important political discourse across their working languages, relying on their interlingual and intercultural competence (which their clients normally lack), and engrave that discourse both in history and in the moment in "as translated" form (Kazakov 2021, 15:50).[3] On the other hand, political interpreters and translators extremely rarely make it into the public eye and, as is the case with simultaneous and remote interpreters, often remain not only virtually but also physically invisible to political actors and their audiences. This paradoxical combination of vital importance and invisibility takes a toll on these people's status, rendering it "ambivalent and insecure" (Sela-Sheffy and Shlesinger 2008, 80).

Despite requiring a master's degree and often an official authorization, the profession of interpreters and translators in both national and international political institutions is still attributed a relatively low social status, not comparable to some other professions requiring equal or lower amounts of training and skill (Dam and Zethsen 2008, 2012). Freelance interpreters/translators working in politics suffer from even harsher underappreciation (Muylle 2021). Even in comparison to literary translators, political interpreters/translators enjoy considerably less visibility and prestige (outside of their professional community). Meanwhile, they labor at the absolute interface between states and often mitigate potential and unfolding conflicts. Yet the mainstream perception of the profession—both emic and etic—is still that this work should ideally remain almost invisible, which echoes the widespread image of translation as "a pane of glass" and of interpreters as mere "go-betweens" (Muylle 2021; Alekseeva 2021).[4] The normalization of invisibility affects various layers of the professional experience of political interpreters/translators, effacing their authorship, mainstreaming scapegoating practices, and frequently erasing the sole fact of their physical presence.[5] Interpretation/translation is thus still considered "a pink-collar profession," and its full-fledged recognition "has not yet been achieved" (Sela-Sheffy and Shlesinger 2008, 80). Who creates and sustains this limbo for interpreters/translators as essential yet invisible workers of politics? Which historical processes and institutions contributed to the displacement of political interpreters/translators from politics and the public eye, and how exactly did it happen? How is the agency of these professionals perceived today by all the actors involved, and how does translation and positional interlinguality help us rethink agency in international relations?

In this chapter, I perform a critical analysis of the history and the present of political interpretation/translation. My main argument is that over the years (and centuries) political interpreters/translators have been actively marginalized and controlled by statesmen through direct and indirect means. In the same spirit, they were effectively incorporated into the international bureaucracy in the twentieth century, and now combine the features of bureaucrats and generic service workers.[6] Thus most interlingual encounters—the key sites of "mediating estrangement" (Der Derian 1987)—remain policed by the bureaucratic apparatuses of the state and the international organizations. Remaining virtually invisible in the process, political interpreters/translators thus often help preserve the existing power hierarchies, greasing the bearings of the hegemonic order.

While I leave a more detailed study of practices and routines of modern interpretation and translation services in IOs to ethnographers, here I try to accomplish two things: (1) to reconstruct the history of control and displacement of political interpreters/translators, and (2) to provide empirical examples of how they exercise their agency today, while being embedded in the international bureaucracy. When describing the history of displacement, I trace how openly discriminatory mechanisms of exclusion were gradually replaced by a sequence of less direct technological and knowledge regimes that exacerbated interpreters' invisibility. To show how political interpreters/translators exercise their agency in the current organizational setup, I provide three empirical illustrations that showcase the roles political interpreters/translators often perform in modern international settings: (1) the gatekeepers of institutional and national legacies, (2) intercultural censors and conduits, and (3) subtle political editors.

In the empirical part of my analysis, I draw on interviews with practicing interpreters/translators, as well as their educators and managers, to shed light on how all of them exercise, wittingly or not, their political agency within the constraints imposed by the technological and knowledge regimes they are embedded in. I begin by reviewing the literature on interpreters' and translators' political agency, and problematize the relatively more recognized agency and importance of interpreters/translators working outside formal politics.

Reclaiming Agency: Scholarly Takes on the Role of Interpreters and Translators

The problem of invisibility is relevant for virtually all kinds of interpreters/translators, not only those who work in politics. From translators of plays in theaters (Jänis 1996) to literary translators (Venuti 2008, 1–13) to technical translators (Yakimenko 2021) to business interpreters (Kazakov 2021, 28:00)—most practitioners of the craft feel and sometimes suffer from their invisibility: legal, social, and in situ.[7] Rakefet Sela-Sheffy and Miriam Shlesinger find this especially puzzling, given "the enormous potential power encapsulated in their work as culture mediators *par excellence*, namely as those who have held the key to all cultural contacts and linguistic exchange" (2008, 80). Indeed, without interpreters/translators the dissemination of knowledge, religions, cultural values, and certainly power would have been impossible (Delisle and Woodsworth 2012). Furthermore, interpreters/translators are the ones who often have their hands and lips on the important decisions on what exactly should be translated and how, often serving as gatekeepers of their cultures (Tahir-Gurcağlar 2009, 178–81) and institutions (Davidson 2000).

Therefore, it's no wonder that, following the linguistic turn in social sciences and humanities, many scholars tried to reclaim and restore the agency of interpreters/translators. "This was a response to widespread narratives [which portrayed the translator] as 'neutral,' with no stake in the interaction other than upholding professional standards, [and the realization that] translators . . . may come to affiliate—professionally, emotionally, ideologically—with different agendas, accounts of some aspect of the world, cultural or political communities" (Baker 2009, 223). Among the early influential works on the topic was Lawrence Venuti's cultural critique of the translator's invisibility (1991, [1992] 2020, [1995] 2008). Venuti's main goal was "to make the translator more visible so as to resist and change the conditions under which translation is theorized, studied, and practiced today, especially in English-speaking countries" (2008, 13). Gaining momentum in the 1990s, this cause attracted many ardent followers.[8]

The axiomatic foundation beneath the agential revolution consisted of two main pillars. First, there was a premise that agency is practically inescapable, which is familiar to all disciplines affected by the interpretivist turn.[9] Thus, perspective was recognized as an inalienable quality of any human action. Second, there were specifically linguistic and translation-related assumptions that came to the fore, including anisomorphisms of languages, asymmetries of culture, and the impossibility of translating fully and accurately all intertextual references without changing the text's form and genre entirely (Tymoczko 2014, 211).[10] Combined, these two pillars made it exceedingly clear for any thoughtful observer that interpreters/translators have to make choices, as well as edit and postedit the results of their intellectual work *all the time*.

What is more, the positionality of the translator/interpreter is often wedded to contexts of domination.[11] Thus, it is indeed unfortunate that the choices those actors make, as well as their positions in the hierarchies of power, remain hidden from view in the disciplines that study power as their main subject. As Einar Wigen and Mauro Caraccioli demonstrated in the introduction to this volume, International Relations has long been a hostage to the discipline's Anglophonic bias and mostly turned a blind eye on interpreters/translators. Political science does not fare any better. Postcolonial scholarship (and literary studies as the discipline's port of departure) has devoted more attention to the political agency of interpreters/translators. Attending to the biographies and work of outstanding interpreters/translators, literary and postcolonial scholars demonstrated the profound impact that interpreters/translators often exerted on their cultural and political milieus, sometimes consciously and with a clear political purpose (Milton and Euzebiq 2004; Bastin 2009; Semenenko 2016), and sometimes rather unwittingly, by spontaneous semantic restructuring that naturalized a certain type of power hierarchy (AbdelRahim 2014; Spivak 1993, 179–81).[12]

Curiously, when it comes to those whose profession is to interpret and translate for politicians and diplomats, their political agency was not reinstated in the same fashion as the agencies of literary translators and various translation agents acting in colonial and postcolonial contexts. If the latter two categories could be said to enact politics from within the act of translation/interpretation itself (i.e., while performing their primary role), then political interpreters/translators are deemed to be able to reclaim their political agency only by changing their role (i.e., by becoming politicians or diplomats). This, however, happens quite seldom,[13] which is strange. For interpreters/translators, going into international politics would, in fact, be a very natural move. First, given their advanced intercultural and interlingual competence, political erudition, ability to listen, familiarity with negotiation techniques, as well as acquired networks, political interpreters/translators are a perfect fit for the job (Muylle 2021). Second, if one agrees with Hannah Arendt's assertion that *plurality* is the fundamental condition of all political life and humans "are all the same . . . in such a way that nobody is ever the same" (1998, 7–8), interpreters/translators seem to be acutely aware of this ontology. Reflecting this, Vladimir Putin's interpreter Kirill Kazakov, for instance, placed "latitude of thought" (*широта взглядов*) among the top three essential skills for any political interpreter, meaning precisely the unavoidable plurality of discourses and logics at the negotiating table and the interpreter's ability to get deeply acquainted with and switch between those different positions (2021, 39:00). Alekseeva, who educated many generations of conference interpreters, also believes that "an interpreter is truly well-equipped to become a *modern* politician, who is able to account for most diverse interests" (2021, emphasis is prosodic). In addition, the importance of plurality of situational and historical contexts is one of the main principles that aspiring interpreters are requested to digest during their studies—often to their great displeasure (Yakimenko 2021).[14]

In the meantime, most homages to the profession have lauded political interpreters/translators as essential participants of political communication, and yet still present them as intermediaries and service providers, whose professional Everest was accuracy and invisibility (e.g., Roland 1999). The stories about outstanding political interpreters/translators even had a circensian vibe. They were portrayed as superhumans with unbelievable memory, encyclopedic erudition, and iron-like stamina, who, nevertheless, always remained politically invisible and could not *act* (in the Arendtian sense). Among such outstanding professionals was, for instance, Olivia Rosetti Agresti (1875–1960) "who could take in a whole speech in English, French or Italian and repeat it in the other two languages without ever taking a note" (Salvador de Madariaga, cited in Delisle and Woodsworth 2012, 251). Another example is Paul Mantoux, who could allegedly render unexpected quotations from British poetry in French verse and attracted audiences to the sessions of the League of Nations that would come specifically to watch him work (Roland 1999, 157–58).

Interestingly, since nowadays most conference interpretation happens simultaneously or remotely, or both, such stories about virtuoso interpreters are almost unimaginable today (outside of narrow professional circles). As Noël Muylle[15] put this in an interview, "those times are over" (2021). No doubt, political interpreters still do participate personally in public high-level meetings and negotiations. Yet these meetings constitute a relatively small share of interpreters' working hours (Kazakov 2021, 24:30), and often the real function of an interpreter during such meetings is not what it seems from the outside. First, most diplomats understand English these days and can communicate (at least on the basic level) without an interpreter (H. 2021; Yakimenko 2021). Second, every public high-level meeting is only the "tip of the iceberg" that is supported by a colossal amount of work at the lower levels (Kazakov 2021, 24:30; H. 2021). Therefore, most of what is being discussed, for instance, between two heads of states at a summit has usually been already decided. At such meetings, consecutive interpreters usually play a "ceremonial role" (especially if English is one of the meeting's languages), or "a role of the buffer," that is, they merely reserve extra time for politicians and diplomats to think about their next statement (Yakimenko 2021; H. 2021). Occasionally, when something goes wrong, interpreters often serve as "convenient scapegoats," as it is all too "easy [for a politician] to hide behind interpreting" (Muylle 2021). In general, however, the profession is becoming more and more invisible, especially after the adoption of simultaneous (and later—remote) interpretation in IOs and high-level political conferences. This massive displacement of political interpreters was justified by a "rational" cause of practical necessity and anticipated savings.[16] One tends to forget, however, that throughout history a bureaucratized translation and interpretation service capable of providing simultaneous interpretation and further translation between several languages was never a cost-effective option for managing linguistic plurality.[17] Still, how did this displacement proceed, and is it a recent phenomenon? Who promoted it and who opposed it? What is the situation like today? In the next section, I briefly reconstruct the history of *control* and *displacement*—two typical strategies that political actors frequently adopted in their relations with interpreters.

Control and Displacement: A Critical History of Political Interpretation

Control over an Interpreter's Political Loyalty

Political interpretation has always been a tricky business. The issue of the interpreters' loyalty has gnawed at political actors since the beginning of times. Often, premodern interpreters were recruited from tightly controlled marginalized groups, such as slaves, ethnic hybrids, religious minorities, and women. Not infrequently they were prisoners of war, political outcasts, or victims of kidnapping (Delisle and Woodsworth 2012, 248). Despite their tremendous importance, their names were almost never recorded in the chronicles, and they hardly ever received due credit for their work. A prime example of this is the predominant anonymity of most interpreter figures mentioned in the Bible (Roland 1999, 9–10). Historically, politicians also created various elaborate systems of selective inclusion to guard the profession from those whom they, for whatever reason, did not trust. Toward the end of the Reconquista in medieval Spain, interpreters' loyalty was ensured through making this post hereditary, which allegedly ensured that interpreters "would have been educated in accordance with a pro-monarchy value system" (Cáceres Würsig 2017, 7). In the times of the conquest of the Americas, the colonizers both trained their loyal subjects to speak a foreign language and captured and enslaved locals to train them to speak the empire's tongue.[18] When brought to the Iberian Peninsula, those individuals and their children entered the same hereditary system, in which they were, however, still incapacitated, marred with their irredeemable ethnic origin. This marginalization existed despite the fact that those who served as interpreters were supposed to convert to the Catholic faith to "annul" their foreignness (Cáceres Würsig 2017, 4–8).

As a rule, premodern and early modern recruitment of political interpreters usually started off as a *heteronomous* system (i.e., implying the recruitment/enslavement of the colonized), and then gradually developed into an *autonomous* system (i.e., when previously captured and other local individuals whose allegiance was deemed unquestioned were trained to become interpreters for the crown). The latter system, although it was time-consuming to build, was always preferred by politicians as more trustworthy (Cáceres Würsig 2017, 9; Cronin 2002). Thus, akin to diplomats who were turned from permanent expatriates into paid nomads and swallowed by state bureaucracies (Neumann 2011), interpreters were also always "domesticated" by the state. The habit of mistrusting political interpreters did not vanish with colonial empires. As recently as 1953, when Australia caught a group of Russian spies, the Australian government sought "a person of *indubitable loyalty* but expert knowledge of Russian to examine both the relevant documents and the more than 200 witnesses" (Roland 1999, 160, emphasis added). They found the person by hiring a Briton, Arthur Hubert Birse, who had interpreted for Winston Churchill during his meetings with Joseph Stalin. In the twenty-first century, during the war in Iraq (2003–11), the American army distinguished between three categories of interpreters (based on their perceived loyalty). The least trusted ones, who received no protection and were not considered as military personnel, were local interpreters. The second category included American citizens with native competency in the target language. The third category consisted of American citizens who were allowed to participate in high-security operations, and for whom a native competency in the target language was not required (Inghilleri 2010, 177).

Even though modern-day political interpreters do not need to pass a purity of blood test to prove their loyalty, like their Spanish colleagues a few hundred years ago (Cáceres Würsig 2017, 10–11), a lot of effort is still invested in ensuring their ideological reliability, even though in a less direct way. In our conversations, both Alekseeva and H. admitted that during the Cold War, the education of political interpreters was heavily infused with multiple ideological subjects aiming at molding professionals who would also be loyal citizens.[19] In that context, political dissent meant the end of an interpreter's career. Nowadays, the situation has changed in the sense that interpreters are trained to assume more individual responsibility for their work and have broader autonomy from their clients.

Yet, when it comes to their political allegiance, things get more complicated. Alekseeva, who educates conference interpreters and translators, believes that they "must be patriots" of their home country, since one of their functions is to represent their state on the international arena.[20] The position of H., another prominent educator of conference interpreters, is more nuanced: In the US, where political interpreters spend their entire careers working for the State Department and do not rotate together with administrations, they are, first and foremost, considered to be "public servants" in the pay of the American nation, which leaves ample room for patriotism. In some other countries, where governments use freelancers, interpreters are believed to be "service providers" who certainly are supposed to act in the best interest of their clients, yet their selection is technically merit-based. However, H. also noted that in her country every administration tends to have a pool of their trusted interpreters, who, accordingly, lose access to government jobs once a new administration comes to power. Yakimenko, a practicing interpreter, educator, and translator, admits that the political allegiance of an interpreter is, indeed, important, but explains that the system functions in such a way that "if the general political line deeply contradicts [an interpreter's] inner values, she would either need to constantly be in a schizophrenic mindset, which would only add to the general schizophrenia characteristic of her profession," or she would choose to stop doing this (2021). Apparently, such value conflict was one of the main reasons why Yakimenko no longer accepts offers to work in high politics. Evidently, the issue of tight control over interpreters' political allegiance remains pressingly relevant.

With the advance of globalization and the emergence of large IOs, the latter started to compete with states for the "domestication" of interpreters. Muylle (2021) provides a very illustrative example from his work for the European Commission in the 1970s. When China came into close contact with the European international system and was welcomed at the negotiation table, it insisted on bringing in its own interpreters trained in China, despite the fact that by then the EU had already trained interpreters to and from Chinese (using their own methodologies) for the EU-China annual committees. No doubt, this situation should not be perceived in terms of "proper" ideological indoctrination on one side (China) and the lack thereof on the other (the EU). While contemporary international organizations allegedly do not discriminate based on political views, or on nationality, religion, or ethnicity, scholars demonstrate that in those institutions interpreters/translators are still "indoctrinated in codes of practice and protocols, which limit their scope of action and provide authorities with certain control over the tasks that have to be developed" (Cáceres Würsig 2017, 18; also see Beaton-Thome 2020 and the discussion of interpreters as gatekeepers of institutional legacies below). Thus, IOs imbue their interpretation and translation services with a specific kind of bureaucratic rationality to build an ideal type of conference interpreter/translator who would be ready to meticulously reproduce the organizational standards and follow strict protocols. The entry into this "golden cage" (Yakimenko 2021) is protected by a series of excruciating exams.[21] Thus, in the seven-plus decades since the founding of the United Nations, a great number of interpreters/translators have been "domesticated" by the international bureaucracy.

Displacement of Interpreters from Public Politics

In January 2019, several high-profile interpreters and educators were asked to comment on the scandal that involved former US President Donald Trump's interpreter Marina Gross, whom the Congress wanted to testify about Trump's meeting with Vladimir Putin (France24 2019). All commentators insisted that Gross must not be subpoenaed for both ethical and practical reasons. Media framed the situation as "an unwelcome spotlight on interpreters . . . who [usually] stay scrupulously in the shadows" (France24 2019). Many interpreters agreed with such framing. Uros Peterc, the president of the International Association of Conference Interpreters, said "it's actually unprecedented that we are in the spotlight as much as we are now" (France24 2019). Echoing Peterc's statement, Laura Burian from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies noted that "since World War II when the use of interpreters became more codified, you've just assumed that the interpreter will never be asked to speak" (France24 2019).

The spotlight that Peterc is referring to was not always unwelcomed by political interpreters. The turn of the twentieth century and several decades that followed saw a plethora of extraordinary political interpreters, some of which have been mentioned previously. They enjoyed publicity and attention. Often, their political position also seemed quite obvious and was indirectly reflected in their interpretation style. For instance, Paul Mantoux was known for "smoothening out . . . the impassionate appeals of nationalistic speakers" (Stephen Bonsal, cited in Delisle and Woodsworth 2012, 251), thereby revealing his somewhat conservative and institutionalist stance. Woodrow Wilson's interpreter Stephen Bonsal was once asked to demand the same from Lawrence of Arabia who interpreted Emir Faisal's poignant speeches. Allegedly, Lawrence refused, responding that the emir was "speaking for the horsemen who carried the Arab flag across the great dessert," and since the emir was bearing their last words, he could not change them, just like Lawrence could not soften them (Bonsal, cited in Delisle and Woodsworth 2012, 252).[22] Thus, in the early twentieth century, political interpretation could be compared to a performance, and the consecutive technique used at most political conferences provided the stage for interpreters to showcase their outstanding cognitive abilities and individual styles, but it also made the unavoidable semantic variation that comes in with every act of interpretation obvious to many observers. The traces of this mode could sometimes be found in the post–World War II context as well. Muylle recalls a professional anecdote from the postwar diplomatic negotiations between Germany and France facilitated through consecutive interpretation. After one issue on the agenda was settled, one of the ministers approached the interpreter, saying, "But that is not what I have said," to which the interpreter replied, "No, sir, but it is what you should have said" (Muylle 2021).

While it was not uncommon at the dawn of the EU to have people speaking and understanding four different languages in the negotiation room (Muylle 2021), the proliferation of multilingual international organizations triggered the professionalization and bureaucratization of interpretation/translation. If earlier these activities were perceived as either an auxiliary job fitting for students of linguistics and bilinguals (Yakimenko 2021) or a true vocation for select virtuosos, in the middle of the twentieth century there emerged a demand for uniformity and measurable expertise. On the one hand, this created a window for bottom-up organization and professional solidarity that could help achieve a proper recognition of the profession. On the other hand, this brought uniformity and a tectonic shift in the practice of political interpretation that turned interpreters into generic service providers within a bureaucratized structure and drastically reduced their visibility: consecutive interpretation was almost completely replaced with simultaneous interpretation that physically removed interpreters from the political spectacle.

The common explanation of the utility of simultaneous interpretation at political conferences is that it saves time, adequate technologies permitting. Yet the preference for simultaneous interpretation was far from being unanimous. Some scholars argued that it was, in fact, the other way around: consecutive interpretation saves time, as it allows more focus on the discussion and reserves more time for developing appropriate answers and rebuttals (Seleskovitch 1978, 124–25). With simultaneous interpretation, the previously mentioned interpreting buffer is gone, and politicians have to negotiate through direct speech, which is not the preferred way of negotiating for some of them.[23] When more than three languages are involved, however, consecutive interpretation may indeed seem too cumbersome. Thus, when IBM originally created a system that could technically facilitate simultaneous interpretation in the 1920s, it was greeted with enthusiasm and soon enough put into use: first, in the International Labour Office in Geneva (1927), then at the Fifteenth International Congress of Physiology in Leningrad (1935) (Delisle and Woodsworth 2012, 253). Sergei Chernov, the head of the Simultaneous Interpretation Department at the International Monetary Fund, also points out (2017) that the first Soviet simultaneous interpretation technology developed by V. Epshtein was used during the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern in 1928. Yet it was not until after World War II, when the new method became the new norm. Admittedly, the point of no return was the Nuremberg trials (1945–46), after which simultaneous interpretation became world famous. Following the trials, simultaneous interpretation was quickly adopted by the UN General Assembly (1947) and the Security Council (1950) (Roland 1999, 131).

Every time the simultaneous method was adopted, many professional interpreters voiced their discontent. Back in Nuremberg, they questioned the quality and efficiency of the method (especially in the context of highly sensitive juridical matters exerting irrevocable impact on people's lives). Additionally, they "feared that the anonymity of the booth would not only downgrade their status but destroy their 'style'" (Roland 1999, 130). In the UN, highly qualified interpreters also protested the new system, arguing that the accuracy of interpretation would be lost, which could bring a crisis of the profession (Roland 1999, 131; Delisle and Woodsworth 2012, 254). Nevertheless, simultaneous interpretation was being adopted by an increasing number of international organizations and political summits. Interpreters, in their turn, were left to adjust to the demands of the age. Locked in the booth, they were removed from public attention. Thus, having partially liberated themselves from the rigid hierarchies and barriers of the old days and having turned their craft into a proper profession, they also discovered that a large share of their new professional life would have to remain virtually invisible.[24]

H. (2021) identifies remote interpreting as another important milestone that further displaced political interpreters from the communication context. The technology required to organize remote interpreting was already available in the 1970s, and, as both H. and Yakimenko attest (2021), it was used sporadically by the UN (and later—by governments and corporations), and started to be perceived as normal in the 1990s. Here again, "interpreters resisted, because they feared that they would become even more effaced, [would be put] even further away from the events" (H. 2021). Muylle, who personally participated in the first remote interpretation experiment organized by the UN during a Law of the Sea conference in Buenos Aires in the 1970s, also mentions that interpreters tried to organize a demarche against the new method. They voiced concerns about the lack of direct visual contact with the delegates, as well as about fatigue and sore eyes caused by imperfect technology. Their ideal vision of how interpretation should be handled harked back to the League of Nations. Muylle himself, however, thought that their concerns were exaggerated and was eager to keep up with the times, especially since the experiment showed no qualitative difference between onsite and remote simultaneous interpretation (Muylle 2021).

It took the professional community twenty years to give up and finally accept the new method. But it was not until the COVID-19 pandemic that remote interpreting would get its first test run for becoming a new global norm, since the overwhelming majority of political interpreters started to work remotely. H. follows the ongoing transformation with curiosity, but also some apprehension. She and many others in the interpreters' community find it symptomatic that the currently booming professional remote interpreting platforms, such as Kudo, Interprefy, and Voiceboxer, do not even anticipate a separate video box for the interpreter, creating a strong impression that "you are completely not there!" (H. 2021). Naturally, the interpreter is *always* there, both contextually and historically. What is more, even in politics and diplomacy, the interpreter is exercising their political agency in a number of very important ways. However, the current hegemonic knowledge regime that defines the standards of excellence and the main functions of political interpreters/translators tilts the balance of their agential capacity toward maintaining the political status quo and cushioning the emerging transgressions (i.e., it turns interpreters/translators into a collective Paul Mantoux, rather than a Lawrence of Arabia). In the following section, I present a collection of empirical illustrations of when political interpreters/translators enacted politics, becoming either gatekeepers of institutional and national legacies, or intercultural censors and conduits, or subtle political editors.

The Hidden Politics of Interpretation/Translation

Political Translators as Gatekeepers of Institutional and National Legacies

Coming back to the Safronkov incident with which this chapter began, I return to the tension between formal and informal pronouns. In the official Russian version of the UN Security Council meeting records, the informal pronoun *ты* was replaced by the formal *вы*, and the surrounding syntax was transformed to match the formal standard. Some of the most unceremonious bits such as "Why are you turning your eyes away?" and "What do you think you are doing?" were removed from the transcript. All other versions I was able to read—English, French, and Spanish—while not excluding the above-mentioned utterances, still deviated significantly from the boorish and openly confrontational style of the Russian diplomat. The English and French versions replaced the second person address with a politer third person,[25] and Russian "*Глаза-то не отводи! Что ты глаза отводишь?*" (Don't turn your eyes away! Why are you (*ты*) turning your eyes away?) was transformed into "He should not look away. Why is he looking away?" and "Il ne doit pas détourner les yeux. Pourquoi détourne-il les yeux?," respectively. The Spanish translation—"No debe apartar la mirada. ¿Por qué aparta la mirada?"—arguably managed to somewhat convey Safronkov's insolence, but still adhered to the formal norm of address. In other words, the transcription and written translation of Safronkov's passionate speech squeezed out its most scandalous (and most likely intended)[26] elements completely.

Alekseeva, who trained some of the Russian UN interpreters/translators who were involved in this situation and is closely familiar with the procedures of the UN Department of Translation, interprets this as a very difficult translational decision: "You see, we talked about patriotism. So it is flourishing there. They want Russia to look decent. . . . Since the UN documents, theoretically, are supposed to be stored forever, they did not want to leave *this* for eternity, and chose to smoothen the wording" (2021, emphasis is prosodic). Thus, a purposeful diplomatic transgression—and as good of a political instrument as all the rest—was carefully erased from history by the gatekeepers of Russia's international legacy. Certainly, such gatekeeping is not a specifically Russian thing. In her research, Morven Beaton-Thome (2020) explored similar gatekeeping practices in the context of the EU institutions. Focusing on the European Union debates on Brexit, she demonstrates how Nigel Farage's "strategies of discursive provocation" were discursively policed in German interpretation by similar institutional gatekeepers. In addition, all my interviewees agree that the cases when protocol is breached are particularly difficult for an interpreter. Even though an interpreter is supposed to convey the message completely and accurately, in the situations when insults and vulgarity pour "for no reason" she or he often chooses to either soften the insult, or add their own commentary (Muylle 2021).

Political Interpreters as Intercultural Censors and Conduits

Even though political interpreters often present the modern-day relationship between themselves and their clients in politics as a business-like transaction between seemingly equal professionals (H. 2021; Yakimenko 2021), the benefits different parties reap certainly remain unequal. While interpreters get their wages for facilitating communication and serving as transparent "intercultural glass," political actors also receive the added advantages of being able to use interpreters as temporal buffers and scapegoats, but also as loyal intercultural experts who would always cover their back in embarrassing situations, even if this requires a little blurring of the intercultural glass.

For instance, when asked how one should translate swearing and obscenities that politicians sometimes produce, Kirill Kazakov urged aspiring interpreters to interpret everything as said, except for the situations when the political actor "clearly did not mean to insult anyone" (2021, 5:50). To illustrate his point, Kazakov recalled a situation when a Russian high official, when asked how he liked the country after arriving to India, responded that he liked it very much and "was treated like a white man" (*приняли как белого человека*) (2021, 9:37). Given his intercultural competence and historical sensitivity, the interpreter chose not to translate this literally. Thus, the ingrained and unreflected racism of the Russian idiom (meaning "welcoming and respectable treatment") was magically erased by an invisible (and allegedly neutral) helper. The fundamentally important role of interpreters as "cultural brokers" in military conflicts and other contexts is also explored in detail by Sara de Jong (2018, 2023, and in this volume).

Sometimes, the role of an intercultural conduit can be rather unpleasant. Comparing her experiences of working in court with political interpretation, Yakimenko admitted (2021) that she sometimes has ethical problems with doing the latter. In a court setting, she can easily interpret the most repulsive and unethical statements, because everything that is being said goes on record and would be further considered by the judge when they deliberate on a verdict. However, in an informal political setting, a conservative male client who, for instance, cracks a sexist joke in his communication with another male conservative, expects the interpreter to translate it not just literally but also wittily and with relish, so that the counterpart could fully indulge in their shared semantic debauchery. Thus, unlike in court, unethical statements in a political context not only help to further strengthen a personal alliance, but the interpreter, even if she is female, is also supposed to act as (and often chooses to be) an intercultural conduit helping the two stags bond.

Interpreters as Subtle Political Editors

Even though simultaneous interpretation makes an interpreter more invisible, it also forces them to selectively edit the original statements. *Ranging*, or a real-time analysis of a speaker's statements with an aim to separate "important" information from "unimportant" information is an essential skill that every simultaneous interpreter needs to master (Kazakov 2021, 39:00). Indeed, the situations when every word uttered by a political actor makes it into simultaneous interpretation are exceedingly rare. Partially, this is because semantics relies on syntax, and it is always necessary to first listen for some time to understand where the speaker is going with their message and to be able to render it in a target language. With some languages (e.g., German) one must often wait until the very end of the sentence, as a negative particle added as the last word could change the meaning of the whole sentence entirely. This time lag necessitates reductions. Interpreters understand this well. For the best of them, interpretation is never about the words and always about the message (Muylle 2021). However, some political actors resist. Muylle mentions that the Russian delegation at the UN includes what he calls "pointers," that is, people who sit with the texts of speeches and make sure that every word from the original speech also makes it into interpretation. Yet for him this seems like an aberration, rather than the norm.

At the same time, professional interpreters would never emphasize their subtle editorship, or attract too much attention to their personae. When asked to identify the 3–5 most essential qualities of an excellent interpreter, three out of four professionals I interviewed mentioned *modesty*, or "knowing one's place," as Yakimenko put this. One of the internalized wisdoms of the profession goes that an interpreter must realize that "she is important, but not the most important one" (2021). Thus, they routinely de-emphasize their presence and rarely burden their clients with being explicit about the inner mechanics of the interpretation process and all the subtle contextual decisions they make. Presumably, in IOs, most of those decisions reproduce organizational standards, engraved in multiple glossaries and phrasebooks.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I showed how political interpreters/translators have been policed and marginalized for centuries by statesmen and bureaucracies, which partially explains the persisting crisis of recognition of interpreters and translators. I also showed how in the twentieth century a large number of interpreters/translators were incorporated into the structure of international institutions that turned them into a hybrid of bureaucrats and generic service providers. As befits bureaucracies, IOs also tried to efface everything individual about their employees and practices, as well as displaced interpreters/translators from the political spectacle. In a way, what happened to interpreters/translators is similar to what happened to diplomats two centuries earlier. Both types of actors were originally (and naturally) positioned at the very interface of mediating estrangement. Both were routinely mistrusted from within a national/monolingual worldview, as they did not seem to be organically tied to the nation/language (Yakimenko notes this as one of the probable reasons why interpreters experience problems with status).

When it comes to diplomats, with the emergence of the modern state, rulers started to build elaborate bureaucratic administration systems that (1) separated the inside of a polity from its outside, and (2) subjugated those who previously managed estrangement by incorporating them in the state apparatus and turning them into bureaucrats and paid nomads (Neumann 2011). Interpreters/translators underwent a similar incorporation in the twentieth century that was mostly carried out by IOs. Made virtually invisible in the process, they were put in the service of the hegemonic international order and invited to oil its wheels.

Yet there is one important difference between the two. If diplomats succumbed to the state in the competition between the higher bourgeoisie and aristocracy, political interpreters/translators have remained relatively marginalized since the beginning of time. Thus, if we ever want to de-reify the national paradigm and give more agency and voice to liminal actors who really know what it means to perform intercultural mediation, while also remaining free from elite bias, interpreters and translators seem like the most natural choice.

Notes

1. I would like to thank my research assistants Harrison Mavric and Mariia Ovcharenko for the competent and indispensable support they provided.

2. For the English version of the meeting records, see United Nations Security Council, *Transcript of the 7921st meeting*, April 12, 2017, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.7921

3. Here and below such referencing format includes a time stamp from the video.

4. In Norman Shapiro's words, "translation [is] the attempt to produce a text so transparent that it does not seem to be translated. A good translation is like a pane of glass. You only notice that it's there when there are little imperfections—scratches, bubbles. Ideally, there shouldn't be any. It should never call attention to itself" (Shapiro, cited in Venuti 2008).

5. This problem is relevant for other kinds of translation as well (Venuti 2008).

6. I thank Einar Wigen for helping crystallize this idea.

7. It stands to mention, however, that interpreters feel their own invisibility much more frequently and acutely than translators, as the former's work in most cases does not leave any lasting legacy (Delisle and Woodsworth 2012, 247–48).

8. For an overview, see Tymoczko and Gentzler 2002, xi–xxviii.

9. In Stephen Greenblatt's words, "every form of behavior . . . is a strategy: taking up arms or taking flight is a significant social strategy, but so is staying put, minding one's business, turning one's face to the wall" (2007, 221).

10. This applies to varied semeiotic structures and mechanisms of meaning production in different languages, as well as to the frequent absence of direct equivalents for various cultural phenomena in the target language or different degrees of their development and detail, or both.

11. I thank Mauro Caraccioli for helping formulate this idea.

12. For more examples of application of postcolonial theory to translation/interpretation, see Dingwaney and Maier 1995; Bassnett and Trivedi 1999; Tymoczko 1999; Simon and St-Pierre 2000; and Tymoczko and Gentzler 2002

13. For example, Delisle and Woodsworth (2012, 274–79) describe the political careers of several notable individuals who started off as political interpreters. Muylle (2021) also mentions cases when interpreters became ambassadors.

14. Other authors have also suggested that interpreters have some advantages when they chose to pursue a diplomatic career (e.g., Harris 2003; Delisle and Woodsworth 2012, 278).

15. Muylle retired in 2004 as an honorary director general of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Interpretation. He created and developed this DG before his retirement. He was a former conference interpreter with almost half a century of professional experience at the highest political level.

16. First, simultaneous interpretation allows the duration of meetings to be halved (Roland 1999, 121–56). Second, when more than a handful of languages are involved, consecutive interpretation is deemed too cumbersome (Muylle 2021). Third, remote interpretation allows travel expenses to be reduced (Muylle 2021).

17. Already in the 1970s, UN-affiliated organizations spent from 4 percent to 24 percent of their budgets on translation/interpretation. The UN itself spent 7 percent,

while the amount of documents that required translation was growing alarmingly quickly (Allen, Sibahi, and Sohm 1980).

18. For an excellent account of the practice of kidnapping locals for the purpose of turning them into interpreters in the preconquest period, see Julia Costa Lopez's chapter in this volume.

19. Both Alekseeva and H. referred to the Eastern Bloc countries.

20. Importantly, Alekseeva (2021) subscribes to the narrow understanding of patriotism, which implies that an interpreter simply wants to make sure that no "cunning manipulation against [their country] could be exercised via interpretation [and that their country] looks transparent."

21. For the examination procedures, see https://careers.un.org/lbw/home.aspx?viewtype=LE

22. It was also rumored that the emir may have simply "recited the Koran, while Lawrence extemporized" (MacMillan 2002, 391).

23. Delisle and Woodsworth (2012, 252), for instance, write that British prime minister Lloyd George and other participants at the San Remo Conference (1920) preferred interpreter-mediated negotiations to direct negotiations precisely because during the former they had more time to think.

24. In some cases, the physical removal of simultaneous interpreters from a political meeting takes extreme forms. At a 1944 conference in Philadelphia, interpreters were placed in a basement under the speakers' stage and were provided with twenty-year-old equipment. They had to simultaneously interpret while listening to the shuffling of feet above (Delisle and Woodsworth 2012, 253). Kazakov (2021, 32:05) also recalls an occasion when simultaneous interpretation booths were hidden inside a huge wall of a temporary pavilion built for a political summit. On the eve of the summit, he and his partner had to lift every canvas sheet that the wall consisted of to find their workplace. On the day of the summit, the booths were unexpectedly moved to a different wall section.

25. Even though in the UN verbatim transcripts first- and second-person pronouns are appropriate and are often used.

26. Safronkov was reading a prepared text, which is a standard practice for the UN in contrast to the EU, for instance (Muylle 2021).

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SECTION II

Translation (and) History

CHAPTER 4

Interlingual Relations in a Persianate International Order

Alireza Shams Lahijani

This chapter picks up on the ending of Mauro Caraccioli and Einar Wigen's introduction to this volume on the necessity of moving beyond state-centric approaches and the Anglosphere within International Relations.[1] It conceptualizes the Persianate, a hegemonic language-based sociability in the region stretching from the Euphrates to the Oxus River, and its interlingual configurations. I am interested in highlighting how Persian, amid vernacular languages, shaped power relations, learning, culture, trade, and social life up to the early nineteenth century across Central, South, and West Asia. Persian and its translations also influenced colonial and imperial politics within and beyond the region, with lasting legacies until today. These interests are animated by the benefits of studying historical International Relations beyond the Anglosphere, which rejects the flattening of all things premodern and showcases how politics takes place in different times and spaces (and languages, in this case).

Alongside other contributions to this volume, I will make a dent in the monolingual conception of international politics and international order. As Caraccioli and Wigen have highlighted in their introduction, multiple contexts exist for understanding the relevance and pertinence of translation and interlingual relations. For me, the context is the international order and how translation creates "a semblance of order." It is not the same for each entity, and the translation does not function the same either. Language is a heuristic tool that, while enabling making sense of the incommensurate, might blind us to understanding issues that we usually understand in other languages. Menton's chapter on "Interlingual Relations and the Limits of Hegemony" shows this for the United States and the English language between 2002 and 2003. This chapter's focus on Persianate as a space, subject, and analytical category, as well as the Persian language, reveals the role of the Persian language in the transformation of the international order over the *longue durée*. Temporally, it is similarly located in time as Costa-Lopez's and Caraccioli's chapters. Still, I am dealing with social and interlingual configurations of greater longevity, emphasizing the structural over the eventful, which enables analyzing horizontal and vertical interlingual relations.

There is a lingering question of how these horizontal and vertical relations functioned and within what contexts. The expansion of Persian is marked by linguistic encounters/fusions with other languages and its transformation into the language of politics, administration, learning, and high culture. This chapter argues that the linguistic encounters of Persian as the lingua franca and its subsequent decline, coupled with translation into Persian and then translation from Persian, captures a distinct story of the transformation of the international order in the region.[2] It may allow us to consider the interactions between the "event" of the change in language, the national and relational sociopolitical conjunctures on which it impinges, and the underlying international dynamics. As the chapter shows, there is a stark difference between Persian's status as a lingua franca and English as the hegemonic language. The Persianate was homologous. Attesting to the interlingual configurations within the region, Persian itself was influenced by the vernacular languages.

In the first section, I lay out the conceptual and spatial parameters of the Persianate. Grasping the geography of this region and what it means, it redresses the near absence of Persian and the Persianate within IR (for an exception, see Spruyt 2020). It will pave the way for the ensuing historical assessment that charts the transformation of Persian and the international order and introduces us to various polities, the multitude of contacts and encounters, specific practices, and actors. It also advances how interlingual relations revolving around Persian created an order shaping diplomacy, trade, religious practices, the social realm, and status across a central region and influencing other spheres. Then I reflect on the legacy and afterlives of the Persianate and discuss the implications of recovering the history of the Persianate into IR.

What and Where Is the Persianate?

The scholarly popularization of the term "Persianate," mostly in history and then area studies, dates to Marshall Hodgson's *The Venture of Islam*. He advanced a global history version of the Eurasian ecumene that focused on shared transregional cultural experiences through the circulation of and reliance on Persian as a lingua franca. The shared language created a distinct space:

> The rise of Persian had more than purely literary consequences: it served to carry a new overall cultural orientation within Islamdom. . . . Most of the more local languages of high culture that later emerged among Muslims likewise depended upon Persian wholly or in part for their prime literary inspiration. We may call all these cultural traditions, carried in Persian or reflecting Persian inspiration, "Persianate" by extension. (Hodgson 1974, 293)[3]

This framework contextualizes the evolution of the Persianate within the advance of the Islamic civilization within the region beyond any ethnic boundaries. The religious context is vital, specifically in IR terms, to understand the region as a contrast to the region's usual secular studies and binaries and the international order. At the same time, the Islamic context does not bind the utterances and circulations within Islam. As discussed later in the chapter, the transregional nature of Persian even influenced practices and rituals of Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism. In a repudiation of Hodgson, Shahab Ahmed finds that the Persianate is an ethnocentric construct. Thus, he labels it the Balkans-to-Bengal-complex (Ahmed 2016, 524–27). However, while the expansion of the Persian during certain stages hinged on the capital of physical force of the Arab-Islamic conquest, its permeance and circulation went beyond any central political authority or institution.[4] It gained currency as a language that "could reconcile the universality of what was shared transregionally with particular forms of local knowledge" (Kia 2020, 15).

Hodgson's definition acknowledges the existence and development of local languages (Green 2019, 3). The development is co-constitutive: Persian influencing vernacular languages. The interlingual relations tacit in his framework connotes imitation and exchange. The exchange here derives from the symbolic and cultural value ascribed to Persian, enabling a hegemonic status that influences culture, power, administration, politics, trade, and literature. These values influenced a cultural formation inspired by Persian that dominated a vast region of the Islamic east and Anatolia, while the polities in Iran, Central Asia, Anatolia, and the Indian subcontinent maintained their autonomy.

The cultural order and traditions exist in tangent with politics and statecraft, science and knowledge production, and trade and economics

(Amanat and Ashraf 2019, 6, 29–33). These are manifested in how the order was shaped, evolved, and operated. The amalgamation of political writings, canonical texts, statecraft literature, poems, novels, dictionaries, rituals, material culture, and trade shaped local languages, politics, polities, and then the broader order. So far, this section has mostly outlined the conceptual, cultural, and linguistic aspect of the Persianate. But where is the Persianate?

The answer changes based on our periodization. The temporal sequencing influences the units we are studying and their spatial logics. In broad terms, over the *longue durée*, we have four geographical spheres and an outer edge. First, the late antiquity period, circa 406 CE to 750 CE, corresponds to the late Sasanian era to the early Islamic conquest: it spans from West Asia to Central Asia. It includes Samarkand, Balkh, Mesopotamia, parts of today's India and Afghanistan, the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, and Egypt. Second, the later stage from 750 CE to 1507 witnessed the rise and expansion of the Turco-Persian empires of the eastern Islamic world. It expanded the Persianate from Turkistan to the Levant, Egypt, the Maghreb, and the edges of China. Third, we have the early modern period, between the middle of the fifteenth century and the early seventeenth century, when the Persianate encompassed the Safavids, the Ottomans, and the Mughals, which widened the zone from the Balkans to Bengal, and into central China (Spooner and Hanaway 2012, 20–21). Throughout these periods and across various polities, a "clear perception of belonging to a single cultural space" emerged (Szuppe 2011, 36).

Finally, we can map the contraction, or fading, of the Persianate in the nineteenth century in the aftermath of British colonialism. While the afterlives of the Persianate continue across the above-mentioned spaces, today it is most prominent in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Iraq, (parts of) India, and the diaspora across the world.[5] Alongside the interconnected space of the Persianate, we have spaces that witness a limited but influential presence of Persianate in cities like London and Moscow, specifically at the height of the imperial and colonial age.

The historical course of the Persian language within the Persianate could be periodized into four phases: rise until c. 1200, expansion until the fifteenth century alongside the Turkic ascendance, fluctuations until the nineteenth century, which then led to the legacy era until today. It is a history of international order that International Relations rarely acknowledges as it bounds the history *after* the rise of the West or benchmark dates such as the long nineteenth century.[6] There is a longer, historical, entangled, and layered story of the international order. Focusing on translations and interlingual relations would help in uncovering it. Grasping how Persian became the transregional contact language enables us to understand the emergence of specific sociopolitical and cultural arrangements that ordered relations. The key here is that Persian was the transregional contact language that accommodated a diversity of dialects and local languages: It was a polyglot zone with an overarching language that served as a cultural capital and enabled a specific symbolic capital. The horizontal frontier, expansion of the language and translations, denotes the international order and the vertical frontier exhibits social relations. In a way, Persian was regarded as a symbolic and cultural capital.

The History of Persian: Commonality, Translation, and Belonging

With the collapse of the Sasanian Empire (224 AD–651 AD, with the collapse starting in AD 632), Arabic started to grow in the bureaucratic and literary genres spanning from west of Iran to the edges of the Tang Empire (Lazard 1975; Perry 2009).[7] Different versions of Persian, with some incorporating Umayyad and Arabic styles and vocabulary, were still in use by different classes. The remnant of the Sasanian bureaucracy heralded the use of their skills and literary practices that led to advancing Persian in the Arabic script and the imperial dispensation. While it coined a "New Persian," as opposed to the Middle Persian or Old Persian going back to the Achaemenian periods (330 BC) (Spooner and Hanaway 2012, 21), the region had a fragmented linguistic map composed of multiple spoken and written dialects. Reflecting the nature and diversity of the order, spoken Persian manifested itself in other scripts beyond Islamic society. There is evidence of the use of Persian in Hebrew scripts by a Jewish merchant found near what is today's western China (Henning 1957; Green 2019). Despite this evidence, the prominence of spoken Persian outweighed the written form. In a gradual process that mostly relied on the local elites' identity, class, and symbolic contributions, New Persian was empowered through a symbiosis with other languages, mostly Arabic's imperial literary and political culture. New Persian gradually moved in as the administrative and political role while embedding Arabo-Islamic vocabulary (see also Sims-Williams 2011). The literary texts started to circulate in regions such as Transoxiana, which is not a traditional center for Persian but Soghdian, and that is where written Persian started to grow in Arabic scripts. The interesting caveat here is how, despite the orthographic pluralism alongside different communities (Hebrew, Manichaean, Zoroastrian, Pahlavi), it was the Arabic script of Persian that would turn into the lingua franca. This showcases how the physical force capital of the Arab army conquering the land allowed a cultural and symbolic exchange between their script and New Persian.

The circulation of these genres and constant poetic, bureaucratic, and religious translations between Persian and other languages made Persian the era's dominant chancery and literary language. By the tenth century, it manifested in material and symbolic capital clusters. The regional manuals of statecraft were in Persian. The caveat here is how all of them were written languages and not just spoken. There is a shift coupled with the geographic expansion of the language.

According to Green (2019, 18), "This Islamo-Persian never fully occluded other users of Persian, who survived (as with Judeo-Persian) or emerged (as with Hindu-Persian) through the social and political interactions of subsequent centuries." Here, we have a distinction between geography and social space. As noted in the introduction and in the preceding section, the geographical reach of Persianate is significant but the sociability of it distinguishes itself. The fact of Persian's expansion across administrative and religious circles does not necessarily mean the same social expansion (temporally and its reach). Persian became the lingua franca in a region where Sanskrit, Armenian, Georgian, and Byzantine Greek were prevalent or circulated owing to their political or religious pasts.[8] The lingual diversity within this space, alongside the interlingual and intralingual configuration, shows that the Persianate was a homologous sphere.

The strength of the vertical relation has shaped the horizontal expansion of Persian as the lingua franca. The prevalent multilingualism and translation from Persian depict a specific order of relationships between various polities that were bound through understanding the political-administrative and cultural-literary spheres. That history of translation is also manifested in spaces such as courts, chanceries, schools, and shrines. Translating from Persian became a key capital and signifier. Despite the massive reordering through the Mongols' conquests, the lingua franca persisted in places such as Delhi in the thirteenth century. Mongols, who destroyed the institutional spaces and materials of the Persian genre, became the main vehicle of carrying Persian farther to the east than it ever had been (Previato 2016; Spooner and Hanaway 2012; Morgan 2012). David Morgan notes as one of the reasons the way "commercial networks operated across the length and breadth of the Mongol Empire" (2012, 162). Some of the diplomatic and political practices of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties were conducted in Persian too (Green 2019, 24). We have an example of how maritime practices, fueled by commercial networks and trade, created an interaction between Mandarin, Persian, and then, later on, English. Based on Fredrick Hirth's writing

(1880), the Mandarin word *dàfēng* (great wind) is the Persian *tufan*.[9] Today, in English, *typhoon* refers to tropical cyclones (Green 2019, 24). Such configurations highlight the commercial and economic space of the Persianate and an exchange between the economic and cultural capital of the language.

Toward the west, translation practices continued under the Saljuqs of Rum and then the early Ottomans until the fourteenth century, creating translation circles between Greek and Persian cultures. Translation "became the processual vector for the order" (Green 2019). For example, there is evidence of Malay translations of Persian court chronicles as early as 1371. Alongside the Indian Ocean and Eurasian reach of the Persian, the European merchants' embrace of the language and translation from it to European languages created new connections. It led to a networked geography, courts, chanceries, schools, seminaries, and trade houses that acted as crucial enablers of Persian expansion and operation of the order through mediating space, differences, times, and events by translation. Although this chapter refers to Persian as a lingua franca, the history that emerges reminds us of one of the core aims of this edited volume: recognizing the multilingual spaces from and between which translations occur that act far beyond enabling the "everyday" but with durable sociopolitical ramifications for the order.

The translations created new communities alongside the Silk Roads, merging Persian literary culture with the Chinese one. These communities revolved around a translated notion of Persian Sufism, with each translation of four key texts having to adapt the vocabulary and concepts to the dominant Chinese genre and semantics of the imperial circles (Lipman 1997; Green 2019). The Ottomans, until the reign of Suleyman, relied on the same translation practices with an emphasis on conducting politics in Persian. Even after replacing the chancery Persian with Turkish, diplomatic correspondence was issued in Persian (Green 2019, 28). Chronicles, alongside manuals of statecraft (their translations and the original), created a shared geo-cultural space within the Persianate that carried shared meanings and horizons (see Kia 2020; and cf. Pollock 2003). It remained the chief administrative language in the Safavid Empire and the preeminent language of state power across a vast region. It faced further expansion in Mughal India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1582, Persian became the official language of the Mughal court (Alam 1998; also see Dudney 2015). It enabled not just horizontal relations but vertical circulation at local levels. Furthermore, it led to a rising demand for skills in Persian. The imperial civil service turned into a vector to maintain order.

However, the key here is that at no time was the use of written Persian dominated by a single administration or an institution, such as the papacy

(Spooner and Hanaway 2012, 36). Neither was it controlled by any preeminent group of users either within or outside the secretarial profession (Kinra 2015). There was no Roman Curia, Chinese imperial examination system, or academy. The sociopolitical configuration within the Persianate and the Islamic world did not just hinge on power centers or political institutions. We witness a myriad of factors from legacies of the past, administrative practices, manuals of statecraft, the prestige and status of individuals, and an overarching legal framework to influence sociopolitical life.

There is one factor (tradition) that merits closer scrutiny. That is *adab*. Social agents recognize and appreciate specific characteristics, traits, or practices deemed valuable in every society. Conceptually, we know it as a symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1994, 8). Within the Persianate, that symbolic capital is known as *adab*. The literal translations to English would be literature, manners, etiquette, politeness, and civility. The latter is the more accurate one. *Adab* is about the substance and form of a language that gains prominence within interlingual relations. Mana Kia's definition of this corpus of a behavioral model (Spooner and Hanaway 2012, 24) is "the proper form of things and of being in the world" (2015; 2020, 5). Persian, on its own or through interlingual or intralingual encounters, enabled the circulation of *adab* and delineated the proper form or content ascribed to it as an additional value recognized across the social sphere. The local contexts and specific linguistics (intra- or interlingual) mattered in this diverse space, but *adab* legitimized shared meanings and practices emanating from Persian. It created a sense of belonging facilitated through linguistic encounters, trade exchanges, and social contacts (Szuppe 2011; Spooner and Hanaway 2012; Kia 2020). It created a set of norms across a vast geography. In addition to its literary and cultural consequences, civility had sociopolitical implications of maintaining order, regulating hierarchy, and binding the social sphere. Gaining and adhering to that symbolic capital, despite differing educational and literacy levels (and class), was possible through the popularization and translation of Persian texts (e.g., poems, stories) that cultivated the framework of *adab*. In addition to creating a linguistically commensurate vocabulary that circulated throughout the sphere, it enabled shared meaning-making practices and codes: the proper form had its specific standards but recognized differences mediated through the Persian language or encounters.

The Republic of Venice and the Portuguese Empire started Persian translations and diplomatic paperwork with increasing European political and economic engagements. Subsequently, France and England followed suit, while Russia established similar practices, mainly with khanates. When it came to the Europeans, the role intermediaries such as Armenians played became more prominent, which was also expanded by the dynasty in Burma. The emerging change of order occurred when the newly trained with new lexicographical works replaced the old Kabir and *munshis* (interpreters). The latter became part of the intellectual circles that started criticizing the culture and the "wrongness" that new translators could bring to the order. The contingency at play here was the rise of conditions and regionally variable patterns for alternative languages. Yet the British and Dutch East India Companies' investment in Persian and choosing it as the official language of law and bureaucracy gave credence to the existing arrangements until the Mughal and Safavid dynasties collapsed. We witnessed a shift with the replacement of Persian with Urdu as the East India Company's language. The change is evident in a statement by Imran Khan, Pakistan's prime minister, during his 2019 trip to Iran: "If it were not for the British, we would have all been speaking Farsi today. We would not have needed a translator" (Bashgahe Khabarnegarane Javan 2019).

The Fading: Legacy and Afterlives

The discussion of how Persian declined as a lingua franca and the transformation of the international order could be arbitrarily ascribed to one specific date or moment. The influence of the East Indian Company and British colonialism is discussed as the trigger for the shift (Rahman 1999), but the ensuing process was gradual and marked with multiplicity. No "moment of change" exists, but multiple occurrences (not necessarily changes) manifest themselves. They enable us to consider the interactions between the "event" of the shift in language, the national and relational sociopolitical conjunctures on which it impinges, and the underlying international dynamics.

I am discussing the legacy with that in mind and cognizant that there is another temporal structure in play. As Jason Wittenberg argues, in considering legacy arguments, there is "an implicit division between a past period (when the antecedent cause or correlate are identified) and a later period (when the outcome occurs)" (Wittenberg 2015, 369). In one sense, the legacy of the Persianate should be discussed as "an aftereffect of an antecedent cause that no longer operates" (Wittenberg 2015, 370). That is the macro-level legacy of the shift in the international order. The other type of legacy, which "persisted from the past . . . has to exist in at least two historical periods, at minimum a 'past' and a 'present'" (Wittenberg 2015, 375). I label that micro-level legacy of the decline of Persian as a lingua franca that manifests itself in the mnemonic politics of specific politics. I will discuss that with a focus on Iran.

In terms of the macro level, the embeddedness of Persian within the Persianate order enabled the language and interlingual configurations to survive the political and economic changes throughout the millennia. Any other form of capital could not outweigh the cultural and symbolic value of Persian, be it force or trade. Even beyond the (late) Persianate, proficiency in Persian was seen as vital for success in commerce and trade circles (White, 1780). There were ups and downs in the prominence of Persian, but the hold on the order was persistent. The vernacularization across the region weakened the capital. For example, the spread of Ottoman Turkish, a Persianized form of Turkish, weakened the Persian language. Yet that interlingual configuration and the exchanges between the two languages, leading to the Persianized form of Turkish, still highlighted the reach and influence of the lingua franca (and its legacy).

During the Persianate millennium, the polities faced the capital of physical force of the British, Russian, and Chinese Empires. As discussed, the most notable was the British and their colonial rule. While the previous political and economic changes failed to change linguistic practices, administration, and knowledge production, the imperial and colonial ones succeeded. The new international order heralded its own politics, economy, trade, and knowledge, with its language valued and regarded as key to sociability. Persian still holds currency within elites and on specific topics, but the prevalence and prominence are limited to particular issues.

At the same time, a weakened version of sociopolitical and cultural ties and networks formed during the Persianate millennium exists across the modern states. It manifests itself in the multilateral celebration of a typical Nowruz celebration across a vast space from the Balkans to Bengal or the establishment of an Economic Cooperation Organization within the same sphere with a membership of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

On a micro level, in Iran, the maintenance and circulation of Persian became a state mandate from the early onset of the decline of the Persianate order. An institutional example is the establishment of the Academy of the Persian Language. It started its tasks by translating legal, scientific, military, and cultural concepts from English and French into Persian while establishing training centers, Asia studies institutes, and cultural associations. It served a twofold task. One was targeted toward the domestic society to maintain the domestic linguistic order and identity. The international one was suited to the new global order: regaining status as a civilized nation within international society. In the end, Persian was the language of culture and civilization, and the state was banking on it to advance its foreign policy agenda and regain its status. Since 1979, maintaining and expanding the Persian language (in the face of English as the hegemonic language) has been seen as a civilizational strife that mirrors the geopolitical struggle. It is not an act of being part of the existent order but devising an alternative order that reminisces the Persianate international order.

Implications for International Relations

So, why should International Relations care about the Persianate and Persian? Because there are empirical, theoretical, and methodological implications for the discipline. This chapter was deliberately neither comprehensive nor definitive but exploratory in capturing differing histories, chronologies, and focuses rather than mere events. Focusing on one moment of change or continuity, or one case of how Persian shaped a specific sociopolitical action or life (regionally or in a particular society), would have been easier. Still, it would have neglected that we are talking about a world spanning over a millennium that encompasses a vast space with a significant number of populations. As the historical assessment of this chapter showed, "Persian had been the informal equivalent of an official language for a larger part of the world and a larger contiguous population than any other language in world history" (Spooner 2019, 302).

A change in our focus on studying how language constitutes international order, and precisely the historical case of the Persianate, enables us to grasp specific social lives and ways of organizing societies. The history of Persian, though worthy as a history of language and its linguistic implications, is a history of those residing within the Persianate and their histories; we have distinct juridical languages and legal systems, extensive trade networks and material cultures, a large network of intermediaries and actors, a notable and significant cultural exchange, all outside of the purview of a central administration or an empire or a force. There is an empirical benefit for International Relations to study the Persianate: we need more cases both to know the story and to be able to theorize further (Neumann 2014). The trick is in how and what to theorize. As reviewed earlier and alluded to by the introduction to this volume, the impact of interlingual relations and configurations on IR is pertinent. In the case of Persia, we have interpolity politics, social stratification and subordination, formation of networks, diplomacy, and trade. Just as the Persianate was blind to the emerging order, IR's lack of attention to the Persianate makes it blind to a history that is not preoccupied with the Anglosphere. The Persianate and the history of its interlingual relations revolving around Persian can offer a new non-Eurocentric/non-Anglosphere history (and order) of transboundary encounters, entanglements, flows, and connections that IR needs as it opens to further transnational and global histories.

Theoretically, IR embraces culture, language, and diversity as part of its agenda in studying international order. Yet these studies are still focused on how various iterations of international order make sense vis-à-vis the current order or match the same conceptual apparatus. The case of the Persianate shows a distinct way of ordering. Yet the conceptual knowledge (and timelines) is absent in our theorization. Despite the variation, most standard conceptions fail to grasp particularities and changes across time, spaces, and languages. How can we talk and study international order without capturing the particularities of the concept across different geographies and histories? Relying on a universal concept and the Eurocentric and Anglophile analyses of the international order undermines the agency of non-Western states and societies, obscures history, and limits the scope of our knowledge production by focusing on just a few cases. Acknowledging the existence of the Persianate, with the vital influence of its interlingual configurations across politics, administration, and literacy, is the first step in devising a research agenda on how different languages (and interlingual configurations) understand and analyze international order.

Conclusion

This chapter started by pointing to the necessity of studying the Persianate within International Relations in its historical narrative and theoretical understanding. Exploring this sphere across various historical epochs and scrutinizing the interlingual relations unveils how the order operated. The historical section of this chapter showed how the social nature of Persian made it a prominent cultural capital alongside *adab* as a symbolic capital, enabling it to become a diverse lingua franca across a vast region (with influences beyond that) that even set the terms of imperial and colonial history within the Persianate. One way to build on this history is through further studies of how, for example, British colonialism leaned (institutionally or otherwise) on Persian. The third section assessed the legacy of a lingua franca now confined to national borders, while showcasing the language's lasting status despite the decline of the Persianate political order. The fourth section reviewed the implications of interlingual relations, the Persianate, and Persian for IR as a way to study and construct new histories that could move the framing of the discipline: Persianate, as a space, subject, and analytical category, could be one starting point.

Notes

1. This chapter is indebted to Mauro Caraccioli and Einar Wigen, the editors of this volume, and benefited from Ingrid Eskild's comments. I am grateful for the comments by Adrian Rogstad, Sarah Bertrand, Joseph Leigh, Kevin Blanchford, Alvina Hoffmann, and Kerry Goettlich during the Reading Group Workshop on April 21, 2021. A summary of this chapter was presented at an ISA 2021 roundtable on "Interlingual Relations: Encounters at the Edge of Linguistic Worlds." This project is part of the the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 101032917.

2. Persian was the transregional contact language that did not necessarily replace other languages, but translating from and to Persian was vital to conduct sociopolitical practices throughout a significant duration of history: scribal practices, material implements, agential practices tasked with "doing" (intermediaries, and so forth). See Spooner and Hanaway 2012.

3. As Amant (2019) masterfully outlines, there was an awareness of the *Persianate* within Persian texts.

4. Throughout the chapter, I borrow on Pierre Bourdieu's conceptualization of capital (Bourdieu 1994), which helps highlight the value of Persian across the Persianate.

5. For an overview of how the rise of nationalism and the nation-state led to the fracturing of the Persianate, see Jabbari 2023.

6. "The rise of the West" seems to be the "logical starting point." For examples, see Zarakol 2011; Buzan and Lawson 2015; also see Blachford 2021.

7. For an expanded history, which I benefited from, see Alam 1998; Green 2019; Spooner and Hanaway 2012; Kia 2015 and 2019; Pollock 2003.

8. On the legacy, see the following section.

9. Hirth also notes the similarity between Arabic, Malay, and Persian.

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CHAPTER 5

Translation Power

The Evolution of the International System with Insights from the 1914 Simla Convention

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Within IR, most of our conventional wisdom about the historical evolution of the international system comes from accounts of the "expansion of international society" as told by English school scholars.[1] According to Richard Little, "The expansion of the international society as articulated by the English School is, arguably, the only effective and generally accepted grand narrative that prevails in International Relations" (2016, 24). Since the publication of Hedley Bull and Adam Watson's canonical *The Expansion of International Society* in 1984, this has largely been a Eurocentric story of Europe's "encounters" with non-European polities and non-European polities' "entry" into the European society of states. In recent years, a growing body of revisionist scholarship has endeavored to problematize and decenter the so-called expansion story to better account for the experiences and perspectives of non-European polities. Nevertheless, important questions remain about the exact processes by which this systemic change occurred. One such question, which this chapter explores, is how did the fact that different actors spoke (and continue to speak) mutually unintelligible languages give shape to the way that individual non-European polities experienced the evolution of the international system in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries? In other words, how did the challenges of interlingual communication shape the evolution of the international system?

To answer these questions, I conduct a case study of contestation over Tibet's international status at the turn of the twentieth century. The history of modern Tibet is often framed as a failure of translation, that is to say, the failure to translate Tibet's historical status into independent sovereign statehood. I consider this question from the perspective of linguistic-conceptual translation and analyze the proceedings of the 1913–14 Simla Conference between China, Tibet, and Britain in light of the conference participants' respective capacities for shaping the commensurability of concepts across languages, what I term translation power. I find that translation was not merely a conduit through which more conventional elements of international politics were made possible but acted to constitute both China and Tibet as actors in the modern international system.

The Evolution of the International System across Linguistic Boundaries

According to classical English school narratives from which conventional IR understandings of the evolution of the international system derive, prior to the mid-nineteenth century the world was never organized into a single, global international system. International order existed on a regional basis such as that of the Sinocentric tribute system in East Asia, the caliphates and sultanates of the Middle East and North Africa, the mandala system in Southeast Asia, the Concert of Europe, and so on—all of which had very little interaction with one another. The Industrial Revolution in Europe changed all of this as technological innovation and the search for new markets fueled European imperial expansion into other areas of the world. As Europeans spread across the rest of the world, the classical account goes, they brought with them a fixed set of European norms and so-called Westphalian institutions that they then imposed on non-European states, with the standard of "civilization" being the most emblematic example. Whether by force or by choice, non-European states came to adopt European standards and thereupon "entered" the European international order, which is referred to as international society. Thus, the global international state system today is essentially "European international society simply up-scaled, its rules and practices persisting over time while the size of the membership increased" (Dunne and Reus-Smit 2017, 6).

In recent years, however, conventional thinking on the evolution of the international system has been subject to radical revision. Leveraging the pathbreaking insights of historians like Anghie (2005), Bayly (2004), and

Benton (2002), as well as Keene (2002) and Hobson (2004), a new generation of scholars has shown that when early modern European polities encountered non-European polities, Europeans did not have a fixed set of fully cooked norms and institutions that they (coercively) imposed on non-Europeans. The international system that emerged from these encounters is far more hybrid than it is European.

A new generation of English school scholarship has advanced beyond earlier-held notions that merely by being exposed to the practices of European polities, non-European polities came to adopt European methods. Notably, Suzuki (2009) and Zarakol (2010) deal explicitly with how non-European polities like Japan, China, and Turkey handled their integration into the modern international system. They have uncovered the darker aspects of "international society" including the constitutive role played by imperialism and the extent to which aspiring members are stigmatized by their non-European identity and relegated to second-class membership. These are critically important advances. Nevertheless, existing revisionist accounts still fail to recognize that even if Europeans had possessed a fixed set of norms and institutions, they could not have been uniformly imposed upon or embraced by non-Europeans due to the fact that concepts, ideas, and words function differently across time, space, and linguistic boundaries. Recognition of this fact is important as it provides a more complete account of the processes of systemic change that include not only the actions of Europeans but also the agency of non-Europeans in shaping outcomes. Further investigation is needed both of European imperialists' capacity to determine how non-European polities "measured up" to European international law and non-European polities' means of arriving at their own particular interpretations of European international law—both of which occurred across linguistic boundaries.[2]

Translation Power and Translingual Practice

To address this gap, I turn to Lydia Liu's concept of translingual practice to develop a novel concept of translation power. According to Liu, translingual practice entails establishing "hypothetical equivalence or makeshift translatability between the political discourses of two very different languages and intellectual traditions" (2004, 131). Translingual practice is less about "translation" than about the "discursive practices that ensue from initial interlingual contacts between languages," which include "the processes of adaptation, translation, introduction, and domestication of words, categories, discourses, and modes of representation from one language to another." These processes are "where the irreducible difference between [two languages] are fought out, authorities invoked or challenged, ambiguities dissolved or created, and so forth, until new words and meanings emerge" (Liu 1995, 26). Attention to translingual practice encourages us to think about, for example, why and how the Western concept of "civilization" came to be expressed in Ottoman and later Turkish with the linguistic code *medeniyet* (Wigen 2015, 442) or "sovereignty" in the Chinese word *zhuquan* (Liu 2004, 109; Svarverud 2007, 132) as well as the implications of these particular pairings.

Questions of interlingual commensurability are most consequential in the early stages of contact between two discourses as over time hypothetical equivalences and the meanings of words across languages become increasingly fixed. During these early stages, translingual practice is not merely a conduit to facilitate more conventional elements of international politics, but constitutive of these conventional elements. Trade, diplomacy, alliance building, norms diffusion, collaboration, and just about everything that constitutes "international relations" has to go through the process of being conceived of in one language and communicated in another. Articulated in this way, it is obvious that translation is indeed the unacknowledged core of global politics.

Since translingual practice is involved in "the discursive production of the subjects, the fixing of meanings and the terms of action of world politics" (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 55), it may also be thought of as a site of productive power, *translation power*. Because translations do not naturally exist in the world but are created by human beings, they are capable of not only being shaped by politics but also shaping politics. As actors participate in translingual practices, they possess different capacities for shaping the commensurability of concepts across languages and what constitutes a "correct" translation. In conjunction with their military capabilities, economic interests, and other variables, an actor's relative translation power affects their ability to shape outcomes spatially and temporally. Thus, the role of translation in global politics, as discussed in the introduction to this volume, is not merely a matter of "meaning-making," but perhaps more importantly, a matter of "world-making" (Onuf 2012; Jordheim and Wigen 2018). As a result, explaining how and why particular "translations" came to be can tell us a great deal about the construction of the global, international state system from the perspective of individual polities.

It is well understood that because no two languages are the same, the meaning of words and concepts changes when they are translated. Less understood is the extent to which meanings can change in ways that are politically consequential, and not just as an aftereffect, but as part of deliberate strategy. This translation power is often exercised in the "silent" work of intermediaries who may or may not be formal representatives of a state or polity but nevertheless come to shape interlingual meanings.

Translation power can be exercised through the bureaucratic apparatuses responsible for translation, but it is located in the individual multilingual bureaucrats, politicians, diplomats and members of the population writ large who are actually responsible for interlingual interactions. Therefore, although translation power affects state politics, it is not strictly a function of state power. Rather, translation power is embodied in individuals, and these individuals themselves are not monopolized by "powerful" states. The extent to which such individuals are employed directly by the state, or the state has to outsource such work to intermediaries who may have no particular allegiance to it, is highly consequential to a state's ability to successfully wield translation power. Moreover, as this chapter explores, translation power can actually be constitutive of state actors themselves.

Finally, translation power is not necessarily correlated with conventional conceptualizations of power. While it is true that having to legitimate one's position in a language other than "one's own" tacks closely with Antonio Gramsci's definition of hegemony (Gramsci 1971; Wigen 2018, 64), and that this reality is invisible for those who enjoy the privileges of hegemony, linguistic hegemony does not imply translation power. Although nearly all European elites can read what the current US president says in US media outlets, the president cannot understand what is being written about him or her in most European media outlets without first having them translated. There is thus an entire realm of political posturing and strategy in which the US is at a notable disadvantage even as its linguistic hegemony compels all of Europe to speak its language in dealing with it.

In the following section, I explore how the relative capacities for shaping and manipulating the commensurability of concepts across languages of China, Tibet, and Britain's representatives at the Simla Conference led to Tibet's incorporation into the modern Chinese state. We see that although China could not match Britain in terms of guns, soldiers, and economic clout, and Tibet could not match either, there are nevertheless scenarios where they managed to go toe-to-toe in terms of translation power. Note that here I use the terms China, Tibet, and Britain as necessary shorthands even as I explicitly do not think of states (and in this case polities) having agency of this kind. While I try my best to spotlight the individual people involved in constituting these state actors in their modern forms, there is a degree of unavoidable reification.

Tibet's Contested International Status

Tibet is a useful case for examining translation power in the context of the evolution of the international system for three key reasons. First, the case of Tibet is illustrative of the challenges of translingual practice and establishing commensurability across discourses. Tibet's historical relationship with China's imperial predecessor, the Qing Empire (1644–1911), is frequently described as that of a "priest" and "patron," wherein, by crude rendition, the Qing offered Tibet patronage and protection in exchange for the spiritual guidance of Tibetan Buddhism. It does not imply either the subordination or full independence of both parties (Sperling 2004). Critically, it does not have a straightforward, preexisting equivalent in European international law.

Both the notions of an independent Tibet and Tibet as a constituent unit of the Chinese state were a conceptual stretch from the position Tibet occupied vis-à-vis China within Asia's historical, called Sinocentric world order. It is often thought that Tibet's historical status is somehow inherently untranslatable into the hegemonic language of modern international relations. Yet this line of thinking implies not only that Tibet as a political entity was all but predestined to be a national victim of mistranslation but also that there is such a thing as a "correct" way to link concepts across different languages. To be clear, I do not mean to suggest that "anything goes" in the realm of interlingual relations, but rather that different actors will have different ideas about what constitutes a "proper" translation based on their unique position in a given situation, structural limitations, and power dynamics, as well as random happenstance. As I will discuss in greater detail below, these factors, not some omniscient arbiter of translation "correctness," are what determine the translations that actually exist.

Second, Sino-Tibetan relations demonstrate the extent to which questions about translation are not abstract, theoretical puzzles of mere "academic" interest. Even today, as Tibet is an internationally recognized part of the People's Republic of China (PRC), persistent Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule is regarded as one of the most dangerous threats to the state's core interests. Likewise, Tibet's status is one of the most contentious issues in China's relations with the rest of the world. At the heart of both these internal and external tensions is the question of how Tibet's pre-twentieth-century international standing "ought" to have been translated into the terms of modern, European international law.

Third, Tibet's modern international status contradicts the expectations of straightforward power dynamics. Attention is often given to the asymmetry of power between China and Tibet, particularly in light of the Chinese communists' so-called peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1950. The military capabilities of the People's Liberation Army to render Tibet an integral part of China in the 1950s, however, would have come to much less effect had Tibet's status been settled in the intervening years between the end of the Qing and founding of the PRC.

The real puzzle of Tibet's modern international status is why it was not settled at any point prior to the founding of the PRC. During this period—often referred to as the "Century of Humiliation"—China was incredibly weak. Following the Opium Wars, China was a semicolony of several foreign powers including Britain. Britain endeavored for over a century to carve out a post-Sinosphere status for Tibet that would serve its interests. While China was divided by decades of civil conflict—from the Taiping Rebellion (1850–64) to the Chinese Civil War (1927–36, 1946–49)—the British Empire was at the height of its global dominance. Moreover, Britain was a powerful constituent of the prevailing European international legal order. Yet Britain's efforts vis-à-vis Tibet ultimately failed after it was outmaneuvered by China's efforts through shrewd appropriations of European international law and diplomatic expertise.

Origins of Contestation over Tibet's Status

Britain, operating out of India, developed an interest in Tibet in the late nineteenth century in the context of its competition with Russia for territorial and political control over Central Asia, the so-called Great Game. Britain was initially driven by a desire to balance against Russian gains elsewhere in Central Asia, to stymie potential Russian influence in Tibet, to manage security in the frontier region between British India and Tibet, and to secure privileged access to natural resources and markets in Tibet.

Britain was categorically opposed to Tibet's subordination to Chinese sovereignty, but it also did not want Tibet to become an independent state in its own right—this is an important distinction. By hook or by crook, Britain was committed to inhibiting Tibet's inclusion in the modern Chinese state and ensuring that Tibet's modern status would instead be something like a neutralized state or buffer state that offered some nominal deference to Chinese authority, conferred through the principle of "suzerainty." To that end, Britain not only invaded Tibet in 1903–4 and meddled consistently in Sino-Tibetan relations until its formal departure from the Indian subcontinent in 1947, but retained its commitment to "suzerainty" and opposition to Chinese sovereignty until 2008.[3] And yet, in these efforts, Britain ultimately failed.

To understand why, we must consider Britain's, China's, and Tibet's varied translation power capacities and engagements with European international law during this period. In 1872, following the devastating Opium Wars, worried that it was being destroyed by European imperialists because of its lack of understanding of European ideas, China began sending students abroad to study Western technology, culture, and law, first in scores, then hundreds, and later thousands. Numerous European international law textbooks were also translated into Chinese, most notably Henry Wheaton's *Elements of International Law*, 萬國公法, *Wanguo Gongfa*, in 1864.

The significance of this translation of Wheaton's *Elements* to the history of Asia cannot be overstated. The *Wanguogongfa* was not only the first translation of Western international law in China, but in all of Asia. It circulated widely throughout the region and its linguistic codes for expressing Western international legal concepts were imported by Japan, Korea, Mongolia, and Vietnam (Han 2010; Okamoto 2014; Tachibana 2014). Europeans found this translation to be incredibly threatening. Upon learning about the publication of *Wanguo Gongfa*, the French chargé d'affaires in Beijing remarked, "Who is this man who is going to give the Chinese an insight into our European international law? Kill him—choke him off; he'll make us endless trouble" (Martin 1896, 235). This translation was so important because it democratized knowledge about the standards that Europeans were using to justify repressive treatment of non-European actors. When Europeans tried to force standards of behavior on non-European actors, non-Europeans no longer had to take at face value the notion that this is simply "how things are done," but they could potentially turn the very same rules that Europeans used to coerce them into potential sources of, if not emancipation, some level of self-protection. Europeans thus feared that widespread knowledge of international law could become a weapon of the weak.

Having begun their engagement with European international law in the mid-1860s, when the first crisis over Tibet's modern international legal status emerged with Britain's 1903–4 invasion of Tibet, China already had multiple cohorts of diplomats, political leaders, and international legal scholars who keenly understood the transformation of international order that rendered the Sinocentric order and Qing institutions incompatible with the demands of Western imperialism. Furthermore, it had at its disposal a set of Chinese language neologisms for expressing important European international legal concepts such as "sovereignty," "suzerainty" and "rights" (Liu 2004; Svarverud 2007; Cheney 2017).

By contrast, Tibet did not send its first students to study abroad until 1913, and then sent only four (Kobayashi 2016). Likewise, there is little evidence of Tibetan engagement with international law during this period. There is no record of *Elements of International Law* being translated into Tibetan as it was in Chinese, Japanese, and even Mongolian. During this crucial period of transition, there did not exist fixed Tibetan language linguistic codes to articulate concepts like autonomy, independence, and sovereignty (Kobayashi 2014b, 2016).

The Simla Convention

The implications of China's and Tibet's divergent engagements with European international law are laid bare at the 1914 Simla Conference, a tripartite conference between China, Tibet, and Britain. The express purpose of the Simla Convention was to define Tibet's status following the collapse of the Qing Empire. After the new president of China, Yuan Shikai, proclaimed on March 23, 1912 that Tibet was a part of the territory of the Republic of China on par with the provinces of China proper, Britain declared that it would withhold formal diplomatic recognition to the new Chinese Republic until it agreed to participate in talks explicitly aimed at producing a written agreement that would repudiate Chinese sovereignty.[4] Although China was still too weak to resist Britain's demand for a conference, it nevertheless exercised agency in its response—as did Tibet.

The Simla Conference was originally conceived of as a bilateral conference, but it ended up being tripartite. Following two periods in exile in Mongolia (1904–9) and India (1910–13), the Thirteenth Dalai Lama began pursuing policies that would buttress Tibet's independence from the fledgling Republic of China and make it impossible for Britain and China to ignore Tibet's right to have a voice in determining its own status.

As the Dalai Lama was planning to return to Lhasa in late 1912, he sent a letter to Russian tsar Nicholas II requesting that Russia aid Tibet in its pursuit of independence from the new Chinese Republic. On January 11, 1913, Tibet and Mongolia signed a treaty mutually recognizing one another's independence. After the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa, he declared Tibet's independence to a domestic audience on February 13, 1913. In early April 1913, Tibet sent a small delegation of children to be educated in Britain—and with them a letter for King George IV similar to that sent to the Russian tsar (Kobayashi 2016, 297–98). Following these events, Britain and China agreed to allow Tibet to send a representative to Simla, thereby making the conference tripartite.[5] There can be little doubt that while in exile, the Dalai Lama's close contact with foreign experts—including William Rockhill, US ambassador to China; Sir Charles Bell, British political officer for Bhutan, Sikkim, and Tibet; and Agvan Dorzhiev, a Mongolian Russian subject who became the Dalai Lama's top political advisor— influenced this new tack (Rockhill 1910; Bell 1927; Samten and Tsyrempilov 2012).

Comparing Chinese and Tibetan Translation Power

Tibet's lead negotiator at Simla was its prime minister, Lonchen Shatra. Of Shatra, Britain's lead negotiator, Henry McMahon, noted that "despite his want of the diplomatic training in Western countries which his Chinese colleague has enjoyed, proved quite his match in debate and political acumen."[6] Yet Shatra's debating skills, raw acumen, and even an overwhelming quantity of evidence to support Tibet's territorial claims could not fully compensate for Tibet's deficits when it came to knowledge of Western diplomatic practices, European international law, the English language, and translators.

For its lead negotiator, China sent Ivan Chen. As a young man Chen worked as an English translator at the Qing foreign affairs office in Beijing, studied abroad, and attended law school in London. He also served in the Chinese embassy in the United Kingdom for five years. Ivan Chen was so fluent in Western culture and the English language that his statements at Simla were made in English and he preferred to go by Ivan Chen rather than his Chinese name, Chen Yifan 陳貽范.

While Chen and McMahon could communicate directly, Shatra required an intermediary. What's more, because Tibet lacked its own English-language-translators, Shatra had to rely on Sikkimese translators supplied by Britain (Kobayashi 2014a, 191; Martin 2016, 107). These translators were not trained in international law, had no experience with Western-style diplomacy, and were tasked with translating texts with stakes far above their pay grade. Shatra's translation power thus paled in comparison to Chen's, while McMahon's assumption that Britain could wield unchallenged influence over the outcome of the conference was at least in part underpinned by his linguistic hegemony.[7]

Since the conference was organized with the explicit purpose of repudiating Chinese sovereignty, Chen had to develop some creative solutions to avoid complete diplomatic failure. Thus, its number-one priority was to have Tibet recognized as Chinese territory. He and other Chinese diplomats believed that, if, in a legally binding document, Britain (and Tibet) were to recognize that Tibet was an integral part of Chinese territory, they could lay the groundwork for future recognition of their sovereignty in Tibet. This strategy, and its ingenuity, are only evident, however, if one engages with original Chinese language archival materials.

Since 1894 at the latest, the British had used the Chinese-language term 上邦之權 *shangbangzhiquan* to refer to Chinese suzerainty, first in Myanmar, later in Tibet.[8] This is the terminology that the British used in all their correspondence with the Chinese in the lead-up to the Simla Convention and in their Chinese language versions of the proposed convention itself.

There exists, however, another linguistic code to express the concept of suzerainty, 宗主權 *zongzhuquan*. This is the term used in current-day Chinese. The Chinese began using *zongzhuquan* as an alternative to the British preferred term of *shangbangzhiquan* around the time of Simla. The distinction of *zongzhuquan* as an alternative, not a substitution, is key to understanding its power.

The Chinese faithfully reproduced the British usage of *shangbangzhiquan* when citing or reproducing British materials[9] (unlike the British who often inserted their own preferred linguistic codes in lieu of the actual terminology deployed by the Chinese). But, in instances where it was forwarding its own drafts of the convention, *zongzhuquan* was used by the Chinese, not *shangbangzhiquan*.[10]

Why did the Chinese prefer to use *zongzhuquan* over *shangbangquan*? According to Takashi Okamoto, who has conducted some of the most definitive analysis on the subject of "suzerainty" to date, *zongzhuquan* was meant to contain within it a sense of territoriality. And because territoriality was associated with the concept of sovereignty, by incorporating territory into the concept of suzerainty, China was trying to embed the concept of sovereignty within the concept of suzerainty (2014, 207).

Had the Chinese attempted to alter the core meaning of suzerainty implied by the linguistic expression of *shangbangzhiquan*, which had been used in earlier diplomatic agreements, as a way to prepare for future claims-making, such future arguments would likely have been hamstrung by precedent. Thus, by introducing a new "vocabulary" to articulate the concept of suzerainty, which did not have the baggage of precedent, *zongzhuquan* had a greater chance of becoming an alternative link between sovereignty and territory.

This was a remarkable innovation that reflects a distinctive interpretation of contemporary international law. Although in the present day, "sovereignty" and "territory" are often thought to be coterminous, at this point in history the association of sovereignty with territoriality, territorial control, and territorial boundaries was not firmly established within European legal thinking.

Henry Wheaton's preeminent *Elements of International Law* (first translated into Chinese in 1864) makes no strong connection between territory and sovereignty. Although he implies that states and nations have a territorial extent, his primary mark of sovereignty is external independence. Likewise, his discussions of the German Confederacy and the United States suggest that he had a rather unclear view of the internal marks of sovereignty (1866, 16–59). By contrast, Lassa Oppenheim's *International Law* asserts that "state territory is that definite portion of the surface of the globe which is subjected to the sovereignty of the State" (1905, 217). That is to say, sovereignty depends on the existence of territory, and without territory, there can be no such thing as state sovereignty. Thus, what the Chinese got ahold of was not a clear-cut doctrine of territorial sovereignty, but a theory of political authority that was malleable and open to multiple interpretations, which created an opportunity for the exercise of translation power.

The Tibetan delegation also used new vocabulary for articulating European international legal concepts. The proposed agreement was supposed to recognize the "autonomy" of a newly created Outer Tibet (analogous to Outer Mongolia). In the Tibetan language version of the text, the term used is *rang bstan*. In present-day Tibetan, *rang bstan* is fully commensurate with the English language word for "independent." There are doubts to be raised about the commensurability of these linguistic codes in 1914 (Kobayashi 2014b, 287); nevertheless, *rang bstan* was also the term used by the Dalai Lama to declare Tibet's "independence" in 1913.

Throughout the conference, regardless of the Chinese or English-language terminology used to articulate the political status of Tibet, *rang bstan* is consistently the only term deployed in Tibetan-language records. Why would Tibet use the same term to refer to both autonomy and independence?

First, Tibet's pursuit of *rang bstan* was less about "independence" as such and more about "the 'independence' of Tibet in regard to its religious and political power" (Kobayashi 2016, 294). That is to say, Tibet's main priority was to protect the independence of Tibetan Buddhism and to ensure that Tibet would be able to continue to exist as a religious state. Indeed, although Tibet clearly sought independence from Chinese sovereignty, Tibet believed that coming under the protectorship of a more powerful state (such as Britain or Russia) might enable it to pursue this goal more effectively than full-on independence. What's more, there is no evidence of Tibet rejecting Britain's proposal for Tibet's subordination to Chinese suzerainty.

Second, it may be noted that during this same period, Mongolia was experiencing a similar struggle to establish its modern international status, with the terms "independence," "autonomy," and "suzerainty" also at the center of debate, and an identical pattern is observed. In the 1912 Russo-Mongolian Agreement, Mongolia used the same Mongolian-language linguistic code to express the concepts of both "autonomy" and "independence"—the same neologism it had used to assert its independence in the 1913 Tibetan-Mongolian Treaty (Tachibana 2014, 240–41). Since it is now known that Wheaton's *Elements of International Law* was translated into Mongolian (Tachibana 2011, 149–66), it is difficult to attribute these "linkages" to ignorance.

Instead, from the Tibetan and Mongolian perspectives, it is possible that the contrast between autonomy and independence was seen as a distinction without a difference. Indeed, for so-called uncivilized states during this period, the differences between autonomy and independence were not so categorical as they are today. In 1914, Tibet would be guaranteed not to meet the standard of "civilization." Yet only "civilized states" that were members of the "Family of Nations" were capable of having their independence recognized.

It must be noted, however, that we lack archival material capable of offering a decisive picture of contemporary Tibetan thinking on this issue. Due to the political situation of Tibet, the best available Tibetan language record of Simla was compiled *after* the conference, with the exact circumstances of its publication somewhat ambiguous (Kobayashi 2014a, 183). Nevertheless, by calling autonomy by the same name as independence, Tibetans were asserting their own interpretation of European rules in a way that they believed would be favorable to their long-term goals of protecting Tibetan Buddhism. At the same time, however, this made any claims to *rang bstan* vulnerable to misunderstanding, if not willful manipulation.

Shatra brought massive quantities of historical evidence to substantiate Lhasa's authority over Tibetan territory (Bell 1927, 154). His arguments, however, were based on historical precedent, "common sense," and concepts of fairness and justice. He did not cite any international legal principles or show any understanding thereof. Unfamiliar with Western-style diplomatic proceedings, Tibet did not assert its claims in a conventional format, whether in a concise list of claims or draft agreement, as China and Britain did.

The Chinese delegation, by contrast, was confident that it did not need large quantities of supporting evidence because it based its claims to incorporating Tibetan territory into the modern Chinese state on the international legal principle of "effective occupation."[11] Effective occupation is one of the five recognized modes of acquiring territory in international law, the others being cession, accretion, subjugation, and prescription. China's choice of effective occupation to justify its claims regarding Tibet is striking for a number of reasons. According to Oppenheim,

> occupation is the act of appropriation by a State through which it intentionally acquires sovereignty over such territory as is at the time not under the sovereignty of another State. . . . Only such territory can be the object of occupation as is no State's land, whether entirely uninhabited, as e.g. An island, or inhabited by natives whose community is not considered as a State. . . . A part of the whole of any State, even although such a State is entirely outside the Family of Nations, is not a possible object of occupation, and it can only be acquired through cession or subjugation. (1905, 275–76)

Had China based its claims on cession—by which territory is acquired through formal transfer—or by subjugation—by which territory is acquired through conquest and formal annexation—this would have implied that Tibet had, at some point, possessed sovereignty over the territory in dispute. But by citing effective occupation, China was also making the implicit argument that Tibet's very existence did not even rise to the level of an "uncivilized" state. This claim to effective occupation was never directly refuted by Britain or Tibet.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to survey all the events of the Simla Conference, but I will conclude this case study by considering the extent to which Britain was unprepared for the outcome it found itself faced with at Simla. After some nine months of negotiations, no definitive agreement was reached. China refused to sign the "final" agreement after Britain, at the outside request of Russia, tried to make several last-minute alterations to the text that it had taken nine months for the would-be signatories to agree to.[12]

McMahon's failure to secure Chen's legally binding signature was due in large part to his obliviousness to the translation power Chen had been silently wielding throughout the conference. Throughout the talks, McMahon hubristically believed that he could "guide discussion" in a direction whereby the exact terms Britain desired would "naturally" emerge over the course of the conference—regardless of whatever China and Tibet sought to accomplish.[13] On April 27, 1914, at McMahon's request, the delegates initialed a tentative agreement so that Britain could secretly consult with Russia to confirm that the proposed terms would be acceptable before its actual signature.[14]

Before initialing the agreement, Chen succeeded in having a provision deleted that would have made the English language text of the Convention authoritative.[15] After consultations with the Russians, however, the British attempted to reverse this concession and requested numerous changes. This brought negotiations to an impasse, such that Beijing repudiated Chen's initialing and ultimately refused to sign a new, final agreement. The British were astonished when China simply refused to sign this agreement—despite the fact that China had never wanted to negotiate in the first place, but had been strong-armed into doing so in order to gain diplomatic recognition.

Despite the lack of a tripartite agreement, Simla was still a critical juncture in shaping Tibet's modern international status. The British, for their part, despite their categorical opposition to Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, had shown themselves willing to grant recognition of Chinese territoriality. The text of the proposed Convention included a statement that "it is understood by the high contracting parties that Tibet forms part of Chinese territory."

Moreover, Chen's refusal to sign was a notable shift from earlier times where China was coerced to sign any number of unequal treaties detrimental to its long-term interests. This change is clearly associated with the deployment of a sophisticated interlingual strategy by Chen and other Chinese diplomats. But the British, rather than admit that they had been outmaneuvered by an "uncivilized" state, blamed their loss on what they saw as (racist) Chinese defects including "their traditional dislike of finality and concluded agreement" and "their proverbial inability to recognize finality in any issues."[16]

More broadly, Britain simply did not grasp the extent to which the "rules of the game," which they had used for decades to advance their interests, were no longer exclusively their own. Instead, European international law and diplomatic practice looked increasingly capable of being bent to serve the interests of non-European polities at the expense of Europeans. Nor did Britain understand the extent to which China's efforts to seize these rules for its own purposes were part of a global reordering of the international system that resulted not simply from European domination but also from non-European resistance. Simla was the last time that China ever sat at an international negotiating table to debate the status of Tibet. Over the course of the following decades, there were numerous attempts to resume diplomatic talks, but none of them ever came to pass.

If sustained contestation over Chinese rule in Tibet is all too painfully obvious, pinpointing precisely when Tibet's status as an integral part of the modern Chinese state became an accomplished fact is equally obscure. Unlike the attainment of statehood, which can be pinned down to a specific date on which a polity gains recognition of its independence, failure to attain formal status defies clear-cut resolution. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the People's Liberation Army launched a military campaign to ensure Tibet's physical incorporation into the PRC and in 1951 Tibet signed the "Seventeen Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" affirming Chinese sovereignty. Following widespread armed rebellion against communist rule in 1959, the Central Intelligence Agency began funding training and arms for Tibetan guerrillas to aid Tibetan resistance until 1974. The program ended only after the normalization of US-PRC relations and the PRC's attainment of China's seat at the UN (McGranahan 2010). Though an outlier in the international community, Britain maintained its position of merely recognizing Chinese suzerainty and refused to formally acknowledge China's sovereignty in Tibet until 2008.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that a focus on questions of translation can offer new insight into the evolution of the international system. Sino-Tibetan relations in the decades before and after the turn of the twentieth century tell an important story about the nuanced relationship between material power, knowledge, diplomatic practice, and language in shaping political outcomes in the international system. Fundamental to the Chinese strategy for subordinating Tibet were the appropriation of European international law, shrewd diplomatic practice, and the manipulation of language itself. Likewise, to the limited extent that Tibet also participated in the appropriation of European international law and manipulation of language, it has not simply been absorbed into the Chinese state and maintains an identity separate from the PRC. However, to the extent that this is merely an identity and not a formal status, one must look at the extent to which Tibetan efforts were far more limited than those of the Chinese.

Notes

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2. Ole Wæver first made this point in 1992 (107–11).

3. "House of Commons Hansard Ministerial Statements for 29 Oct 2008 (Pt

0001)," accessed March 13, 2017, https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmhansrd/cm081029/wmstext/81029m0001.htm

4. Viceroy, India to HM Minister, March 23, 1912, FO 228/2575, Foreign Office Records, the National Archives of the UK, hereafter NAUK, p. 110.

5. Telegram from Sir Edward Grey to Sir G. Buchanan, May 23, 1913, FO 535/16, NAUK, p. 237.

6. Final Memorandum of the Tibet Conference, Part 5. Personnel of Conference, FO 535/17, NAUK, p. 240.

7. Telegram from India to HM Minister, February 3, 1914, FO 228/2584, NAUK, pp. 41–42.

8. Memorandum on translation of Draft Tibet Convention enclosed in Sir John Jordan's letter of June 20, 1914, FO 228/2586, NAUK.

9. Matters concerning the Tibet Treaty, June, 1914, 03-28-009-01-015, also 03-28-024-01-015, Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Jindai Yanjiusuo Dang'anguan, hereafter ZYJYD.

10. Tibet Agreement, April 1914, 03-28-024-06-006; Telegraphed copy of the draft agreement, May 1914, 03-28-008-03-022, ZYJYD.

11. 憑公法所謂「寔力经营某地者」03-28-024-06-004, Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Jindai Yanjiusuo Dang'anguan, hereafter ZYJYD, and Enclosure 2 in No. 28 Chinese Statement on Limits of Thibet, FO 535/17, p. 27.

12. Memorandum regarding progress of negotiations from May 1 to July 8, 1914, FO 535/17, NAUK, 254.

藏約事, 1914–06, 03-28-009-01-021, ZYJYD; 寄六月六日電底由, 1914–06, 03-28-009-01-020, ZYJYD.

13. Telegram from India to HM Minister, February 3, 1914, FO 228/2584, NAUK, pp. 41–42.

14. India to HM Minister, April 16, 1914, FO 228/2585, p. 52.

15. India to HM Minister, April 21, 1914, FO 228/2585, p. 54. See also Draft (Initialed) Convention between the United Kingdom, China, and Tibet, Simla, April 27, 1914, FO 93/105/5.

16. Memorandum regarding progress of negotiations from May 1 to July 8, 1914, FO 535/17, NAUK, p. 255.

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CHAPTER 6

Transversing Civilizational Hierarchies?

The Introduction of the Latin Alphabet in Turkey

Senem Aydın-Düzgit and Bahar Rumelili

For the past three decades, IR scholarship has expressed a keen interest in how international relations phenomena are constituted through language. Linguistic tools and styles, such as metaphors, similes, and genres, have been identified and studied as critical elements of discourses that are constitutive of IR reality. It is only recently, however, that Anglophone IR is beginning to wake up to the fact that international relations phenomena are constituted in multiple languages and that interlingual relations is at the core of IR. Accordingly, the politics of translation as an everyday practice of diplomacy, an integral aspect of collective meaning-making, and a neglected aspect of IR scholarly activity is beginning to attract greater interest.

In the current world of IR, respect for and active promotion of linguistic diversity in the domestic realm goes hand in hand with an explicit and unquestioned acceptance of the higher status of certain languages internationally, as languages of diplomatic exchange and of scholarship. While most scholarship on politics of language focuses on domestic issues of multilingualism and recognition of minority languages by nation-states (also in the context of international human rights promotion), the research program on interlingual relations promises to expose how language functions as a marker of identity and status, and as a tool of power and authority internationally. These are the dimensions we seek to explore further in this chapter via the case of Turkey. There is a rich IR literature on the identity aspect of the Turkey-Europe relationship both in terms of its historical as well as contemporary manifestations (see, among others, Neumann and Welsh 1991; Rumelili 2007; Zarakol 2011; Aydin-Duzgit 2012; Wigen 2018; Aydin-Duzgit and Rumelili 2021). Thus, Turkey constitutes a fruitful case to analyze the intersection of interlingual relations with dynamics of identity change, ontological security, and status-seeking in IR (Wigen 2018).

In this chapter, we analyze the adoption of the Latin alphabet by Turkey in 1928 as a case of international hierarchy subversion and status seeking via language policy and as a window to observe the historical constitution and operation of linguistic hierarchies. Five years into the founding of the Turkish Republic, and with a view to modernizing and Westernizing the country, the Turkish parliament passed a law on November 1, 1928 requiring a complete shift from the Arabic scripts to the Latin alphabet in all walks of life. To put the law into effect, a language commission composed of prominent Turkish writers of the time was formed to adapt the Turkish language to Latin script, and *millet mektepleri* (schools of the nation) were established for the adults to learn the new alphabet rapidly.

Despite the fact that Turkey's alphabet reform stands out as the "textbook example of a successful and lasting case of script change romanization" in the world (Aytürk 2010, 97), it has not received the attention it deserves in the relevant IR literatures. The few studies that have exclusively dealt with the alphabet reform in Turkey have primarily approached the subject at the domestic level from the lens of nation-state building (see, for instance, Aytürk 2010). In this chapter, we conduct an "interlingual" discourse analysis of how the reform was received in Europe and Turkey at the time through an analysis in the English language of the British, French, and Turkish reporting on the event.

The case of the Turkish alphabet reform allows us to contribute to the study of interlingual relations in three ways. First, we stress that the alphabet is an iconic aspect of language, and an important visual component of interlingual relations. That interlingual relations are also poly-iconic is an aspect that escapes the attention of Wigen and Caraccioli in this volume's introduction. Languages can be alphabetized via different scripts, and a change of script, while not amounting to a language change in the form of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, constitutes a dramatic and wholesale transformation of the iconic aspect of language. Languages sharing the same alphabet possess an iconic similarity despite the linguistic differences, and script differences may render another language totally unfamiliar and inaccessible despite similarities in vocabulary. Thus, as Caraccioli and Wigen highlight in their introduction, a shared alphabet may diminish the "mutual unintelligibility" that is constitutive of "language boundaries," while the reverse exacerbates it.

In addition to affecting mutual intelligibility, we stress that alphabets are also key features of icono-spaces in world politics, spaces of widely recognized shared images. The case of Turkey's alphabet reform thereby promises to establish an important connection between the interlingual relations research program and studies on visual international relations. As we will discuss below, the Kemalist modernizers of Turkey were painfully aware of how iconic differences are used to naturalize international identity boundaries and hierarchies. The adoption of the Latin alphabet, along with the adoption of European dress and the metric system, were therefore attempts at establishing an iconic similarity with Europe, and an iconic break with the Ottoman past.

Second, the case of the 1928 alphabet change in Turkey provides a window to appreciate how linguistic differences have historically been nested in racialized civilizational hierarchies. As we will demonstrate, Turkey's shift to the Latin alphabet triggered intense debates in Turkey and Europe about the relationship between civilization and international hierarchy on the one hand and language and the alphabet on the other. The analysis of debates from this period clearly manifests the racist foundations of interlingual relations. The European philologists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries sought to link linguistic diversity to inherent racial differences in creativity and civilization (Aytürk 2004, 3). Turkey's attempt to transverse these racialized hierarchies through alphabet change therefore received at best a mixed reaction in Europe. Turkey's adoption of the iconic aspect of what was regarded at the time to be civilizationally superior languages constituted an occasion to debate the acquirability of civilization itself. While all Turkish and some European commentators regarded the alphabet change as a conduit of civilization through the promotion of literacy and the easier transmission of European knowledge and arts in Turkey, for other European commentators the alphabet change triggered the need to reassert the civilizational difference between Turkey and Europe. In many ways, then, the 1928 debates around the alphabet reform in Turkey were a forerunner of the more contemporary debates on whether Turkey can become European through fulfilling EU conditionality, which are also constituted on the axis of whether Turkey's difference is inherent or acquired (Rumelili 2007, 2011; Aydin-Duzgit 2012).

Third, and relatedly, the 1928 alphabet reform was an occasion for the construction and solidification of another civilizational hierarchy, this one between Turkey and the Arab world. In fact, the arguments about the alphabet change being a conduit for civilization in Turkey depended on the construction of the Arabic script as inferior and ill-suited for modernity and progress. Our analysis shows that the inferiority of the Arabic script was reproduced in both Turkish and European contexts. In the Turkish context, the construction of the Arabic alphabet as inferior justified the political break with the Ottoman past that the new Republican regime sought to achieve. In the European context, it was a means of re-erecting the civilizational hierarchy between Europe and the Orient that Turkey sought to transverse through Westernizing reforms. It is interesting that the reporting on the 1928 alphabet reform dwelled on the radical mismatch between the Turkish language and the Arabic script much more than the suitability of the Latin alphabet to the Turkish language. That the transgressing of the civilizational boundary between Europe and Turkey necessitated the erection (and solidification) of another between Turkey and the Arab (Muslim) world shows the limits inherent in Turkey's "liminal" identity position (Rumelili 2012; Rumelili and Suleymanoglu-Kurum 2017). In the European discourses at the time, Turkey's adoption of the Latin alphabet did not trigger the constitution of Turkey as European, but only facilitated its recognition as not Arab and as possibly becoming European.

In what follows, we will first discuss the significance of the alphabet as an iconic aspect of interlingual relations and its relationship to identity in international relations. We will then move on to demonstrate the two means through which the alphabet reform was treated as a civilizational marker and served to (re)produce civilizational hierarchies in Turkey, France, and Britain: first, by debating whether civilization is essentially an inherent trait or acquirable by some more inferior civilizations through reforms such as the adoption of the Latin alphabet; and, second, by inscribing strict racialized civilizational boundaries between both the Turkish and the European Selves and the Arabic Other. We will conclude by assessing our main findings and the lessons drawn for the future agenda of the study of interlingual relations in IR.

Alphabet as Icon and the Visual Dimension of Interlingual Relations

Alphabets deserve greater attention in the study of interlingual relations. While letters of contemporary alphabets are arbitrary devices for representing sounds, and do not visually represent objects as hieroglyphs once did, they carry an iconic potential (Lecky 1968, 73). Their spatial configurations become familiar to readers of particular alphabets and these serve as archetypes for whatever in the world has similar shape (73). Alphabets situate different languages in a zone of iconic similarity; hence, they reduce the foreignness of a different language. While contemporary technological devices have enabled the automated transliteration of the same language into different scripts, it is important to underscore that transliteration remains an act of visual translation, the transfer of a language from one icono-space to another.

In recent years, the literature on visual international relations has underscored the important role of icons—"images that are widely recognized and remembered, are understood to be representations of historically significant events, activate strong emotional identification or response, and are reproduced across a range of media, genres, or topics" (Hansen 2015, 267). While the interest of IR scholars has largely focused on influential discrete icons, such as photographic images that mobilize public opinion, it is also necessary to pay attention to the constitutive role that generic icons play (for comparison, see Hansen 2015, 269). While generic icons may not be representations of distinct events, they are widely recognized and reproduced images that symbolize particular identities, geographical areas, or historical periods. For example, the image of any head-scarved woman is a generic icon of a Muslim woman, which is widely recognized and reproduced. Due to their generic nature, such icons evoke feelings of cultural proximity or distance. It is in this sense that we conceive of alphabets as icons. They are generic icons that invoke feelings of closeness and familiarity in users of similar scripts, and a sense of cultural distance in others.

This iconic dimension of interlingual relations that arises from the use of different scripts is in need of further exploration. Highlighting the iconic aspect of alphabets clarifies how they may be associated with identity and belonging in international affairs. In this chapter, we would like to underscore how the 1928 alphabet reform in Turkey was undertaken and served to situate Turkey away from the icono-space of "Oriental" and "Muslim" countries and into the same icono-space as Western European countries. It is necessary to note that the iconic value of the alphabet as a marker of identity was stronger at the time of Turkey's alphabet reform than it is today. This is because icons are situated in particular discursive fields through appropriations, which vary across different temporal and social contexts (Hansen 2015, 275). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the iconic aspect of the Latin alphabet was appropriated as a symbol of European modernity, efficiency, and progress (Aytürk 2010, 102). Hence the adoption of the Latin alphabet in 1928 functioned to symbolize the newly established country's commitment to these ideals and values.

Highlighting the iconic aspect of alphabets also situates the 1928 alphabet reform in Turkey in the same category with other reforms enacted by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, which explicitly targeted Turkey's iconic image and identity in world affairs, such as the dress reform of 1934 and the transition to the metric system in 1925. Starting with the late Ottoman era, the modernizing elite became increasingly conscious of the ways in which the stereotypical image of the Turk was appropriated to construct an iconic divide, which in turn constructed a racialized hierarchy between Europe and Turkey. Hence adopting the Latin alphabet, Western dress, and the metric system were seen as ways to transverse this iconic divide and the racialized hierarchy it signified.

The iconic dimension of Turkey's transition to the Latin alphabet was recognized by Turkish as well as European commentators at the time. To describe the alphabet reform, Mesaroş (1928) used the metaphorical depiction "Western dress on the Turkish language" and Nadi (1928a) noted that the alphabet change amounts to "the *real* and *physical* accession of Turkey to Europe." Several European commentators underscored the iconic inferiority and temporal backwardness of the Arabic alphabet compared to the Latin one. The *Manchester Guardian* (1928) noted that Arabic letters are "fixed" and thus "inadequate" for "expressing modern scientific needs and philosophic theories," while the Latin alphabet is "malleable." *L'Europeen* (1930) likened the Arabic script to "ancient Hieroglyphs," while the *Manchester Guardian* (1928) noted that it was "devised for quite another epoch."

That the alphabet change moves Turkey away from the icono-space of Muslim and Oriental countries was also noted by European commentators. *L'Europeen* (1930) underscored how alphabet change iconically transforms a language. When written with Latin scripts, it said, "there is no possibility of mistaking an Arabic for a Turkish word." The *Times* (1928a) highlighted how the Westernizing reforms are changing the Oriental image of Turkey:

> The Turk, whether Pasha or peasant, was regarded, and rightly regarded, as a classical example of Oriental Conservatism by our Victorian parents, who rashly spoke of the unchanging East. Nowadays, the study of Near Eastern change is apt to make the European observer more than a little dizzy.

The magnitude of the alphabet reform in relation to identity change is acknowledged by describing the reform as a "revolutionary change" toward Turkey's efforts to align itself with Europe (Observer 1928; Parent 1928) and the "Westernization of its culture" (Parent 1928), along with other iconic reforms undertaken by the Republic at the time, most notably the banning of the *fez* in public in an attempt to erase the "dividing line between Turkey and Europe" and achieve "Westernization at any cost" (Observer 1928). Hence the iconic-space that extends beyond the alphabet reform is recognized in Europe as a key marker of an identity shift, yet with embedded civilizational hierarchies on both sides, to which we now turn.

Interlingual Relations and Racial Hierarchies

The case of the alphabet reform in Turkey also demonstrates the linguistic hierarchies that were nested in racial hierarchies at the time. A widely accepted classification groups all human languages under three categories as isolating, agglutinative, and inflectional languages. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it was believed that these linguistic categories corresponded to ascending levels of civilization and human achievement (Aytürk 2004, 3). According to the "inflectional superiority thesis," "the capacity of the human mind increased in parallel with the plasticity of one's language," and therefore "those nations which speak inflectional languages were more creative and civilized" (Aytürk 2004, 3). In this classification, Turkish was identified as an agglutinative language, and thereby considered inferior to the inflectional Indo-European languages. Hence, the constructed civilizational boundaries between Europe and Turkey were reproduced in the linguistic terrain. Philologists of the nineteenth century commonly believed that the Turkish language was "not a language of civilization" (Aytürk 2004, 5).

Although discredited today, the inflectional superiority thesis and other historical ideas about the overlap between racial and linguistic hierarchies need to be taken into account in the historical as well as contemporary interlingual encounters between Turkey and Europe. Wigen (2018)'s otherwise stellar analysis of conceptual entanglements between the Ottoman Empire and Europe in the nineteenth century misses out on this racialized dimension of language hierarchies of the time. Hence, the hierarchy between Ottoman Turkish and French was not solely constituted by the fact that the Ottoman elite had to legitimize their actions in the French language but not vice versa (Wigen 2018, 64); it, more fundamentally, originated in the mutual acceptance of French as the more "inflectionally superior" language of civilization.

Hence, the alphabet reform in Turkey was not simply a change of script; at the time, it amounted to the adoption of the iconic aspect of languages of civilization by the speakers of a civilizationally inferior language. Thus, it sparked and immediately became embedded in debates about the acquirability of civilization itself. Almost all of the Turkish news articles published on the occasion of the alphabet reform consider the Latin alphabet as the alphabet of civilization and express full trust that its adoption will facilitate Turkey's efforts to join civilization. In the Turkish texts of the time, civilization is constructed to be singular and associated solely with the West and Europe. The Latin alphabet is constructed to be an acquirable aspect of (Western) civilization and also a conduit through which civilization may be acquired. According to Nadi (1928a), the alphabet is "the true key of civilization." Mesaroş (1928) notes that the power of civilization, Europe in particular, stems from the fact that it is not solely reserved for a privileged few, but understood and embraced by everybody (from intellectuals to shepherds) through a common alphabet. The Latin alphabet will thus enable Turkey to better learn the "Western spirit" and become fully anchored with civilization.

Racialized arguments about civilization being rooted in mental capacity and character were at the heart of the depictions of the Latin alphabet as a conduit for civilization in Turkey. It was widely believed that the Latin alphabet would facilitate a "mental revolution" for the citizens of the nation. For instance, Mustafa Hakkı (1928) argues that it is only via dismissing the Arabic script in favor of the Latin alphabet that a citizen can begin to think rationally, move forward, and become a citizen of "high humanity." The mental revolution is also expected to translate into a character transformation for the Turkish nation, where they will become hard-working and resilient citizens (Hakkı 1928). This is why time is considered to be of the essence. As the European/Western powers are advancing forward, Turkey needs to act rapidly to catch up with the "rest of the civilized world" (Nadi 1928a). To this end, some suggest that new (Turkish) words in science and art, as both are considered central to European/Western civilization, are invented so that the mental revolution that had "already been accomplished by the majority of European nations" can now be achieved by the young Republic (Mesaroş 1928). There is also a high level of optimism regarding how long this process would take. Nadi (1928a), for instance, argues that thanks to the alphabet reform, Turkey will be able to retrieve "the true key of civilization" in less than a year, when it will "completely resemble Europe." A running theme throughout the discussion on the alphabet reform is that of "unity." Rationality and civilization are singular, which entails the argument that reaching civilization through the rationality attained by the alphabet reform will lead to the emergence of a unified nation of rational citizens.

On the European side, there were two main ways in which the alphabet reform was represented as a marker of civilization, depending on whether civilization was represented as an acquirable trait by those who stood inferior to Europe on the civilization ladder or as an essentially inherent property. The former can be observed in representations of the reform as a crucial step toward Turkey's assimilation into European/Western civilization (Manchester Guardian 1928; Observer 1928). It is argued that thanks to the alphabet reform, Turkey is now well on its way in catching up with key aspects of European/Western civilization in a short time frame, evidenced in the practice of journalism and the quality of its print media (L'Europeen 1930), translation of key European classics (Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, d'Alembert, Denis Diderot, Montesquieu) (L'Europeen 1930), and the prospect of producing high-quality art, literature, and science thanks to the possibility of translating a vast number of European works in these fields (Manchester Guardian 1928). Hence civilization and the Westernization associated with it are considered attainable so long as Turkey adopts its key elements, the alphabet being one of them.

Many European commentators, on the other hand, felt the need to reassert the distinct and unbridgeable civilizational hierarchy between Europe and Turkey in reaction to the alphabet change in Turkey. This was done at three levels. The first level consisted of defining Turkish as an "oriental language" (Mercier 1928), where the Latin alphabet was almost unequivocally referred to as the "European alphabet." The second level involved arguing for the futility of the alphabet reform as Latin characters could not possibly fit in Oriental languages that possess different phonetic requirements, which ultimately meant that "the Latinization of Turkish language would always remain inadequate" (Mercier 1928). This essential distinction was justified with reference to the works of European linguists and intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who argued for the incompatibility between Oriental languages and the Latin alphabet (Mercier 1928).

The third and the final level at which European commentators reasserted the civilizational hierarchy between Europe and Turkey on the occasion of the alphabet reform was to underscore the authoritarian means via which the change was imposed on the Turkish public, which in their eyes made it impossible for the reform to achieve its intended results. For many commentators, this authoritarianism is an essentialist feature of Turkish nature as the Turkish culture places "the highest admiration and trust" on "the stern ruler" (Times 1928b; Parent 1928), the Turkish public has historically trusted authoritarian rulers who crush their dissenters (Times 1928b), and is now passively in need of a "pedagogue dictator" such as Atatürk (Parent 1928).

By drawing on comparisons between Atatürk and former Ottoman sultans such as Abdulhamid II, infamous for his repression of the public, historical continuity with the Ottoman Empire in authoritarian practices are given as evidence of the innate authoritarian nature of the Turkish political system (Times 1928b). Comparisons are also drawn with other authoritarian settings such as Morocco where there was also an attempt to Latinize Arabic, as proof that artificial and top-down impositions in the region are common, but cannot yield successful results (Mercier 1928). Such comparisons with other settings where the Arabic script is used also provide insight into how the Arabic Other is constituted in this hierarchical civilizational ordering, which we discuss further in the following section.

Constitution of Turkey's Liminality: Othering the Arabs

In both Turkish and European contexts, the discussions on the alphabet reform entailed the close association of Arab countries and the Orient with the lack of civilization. Although the European texts overwhelmingly designated Turkey as a "non-European" or an "Oriental" country, or both, inferior to Europe and its civilization, they nevertheless acknowledged Turkey's difference from other Muslim countries in its neighborhood and its Europeanizing/Westernizing efforts through the alphabet reform. Even where the alphabet reform was positively received, it was only welcomed on the grounds that it would help Turkey to distance itself from the Orient, which is described as a separate and distinct civilization "which, owing to its inherent faults of fanaticism and tyranny, soon became decadent and obsolete" (Manchester Guardian 1928). The positive embrace of the alphabet reform was justified on the grounds that the modern and singular European civilization requires Turkey to "detach from Oriental culture" (Manchester Guardian 1928) and set a barrier with the "Islamic Orient" signified by the Arabic script (Parent 1928), and adopt the Latin alphabet as a marker of European civilization. Hence it was explicitly expressed in essentially civilizationist terms that the Orient was considered inherently unfit to reach the standards of civilization embodied in Europe and the West.

For European commentators, the argument that the Arabic script is "ill-suited to Turkish" (Times 1928a) was put forward as a key driver behind the alphabet reform and as such became the basis for the construction of a civilizational divide between Turkey and the Orient. The roots of this incompatibility were sought in history, where the Turks' adoption of the Arabic script upon their conversion to Islam in the tenth century was seen as a historical anomaly for a community that had used the Aramaic alphabet in earlier centuries (Observer 1928). The Arabic script was further defined as "unnecessarily long and difficult" (Times 1928a) and not conducive to widespread literacy, as was evidenced in the fact that Turkish literacy rates were low at the time of the reform (Manchester Guardian 1928).

Yet some European commentators were also concerned that the alphabet reform could render Turkey unpopular among other countries with Muslim populations, such as Egypt and India, as well as among the Turkish peasantry itself, as it signaled an "unconditional hostility" toward religion like the other modernizing and Westernizing reforms of the young Republic (Times 1928a). Deriving from the association of the Arabic alphabet with the Quran, such arguments about the futility of the alphabet change are reflective of the prevalent ascription of Islam as the primal identity of Turkey, which was also observed in the European reactions to the abolition of the caliphate in Turkey in 1924 (Aydın-Düzgit, Rumelili, and Gülmez 2020). Taken together, these responses attest to the prevalence of European views on Islam and the Orient as inherently incompatible with modernization and civilization embodied in Europe. Additionally, the ascription of Islam as the primal identity construes the Westernizing reform efforts of all Muslim countries as futile and inherently doomed to failure.

Such arguments rendered the Othering of the Arabs in the Turkish context unavoidably necessary. The alphabet reform was taken as proof that Turkish, and hence Turks, are inherently adaptable to reaching European civilization whereas Arabic, and Arabs, are not. In other words, the alphabet reform was considered as a key step in not just reaching European/Western civilization but also in demarcating the Turkish Self from the more inferior Arabic/Persian Other. The proof is found in the way in which "the Western dress on the Turkish language reveals the redundancy of foreign (Arabic and Persian) elements forcefully glued to it" and this is only natural given "the fact that Turks and Arabs are diametrically opposed to each other" (Mesaroş 1928). Hence Arabic and Persian influence on the Turkish language were perceived as foreign and backward elements that the Turkish Self in its entirety should dismiss, mainly through reforming its alphabet. Therefore, the alphabet reform was also coupled with efforts to purify the Turkish language of Arabic and Persian elements and to situate it in the Indo-European language family. This also shows the hierarchical ordering of regions among the ideologues of the early Republic in relation to their proximity to civilization, with Europe/West, which embodies it, at the top; Turkey, which contains the innate ability to acquire it, in the middle; and the Orient, which essentially is unfit to reach that level, at the bottom. In their line of thinking, there is no Oriental civilization as "the Orient and the Islamic world are not worthy of such an honour" and that "Arabs were only able to represent civilization briefly when they temporarily adopted Hellenic science," which is considered an aberration in their natural course through history (Nadi 1928b).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we sought to analyze the ways in which international civilizational hierarchies can be (re)produced through language policies by focusing on the case of the 1928 alphabet reform in Turkey. Studying the coverage of this case in Turkish and European discourse has shown us that alphabets, as central elements of the iconic spaces in world politics, can be instrumental in constructing identities and establishing boundaries in international relations. We have seen how the attributed differences between the Latin alphabet and the Arabic script have served to establish strict hierarchical civilizational orderings between the European/Turkish Selves and the Arabic Other as well as between the European Self and (to some extent) the liminal Turkish Other.

The contemporary research program on interlingual relations seeks multiple critical objectives, including remedying the Anglophonic bias, identifying the different worlds of IR, and exposing how some speak about global politics at the expense of others. The alphabet reform in Turkey took place at a time when the priorities of interlingualism were different in Europe and in Turkey. Interlingualism was a means to assert civilizational status, change identity, and attain modernity, as was observed in the justifications for and in the reception of Turkey's change to the Latin alphabet at the time. However, this does not mean that those priorities have become irrelevant today. In fact, a closer look suggests that adopting a historical view of the constitution of identities through interlingual relations can shed light on more contemporary debates on the struggles and constitutions of identity within Turkey as well as between Turkey and Europe.

At the domestic level, the alphabet reform is still to some extent politically contested between the more conservative and secular segments of Turkish society, as part of the domestic identity struggles between the pro-Western and Islamist camps in the country. The Latin alphabet and other radical Westernizing reforms of the early Republican period are still defended as a means to acquire modernity and progress and criticized on the grounds that they were top-down impositions of identity change and have served to internalize a neocolonial and Eurocentric worldview. At the international level, the main elements of the European responses to the alphabet reform can be observed in the more current debates on whether Turkey as a Muslim country is fit to become a democracy in relation to its accession prospects to the EU. A close look at these debates demonstrates how democracy and human rights are construed as key elements of standards of European civilization, where the major intra-European divisions are mainly incurred over the capability of Turkey to adopt democratic reforms and hence become a member of this civilization (Rumelili 2011; Aydın-Düzgit 2012). Current European debates on Islam and its relationship to secularism also draw heavy conceptual parallels with those discussions in history as sparked by the alphabet reform, over whether Muslim societies are inherently suitable to such reforms that ultimately belong to the European experience. This suggests that critical approaches to interlingual relations in IR, which are particularly concerned with the constitution of identities and hierarchies in the international system, could benefit from a stronger engagement with the role that language has played in history in structuring the identity divides within domestic contexts and, relatedly, at the international level between states.

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CHAPTER 7

Historias for the Empire

Indigenous Translators and the Reproductions of Linguistic Conquest

Mauro José Caraccioli

Imagine what it would take for a conqueror to learn a new language. The proposition isn't as ludicrous as it sounds, so long as mastery over a language itself is regarded as key to a conquest's success. Conquest narratives in International Relations (IR) are few and far in-between, but scholarly interpretations of conquests have almost always invoked a rhetorical continuity to their unique vocabularies. From Athens to the Soviet Union, empires are often represented in the political languages of ambition, growth, or, more simply, *might makes right*. Similarly, studies on the New Imperialism of the nineteenth century—read as inaugurating the "civilizational mission" of modern political domination—have only recently drawn attention to the power of rhetoric and the imagination in Europe's creation of its others (Jackson 2006; Daggett 2019). Yet despite sustained efforts attending to the agency of the oppressed in relations of domination, most histories of past empires remain written by, for, and in the vernaculars of imperial rule. What would it look like to render those silenced words, stories, and worlds intelligible?

Casual observers might assume that the language of a conqueror is something experimentally imposed from the outside, a feature increasingly recognized as part of the West's unique style of subjugation (Barder 2015; Manchanda 2020). What is less acknowledged, however, is the role that translators have played during major global historical transformations. That is to say, how have translators helped to establish the standards of memory, history, and forgetting that allow for future interpretations of politics? As more than intermediaries, translators often hold the keys to what Einar Wigen describes in his chapter in this volume as a broader network of agents who "shape the scope of action that political actors have." Indeed, translators were central to the colonial infrastructure of the early modern Spanish Empire in the Americas, making possible several strategic goals of imperial rule: negotiations, trade networks, surveys, medical practices, naturalist inquiry, religious indoctrination, and multiple other facets of everyday life during and after the military and spiritual conquests. So what difference would disclosing the *interlingual memories* behind such moments entail? What kinds of agency begin to emerge for imperial translators through a study of the interlingual encounters that challenge conventional historiographies of conquest?

My aim in this chapter is threefold. First, I seek to unpack the interface at which languages meet not just as a feature of interlinguality but also of historical relationality. Rather than thinking of imperial encounters as one-directional moments, I look at the memories of conquest and their reproduction in distinct linguistic and rhetorical settings to interpret the Spanish Empire's evolving meanings in the New World. Specifically, to what extent was the question of domination in the Spanish Empire a problem of translation as much as one of violence? Once the fervor of military and spiritual zealotry subsided, so began the long task of writing and retelling the story of conquest, a task made possible by the very subjects who were forced to adopt a strange tongue. Examining the competition between linguistic meanings in such historical context shows how different communities rely on those interlingual exchanges in crucial ways. In other words, taking apart the historical contingencies of interlingual relations interrogates the extent to which concepts such as relationality and assimilation are regarded as always progressive (Inayatullah 2014; Kalaycioglu 2025).

Second, I aim to reconfigure the scholarly understanding of the indigenous interpreter as she moves from her role as native informant to that of colonial subject. Rather than thinking of colonial knowledge as ready-made for an imperial audience to consume, I examine how the various layers of myth, encounter, description, translation, and (re)interpretation converge around the figure of the native translator as subject. For IR scholars, such matters were once taken up by Tzvetan Todorov's (1999) analysis of Spain's subduing of the Aztec Empire. Key to Todorov's story was the deft manipulation of rhetoric that Spaniards employed to allegedly outwit the Aztecs by means of signs (Todorov 1999, 62). Yet there is more to say about the historiography of conquest in the New World and how relationality was, can, and *has been used* as a means of domination. A particularly important episode in this history of conquest was the conscription of the Nahua woman Malintzin (otherwise known as La Malinche) into the services of the conqueror Hernán Cortés and how her trajectory mirrored other stories of translational conquest across the Americas (Scully 2005). Malintzin's story serves as a kind of origin myth for a plethora of rival conceptions of indigenous agency (or lack thereof) under the duress of domination. I propose to read this same myth as an example of how indigenous translators—particularly women—became colonial subjects as a means of survival, as well as an example of empowerment within inhospitable conditions.

Lastly, I reflect on the cultures of translation within IR's historiography as an entry point to examine the lives of subjects that live *in-between worlds*. In recent decades, historians and theorists of colonial Spanish America have debunked the image of a monolithic indigenous experience during the wars and trials of conquest (McDonough 2014; Brian 2016; de la Puente Luna 2018). Specifically, greater attention to schools, material culture, and the interplay of religious and scientific knowledge production has focused on the vital role that translation played in the everyday workings of colonial life (Sigal 2011; Caraccioli 2018; Bigelow 2020). But translators have only been featured in the archive of colonial conquest through a privileging of the written text. In the spirit of Gayatri Spivak's famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), I propose in this chapter a contrapuntal account of the relation between hegemony and who gets to speak on behalf of power, focusing instead on the back-and-forth exchanges between imperial and subaltern appropriations of language, particularly in oral traditions that have survived in counterintuitive ways.

I begin the chapter by examining the first Castilian grammar book as a "tool for empire" and civilizational mandate, a theme with rich insights into the cultures of conquest born on the Iberian Peninsula and exported across the Atlantic. Looking at how the Spanish conquests of the New World were aided by the translation of indigenous languages, I go on to show how studying what indigenous translators *actually did* (and do) strengthens our scholarly understanding of *interlingual memories* as frameworks for how we think certain political events took place at all. Translators, I maintain, not only mediate meaning, but *create the standards under which meaning endures over time*. Drawing on the story of Malintzin, my broader aim is to rethink the archive through which historians and theorists can grasp the meanings of lifeworlds under duress. Doing so not only interrupts the imperial imaginary through which knowledge about the past and its afterlives is re-created anew every day; it also provides a glimpse into how our daily acts of translation can embolden us to keep the prose of old worlds alive and in view. I conclude by arguing that the *history of translation as conquest* reflects not only the motivations of the powerful but also presents a more relational view of the lifeworlds and meanings that conquest has allegedly destroyed and left behind.

Grammars of Violence: From Alhambra to Tenochtitlan

Translation has long been a pillar of imperial conquest, both on the ground and for the historical record. When historians recount the formative moments in an empire's rise and fall, their task is twofold: to reconstruct events, and to make intelligible how new realities are superimposed on the old. IR scholars have similarly taken on this interpretive charge, yet have hardly reflected on the various assumed acts of translation that inform the field's conceptions of conquest and domination. What happens if in recounting our preconceptions about the imperial past, we add interlinguality to long-standing paradigms of conquest?

For example, having formally overtaken the Caliphate of Granada (the last Moorish kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula) in January 1492, the Catholic monarchs, King Fernando of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile, were said to have marched into the city in full Moorish garb, a custom of respect and transitional authority rooted in Islamic legal conventions (Irigoyen-Garcia 2017). The gesture was a visual expression of the broader linguistic norms that shaped Christian-Moslem relations during the period of warfare Spaniards dubbed La Reconquista. Borrowing from Islamic norms of war and governance, Spanish conquerors translated the component parts of the ritual demand for submission (*islam*) into a practice known as the Requerimiento. Part performance and part improvisation, Patricia Seed describes the Requerimiento as "the principal means by which Spaniards enacted political authority over the New World during the era of their most extensive conquests" (Seed 1995, 70). Upon arrival at the outskirts of a settlement, the Requerimiento would be read as a means of ordaining the Spanish right of possession under the eyes of God, with any defiance by the indigenous inhabitants being used as grounds for enslavement and "just" warfare. The ritual was thus an expression of how Spaniards used familiar rules of war to first justify their domination over the Iberian Peninsula and later translate their rhetorical normative assumptions into their encounters with indigenous lands and peoples of the New World (Seed 1995, 69–99).

While medieval norms born from battle were changing, so too were customs around the textual authority of vernacular languages. For instance, the famed humanist scholar Antonio de Nebrija ceremoniously dedicated his *Gramática de la lengua castellana* (a bilingual dictionary also known as *Grammatica Antonii Nebrissensis*) to a victorious Queen Isabella on the eve of Granada's surrender. As he famously wrote in the prologue to the grammar book, "language always accompanies empire, both have always commenced, grown and flourished together" (Kamen 2002, 3; Nebrija 2014, 11). Nebrija's words have been the subject of much interpretation, no less by critical scholars of global politics (Jahn 2000; Krishna 2001) who have seen the consolidation of an imperial grammar as an admission of criminal intent for the centuries of conquest that Spain inaugurated in 1492. The Requerimiento is very much an extension of that grammar, but one that roots conquest in the localized meaning of (failed) linguistic exchanges, not just an expression of rapaciousness nor a mere historical contingency.

Grammar books may have helped fuel the metropole's confidence in the authority of their political claims, but domination would remain incomplete without a proper basis on which empire could be imposed on new linguistic worlds (Mignolo 1992). Here I want to propose a more nuanced understanding of the broader interlingual character of Spain's encounter with the Americas, particularly as imperial grammar books generated new vernaculars. From Columbus's letters during his first journey across the Atlantic to the epic plights of conquistadores like Hernán Cortes and Bernal Díaz del Castillo, the conquests of the New World are typically presented as a monolithic venture, most notoriously under the slogan "God, Gold, and Glory" (Dussel 1995; Restall 2003). Yet these kinds of tropes are a common shorthand for conquest narratives, particularly those produced as polemics against an imperial power (Greer, Mignolo, and Quilligan 2008). As a genre of historical and political literature little studied by IR scholars, conquest narratives are central to many of the field's founding myths. As the contemporary historiography of the conquest genre shows, however, early debates between chroniclers have increasingly given way to the perspectives and voices of the allegedly vanquished (Adorno 2007; Rabasa 2011). Just as the subjugation of Iberian Moors depended on the translation and appropriation of Arabic, Spanish colonial rule depended on its adaptation to the Nahuatl, Quechua, Guaraní, and Yucatec languages, among nearly a thousand more.

It seems impossible to believe that testimonies of the encounter's first decade could escape the melding of words and worlds that gave birth to new political languages, in particular those that relied on using Castilian itself as a means of resistance (Karttunen 1994). The Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas, for instance, long held a monopoly on these testimonies with his polemical *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias* (2003). The product of his many travels, experiences, and masterful translations of hearsay and laments alike, the book gave a uniform vocabulary to critics of Spain's early tenure in the New World, even as it professed an ecclesiastic imperialism of its own (Castro 2007). At the same time, the work was translated across the European continent, serving as ammunition for Spain's enemies from the Low Countries to the Ivory Coast (see Costa Lopez's chapter in this volume). Yet despite the contentious and colorful trajectory of Las Casas's narrative, his legacy belies a wider range of endeavors that missionaries and explorers were engaged in, particularly as they fought conquistadors and bureaucrats alike for the knowledge produced by indigenous peoples (Herzog 2015).

Indeed, today's popular and scholarly attention to these narratives is also largely possible because one of these missionary figures, the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún, took a page out of Nebrija's book to better understand the peoples and cultures around him. From 1530 to 1590, he lived among the peoples of the Valley of Mexico, not far from the old imperial capital of Tenochtitlan. Sahagún effectively used this location to found the Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco, a missionary school charged with the spiritual education of young indigenous noble children, survivors of the wars of conquest. The colegio also served as a clearinghouse to train them in the Castilian language and European arts. Using his sojourn to learn, document, and reproduce the intricacies of the Nahuatl language, Sahagún encountered fundamental conceptual, political, and cosmological dilemmas that were emblematic of the Spanish missionary experience (Caraccioli 2021). As he sought to make sense of the veritable "Forest, Garden and Orchard of the Mexican Language" (Sahagún 1963, 88), he documented how indigenous idioms operated, as well as the spiritual opportunities that could emerge from this interlingual exchange. Yet that immersion came at the price of the perceived religious and cultural accommodations of indigenous beliefs, ultimately leading to censure.

What for Sahagún began as a rooting out of idolatry evolved into a profound immersion that generated the first grammars, translations, and ethnographies of the Nahuatl language and its people (León-Portilla 2002). Such constitutive moments form part of an ostensibly more *relational* civilizational narrative than what is typically referenced, one that took conscript indigenous scribes and translators as interlocutors to make imperial rule possible. The spread of empire via the mutual imposition and study of language thus shaped both indigenous and settler colonial subjectivities alike.

In this spirit, translation is not just a part of early modern global politics, it is the core of why global politics matters at all. As agents of the Spanish Empire sought to make sense of new landscapes and cultures, they seized and relied on the skills of go-betweens that could effectively demystify entire societies. Mobile and often excluded from their original communities, interpreters were both indispensable and highly coveted. They were often women who were forced into positions of sexual codependence with European men, serving later as foils within grand narratives of national origins (Faery 1999). And although the loyalties of indigenous translators were often suspect, they were recipients of distinct powers and privileges that buttressed their status as native informants.

In the next section, I rethink the basis on which scholars of global politics can afford (rather than deny) greater agency to the indigenous translator considering their liminality. It's a position that, despite their role in the production of colonial translation, has received little scholarly attention as central to colonial cultures of knowledge production.

En Otras Palabras: In-Between Worlds and the Archives of Translation

I turn here next to the story of the indigenous translator—and much maligned "mother" of the Mexican nation—the Nahua woman known as La Malinche. Given away into slavery as a child, she was "liberated" by Cortés in 1519 during his march toward Tenochtitlan, having been offered to him as a gift by Mayan vassals in the region of Tabasco in southeastern Mexico. Often dubbed by historians as Doña Maria to reflect her transformed social status within New Spain's embryonic caste system, ethnohistorians refer to her as Malinalli, or, Malintzin.

Malintzin represents the most well-known of relatively elite women whose lives would become paradigmatic examples of the intersection between gender, language, and territorial power across the so-called Age of Discovery. In Pamela Scully's view, while these are prominent and dominant narratives that remain even today, the danger is that they "[dampen] our appreciation of the experience of other women and of the widespread daily work women did for Europeans in the earliest years of conquest and centralization" (2005). The challenge here, then, becomes twofold. First, how do we honor Malintzin's example to highlight what her journey likely conveys about the fate of other translators—men and women alike? Second, what are the archives from which we can draw both narrative content and forms to speak about the legacy of her life and work today?

As Camilla Townsend writes, Malintzin's life with Cortés saw her "catapulted to the very center of the drama of two continents colliding" (2006, 2). That Malintzin is often regarded as a traitor to her people, rather than as a savvy navigator of Cortés's efforts to conquer the Aztec Empire, illustrates the power of "grand narratives" to occlude the interlingual nuance and complexity of the Spanish-Nahua encounter in the New World. Indeed, Malintzin's story is paralleled by hundreds if not thousands of other indigenous interpreters, scribes, and illustrators—particularly women—who literally rendered comprehensible the political vocabulary of the New World to European tongues, albeit at the price of being made invisible for centuries (Karttunen 1994, xi–xiv).

Like those countless others, Malintzin's story challenges several features of the Spanish American conquest narrative: for one, her actions go beyond the literary authority of the male "participant observer," instead illustrating what "other Indian women like her . . . were forced to confront . . . in their own lives" (Townsend 2006, 5) as the conquests raged. Her role in the conquest itself, however, showcases the centrality of interlingual encounters in politics, particularly by individuals at the intersection of world-historical transformations. How a young noble girl, given away to facilitate her stepbrother's familial ascension, later handed over to Spanish conquistadores as a conventional war prize, goes on to become the central negotiator and advisor to Cortés, his mistress and mother to their child and a mixed-race people, all before her death at the age of thirty is the story of epics. And although scholars have debated the evidentiary substance of Malintzin's journey, the power of her example resonates with us today as a living *interlingual memory*, albeit one that often serves revanchist political purposes.

Like the Franciscan missionaries who would later lead the spiritual conquest of Mexico, Malintzin quickly learned Castilian to leverage her knowledge of regional dialects and customs. In the eyes of Nahuas, Mayans, and Spaniards alike, she became a crucial go-between for exchange, communication, and conversion, facets of translation that reflect the embedded character of the interlingual encounters she witnessed. But more important than the literal languages she mastered was, according to Stephen Greenblatt, her "being in a state of circulation . . . at once a figure on the margins and at the center, both an outcast and a great lady . . . and it is not surprising that she has continued to function in our own time as a resonant, deeply ambivalent symbol, half-divinity, half-whore, the savior and the betrayer" (1991, 142–43). Greenblatt's emphasis on Malintzin's representational prowess echoes Todorov's own emphasis on the Spaniards' semiotic dexterity with words and symbols. Through that same lens, for him, Malintzin becomes "the supreme instance of the go-between in the New World but as an emblem of the vast process of cultural translation that the discovery initiated" (1991, 145). But as with Sahagún, what if instead of focusing on her symbolic and interpretive propensities, we emphasized what Malintzin *did*, *facilitated*, and what she *helps us remember* from the encounter with Spanish (language) and empire? What if Malintzin just happened to be the right person, living at the right moment, and knowing how to pursue the right path available to her given the circumstances?

As Bernal Díaz del Castillo recounts in the *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (*The True History of the Conquest of New Spain*), his memoirs of the Mexican conquest, Malintzin's professed skill was not simply the product of confidence, but of the otherwise tragic fate many other women faced through conquest. By Castillo's own version of events, Malintzin simply knew how to read the room, and was recognized as such by Cortés to his great fortune:

> I want to talk about doña Marina, how from childhood she was a great lady and *cacica* [queen, princess] over towns and vassals. . . . Her father and mother were lords and *caciques* of a town, Painala, eight leagues from the town of Guazacualco, and other towns were subject to it. Her father died when she was a very small child, and her mother married another young *cacique* with whom she had a son and, it seemed, they loved him very much, and the father and mother agreed that he should become cacique after their deaths. To avoid any obstacles, one night they gave the child, doña Marina, to some Indians from Xicalango so she would not be seen. At that same time, the child of one of their Indian slaves died, and they announced that the one who had died was the heiress doña Marina. . . . As doña Marina was such an excellent woman and good interpreter in all the wars of New Spain, Tlaxcala, and Mexico, Cortés always had her with him. . . . Doña Marina had a great presence and commanded absolutely among all the Indians in New Spain. (Díaz del Castillo 2012, 54–55)

While she herself holds a vital place in the conquest of Mexico, there were many other indigenous interpreters like Malintzin—both potential and actual—if we consider that the broader history of New World conquest goes beyond the Aztec Empire. However, stories like Malintzin's are themselves subject to the same politics of translation that interpreters like her participated in. Malintzin is no stranger to political controversy: the very same reason she is remembered at all is the controversy. That her name is often used pejoratively to describe the ways that indigenous women survived during the trials of conquest (she is often disparaged as *la chingada*, or the fucked one) only adds to the difficulty of theorizing political languages beyond their role in war.

Malintzin's experience as a translator of (and for) empire makes her story more than just a *disclosing* of events surrounding the interlingual encounter between Spain and the New World. Rather, to paraphrase Rolena Adorno, her story is an *event in itself* (Adorno 2007, 4–11). To that end, the stories translators tell may require multiple avenues of interrogation including gender, race, and ethnohistory; but none of these are more powerful—as the chapters by Reshetnikov, Costa Lopez, and de Jong in this volume hauntingly show—than asking what translators themselves do and how they are remembered for it. The archive that holds their stories thus possesses the very same sense of indebtedness to relational memory (or lack thereof) that conquerors and conquered alike share.

In the final section of this chapter, I examine how these interlingual circumstances have been neglected in the historiography of International Relations, not least because of the field's imperial origins and Eurocentric conceptions of agency. By looking at how language and translation are relegated in the Anglophone study of global politics, my aim is to reveal and trouble the dominant paradigm of conquest that informs the field's readings of the past and arguably continues to color its aspirations for the future.

Paradigms of Conquest and the Politics of Historiography

While vital to the emergence of colonial Spanish America as a site of imperial knowledge production, the stories of missionary friars, captive indigenous women, and the eclectic avenues taken to translate indigenous languages has not received much attention in histories of global politics. Though a part of that exclusion is perhaps tied to scholarly suspicions concerning the evangelizing motives of missionary work, more flagrant is IR's lack of engagement with Spanish and indigenous language sources, translations, and authors writ large. The same can be said of Chinese and Mongolian concepts (see Cheney's chapter in this volume), the cultural hegemony of Persian (see Lahijani's chapter in this volume), and not least the Iraqi and Afghan interpreters who made the American encounter with Arabic and Pashto possible (see de Jong's and Menton's chapters). As much of this volume has highlighted, however, translation is an indispensable feature of the reflexivity needed to unpack logics of domination in global politics. Histories of translation in the context of conquest narratives are particularly key for the study of how *interlingual relations* shape *political relations*, both past and present. As I examined above, interlinguality also serves as a means of interrupting the infrastructure of colonial administration and, as I aim to show below, potentially upending extant paradigms of conquest that shape scholarly production.

The absence of Spanish sources—and by extension the indigenous vernaculars that Spaniards mastered (or attempted to) in their imperial endeavors—is reflective of IR's own conquest narrative as a field of colonial administration (Schmidt 1997; Vitalis 2015). Central to this narrative is the Liberal appropriation of that colonial legacy, whereby early efforts to manage race wars and calls for decolonization were sublimated into the clarion call for self-determination—first for some, perhaps later for others (Vitalis 2010; Barder 2021). As historians of colonial Spanish America have similarly shown, the early modern past has also been subject to the same hagiographic tendencies, whereby settler-colonial projects led by English and French Creoles have been made more palatable in juxtaposition to the Spanish colonial experience (Cañizares-Esguerra 2006; Street 2019). To be fair, early expositions of a Spanish "White Legend"—whereby the textual and legal interventions of priests, philosophers, and jurists formed part of a broader "Spanish struggle for justice" against military exploitation—have also risked downplaying the nuances of linguistic domination (Hanke 1971; Keen 1971).

Paying attention to the specific roles that translators and interpreters played in these formative moments would be an important step in interrupting the colonial infrastructure that still colors IR's grappling with the study of comparative colonialisms. Indeed, there are some important exceptions in the field, as many notable figures within IR's intellectual landscape have drawn attention to the difference that Spanish America made for the birth of global politics (Alker 1992; Campbell 1992, 111–18; Boucher 1998, 202–9). Few of these studies, however, have reflected on what role the actual translation of the New World played in its subjugation to the whims of the Old. The relation remains one where the metropole's status is legitimated in the eyes of its fellow empires, while its colonies remain peripheral possessions with little autonomy to show for their intellectual culture beyond mimicry (Bhabha 1984).

As Subotic's chapter in this volume notes, IR's Anglophonic bias is key to this conceptual reproduction. Without immersion in the linguistic intricacies of encounters, legal codes, and accompanying social challenges, studies of the global political past all too often lead to the reinvention of preexisting debates and exchanges, as well as to the further exclusion of works that tackle the ambiguous place of "native" expertise as sources of global insight (Zarakol 2010; Rabasa 2011; Barkawi 2017; Wigen 2018). The polemics of Spanish missionaries, jurists, and their native scribes are replaced by the writings of colonial bureaucrats who did not venture to learn the language of subjugated peoples, but rather exported the emerging idiom of "modern" political thought to the New World sans earlier spiritual disputations (Silverblatt 2008; Premo 2017).

Yet as contemporary IR scholars aim to rectify the Eurocentric basis on which international knowledge is produced, the field would be well served to consider the histories and lived experiences of subalterns beyond merely being producers of their own knowledge. Rather, as interlingual encounters of the past show, subaltern translators—both indigenous and European—are also arbiters of *what counts as knowledge at all*. As an interpretive strategy for studying the global politics of translation, conquest narratives are themselves products of global politics and constitutive of its theoretical possibilities. They curate the deeds and legacies of conquering heroes, as well as teach conquered peoples how to recount the story of their downfall. That these genres are further reproduced in texts and classrooms today only serves to further cement their linguistic exclusion. To begin any discussion of the logic of encounters with Columbus, Cortés, or even the putative "father of international law," jurist Francisco de Vitoria, while neglecting the Taino, Nahua, and Quechua interlocutors they drew from, effectively erases the way interlinguality makes the native informant a relevant agent at all. More than relevance, however, the concept of the native informant reifies a liminal status that can neither return to the relations of the past nor assume a stable identity in a colonial future. Yet, in practice, stability is precisely one of the things that serving as a translator could (and did) afford an indigenous conscript. While the goal of the conqueror—military and religious—is always one of subjugation, indoctrination, and domination, their political position did not preclude the accommodation of the artisan, laborer, concubine, or scribe. Indeed, for many indigenous translators, collaboration was a means of attaining more than just mere survival. But conquest is a doubly harmful logic: it promotes exclusion of the very immersive inquiries that make it effective.

Histories of global politics regularly detract attention from this crucial pedagogy of indoctrination, focusing instead on the retroactive act of turning the past into an anticipation of present concerns. Imperial domination becomes one-dimensional and deterministic: good empires beget civilization; bad empires engender barbarism. Nebrija's own reasoning again merits consideration here, as one of the aims of grammar books was indoctrination aimed at building a larger, better society. His reflections on the marriage between language and empire were not only hegemonic in character (for who would question the nobility of Latin), but also allegedly tutelary and intent on cultivating a spirit of learned upbringing:

> After Your Highness has subjected barbarous peoples and nations of varied tongues, with conquest will come the need for them to accept the laws that the conqueror imposes on the conquered, and among them our language; with this work of mine, they will be able to learn it, as we now learn Latin from the Latin Grammar. (Kamen 2002, 3; Nebrija 2014, 14)

Nebrija's paradigm is one such example of the determinism underlying conquest narratives. The rules of language, themselves born out of the experience of Iberian (re)conquest, serve to establish the boundaries and aims for new territories. Language thus becomes a central pillar of the infrastructure of colonial administration. As I show above, though, it is far from ready-made or incapable of reformulation.

Monumental ethnographies like Sahagún's *Florentine Codex* (1963) reveal the necessary linguistic sophistication and profoundly relational character of imperial politics in the New World. For example, the men who served as illustrators, surveyors, and interpreters of Sahagún's queries (known as *tlamatinimeh*, or simply, wise men) were part of a broader intellectual tradition of indigenous writers described by Kelly McDonough as "agents of their own discourses and agendas" (2014, 4). Though they wrote and labored under the shadow of empire, they were nevertheless "concerned with the more esoteric or abstract tasks of producing and interpreting knowledge, and . . . with the more technical, artisanal practice of recording these knowledges" (2014, 11). Hence the translation of conquered worlds and cosmologies served to strengthen, not dilute, the dissemination of imperial ideology. In effect, the means for modern imperial domination and appropriation are found in the very crucible of translation.

A generous reading of all these encounters would venture to say that the master's language evolved alongside the efforts of learned men to capture what the indigenous conscript brought with them for a future civilization in the Americas. Yet unpacking what it takes to learn a conquered people's language also merits reflecting on what learning a master's tongue entails (Ling 2002; Vasko 2019). In being forced to collaborate with a conqueror, the translator becomes a liminal figure with divided agency: a transformer of words and worlds, but also a betrayer (i.e., *traditore*) of words and nations

(Bassnett and Trivedi 1999; Edwards 2010). Therefore, on the other side of liminality is the constant threat of disappearing from the record altogether. A conqueror's go-between can become a nationalist's pariah. What the vignettes, texts, and stories above illustrate, however, is that memories never truly recede, if you know how they continue to speak.

Conclusion: Global Politics as Imperial Translation

Why does this matter today and specifically to the study of global politics? Translation not only occurs on a two-way spectrum between conqueror and conquered, but ultimately shapes historical understanding of why a conflict ever took place at all. This is a political encounter that relates to domination not only as an obstacle, but as the *precondition* for any future freedom. As Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra (2001) has documented, how to write the history of the New World was and remains a question full of robust responses that cut across politics, ideology, methodology, and transatlantic spaces. But translation is also a concern with how we belong to language before belonging to ourselves. Who gets to write the histories of domination, and how we convey these in our own rendering of the world, is an equally if not more urgent question in times of genocide, displacement, fake news, academic hoaxes, and generalized suspicion over the power of stories—shockingly, of both perpetrators and victims alike—and the languages they employ to convince us of the justness and urgency of their causes. Imagine what it would take for us to learn just one of those new languages; to learn not just what people under duress are saying, but also who's making them say it.

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CHAPTER 8

Kidnap Yourself a Translator

The Social Embedding of Translation in First Encounters

Julia Costa Lopez

As Mauro Caraccioli and Einar Wigen highlight in the introduction to this volume, "interlingual relations is the unacknowledged core of global politics."[1] In other words, international politics cannot—and should not—be thought of without considering the politics of linguistic difference. Attentive to this fact, and seeking to challenge old (positivist) common sense that understood translation as a technical craft focused on "getting it right" (Herborth 2021), recent studies on the politics of translation in international relations have sought to show the myriad ways in which the entanglement between two linguistic contexts is negotiated, contested, and ultimately productive (Çapan, dos Reis, and Grasten 2021a; Wigen 2018, 2015; Caraccioli et al. 2021). These studies have provided insightful contributions not only about the notion and theory of translation itself but also about the centrality of linguistic difference and the many roles translation plays in world politics. A consequence of seeking to dismantle the problematic notion of smooth interlingual translation that has too long characterized Anglophone IR scholarship, however, has been that this new literature has located the politics of translation in the act of translation itself. For example, by looking at the way in which certain concepts were incorporated into Turkish, Wigen points not only to the fundamental reformulations and reinterpretations in meaning that take place in translation, but also to the ways in which they were used in the context of evolving political contestation within the Ottoman Empire (Wigen 2018, 2015). Similarly, in the case of East Asia, scholars have shown how processes of translation of concepts such as suzerainty were essential for the creation and maintenance of hierarchies and ultimately the production of specific identities (Cheney 2017; Liu 2004).

In this chapter I consider a different aspect of the politics of interlingual relations. Rather than asking about the politics of specific translations I inquire into how translations become possible in the first place, that is, into the social embeddedness of translation. I do so by examining the politics of translation surrounding a quintessential example for the problem of a language barrier: first encounters. Specifically, I focus on the African Atlantic region in the century and a half preceding the Columbian travels. Although most of the IR literature has focused on the exceptionality of the "discovery of America" (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004; Jahn 2000; see Costa Lopez et al. 2024), we know that encounters between peoples who did not previously know one another repeatedly occurred both before and after 1492. Starting in the mid-fourteenth century, a series of expeditions by European sailors, merchants, and missionaries ventured progressively further south along the African Atlantic coast. In doing so, they encountered a number of peoples that were previously unknown to them. This posed significant communication challenges, and ultimately led to the development of a historically specific set of translation practices. In unpacking the historical development of these translation practices a distinct side of the politics of translation comes to view: one that instead of interrogating interlinguality from the perspective of meaning and incommensurability foregrounds the politics of the social contexts that make translation possible.

The Problem of Language in Early Exploration: Translation and the Possibility of Social Relations

The Mediterranean coast of Africa had been the site of intense interactions for centuries, but in the early to mid-fourteenth century an increasing number of European[2] expeditions ventured further south on the African Atlantic coast (Russell 1995; Fernández-Armesto 1987). While many of the archipelagos in the Atlantic, such as the Canary Islands and the Azores, were well known by the early fifteenth century, the circumnavigation of and acquaintance with Africa took longer. It was only in the 1440s that European expeditions reached the Senegambian region and the peoples that lived in it,[3] and it took until the late 1460s to reach the Gulf of Guinea, and until 1489 to arrive at the southernmost cape of the African continent. In this context, where each sailing expedition went further than the previous one along territories characterized by a multiplicity of languages and relatively isolated communities, the problem of communication became paramount.

A first-person travel narrative of two of these trips by Alvise Ca' da Mosto (Cadamosto) provides an example of how challenging the interlingual nature of first encounters was. Ca' da Mosto was a Venetian trader who first sailed to explore the Atlantic coast of Africa in 1454 under the auspices of Prince Henrique of Portugal. By his own admission motivated by both a desire for wealth and for fame (Ca' da Mosto 1507, 2v),[4] he undertook several trips where he attempted to establish new trade relations with previously unknown peoples in West Africa. In his second expedition in 1456, Ca' da Mosto explored the area of the Mansoa River, in present-day Guinea-Bissau, where he encountered some people who came out to his two ships in canoes and raised something that he saw as a white flag. Having done the same, both groups approached one another, at which point Ca' da Mosto recounts that:

> I, wanting to understand these people [*generatio*], made my interpreters [*turcimani*] speak to them, but none could understand what they said to them, nor could any of the ones in the other Caravel. Upon realising this I was very displeased, and ultimately we left without being able to understand them. Seeing that we were in a new land [*paese*] where we could not be understood, we concluded that advancing further was pointless, as we thought we would keep finding new languages, and thus would not be able to achieve anything worthwhile. And thus we decided to go back. (Ca' da Mosto 1507, 41r-v)

In the context of this, and one has to suppose many other fifteenth-century expeditions, the problem of language was in many cases insurmountable. Ca' da Mosto's own narrative provides up to two more encounters with peoples where any prospect not only of trade and collaboration, but also of coexistence within the same space, had to be abandoned in the face of absolute communication breakdown (Ca' da Mosto 1507). In a context where sailing explorations were becoming increasingly frequent, and where trading relations were being established with a variety of peoples previously unknown to Europeans, the interlingual problem posed a serious challenge to the goals—and even safety—of the expeditions that needed to be solved for any meaningful social relation to be possible.

Taking this as the starting point to explore the politics of translation immediately draws attention to the importance of centering translation as enabling sustained social relations. The link between translation and connection is frequently made in the literature. Pinar Bilgin, for example, remarks that focusing on translation is nothing less than studying "connections between things" (Bilgin 2021, 248)—where both the things and the connections cannot substantively be thought of as independent—while Einar Wigen understands translation as an act of "yoking together meaning between two repertoires or languages" (Wigen 2018, 14). The examples above make the stakes transparent: the yoking of context, the connection of things is ultimately about the possibility of sustained relations. As a result, I want to suggest, we cannot only situate the politics of translation in the incommensurability of meanings and the ensuing negotiation, transformation, and contestation, but also need to interrogate the conditions under which commensurability—that is, connection, yoking—becomes possible.

Social Practices of Interlingual Mediation

How was the problem of communication in first encounters along the African Atlantic overcome? The framing of this communication breakdown as a problem need not lead to a functionalist scheme of problem-solution. On the contrary, understanding translation as sustaining social relations immediately brings up its situated character as a historically and geographically specific practice, the conditions of possibility of which need to be unpacked. Indeed, in the remainder of the chapter, I proceed with unpacking the conditions of possibility for the overcoming of the language barrier in the African Atlantic in an effort to call attention to the politics of making translation possible. Specifically, I trace the development of a specific social position devoted to mediating this interlingual situation: the captive translator.

European explorers resorted to a variety of practices in order to overcome the language barrier. A first possibility would be for travelers themselves to learn more than one language, so as to be able to communicate. This was of course a long-established practice, but it was characteristic of contexts with stable interlingual relations, especially in communities that would allow for regular travel or spending time in other places such as merchants. In the case of African Atlantic encounters, records do not appear to show that many of the travelers learned local languages as part of their trips. There are of course a few isolated exceptions, dating mostly to the end of the fifteenth century, and notable among these is the case of missionaries. Indeed, in the case of the Canary Islands, which were explored from the 1340s onwards, the early establishment of a Christian diocese in Tenerife for the conversion of the indigenous populations allowed at least some missionaries to learn the local language (Rumeu de Armas 1960; Sarmiento Pérez 2008).

When taking into account all the Iberian trips into the African Atlantic, however, this was more the exception than the rule. Indeed, most travelers relied on translators and interpreters in order to communicate during their trips. In the earlier quote, for example, Ca' da Mosto mentioned the presence of interpreters in his expedition. Indeed, while some of the core members of an expedition were multilingual, all expeditions included at least one interpreter to facilitate relations, and in many cases more than that: famously, when Vasco da Gama arrived in India in 1498, his expedition included no less than seventeen translators (Hein 2013, 41). My contention in this chapter is that examining the social positioning of this group shows how a stable social role emerged at the intersection of a variety of practical contexts with distinct, overlapping, and sometimes contradictory rationalities and politics. This reinforces the idea that a consideration of the politics of interlingual relations also needs to take into account how they become possible in the first place.

That we can speak of a specific social position rather than of a disjointed set of individuals is evidenced by the existence in contemporary sources of a vocabulary to refer to these interpreters. In some cases, such as the aforementioned Italian travelogue of Ca' da Mosto they are referred as *turcimani*, or in French and Spanish sources as *trucheman* and *trujaman*, respectively. Originally probably an Arabic or Aramaic word, dragomans were an established institution in the medieval Mediterranean, particularly in Muslim polities, where they served as interpreters and as part of diplomatic missions (Rothman 2014).[5] The use of the word in an Atlantic exploration context thus shows the extent to which these trips were embedded in a Mediterranean cross-cultural tradition and drew from long-standing practices and institutions. These continuity lines in the institution of interpreters are also evident in another term used to describe them: *lingua* or *lengua*, which is predominant in Portuguese and Spanish sources. While late-medieval uses of this term are already fairly common, this became one of the core ways of describing the interpreters and translators in the Iberian empires in America (Valdeón 2014).

But what was the origin of translators in these early first encounters? What was their social background and training? The main way of procuring translators was the practice of taking captive a few individuals among the local population and taking them back to either a Christian stronghold or the place of origin of the expedition for baptism and language training (Fayer 2002; Sarmiento Pérez 2011; Pinheiro 2009). These captives could then serve as translators in successive expeditions. The role of captives in mediating in multilingual contexts is a long-established practice, not only in the Mediterranean but also beyond (see, e.g., Karttunen 1994). In the case of these translators along the Atlantic, however, we are talking about capture for the explicit purpose of translating rather than as one of the activities undertaken by captives. The practice seems to have started as an improvised solution at the same time as the expeditions into the African Atlantic. For example, records show that already in 1351, merely nine years after the first expeditions by Mallorcan sailors to the Canary Islands, there were at least twelve native Canarians living and working in Mallorca (Rumeu de Armas 1960, 33). In 1352, when a new expedition was prepared, these twelve persons who in the ten years they spent (captive) in Mallorca had been taught Catalan, returned to the islands and served as translators between the Mallorcans and the local peoples.

The Practical Contexts of Slave-Interpreters

By the fifteenth century, this was an established practice rather than an improvised mechanism.[6] Ca' da Mosto gives one of the most extensive descriptions of the practice from contemporary sources:

> Each of our ships had Black interpreters [*turcimani*] brought with us from Portugal. These interpreters were black slaves sold by the Lord of Senegal to the first Portuguese Christians who came to discover the said land of the Blacks. And these slaves were made Christian in Portugal: and they knew well the Spanish language. We had procured them from their masters, with the agreement of giving them one slave of their choosing from our lot for their work as translators. (Ca' da Mosto 1507, 28v)

It was thus through kidnapped interpreters that stable social relations were made possible in African Atlantic encounters. In other words, translation in the context of these interactions was made possible through violence. And yet, this was not spontaneous violence but rather a routinized social practice. In this section I unpack the various practices—understood as semantically constituted practical contexts—that enabled this routinization of violence and with which the role of the slave-interpreter was entangled.

A first context is transparently provided by Ca' da Mosto referring to these interpreters as "slaves." Indeed, in both the Spanish and Portuguese cases, the procurement of translators from the mid-fifteenth century onward was partly embedded in the incipient Atlantic slave trade, whereby African and Canarian coastal peoples would either (initially) be raided and taken captive or (later) acquired as captives from local rulers and then be sold in various ports in the Iberian Peninsula. Some of these captives would then serve as translators in successive trips, hence the current historiographical term "slave-interpreters" or slave-interpreter system (see, e.g., Curto 2007; Jackson-Eade 2018). The slave trade was not only the broader practice in which the kidnapping of translators was embedded, but was also an important rationality in generating the situation that gave rise to the need for interpreters in the first place. Indeed, the opportunity to establish new commercial relations and find commodities like gold had been an important motivation for the first European expeditions to venture into the African Atlantic coast. The reported ease with which these expeditions raided coastal populations and arrived with slaves to be sold in the peninsula has been seen as stimulating further trips and ultimately the development of a slave trade. At the same time, slavery was by no means a new social practice in Iberian polities. On the contrary, medieval slavery was a well-developed and legally regulated institution that had particularly flourished in the context of the conflicts between Christian and Muslim polities in the peninsula. Thus, enslaved translators stood at the intersection of both long-standing and changing (Iberian) slavery and slave-trade practices.

At the same time, however, merely subsuming the social positioning of translators under the broad system of the slave trade (both Medieval and incipiently Atlantic) would be reductionist, as various other social practices and rationalities also came into play. A first sign of this is the fact that the procurement of translators in this manner was not just a pragmatic, routinized solution within the slave trade system, but rather had separate legal bases of justification from the beginning of the Atlantic explorations—justifications that drew from both existing Iberian regulation of slavery in terms of Just War and from other political processes (Ireton 2020). Royal Portuguese grants for navigation included the explicit authorization (and requirement) for expeditions to bring back some indigenous men and women to be trained as translators. In the account of the travels of Captain Sintra, for example, we find the following explanation:

> Three of the blacks boarded the caravel and of these three, the Portuguese took one and allowed the others to leave. This they did to abide by the commandment of their King, who had instructed them that from the farthest land they reached, if they did not want to go further

> lest they were not understood by those people, they were to try to bring him one of those Blacks of the country, be it willingly or by force, so that they could hear from him about his country -whether through one of the many Black interpreters [*turzimani*] that are in Portugal or with time if he learned to speak. (Ca' da Mosto 1507, 44v)

What were the social practices at play in this injunction? The practical context and rationalities become more evident if we examine the earliest known case of this royal order. As early as 1436, Prince Henrique of Portugal had instructed Captain Gil Eannes to "go as far as you can try to take an interpreter from among these people. Surely you know that seizing someone through whom we can become familiar with this land would in no small way carry out my aspirations" (Hein 2013, 42). As this reveals, these expeditions, and the enslaved translators that enabled them, were not only embedded in a context with a slave-trade, commercial rationality but also in the process of the production and consolidation of royal authority. Indeed, many of these trips were undertaken under royal authorization grants, be it of the king of Mallorca, of Portugal, or of Castile who would, in the act of authorizing the expedition, claim for themselves the authority to regulate trade in the region and in some cases the overall lordship in the newly encountered territories.

While in the case of the Canary Islands these claims were put forward in a context of actual conquest, the self-attribution by the Portuguese monarchy of the title of Lords of Guinea (O'Callaghan 1993) highlights the importance of understanding this as a practical semantic context of authorization of authority rather than an effective deployment of direct coercive power (Costa Lopez 2020). And yet kidnapped translators emerged in this context of attempts at consolidation of Iberian monarchies within which the formal authorization of expeditions, kidnapping, and regulation of trade was itself also a claim to the authority of the monarch.

Finally, secular rulers and commercial purposes were not the only practical contexts at play. As is well known, missionary rationalities played a key role in Atlantic exploration both in Africa and later in Asia and the Americas (McClure 2017). Already in the fourteenth century, shortly after the reentry of the Canary Islands into the European imagination, we can identify a practical missionary context that justified conquest and exploration in terms of evangelization of non-Christian peoples, and (kidnapped) native translators were seen as a strategic part of this effort. In 1351, for example, Pope Clement VI sanctioned the use of captured natives who had been taught Catalan and converted to Christianity as helpers in the missionary efforts of various expeditions, "so that it will be easier to bring people to the guardianship of the apostolic community" (Rumeu de Armas 1960, 152-3, docs. 4 and 5). Interestingly, the relation of the practical missionary context to the enslavement of most translators is ambiguous. Indeed, papal pronouncements would just mention the native and infidel status of the translators, and on one occasion, the fact that they were formerly enslaved but had been manumitted by the captain of the expedition (Rumeu de Armas 1960, 152). Besides this, however, papal and missionary pronouncements sidestep the legal status of the translators. This brings to light the ambiguous underpinnings and rationalities at play in the missionary effort. Beyond the existing ambiguity about the characterization and principles of relation with non-Christians in medieval Church discourse (Costa Lopez 2016), the legal and moral articulation of slavery in Church thought is a matter of much debate—both historical and historiographical (Avalos 2014; Panzer 1996). But in any case, the kidnapping of translators was also enabled by this missionizing context and its contradictions.

Beyond a Single Understanding of Power in Translation

The position of a captive translator in first encounters emerged therefore embedded in a variety of social practices and rationalities: from trade and slavery to conquest and Christianization. Although varied, however, I have so far unpacked these different practices as enabling the violence of kidnapping and thus implied a very hierarchical relation between the captive translators and the Iberian explorers and rulers for whom they translated, and one that is consistent with the power dynamics that postcolonial literature has identified in the binary colonizer/colonized. While this hierarchy and violence were undoubtedly central to the position of the captive translator, this section seeks to problematize the extent to which the activity of interlingual mediation of these translators is reducible to it. In doing so, it draws on a long list of scholars who have sought to understand the dynamics of resistance, brokerage, and mediation undertaken by what the introduction to this volume refers to as intermediaries (Caraccioli and Wigen in this volume). By examining a few historical situations and practices involved in the translation of first encounters, this section shows that the constellation of power dynamics involved is far more complex than a binary of colonizer/colonized or even power/resistance would capture.

At a very basic level, the interlingual challenge that we saw in Ca' da Mosto's account—that is, the difficulties in establishing relations in a context where communication was impossible—made translators indispensable, and as such empowered them in a way that is not captured if we reduce them to victims of the incipient slave trade. Thus, several accounts record how slave-interpreters used their position as intermediaries to derail specific deals, or to create the circumstances for their liberation (Hein 2013; Sarmiento Pérez 2008).

The heterogeneity of the social embeddedness of translators, however, goes beyond the strategic use of the intermediary position of the translator for their own advantage or to derail a particular situation. Indeed, having unpacked the practical social contexts within which the position of the captive translator was embedded we can also appreciate how these translators could maneuver within these contexts in ways that at once resisted and reinforced them. For example, medieval law about slavery—though itself varied—had an important anchor in the regulation of slavery in Roman law. And central within this was the possibility for manumission, that is, the possibility of a slave acquiring their freedom be it because of the will of the master or by purchasing it (Caldeira 2020). Slavery was thus not necessarily permanent or associated with particular beliefs about biology or ethnicity, but rather was understood as a condition that could very well be temporary. For the captive interpreters, therefore, this was also a possibility.

A few contemporary accounts describe the workings of manumission for these interpreters. Ca' da Mosto, for example, mentions that "giving each of them four slaves, the masters let them go and set them free" (Ca' da Mosto 1507, 28 verso). That is, if slave-translators, in their work on the ships, provided their masters with four more slaves they could be set free. The condition for manumission was thus in these cases active contribution to the slave trade rationality that had given rise to their condition in the first place. It is uncertain how frequent this was, but we know that there were a number of burgeoning black freed-slave communities in Iberian cities at the time (Caldeira 2020; Ireton 2017).

The location of captive translators at the intersection of a variety of practical contexts sometimes created broader possibilities, however. The case of Joao Garrido serves to illustrate this point (Curto 2007). Born in the Guinea Coast, João Garrido was taken captive and served as a slave-interpreter on many trips. After attempting to flee on his last-known trip, in 1477 he was able to have a petition delivered to the prince of Portugal, Dom João,[7] asking to be freed. In the articulation of his petition for freedom we begin to see how the various practical contexts outlined above intersected and could be navigated by the captive translators. Having already attempted to escape on his last known trip, Joao assured the prince that he did not flee because he wanted to apostatize to Islam (*nom por tornase mouro*) but rather because he did not want to live in captivity any longer. The evangelizing rationality of the Atlantic missions—on which not only the pope but also the monarchy relied—was therefore safeguarded. Referencing the system of manumission for captive translators mentioned in the accounts above, he also made clear that he had already served well on a number of expeditions. His petition went further than this, however, for he asked not only to be freed but also to be allowed to return to Portugal in order to continue serving the prince as a "good and loyal subject," thus effectively reinforcing the position of the monarchy. In granting his petition, Prince Joao further demonstrates the practical entanglements of the different rationalities. For in a move that reinforces the "paternalistic" discourse of the monarchy in the process of consolidation, the crown granted his freedom on the understanding that it did "good to the public of this Kingdom" and because he was useful for the "trade in Guinea from which so many benefits are obtained" (see also Curto 2007, 316). What is more, the prince also granted him an exemption to the royal tax to all the goods that he may want to bring from Guinea, that is, an authorization to engage himself in the (slave) trade that had given rise to his condition in the first place. This case shows not only a more flexible enslavement arrangement, whereby slave-interpreters could effectively be freed, but as Curto (2007) highlights, how the positionality of these interpreters enabled them to also use the Iberian cultural framework of their masters to their own advantage. At the same time, it also shows how the politics of translation in this case cannot be reduced to either an act of resistance nor to a mere reproduction of social rationalities at play.

Conclusion: The Politics of Translation

Where does this then leave us in examining the politics of translation and interlinguality in international relations? In one of the most famous takes on translation in the philosophy of language, Willard Van Orman Quine posited a hypothetical first encounter between a field linguist and a previously unknown local informant (Herborth 2021). The resulting radical mistranslation demonstrated for him both the inscrutability of reference—the indeterminacy of the relation between word and object—but also holophrastic indeterminacy—the fact that this indeterminacy also applies to whole sentences. For each utterance, therefore, a variety of equally plausible yet mutually incommensurable translations/interpretations are possible absent an understanding of its context, so that we ultimately situate the politics of translation "in a multiplicity of social contexts from which a multiplicity of world-making references become possible" (Herborth 2021, 35). For linguistic-turn-oriented scholarship, the problem of translation is squarely one of incommensurability of social contexts. The resulting politics are thus ones where attention is placed on the "performative and productive dimension of translation . . . [and] how in processes of translation . . . hierarchies are established and torn down, or how boundaries are stabilized and destabilized" (Çapan, dos Reis, and Grasten 2021b, 7).

Interestingly, Ian Hacking criticized Quine—and implicitly others in the philosophy of language—for basing their understanding of language and translation on "logical possibilities, and not [on] what happens in fact." For Hacking, on the contrary, "the remarkable thing about human interaction is that mistranslations are so readily cleared up" (Hacking 2002, 152–53) so that the tales of radical mistranslation would be just that—tales—and we should just develop an understanding of translation that is more sensitive to the actual ways in which translation takes place in human society. And yet the case of captive translators and their social embedding as unpacked in this chapter tells a different story. For starting from radical communication breakdown is not a logical possibility but a historical occurrence in this case, which reminds us, contra Hacking, that successful communication—sustained social interaction—is something that should be interrogated rather than assumed. Contra Quine, however, and going beyond current analyses of the politics of translation, the case also highlights that interrogating the problem and politics of translation cannot (only) be done from the philosophy of language and the notion of incommensurability. For understanding sustained social relations in the face of possible communication breakdown is not a matter of logical possibilities, but rather necessitates a historicized, social-theoretical account that problematizes how translations became possible in the first place.

Notes

1. Research for this chapter was funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO), grant number VI.Veni.191H.048, and by the Research Council of Norway, project number 262657.

2. I am using European in a clearly anachronistic way that should not impute any identity or stability, but rather be understood as a shorthand to indicate geographical origins.

3. I am referring exclusively to sea expeditions by mostly Christian sailors. These societies had prior and extensive land-based contacts with Muslim traders (see Austen 2010).

4. All translations are mine. I am using the 1507 first edition of his trips in Italian. There is also a 1550 edition in Ramusio that seems to be derived from a different manuscript source. There are two common English-translation editions, one from 1811 and one from 1937, but they are unsatisfactory for current use in that they use nineteenth-century loaded language.

5. For a fascinating study of dragomans in the Early Modern Ottoman context, see Rothman 2009.

6. A document from the king of Mallorca gives the impression that the capture of the twelve Canarians had been done without his knowledge or consent (Rumeu de Armas 1960, doc. 6).

7. Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo, Chancelaria da Ordem de Santiago, liv. 1, fo. 64r–65r. A transcription is available in Viterbo 1905 (496). This document is the record of the prince's reply to Joao's letter, and constitutes the basis for my account.

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SECTION III

Translation (and) Order

CHAPTER 9

Morgenthau in Translation

On Languages, Academic Environments, and the Making of International Relations in the United States and Germany

Filipe dos Reis and Oliver Kessler

At first sight, translation appears to be a rather technical and, in the end, an uninspiring enterprise where words are individually replaced from one language into another: the *chair* becomes *la chaise* or *der Stuhl*, and there is then not much more to it. If we think of translations in that way, we may have the army of translators in mind that in every multilateral setting, while sitting in the background, provide instant translations to the audience.[1] At the same time, if we approach translations in that way, we are already caught in a specific understanding of language itself: as Wittgenstein made clear in the opening paragraphs of his *Philosophical Investigations*, it is based on a specific semiotics where words work like price tags that we attach to objects (Wittgenstein 1953). With a changed understanding of what language is and how it operates, the concept of translation becomes more intricate and inevitably drags us into the depth of social theory. It allows us to recast some of the basic questions about meaning, authorship, and contexts.[2] Translation serves as a vantage point to explore the contingency of meaning and the ways in which languages are structured differently (Kessler 2021). Sometimes, it is simply impossible to express the same "thing" as one moves from one language to another. The translation of terms from one language into another then often comes with a change of meaning that loses nuances of what was said.[3] The same author, the same book in two different languages are never absolutely the same.[4] Translation thus is not merely a technical practice, but always incorporates a moment of creativity and hence is always productive and transformative.

This chapter pursues this productive and transformative dimension of translation with regard to the emergence of realism as a dominant approach within the study of International Relations (IR). Over the last couple of years, a growing consensus has emerged that realism was constituted in important ways by German-speaking émigré scholars who had to flee the Nazi regime in the 1930s (see Rösch 2018; Reichwein und Rösch 2021). While IR might have been (and probably still is) a very US-dominated discipline, its origins point beyond the US to the structures and dynamics of the Second World War, if not also to the interwar period and discussions about the state in Weimar Germany. While European intellectuals had to flee, they had to *translate* their ideas and backgrounds in a double sense: they had to translate the concepts and terminology they had grown up with into a new language; and they also had to translate and communicate them into a new academic environment and a new political constellation where the concepts had to circulate and operate.

Whereas those interested in the formative experiences of realism focus on what happened within the US, we are particularly interested in how the realists translated their ideas back into their previous context: what we see is that the retranslation does not work in the sense of going back to the original. Translations do not leave their context unchanged and hence it is not possible to "move back" like in an algebra equation. The retranslation of realism into the German context not only helped to shape a particular German version of realism but contributed to the institutionalization of IR as a distinct subdiscipline of political science in West Germany.

The following section elaborates on the notion of translation that we pursue in this chapter. The discussion then turns to recent contributions on the emergence of realism through the contributions of émigré scholars. Through a reconstruction of the work of Hans J. Morgenthau, we argue that it is possible to zoom in to the dynamics of translations where translation is not merely a one-to-one practice. Instead, we need to understand better how ideas developed in the Weimar context had to operate in the US. Finally, we reconstruct the retranslation of Morgenthau's work and ideas from the US into (West) German academia in the context of the so-called Munich school of synoptic neorealism, which was established by Gottfried-Karl Kindermann from the 1960s onwards. The recourse to Morgenthau and other émigré scholars was important in the German context in the creation of IR as a discrete academic subfield.

The Politics of Translation: Toward Translation as Transformation

Translation is a central but relatively neglected concept in IR that has only recently started to attract more attention. As a heuristic, it is possible to identify three notions of translation, each of which highlights distinct dynamics and, hence, possibilities for political interventions: translation as *transplantation*, as *transmission*, and as *transformation*.[5]

The first notion, translation as *transplantation*, is probably the most common approach to translation: there is a simple and direct one-to-one relation between a source (A) and a target (B). This approach can be found in the basic acts of translations as outlined at the outset of this chapter, where one term in language A is translated into an equivalent term in language B. This is fairly straightforward as long as we can point to objects: the car, the tree, the chair. Things become a bit more complicated when words denote immaterial "objects" like "spirit," "nation," or "soul." We can already witness here how "nation" in the US and "Nation" in Germany work quite differently. A move like "across the nation," which is common in the US, does not exist in Germany.

Yet, even within this approach, questions of politics arise when we look for example at the literature on "epistemic communities." These communities are characterized as "knowledge-based networks" (Haas 1992, 2) and the literature deals with the question of how causal and normative ideas spread and guide collective behavior. As the literature points out, these knowledge-based networks are characterized by struggles between or within epistemic communities to deliver the "best" interpretation. Hence, the struggle over how to interpret a crisis, problem, or development is certainly prone to politics in terms of issue linkages, analogies, and other rhetorical devices. These disputes are resolved, however, when the "common" understanding and "produced truths" are established and they are then transplanted into policy proposals.

A slightly different approach to translation can be found when translation is framed as *transmission*. This second notion of translation works as follows: if we imagine translation again as an operation between contexts A and B, translation as transmission concentrates mainly on the action in context B. We find classic statements in the "second image reversed" literature whose logic works similarly in more recent versions, such as the diffusion of norms. Here the question arises: How do "global" norms and standards get translated into local contexts? (see, for example, Acharya 2004; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; Zimmermann 2017). As the Stanford school of world polity in particular has pointed out, international or global norms get *translated* into local contexts on the basis of prior structures. These structures always make that translation incomplete to the extent that the formal and the material structures are never fully aligned. Every country may now subscribe to the norm that teachers should not beat pupils—but in some countries, the stick is leaning in the corner. Common for these approaches is that the norms themselves are prior to the interactions, that they present themselves as objective force (see Kessler 2016).

A third notion of translation as *transformation* tries to avoid ontologizing and pre-fixing contexts: neither context A nor context B are fully present—as Jacques Derrida would have it—but are continuously reenacted through translations and thereby subject to continuous change. This approach thus tries to zoom into the "trans" part of the term and reconstructs how different asymmetries of power and hierarchies between A and B emerge and become manifest. Translation as transformation thus acknowledges the boundary-making or productive effects of translations. The following two sections pursue this approach in more detail by looking, first, at how the translation of debates in the Weimar Republic into the US context helped to create realism as an approach. This process has already been subject to debate among IR scholars, and we built on this literature. In a second step, we examine how realism got retranslated into Germany and thereby helped establish IR as a distinct subdiscipline within German political science.

Translating Weimar to the US: Émigré Scholars and the Translation between Academic Cultures

There is, by now, a common understanding that the emergence of realism as an approach is not just a story of and within the United States. Instead, the emigration of many of its early contributors from Nazi Germany in particular and Europe in general to the US proved a formative experience that also impacted the formation of realism itself (see Rösch 2018; Reichwein und Rösch 2021). A good example of how that European context affected the limits of realism is visible in the work of Hans Morgenthau. In his *Politics Among Nations*, for example, one searches in vain for an engagement with geopolitics, a discourse that has started to be more closely associated with realpolitik in recent years. To understand why, one has to realize that geopolitics formed a discourse in Germany based on Karl Haushofer's reinterpretation of *Lebensraum* (living space), which then also provided a rationale for the genocide conducted in the European East during the Second World War.

Moreover, Morgenthau and other Jewish émigré scholars such as John Herz and Karl Deutsch were originally trained as international lawyers and transitioned to IR only after moving to the US, where they helped to develop IR into an autonomous field of study. Importantly, these scholars were not socialized in the US debates about international law, including the challenges to legal positivism by legal realists and emerging policy-oriented approaches (with the latter flourishing in the US after the Second World War). Rather, they were trained in the "Weimar context" of *Staatslehre* (Jütersonke 2010) and European debates about legal, political, and social theory. Many of the European debates of the interwar years revolved around the question of how to draw the constitutive boundaries between the international and domestic (or state) as well as between (international) law and politics. While these boundaries were conceptually well known already, the interwar period was instrumental in consolidating these boundaries and creating the respective turfs for various disciplines (dos Reis and Grzybowski 2021).

To better understand this context, it is instructive to closely reconstruct Morgenthau's publications while he was still working within a European environment. His doctoral dissertation intervened in the debate on the justiciability of international conflicts, that is, the question of whether all international conflicts can be subsumed under international adjudication or whether (some) conflicts would escape international law (Morgenthau 1929). While leading international legal scholars, in particular Hersch Lauterpacht (1928), argued that in principle all international conflicts are legal conflicts, Morgenthau insisted that certain conflicts—tensions (*Streitigkeiten*)—cannot be legally resolved as they touch upon the "vital interests" and the "honor" of states (Morgenthau 1929, 73). This debate continued to have a long-lasting impact on Morgenthau's take on international law, as he acknowledged almost half a century later (Morgenthau 1974, 332).

What is more important for our purpose is how Morgenthau translated this debate into a new context: When Morgenthau arrived in the US in 1937, he was confronted not only with a new language but also with a different disciplinary constellation. To better understand this, it worth to have a closer look at the state of IR back then. The first IR program in the US was established at the University of Chicago in 1931, with Charles E. Merriam (1874–1953), Frederick L. Schumann (1904–81), Quincy Wright (1890–1970) and Harold D. Lasswell (1902–78) as its most prominent early figures. These scholars shared an understanding of IR as part of political science, where IR serves as one of its subdisciplines alongside political theory and comparative studies. In 1933, Frederick Schuman published *International Politics: An Introduction to the Western State System*, IR's first major textbook, in which he positioned the discipline in distinction from previously typical legal and historical analysis (Schuman 1933). Political science was understood to be close to policy circles, where Merriam became one of the initiators of the behavioral revolution in political science. In a similar fashion, in *World Politics and Personal Insecurity* Harold D, Laswell introduced his famous definition of politics as "the study of *who gets what, when, and how*" (Lasswell 1935, 3). After his move to Yale in 1938, he was a cofounder with Myres McDougal of the so-called New Haven school of international law, which understood itself as policy-oriented. Moreover, Quincy Wright worked at the intersection of international law and international relations, trying to integrate both under the umbrella of a larger social science (or a "new Policy Science").

This environment provided the space in which Morgenthau had to translate his previous work in three ways: first, he had to communicate to members of American academia that operated in a different set of projects and institutions; second, he had to move from law to the "emerging" field of IR; and, third, he had to understand and take issue with the changing international order after the Second World War. His early US publications, in particular the three monographs *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, *Politics among Nations*, and *In Defense of the National Interest*, can be read as attempts to address each of these changes and challenges in distinct ways.

That said, Morgenthau did not just translate his understanding of international law from German (and French) into English; he had to translate his concepts into a new discipline and scientific field. Moreover, as Robbie Shilliam noted, "Morgenthau had proceeded, upon arrival in the new world, to Anglicize the sources of his argument, thus making German philosophy speak predominantly through the mouths of British and American personalities" (Shilliam 2009, 194). In particular, traces to Max Weber had to be made invisible and Weberian concepts had to be adjusted to the new environment (Breiner 2004; Barkawi 1998). In what follows, we focus on these dynamics—concerning language as well as academic and disciplinary culture—and show the importance of translation (as transformative and productive) in the making of IR after the Second World War.

Morgenthau's elaboration on the relationship of international law and politics, which he had started in his doctoral thesis, culminated in his article "Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law," which he published in 1940 in the *American Journal of International Law* (Morgenthau 1940). In his "legal swan song" (Koskenniemi 2001, 459), Morgenthau continued with his argument that international law cannot categorically tame politics and combined it with an assessment of the failure of the international legal architecture of the interwar years. For Morgenthau, the problem was that much of international law, in particular its tradition of "juridic positivism," worked with "the assumption that law, as it really is, can be understood without the normative and social context in which it stands" (Morgenthau 1940, 267). According to Morgenthau, international law had to be analyzed and understood instead within precisely this context of "psychological, social, political and economic forces" that allowed international law to operate (Morgenthau 1940, 274). Highlighting the context of law opened the space to accept the fact that a change in its context will inevitably also change the legal framework, with the consequence that law does not stand outside of politics.

The article was Morgenthau's last major text in international law. However, what is common to all of Morgenthau's first three American books is that while their main focus seems to be gradually shifting away from international law, they still operate within the confines of *examining the limits of international law* (see, for example, Jütersonke 2010, 31). *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* continues this critique but adopts it for the US audience. It is now framed as a critique of the "legalistic spirit" of the interwar years (Morgenthau 1947, 98), a point that was echoed a few years later by George F. Kennan's polemic against the dangers of a "legalistic-moralistic approach to international politics" (Kennan 2012, 101). Moreover, the book emphasized the limits of the high hopes of a liberal "scientific" approach, as it was present in circles at the University of Chicago.

Before *Scientific Man*, as Rösch noted, Morgenthau had worked on the role of science in modern societies in an unpublished manuscript during the interwar years (Rösch 2016), on which he should also base some forty years later his *Science: Servant or Master?* (Morgenthau 1972). Already the very translation of the word "science" is important here. While the English word "science" is very much tied to the natural sciences and was mobilized by behavioralists to distance themselves from the humanities and normative considerations, the German word *Wissenschaft* points etymologically to the larger mode of "creating knowledge" and includes academic disciplines in the humanities (Rösch 2016). For Morgenthau, both the reliance on science and "legalism," for example, build on the idea that, while war has been for a long time the result of untamable brute power politics, with the arrival of the figure of the "scientific man" a belief emerged that peace could be established by juridico-technical means. As Morgenthau summarizes, the approach of the "scientific man" claims that politics should be "reformed" and "rationalized." Political maneuvering should be replaced by the scientific "plan," the political decision by the scientific "solution," the politician by the "expert," the statesmen by the "braintruster," the legislator by the "legal engineer"' (Morgenthau 1947, 31–32).

Morgenthau rejects such a technocratic vision. In contrast to the project of the "scientific man," Morgenthau (1947, 130) argues in line with his previous work that international tensions and war cannot be eliminated through the scientific and legalistic tools of the "scientific man" as this approach fails to grasp the "contingent character of social reality" and overlooks the fact that conflicts on the international level are the result of deeper, often uncontrollable, psychological and social forces in the struggle for power. This brings Morgenthau to the conclusion that politics "*is an art and not a science*, and what is required for its mastery is *not the rationality of the engineer but the wisdom and moral strength of the statesman*" (Morgenthau 1947, 16, emphasis added). As we will see below, the idea that politics is only—to a very limited extent—tamable through what is often referred to as the "prudence" of the statesman would become one of the central claims of Morgenthau's work as well as in classical realist approaches more generally. And it is the task of science to provide the normative background for it.

In a similar vein as with *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* and contrary to many of today's "mainstream interpretations, *Politics among Nations* was not a book on what today would be called International Relations theory, constituted in the vein of Political Science" but it was instead "*a book on the practical limitations to the use of law in the international realm*, written at a time when peaceful change seemed an increasingly futile endeavor and the bipolar stalemate that was to become the Cold War an ominous reality" (Jütersonke 2010, 179, emphasis added).[6] The book situates the discipline within a certain problematique, namely, as its subtitle indicates, *The Struggle for Power and Peace*. As we can read in the first pages of the first edition (published in 1948), "international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power" (Morgenthau 1948, 13). Here, we also find a line of discontinuity as his notion of power was to a degree "lost in translation." In his European writings, Morgenthau worked with a dualistic concept of power—*Macht* and *Kraft*, *pouvoir* and *puissance*, respectively. He thereby distinguished "between an analytical, empirical concept of power as domination and a normative concept of power as the capability to act and enact something politically" (Behr 2016, 36). In his English writings, he conflates the two terms in one notion of "power" that incorporates these differences and which thus has been subject to several criticisms and reformulations (Behr 2016; Rösch 2014).[7]

A third site of translation can be found in Morgenthau's *In Defense of the National Interest*. The book intervenes in debates on US foreign policy and asks how the US should deal with the new architecture of the bipolar order of the Cold War. It constitutes an attempt to translate Morgenthau's critique of interwar international politics, in particular of legalism, into the confines of a new geopolitical constellation by focusing on *foreign policy*. According to Morgenthau, the US should refrain from relying on any form of a "legalistic approach to foreign policy" and concentrate instead on diplomacy (Morgenthau 1951a, 92). To do so, Morgenthau introduces the concept of the national interest, a concept that was new to US foreign policy debates (Navari 2016). The concept presents an attempt to translate an ethics of responsibility into a feasible foreign policy. Yet he could draw on his exploration of the "vital interests" of states, which he had developed since the time of his doctoral thesis. While his earlier work advanced that international law cannot tame the "vital interests" of states, *In Defense of the National Interest* argues that it is up to foreign policy and its mechanism of diplomacy to take prudent decisions under such circumstances.

To summarize the discussion so far: we have seen how key concepts of Morgenthau's European writings like "objectivity," "vital interest," "science," and "power" got translated into the US context and thereby changed their meaning: the Weberian objectivity (much more in line maybe with what today is called intersubjectivity) got taken up for a scientific concept of objectivity; vital interest became national interest; the very notion of science changed toward a more "natural-science-like" imaginary; and, a dualistic concept of power—*Macht* and *Kraft*, *pouvoir* and *puissance*—merged into one notion of "power". While these terms had relatively established meanings within the European context, they produced paradoxes and inconsistencies within the US, which were then subject to reformulations and rediscoveries—to use Halward Alker's famous phrase. Yet, without wanting to sound ironic, these changes in nuances and meanings produced by translations helped spark enough interest for continued interpretations, which then helped to establish realism as a key approach to International Relations. In the next section, we turn now to how realism got translated "back" into the German context.

Retranslating Morgenthau: Kindermann and the Munich School of IR

Germany, as the whole of Europe, had changed entirely after the horrors of the Second World War. These changes did not leave the German universities untouched as many intellectuals, who had remained in Germany, had supported the ideas of the "Third Reich." In the decades after the Second World War, some émigré scholars began to reorient themselves again toward Europe and Germany. Some prominent scholars returned to German universities (think of Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer), while others stayed in the US but began to publish in German again like Karl W. Deutsch and John H. Herz (Deutsch 1963; Herz 1961). Morgenthau again provides an interesting case here. After the Second World War, Morgenthau started to develop an interest in questions of European integration and German foreign policy (Morgenthau 1951b) and eventually publish articles in German, Austrian, and Swiss journals on topics related to the Cold War. Yet he would now firmly present himself as representing an "American perspective" (Morgenthau 1957, 1961, 1964).

It is in this context that realism got translated back into the German context. In 1951, thirteen years after his emigration, Morgenthau returned to Europe for the first time, where he visited Vienna as a consultant for the Policy Planning Staff, the think tank of the US State Department created and headed by George F. Kennan. On this occasion, Morgenthau met Gottfried-Karl Kindermann, a student who chaired the Foreign Policy Association in Vienna. Kindermann joined the newly established Center for the Study of American Foreign Policy at the University of Chicago in the same year, where he became a research assistant for Morgenthau and completed his PhD in 1959 (with a dissertation on Sino-Soviet relations during the interwar period). Kindermann then moved to Germany and worked, under Arnold Bergstraesser, on his habilitation at the University of Freiburg. Bergstraesser was another émigré scholar who fled to the US in the 1930s and returned in the 1950s to Germany, where he became one of the founders of political science in West Germany and was known as the main protagonist of the so-called Freiburg school of political science. In 1967, Kindermann became chair for international relations at the University of Munich, where he joined the political science department that had recently been founded by the political theologian Eric Voegelin. Kindermann's position was actually the first chair created for IR in West Germany. Kindermann was confronted with two tasks in his new position: on the one hand, the need to establish IR within a broader political science as a semiautonomous field of study while, at the same time, holding on to his training in the US as a source of epistemic authority. As we argue, the *retranslation* of Morgenthau's texts and ideas was instrumental for both. Let us discuss these two points briefly in turn.

The first attempts to establish political science in Germany date back to the 1920s, but many of its representatives had to flee and emigrate. After the Second World War, émigré scholars who returned to Germany took on the task to (re-)establish the discipline. In particular, Arnold Bergstraesser (Freiburg), Eric Voegelin (Munich), and Ernst Fraenkel (Berlin) transferred ideas from US academia to Germany and aimed to launch political science. The institutionalization of political science also served a purpose in the attempt at the denazification (*Entnazifizierung*) of Germany. Political science was broadly understood as encompassing three subfields: political theory, comparative politics, and, more recently, International Relations. At the core of political science was the concept of "the state," which both separates and holds together these three fields. Within the context of German academia, political science integrated parts of practical philosophy (which found itself discredited), the previous *Staatswissenschaften*, and history into its newly established departments. Having been trained in the US, Kindermann subscribed to this model as well and worked alongside these evolving intellectual and institutional developments. Here, Bergstraesser's "synoptic approach" (Kindermann 1965b; 1965a, 291; see also Bergstraesser 1960) proved to be instrumental since Kindermann saw political science in Germany as highly fragmented, resembling an "ecclesia militans" (Kindermann 1963, 20). At the same time, while political theory and comparative politics could draw from practical philosophy and history, International Relations was the least developed field in political science.

For Kindermann, this institutional landscape implied that he had to (co-)establish his own field of research where he would refer to Morgenthau's ideas and texts to legitimate his endeavor. Kindermann highlighted his proximity to and insider knowledge of Morgenthau that he had acquired during his extended stay in the US. For example, Kindermann indirectly legitimized his position as Morgenthau's exclusive translator in a contribution published in a volume of the Freiburg school, in which he aimed to bring the "works of Hans S. [*sic*] Morgenthau and Reinhold Niebuhr" closer to the German audience, with the following words (referring to himself in the third person):

> The task of this author [Kindermann] has been made easier through the experience of an extended stay in the United States, during which he was able to familiarize himself with both the personality and position of leading realist thinkers through numerous conversations and the participation in many public and private discussions of their theory. The significance of the philosophical and methodological success of the realist school might have been most apparent to those observers who are familiar with the general intellectual climate in the United States during the last two decades and who have been able to follow the traces of this success in the political science literature in the United States as well as in the inevitable discussions on realism—especially Morgenthau's theories—during the meetings of

> the American Political Science Association. (Kindermann 1962, 292–93; similarly, 1963, 46–47; 1965a, 291)

How could realism as a distinct theory and IR as a subfield contribute to the establishment of political science in Germany? According to Kindermann, it is the task of theory, particularly political theory, to integrate the various fields of political science and guarantee a division of labor (Kindermann 1965b, 65). Kindermann here mirrors some of Morgenthau's earlier reflections on the "state of political science" and translates this into the German context. Morgenthau had criticized political theory for being "hardly more than an account of what writers of the past, traditionally regarded as 'great,' have thought about the traditional problems of politics, with hardly a systematic attempt being made to correlate that historical knowledge to the other fields of political science and to the contemporary political world." And, therefore, "political theory as an academic discipline has been intellectually sterile" (Morgenthau 1955, 444). For Morgenthau, political theory, as political science in general, should instead focus "to communicate objective and general truth about matters political" (Morgenthau 1955, 448).

Kindermann follows this commitment to theory and introduces realism as a variation of political theory to the German audience. Here, the translation of Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations* into German, which Kindermann initiated, was an important landmark. The translation is based on the third edition of *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (originally published in 1960) and appeared in German in 1963 as *Macht und Frieden: Grundlegung einer Theorie der internationalen Politik*. Note the change in the title: the title is not "Politics among Nations," but "Power and Peace: Foundation of a Theory of International Politics." The German title, thus, highlighted IR's "key concern" and, at the same time, emphasized a commitment to the necessity to study international politics theoretically. Morgenthau himself contributed a short preface in which he points out that his theory was intended not exclusively for an American audience but also for a German one. However, the German reader should study the book differently: while he had criticized the idealism of American foreign policy in the form of moralism and legalism, it is now essential to point out that the primary error of German foreign policy of the past decades was an overly strong "materialism," based above all on military coercion. In other words, where the US was too idealist and forgot about power, Germany was too realist and had a too narrow understanding of power (Morgenthau 1963, 10). Morgenthau's preface is followed by a lengthy introduction written by Kindermann, in which he presents Morgenthau's work and the theoretical foundations of realism. In this introduction, Kindermann "aims to make available to the German-speaking audience not only the worldwide most disseminated, but also most frequently read treatise of a theory of international politics" (Kindermann 1963, 19). For Kindermann, the translation of *Politics among Nations* has become a necessary endeavor as "systematic accounts" in German within the discipline of International Relations "can literally be counted on the fingers of one hand" (Kindermann 1963, 19; see also Kindermann 1962, 1965a).[8]

It is interesting to see how the translation back into German worked. As we have seen above, Morgenthau had avoided references to Weber in his translation from Weimar to the US context. Kindermann heads here in the opposite direction. According to Kindermann, Morgenthau's approach is well-suited to systematize political science and to integrate its various subdisciplines without losing their specificities. Reading *Politics among Nations* as political theory can highlight how political dynamics are anchored in human nature and thus remain trans-epochally stable. This "objectivity" of human nature thus makes it possible to derive "value-free or value-open basic concepts [wertfreie bzw. wertoffene Fundamentalbegriffe] for a science of politics" (Kindermann 1963, 24).[9] In particular, the concepts of power, interest, and morality have become "interdependent pillars of the realist theory of politics" that are not limited to IR itself. Thus, the realist concept of power, "as Professor Morgenthau remarked to the author [Kindermann], corresponds essentially to Max Weber's classical definition: 'power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests'" (Kindermann 1963, 26). Trancing a genealogy back to Max Weber, allows Kindermann to present power politics not as a "pseudo-realistic realpolitik" and "its glorification of state power," which was criticized by Weber already (Kindermann 1963, 35–36). Morality, in a realist sense, must be understood in terms of a Weberian ethics of responsibility. Morgenthau is now presented as a continuation of a particular German intellectual tradition that Kindermann also links to his own context as now the concept of interest resembles very much Bergstraesser's concept of subjective interests. All this is wrapped into the ideal of a value-free science.

Yet Kindermann did not limit himself to conveying Morgenthau's ideas to a German audience. Rather, from the 1970s onward, he developed his own version of realism, the synoptic neorealism of the Munich school (Kindermann 1996; Meier-Walser 1994). However, unlike Kenneth Waltz's version of neorealism, which pushes classical realism to the structural level (third image) and aspires to parsimony as the ideal of scientific inquiry, Kindermann modifies classical realism in a significantly different direction. Similarly to the neoclassical realists in the 1990s, Kindermann seeks to include all relevant factors in his analysis, including domestic politics and nonstate actors. It is the task of scientific "synopsis" to integrate those into a general theory. Moreover, neither power nor interest are the foundation of his theory but it starts with politics "as deciding in public affairs." Despite these modifications, Morgenthau remained central in the justification of Kindermann's approach. The main ideas of the Munich school were published in 1977 in *Grundelemente der Weltpolitik* (Basic elements of world politics), a volume edited by Kindermann. Most chapters were written by Kindermann and complemented by his assistants and doctoral students at the University of Munich. However, Morgenthau contributed a chapter on "Peace in the Nuclear Age" and a brief preface, in which he endorsed the Munich school as a legitimate offspring of his approach. Kindermann quoted this preface, almost at full length, more than three decades later to justify his own approach (Kindermann 2005, 20).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have addressed the role of translation in the formation of IR as an academic discipline. To this end, we first focused on the already well-researched role of refugee intellectuals and, here, in particular, Hans J. Morgenthau in the US/American context. Morgenthau was not only tasked with translating his work into a new language but also had to translate ideas, which he had developed in the interwar period in Europe, into the academic and political context of the US. For instance, references to Weber had to be rendered invisible, as they would have met resistance from the behavioralist paradigm that dominated US social sciences at the time. In a second step, we then explored the hitherto unexplored retranslation of Morgenthau's ideas and texts into the West German academic environment. Morgenthau played a central role in the work of Kindermann and the Munich school of synoptic neorealism, and his translation was crucial in justifying IR as a semiautonomous field within the emerging German political science after the Second World War. However, this retranslation was different as it reintroduced references to Weber, which made it possible to operate within the German social science discourse. It was not a return to a Morgenthau before his emigration, but a novel approach. Our contribution thereby points to the performative dimension of translation in creating academic fields and highlights its transformative dimension in these fields through the need to operate within these environments.

Notes

1. That there is much more to it, see Wigen (2018), and the introduction to this volume by Caraccioli and Wigen. On the complex role, contemporary and historical, of translators and interpreters in global politics, see the individual chapters by Caraccioli (2026), Costa Lopez (2026), de Jong (2026, and Reshetnikov (2026) in this volume.

2. How these two understandings differ can be highlighted by looking at how they fail. In classic semiotics, a failure is a simple mistake that can be remedied by looking harder at the facts: the word was simply wrong: *la table* was translated as the chair and not the table. In multivariate semiotics, there are better and worse translations given one's own interpretation of what the text wants to convey. A translation can be said to have failed because some crucial nuance got lost, but one cannot show that by a simple reference to an object.

3. The same holds for the translation of key concepts not only between different academic disciplines, but already for different traditions within disciplines. For an illustration of how this is the case with the concept of legitimacy; see dos Reis and Kessler (2016).

4. Take already the title of Umberto Eco's book on translation, first published in 2003: the Italian title *Dire quasi la stessa cosa. Experienze di traduzione* was translated into German as *Quasi dasselbe mit anderen Worten. Über das Übersetzen*, while the title of the (abbreviated) English version is *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation*.

5. The discussion in this section draws on Capan, dos Reis, and Grasten (2021).

6. Moreover, it is a book that is important in the formation of IR as an autonomous discipline as it replaced Frederick Schuman's *International Politics* as the leading textbook of the discipline and maintained this status for decades, running through seven editions by now.

7. It would also be interesting, in particular in light of *Scientific Man*, to reconstruct the German background of his understanding of "objective," which was much more in line with the Weberian tradition rather than a concept of objectivity as we might find it in "traditional" natural sciences. See Behr and Kirke (2014).

8. Interestingly, after the Second World War, there were extensive discussions in West Germany over how to name the (re)established discipline that deals with politics as its core. Some of the nuances of the debate get lost when translated into English. Not only, as discussed above, does the concept of science (*Wissenschaft*) work differently in German since it is more firmly rooted in the imaginary of a unity of science and describes the process of knowledge generation in general. Moreover, after the Second World War, the discipline was either named *Wissenschaft von der Politik* ("science of politics") or, more commonly, *Politische Wissenschaft* or *Politische Wissenschaften*. *Politische Wissenschaft*, which is usually translated as "political science," has the important connotation that the discipline *cannot* be neutral and, as a newly reestablished

Demokratiewissenschaft ("science of/to democracy"), *should* not be neutral. The plural *Politische Wissenschaften* ("political sciences") additionally indicates the interdisciplinary roots and character of the endeavor. Finally, *Politikwissenschaft* (also translated as "political science") has become established more recently and indicates a "neutral" notion of science, following more in the footsteps of an understanding of the discipline in the US. For example, the largest German professional association was founded in 1951 as Deutsche Vereinigung für die Wissenschaft von der Politik and changed its name two times: in 1959 it became Deutsche Vereinigung für Politische Wissenschaft, and in 2016 it was renamed Deutsche Vereinigung für Politikwissenschaft.

9. It would be interesting to take a closer look at the purpose of anthropology here. Anthropology was quite instrumental in the first years of the new Republic. Arnold Gehlen was one of the most prominent figures, and like many who followed an anthropological approach, he actively supported the Nazi regime. After the Second World War, anthropology was thus part of a very conservative, if not even reactionary and countermodern, literature that served as an intellectual counterpoint to the Frankfurt school on the political left. We can only assume that anthropology was a "battlefield" where different social forces met. Morgenthau's anthropological approach could thus speak to an already established literature without being considered "left." At the same time, of course, it could do so without the danger of running into countermodern minefields.

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CHAPTER 10

Constructing Incommensurables

Hebrew's Machiavellian Moment

Daniel J. Levine

For He did not set our portion as theirs,
Nor our fate as all their multitudes.

—Macy Nulman, Encyclopedia of Jewish Prayer

In the opening chapters of *The Machiavellian Moment*, J. G. A. Pocock considers the problem of an intellectual community that has lost the power to express the fullness of historical contingency. Such powers of expression, as Alison McQueen—and in another idiom, Roman Jakobson—have noted, rest upon a base that is both conceptual and rhetorical (McQueen 2018; 72, Jakobson and Halle 1971 pt. 2; see also de Jong, this volume). The polis cannot appear as "a contrivance for amplifying the possibilities of human action through the self-conscious cooperation of individual agents" unless there is both some "homogenous empty space" that this action can fill, and a stock of sufficiently evocative rhetorical-communicative figurations by which to inspire and direct it (Halpern 2017, 13–14). Pocock continues:

> [A] citizen, constantly involved with his fellows in the making of public decisions, must possess an intellectual armory which takes him beyond the perception of hierarchy and tradition, and gives him cause to rely on his and his fellows' power to understand and respond to what is happening to them. (Pocock 1975, 49–50; see also Beer and Harriman 1996; Kornprobst 2009)

Such an "intellectual armory" makes at least three distinct, and to some degree orthogonal, demands of language. First, it must support a rich array of "private" vernaculars—the specialized practical, professional, and technical jargons that arise in any polity where extensive divisions of labor prevail. Second, it must possess a stock of rhetorical-poetic conventions and figurations capacious enough to bind those fragmented vernaculars through a cohesive political vision. Third, it must delimit the scope of that vision. Put differently, it must produce the "public" whose business it mediates.

As noted, these three functions exert a degree of mutual tension. The first hews toward the plain speech of instrumental reason, with its roots in Weberian disenchantment and "universal" theory. The second and third, by contrast, draw on the forms and structures of myth, in their late-modern adaptation: the grand histories of Leopold von Ranke and Jacob Burckhardt, and an array of "social" and historical novels: Leo Tolstoy and Sir Walter Scott, Emile Zola and the "socialist realists" (Lukacs 1971; Clark 1981; Babik 2019). To manage those tensions, citizens must cultivate a range of public and private political virtues and place them in mutual tension; a "tragic vision of politics" (Erskine and Lebow 2012; Lebow 2003; Steele 2019).

Such "Machiavellian moments"—as Pocock himself noted—are not confined to fifteenth-century Florence, and certain broad similarities can be discerned among them. In this chapter, I will argue that the nineteenth-century Jewish diaspora underwent its own version of such a moment, and that the emergence of modern Hebrew's emergence as a distinctive political vernacular was one consequence of this. Further, I will argue that retracing this emergence can yield broader insights: first into interlinguality's connection to the international, and second into the broader, ongoing crisis that characterizes them both.

I proceed in three steps. First, I survey the "need" that a modern Hebrew political vernacular meant to fill, and the processes by which it came into being. I then focus on a specific element of that vernacular, as it emerged in the late 1930s and early 1940s: a professional idiom for the "doing" of military operations and strategy. Last, I consider its limitations.

(Re-)Vernacularizing Hebrew

> Ich vil az m'zoll alts ton oyf Hebraisch. M'zoll oykh kaken oyf Hebraisch, schreien, ganvennen, no'efn oyf Hebraisch.
>
> [I would have them do everything in Hebrew. I would even have them shit in Hebrew; scream, steal, get laid in Hebrew.]

> Ain lanu epos. Anakhnu dalei-epos.
>
> [We have no epics; we are epic-impoverished.]
>
> —Haim Nahman Bialik[1]

Between about 1850 and 1910, a well-known story goes, the Hebrew language was "revived" (inter alia, Alter 1988; Fellman 1973; Saposnik 2008). Four things are generally meant by this. First, that a concerted process of lexical expansion, grammatical and orthographical standardization, and stylistic innovation had rendered it "as flexible, as rich, and as capable of adaptation to every new use" as any other (Balfour 1928, 80–81).[2] Second, that a Hebrew-language public sphere had come into being (Lederhandler 1988, 119–153; Penslar 2000; Stein 2004; Veidlinger 2009). Third, that a set of literary genres, conventions, and styles had emerged, by which to capture and convey "the ephemeral, the fugitive, [and] the contingent"—qualities held to be emblematic of modern life and experience (Baudelaire 1964, 13).[3] Finally, that these developments constituted a basis for a new, distinctively national lifeworld to emerge—and with it, a range of sensibilities, identities, and "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; also Anidjar 2005; Chowers 2012; Hasak-Lowy 2008; Miron 2010; Moss 2009; Mufti 2007; Parush 2004; Shaked 2008; Shumsky 2018; Zakim 2006; Zerubavel 1995). To be sure, this development mirrored a host of other central European "linguistic nationalisms" (Hroch 1998; Connelly 2020). Even so, its emergence was a surprise—one that, for some Jews, seemed all but miraculous. To understand why, a brief reprise of that "revival" story follows.

"Doing Everything in Hebrew" (1): Problems of Lexis

Hebrew had little to recommend it as a medium for modern political discourse or mimetic representations of lived experience. For one thing, there was very little of it. The spoken language had fallen out of use some two thousand years prior, and very little of its spoken vernacular survived. What had survived was a relatively limited written corpus centered primarily on the Hebrew Bible and its exegesis: some 7,000 to 8,000 words and word-stems (Fellman 1973, 15; see also Kutscher 1982; Schniewinde 2013). "As with most of the languages of antiquity," noted Johann Gottfried von Herder in 1782, "the flood of ages has passed over [it], and only a small remnant . . . has escaped" (Herder [1782] 1833, 30–31; Chowers 2012, 171–73; Yildiz 2012, 7–12).

To be sure, that "small remnant" had sustained a continuous tradition of literary and intellectual production (Brovender 2007). But the range of that production was highly circumscribed, as Naomi Brenner explained—here with reference to nineteenth- and twentieth-century Yiddish:

> Yiddish was the *mame-loshn*, the mother tongue and language of daily life, encompassing everything from mothers' lullabies to rabbis' sermons. Hebrew, the *fotershprakh* (father tongue), was the written language of the Bible, rabbinic texts, and, increasingly, of Jewish enlightenment texts that circulated in Eastern Europe over the course of the nineteenth century. (Brenner 2016, 5)

Put simply, Hebrew was not used for a wide range of vernacular contexts and functions. In more formal-linguistic terms, it was part of a "dependent polysystem"—enmeshed within a matrix of one or more "everyday" vernaculars (Yiddish, Arabic, Aramaic, Russian, Koine Greek, Ladino), its use was largely confined to a fairly circumscribed set of public-official and sacred contexts (Even-Zohar 1978; Harshav 1993; Kronfeld 2016).

The first of the two epigraphs above illustrates one aspect of this division of expressive labor and the ironies to which it gave rise. The speaker who would have Jews "do everything" in Hebrew was none other than Haim Nahman Bialik (1873–1934)—by far the most celebrated Hebrew-language poet of his era. The reader may observe that Bialik is giving voice to that wish —crudely, but emphatically—in Yiddish (Spicehandler 2003, 162).[4] It seems that even he could not find just the right combination of expressions to adequately convey his feelings in Hebrew.

That problem begins with insufficient lexis. Fin de siècle Hebrew lacked "translation equivalents" for a range of contemporary objects, actions, and networks of relation—from pince-nez to the postal service (Wigen 2018, 40–43; Patterson 1962). That granted, this is not quite the problem here (Wigen 2018, 40–43; Patterson 1962). Hebrew did not lack terms for expressing private and/or intimate relations and acts. The English-language *carnal knowledge*, after all, arises from biblical translation. Bialik's *no'efn* also arises from a widely-used verb in biblical Hebrew ("thou shalt not commit adultery"). Though its usage here is thoroughly assimilated into Yiddish grammar and syntax, its source was hardly obscure or unknown.[5]

The key difference lay in the range of colloquial sensibilities that speakers of Yiddish had at their disposal. Parsed into Yiddish, the speaker can place *no'efn* within a range of possible codes, inflections, and registers. That range is what Hebrew was said to lack.

This was a known problem, to which a host of responses had arisen. These included a range of specialist and general-use dictionaries, encyclopedias, and scholarly monographs through which neologisms could be created and disseminated. It also included systematic programs for translating European ("universal") literary classics into Hebrew. These were understood to accomplish several goals. First, they gave translators—themselves often aspiring Hebrew-language authors—a chance to "improve [their] literary craftsmanship." The resulting publications might then serve both as stylistic exemplars and attract readers who might otherwise read books in other languages (Shavit 2017, 4; Moss 2009).

A second set of efforts centered on concerted efforts to create a modern, narrative "plain style"—the modes of "free indirect discourse," by which modern, novelistic prose seemed to capture and convey lived experience (Greiner 2009). One approach to this, widely associated with the Yiddish novelist S. Y. Abramovitch, was to import conventions, syntax, and idioms from vernacular languages that Jews already knew—a process known as *relexification* or *hybridization* (Benor 2021; Zuckermann 2020, 2–15).

Another approach was more self-consciously heroic. It entailed sifting through "the many historical layers of biblical, Mishnaic, and medieval Hebrew"—alongside rabbinic Aramaic, Arabic, Ugaritic, and a host of other Near Eastern languages—to uncover new words, usages, and figures of speech, "continuous in language and allusion with the three-thousand-year tradition of Hebrew literature," but also "at home in the realm of cosmopolitan European literature" (Frieden 2012, 175; Alter 1988, 72). Such work was often described through a range of "archaeological" metaphors: plumbing the depths of half-forgotten Hebrew works to excavate some long-lost linguistic treasure-cum-artifact.[6] Rightly or wrongly, this is what Bialik understood himself to be doing; and his admirers too. To be sure, the distinction between "inauthentic" relexification and "authentic" excavation was itself thoroughly ideological—a point to which the conclusion will return (Benbaji 2021; Harshav 1993; Levy 2014; Halperin 2015).

"Doing Everything in Hebrew" (2): Peoples without Epics

The previous section dealt primarily with the figurative powers of Hebrew prose and the means for bringing them into being. A second line of inquiry emphasizes the demand for such prose—the "need" it emerged to fill. As Georg Lukacs, Hayden White, and a host of others have noted, mimetic writing was valued because it seemed to "overleap itself." For individuals experiencing wrenching social transformation—radical alienation, spiritual "disenchantment," unfamiliar manners and milieux—such prose seemed to provide a window into mysterious, obscure, or otherwise incomprehensible realities. With a reliable narrator as guide, a reader could be ushered into a community of others, who shared the same sensibilities, felt the same fears, took interest in the same events as thousands of others. They might bear witness to significant events; look 'over the shoulders' of the great and the good; gain a glimpse into their clubs, drawing rooms, and chanceries. They might even hear what seemed like the authentic inner voice of another person.

Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt have called this feeling "the touch of the real" (2002, 31). In some accounts, it refers to the experience of a text "coming alive" a the reader's imagination. Others describe the experience of being transported or carried away, or of of coming into the unmediated presence of something real, authentic—even sublime. For Walter Benjamin, such experiences carried a "weak messianic" valence: they effected—or at least approximated—a union of hearts and minds that had once been associated with the the "end of days." Thus history became "backwards-facing prophecy," and the novel "the epic of a world that ha[d] been abandoned by God" (Benjamin 1968, 263; Brenner 2010, 1; Lukacs 1971, 88; Rothberg 2000).

Consider, by way of example, the feeling—widely reported in diaries, memoirs, and autobiographies—that one has "witnessed history in the making." One has felt the foundations of lived experience shift in real time, and lived to tell the tale. One undertakes to record them, believing there is value in capturing one's subjective impressions, however limited they may be, while the experience remains "fresh."

Now imagine that, having done this, one now wishes to share them with others. To do so, one must make one's writings available to others in a form and idiom they will recognize. That form must be familiar, so that others will understand what they are reading. But it must be novel in a way that capture as much of the experience's particularity and specialness, as one can summon up. Suppose further that, having done this, one actually wins the sustained attention of an audience. Letters expressing approbation and acclaim start arriving in the mail. Laudatory reviews appear in newspapers and journals. One's work is quoted in fashionable salons, read aloud in coffee houses, or fought over in pubs. The finished work has become an 'event' in its own right.

All of this would be remarkable enough. But now suppose that all this happened regarding a manuscript composed in Hebrew—a language which even most Jews cannot read easily or comfortably. One might be surprised by this experience. One might even be tempted to view it as an historic event of considerable significance. How often do such things happen for Hebrew texts written by modern, flesh-and-blood Jews? One's words have passed through the same channels as those written in any other 'living' language—from editor to typesetter, from press to bookseller—and on to readers. The ordinary workings of "print capitalism," it might seem, have brought about something that millennia of pious supplication could not (Anderson 1983; Chowers 2012 74–75; Brenner 2010; Yerushalmi 1982).

Not a moment too soon, either—for the Jewish diaspora was everywhere in crisis. "We have arrived at a point where two worlds collide," the Hebrew-language novelist and public intellectual M. Y. Berdiczewski noted in 1894. "To be, or to vanish! To be the last Jews, or the first Hebrews" (Chowers 2012, 72; Hasak-Lowy 2008). Others made the point in grimmer, more explicitly colonial-cum-extinctionist terms. "Do you know," novelist Y. H. Brenner wrote in 1900 to the writer U. N. Gnessin, "that we are the last of the Mohicans? Are you aware that our people are going to die? Do you know that the world is sick?" (Shapira 2014, 24).

At issue here is not merely describing a political condition but *naming* it—per Wigen and Caraccioli's notion of "world-making" (this volume, see also Onuf 2018). Here, the second of the epigraphs above bears lengthier consideration. Again, Bialik:

> We have no epic poetry. I have tried to create our popular epic—the one we are lacking, as if it were already there; I have created it, as if it existed already. I went back 1,500 years, as if I had been living 1,500 years ago. When I write, I always have this feeling that something stands behind me . . . as if we had been in Palestine this whole time. As if there had never been a pause. (Rawidowicz 1983, 90)

Bialik's concern with "epic" poetry rests upon two interconnected beliefs. The first holds that Hebrew was the "one 'true' language" of the Jewish people (Yildiz 2012, 3; Kuzar 2001; Lapidot 2016). To have lost the ability to tell an epic tale in that language—on this account, at least—was both catastrophic and scandalous. It was a catastrophe because it meant Jews had lost their own authentic space of appearance. It was a scandal because to allow such a loss must mean that Jews lacked the kind of moral and political will needed to sustain it. What was left but to appropriate the words of other peoples—the linguistic equivalent of wearing the clothes of another gender (Boyarin 1997; Seidman 1997; Schulman 2013; compare to Enloe 2014 and Weber 2016)?

The second belief at work here is formalist. Epics were understood to play a distinctive role in cultivating the virtues needed for personal and political self-determination, as Eric Auerbach has noted. Homer's epics, on this account, included a series of "retarding elements," episodic plot digressions that served to heighten—and then put off—the listener's anticipatory desire for a narrative resolution ("to keep the hearer or reader breathless") (Auerbach [1953] 2003, 4–5). Such digressions have the effect of teaching the listener to cultivate the power of deferring one's gratification, and to take pleasure in doing so.[7] As political events require patience—some things must be allowed to unfold in their own time—such emotional self-mastery was a key component of public virtue. For such "aesthetic education" to work, however, one must have at one's disposal a body of powerfully evocative literary works; works that summon up "the strongest emotion[s] which the mind is capable of feeling" (Burke [1757] 1998, 86). Otherwise, there was nothing to overmaster.

That modern Hebrew writing could evoke such feelings—worlds "of terror and fear, of lust and longing, of reward and punishment, of wills colliding and overflowing"—was thus more than merely an aesthetic breakthrough (Katznelson 5705 [194/45], 309; Ohana 2019, 31–39). If the "dry bones" of the Hebrew language could recover their vitality, then so, perhaps, might modern-day "Hebrews" themselves.

"The Other Emotion I Was Feeling"

> The officer woke me the next morning and informed me that we had guests. Still drowsy, I thought my eyes were deceiving me; that I was in the throes of an other-worldly dream. Two German soldiers were seated at our table, quietly sipping tea. The dream held, even after I sat up in my bunk and rubbed my eyes. Pointing to their red cross armbands and smiling, the officer rescued me from this sorry state.
>
> "Stretcher-bearers," he explained. "Come to borrow a stretcher."
>
> Am I still dreaming? Maybe I've only now awakened from an even longer dream, about the war and the Germans on the opposite embankment. Maybe I am still back with my battalion, and these are just the guys from "A" company, playing the enemy like always.
>
> It was the voice of one of our guests, who spoke in German, that threw me back to reality. "Fine bit of work, you lot. That's five of ours killed and three wounded. We're here to take away the dead, but we're short a stretcher. We'll take one and return it in a couple of hours."

> They calmly finished their tea and left with the stretcher. One of them returned it some two hours later. He received a pack of cigarettes as a gift, for which he expressed thanks. Then he left.
>
> Throughout this give-and-take, I scrutinized my Canadian comrades, looking for some sign of what was then taking place in my heart. I did not discover anything, however. They comported themselves entirely naturally, as if this was an everyday matter, no place for extraneous emotions. They are stretcher-bearers, under the cover of a white flag and red cross. They should be received as such, perhaps even accorded some hospitality. Who's to say that tomorrow our fortunes and theirs might not be reversed? We might need their help. Perhaps more even: any one of us might wind up wounded, with his life in their hands. "You look out for me, I'll look out for you." A healthy, natural sentiment between two warring sides.
>
> As to the other emotion that I, the Jew, was feeling—it would surely never have occurred to any of my Canadian friends.
>
> —Capt. J[oseph] Glücklich, "With the Canadians on the Italian Front," *Ma'arakhot* 33–34 (May 1946): 64

The experience of double consciousness related here appears to date from January 1945. The narrator, one Joseph Glücklich, was a platoon commander in the first battalion of the Jewish Brigade Group, a combat-infantry formation created by the British army in 1944. The brigade was to take up operations along the Senio River, on Italy's Adriatic coast, in March 1945. Glücklich had been sent as part of an advance team of officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) to shadow units from the First Canadian Division, whom they would be replacing (Glücklich 1946, 59; Gelber 1983, 2:540; Lifshitz 1950, 129; Nicholson 1956, 61–63; on British imperial and dominion forces in this period, see Barkawi 2017; Delaney 2017; Perry 1988; Jackson 2006, 97–144; and Bunyan 2015).

Born in Jerusalem in 1921, Glücklich had joined the Haganah—the largest of Palestine's Zionist paramilitaries—in 1936. From Palestine, he later enlisted in the British army, serving in a series of locally raised colonial formations trained primarily for noncombat—garrison and convoy—duties (Gelber 1983, 2:426–28 and 513–22; Beckman 1998; and Museum of the Jewish Soldier in World War II, ND). Most of the Jews in these units—many of whom would have had some understanding of German—were folded into the Jewish Brigade Group upon its creation.[8] So were Palestinian Jews serving in other British army and Haganah formations, including the "German platoon": the "guys from 'A' company" mentioned above.[9]

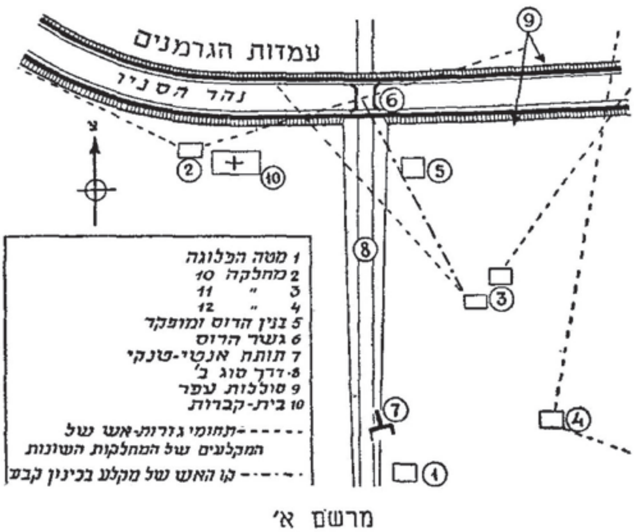

Figure 2. Disposition of Glücklich's host company

When he first arrives at Canadian Field HQ, Glücklich reports feeling completely overwhelmed. There was too much to take in: "maps, aerial photographs, information on patrols and recent incident reports" all blurred together; "I couldn't tell my hand from my foot" (Glücklich 1946, 60). Only gradually did a cohesive picture begin to emerge of the unit's disposition and operations.

Arrayed defensively along an embankment overlooking the Senio from the south, the sector had been quiet for some months. The Germans were dug in along a parallel embankment to the north. Each side was arrayed in a reverse-slope defense (Glücklich 1946, 61, FM7–20 1943, §213). (See fig. 2.) Of late, the Germans had begun crossing the river. Digging in along the forward slope of the Canadian side, they could harass Allied forces at will—lobbing mortars, sniping, and laying mines. HQ believed a temporary bridge at the waterline was facilitating these crossings. The night before the "dream sequence" related above, a small scouting team had unsuccessfully tried to locate it. A firefight ensued, and several German soldiers were killed. Those were the bodies the stretcher-bearers had come to remove.

Glücklich's narrative appeared in *Ma'arakhot* (Military campaigns). This was the Haganah's in-house, semiunderground strategic and military affairs journal. Founded in 1939, and modeled on extant British, American, and Continental military periodicals—Britain's *Army Quarterly* and *Jour-*

nal of the Royal United Services Institution, the *American Infantry Journal*—*Ma'arakhot* offered a mix of original and translated material. The editors hoped to "broaden the horizons" of readers on a range of military and strategic matters, at a time when the Haganah was under pressure to reform internally from a series of loosely affiliated regional militias into a hierarchically organized, national force.[10]

Many Haganah commanders opposed this. Funds were limited, and most commanders wished to protect their local freedom of action. But their opposition was also principled. Many viewed self-proclaimed "military professionals" and would-be staff officers with disdain—a worldview informed more by works like *Good Soldier Schwejk* or *Red Cavalry* than articles in *RUSI Journal*. In that context, "professionalism" also functioned as a code word for those who—like David Ben-Gurion—wished to see the Haganah develop doctrinally along "bourgeois"—largely Anglo-American—lines, rather than Soviet partisan ones.

Ma'arakhot's editors presented the journal, in part, as a forum in which to air such questions: to serve "as both mortar and yeast" for the development of "military thought and understanding" within the Yishuv (Galili 1949, 3). As such, its offerings were highly variegated, combining elements of a command-and-staff journal, an officers' and NCOs' magazine, a Russian "thick journal," and a party mouthpiece (Unsworth 1990; Bollaert 2019). The issue in which Glücklich's essay appeared also included the first installment in a series of original comparative-historical studies of interwar national-liberation struggles; an assessment of Aleksandr Bek's *Volokolamsk Highway*, a Soviet war novel translated in 1946 and widely read in the Palmakh; a close discussion, by Yitzhak Dubno, of a 1942 Swiss manual for training "shock troops"; a lengthy commemoration of the 1936 Palestine revolt; and a discussion of a Chatham House policy paper on British Near Eastern policy, as "scooped" by US journalist "Izzy" Stone.[11] There were also direct translations of work by Major-General Charles Gwynn on imperial policing; by Polish Home Army commander Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski on the 1944 Warsaw uprising; by *Times* (UK) military correspondent Cyril Falls (later, Chichele professor of military history, All Souls College, Oxford); and Hirsch Glick's "Partizaner-Lied," with full musical notation.

More broadly, the task that *Ma'arakhot*'s editors set for themselves paralleled the one Bialik was said to have taken up some decades earlier, within the confines of a particular specialist discourse. Hebrew lacked both the technical vocabulary to express complex tactical, operational, and strategic concepts and a discursive-rhetorical framework through which to "hash out" the political vision within which such concepts might fit. To this, they responded in terms that will by now also be familiar. "Creating a military language ex nihilo," noted founding editor Eleazar Galili in September 1949, demanded "the hard labor of excavation" (Galili 1949, 9; also Sheffy 1991, 87–92). Once uncovered, Hebrew's extant corpus of words could be sifted for new, authentic equivalents onto which "universal" terms of military, operational, and tactical art could be grafted.

Translation served at least two additional functions. First, it allowed the editors space to publish publicly, even as most of the Haganah's activity remained formally illegal, and in the context of wartime censorship. As has been widely noted, censorship of Hebrew publications was fairly lax: by default, the government relied on Hebrew-speaking Jews, who naturally came out of the Yishuv or had ties to it. Some were even Haganah commanders. Even so, there were limits as to what could or could not be published. But when presented unclassified, already-published material from leading British periodicals, what could a censor say? (*Ma'arakhot* 50 [June 1948]: 10; see also Rivlin 1963, 2, Hazkani 2021, 23–27; but note Wintringham [1973] 1943, 178).

Second, it gave the editors freedom to "curate" the mix of materials they put before their readers. In the process, they could craft a professional discourse that minimized the tensions between the Haganah's various factions. An outgrowth of the Labor-Zionist Histadrut, the organization had relied heavily on a voluntaristic, internationalist ethos that rejected both militarism and British imperialism. "The monopolist exploitation of a country, of its natural wealth or population in favor of [a] mother country" was to be rejected in principle. So long as this line was kept to, it was possible to argue that Zionist and Palestinian aspirations were, in the long run, ultimately reconcilable (Poale-Zion 1916, 32).[12] Eventually—so the argument ran—Palestinians would see this, and the need for a standing army would wither away.

To be sure, both the realities of Palestinian nationalism and the Yishuv's own economic-developmental trajectory made this argument very difficult to sustain (Katz, Leff, and Mandel 2017, pt. 3; Lockman 2017; Shafir 2016). The Jewish National Home increasingly looked like "an Ulster in the great Ireland of Arabia" (Trevor-Roper 1963, 15). There was no reason to imagine the war would change that situation or reduce Palestinian opposition to it.

If so, then the long-term survival would mean finding allies and patrons. In practice, one school of thought envisioned a Jewish self-governing "free state," taking its place within an emergent British imperial commonwealth, based on a mix of settler-colonial and "native" dominions (Wedgwood 1922; Rose 1973, 71–96, Sinanoglu 2019). That held, even if force might be needed to persuade Britain to give up the day-to-day government of some or all of Palestine, as with the Irish Free State in 1921; to establish Jewish-minority rule until unrestricted immigration could commence; or both (Livni 1960; Miller 2010, 157–76).

Such collaboration would require cadres of staff officers and strategic experts conversant in imperial-security discourse and forces that could take on a variety of colonial policing and regional-security roles (Delaney 2017; Barkawi 2017; Kamissek and Kreienbaum 2016; Khalili 2010; compare also to Cheney, this volume). The operational realities that such missions posed were one problem. Another was framing those realities in terms that the Haganah's membership could accept. This may partly explain the odd combination of "high Stalinist" and Kiplingesque fiction that graced the journal's pages.

Viewed in this context, Glücklich's essay appears as a kind of nascent or "gestational" literary form. It combines both diaristic self-reflection alongside more reportage, along the lines of an "after action report" (e.g., Keegan 1976, 17–20). Ostensibly ordered around a unitary tactical action—the effort to find and destroy the German bridge—the narrative shifts to a lengthy reverie about the ambiguous nature of comradeship in a large, multi-national imperial army. The reader never learns how, or if, the problem of stabilizing the line was resolved. Glücklich's personal reflections are more consistently developed. That said, the published piece appears to have been fairly substantially redacted by the editors.[13]

Even so, it is still possible to identify some fragments of what appears to be an emergent set of literary and technical conventions.[14] For one thing, Hebrew-language tactical and institutional "translation equivalents"—"reverse slope defense," "Forward Defensive Locality," "company sergeant-major"—are offered confidently and authoritatively, with their originals in parenthetic translation (Wigen 2018, 40–43). While literary conventions are harder to render in English, discontinuities in the author's narrative timeline may give the contemporary reader some clues. The reader may recall that the German stretcher bearers are already enjoying their tea when Glücklich is "rudely awakened." If so, how can the expository dialogue attributed to them have taken place ("we're short a stretcher") as described? They would, one presumes, have explained themselves already—that is, when Glücklich was still asleep. Otherwise, how could the Canadian officer relate their wishes to him? But if that's the case, how could Glücklich relate the dialogue between them?

The point here is neither to cast doubt on Glücklich's "narrative reliability," nor to impose a set of exogenous literary standards on his recollections.

It is simply to note that these inconsistencies went unchallenged. Published in haste and largely in secret, they may have been considered unimportant or gone unnoticed by the editors. It is also possible that they were left intentionally—that the story's narrative disjunctions and inconsistencies would serve to *increase* its credibility as an "authentic" set of observations, offered in the moment.

Just such an argument was published in *Ma'arakhot* some months earlier by the author and literary critic Sh. Friedman. The technical shortcomings of "naïve" compositions (i.e., works written by those who were not 'professional' writers), Friedman explained, did not diminish their literary or didactic value. Rather the opposite: reading them, one feels as though a window has been opened onto a great, transformative event *in medias res*—one which neither the author nor the reader could fully process or understand.[15] To "smooth out" its narrative discontinuities would deprive the reader of this felt immediacy. War being an essentially disjunctive experience, a polished, 'professional' narrative would actually ring false—as though one was shoehorning lived experience into a pre-formed set of formal-literary rules and conventions.

The problem with this argument is that "unsettled" forms of mediation are still mediations—which would eventually give rise to new literary genres and forms. These were already in fact emergent—a Hebrew-language realism that drew heavily on the very sources *Ma'arakhot* itself was translating. Subsequent versions of these would come to be known in literary circles as "Palmakh-generation," or "mobilized" literature—the latter term (*giyyus/miguyyas*) evoking an operational mobilization or muster-point (Hasak-Lowy 2008, 102–6; also Cohen 2012; Nir 2018, 39–64; Shaked 2008, 139–87). That literature drew heavily on the aesthetic and style of Soviet war literature from the same period—works which *Ma'arakhot's* editors would devote considerable efforts to make accessible to Hebrew readers (Levine 2022).

If it seems far-fetched to place Glücklich's short recollection within an interpretive frame defined by works such as Petr Petrovich Vershigura's (Stalin Prize-winning) *Men with a Clear Conscience* or Nikolai Ostrovski's *How the Steel Was Tempered*, consider that the former was discussed extensively in *Ma'arakhot*'s pages and later appeared in Hebrew translation under its imprimatur (Vershigura 1953). Consider, as well, the manner in which Glücklich's narrative incorporates elements found within the "master plots" of wartime Soviet realism: a young leader, ideologically committed but practically untested ("I couldn't tell my hand from my foot"); who must negotiate an unfamiliar physical and human terrain; and whose personal experiences must be diffracted through a broad collective historical condition ("I, the

Jew, felt something more") (Clark 1981, 3–15). Yaron Ezrahi (1995, 19–30) would later call this "the impoverished language of the Israeli self."

Viewed within these constraints, Glücklich's narrative reflects a remarkable point of culmination: a "Machiavellian moment" come to fruition. A young officer possesses the "intellectual armory" by which to make himself understood, to place his own experiences within a broader narrative of what is happening to each and all. To be sure, there are tensions between the pull of the professional and that of the epic—between Glücklich's "outer" role as an officer in a multinational, polyglot imperial army and his "inner" self-understanding ("I, the Jew . . .")—just as there are between events as they happen and events as they are narrated. These cannot be entirely resolved, but that is what gives these rhetorical constructions their felt sense of necessity, power, and urgency. For those are the tensions that limn the identity of the "new Hebrew" as distinctive, incommensurable—and untranslatable.

Conclusion: Moral and Linguistic Incommensurabilities

In her 2015 *Babel in Zion*, Leora Halperin considers how the Arabic language was studied, and not studied, in the context of Hebrew's gradual emergence. Facility in Arabic was widely understood as a practical and political necessity for the success of the Jewish National Home; nevertheless, a close examination of the programs designed to teach it, she suggests, reveals a degree of ambivalence. Daily human contact between Palestinians and Zionists gave way to "a more regimented program of historical and cultural studies" (Halperin 2015, 160). Ultimately, Arabic language courses reinforced the differences they ostensibly aimed to transcend, binding non-Arabic-speaking Jews to a professional class of state-sponsored Middle East "experts" (Eyal 2006; Sorek 2009; Gribetz 2014, Wallach 2024).

The literary theorist Lital Levy presses this argument further still. Between Palestinian Arabs who write in Hebrew and Jews raised in Arabic-speaking milieux, she argues, there exists a literary "zone of abnegation" (*shetach hefker*)—in which any clear delineation between the two languages falls apart—along with any "essentialized or primordial" identities that rely upon it (Levy 2014, 5–6). For Hebrew writers like Bialik, the problem was that Hebrew and Arabic were not, in fact, incommensurable, when left to their own devices. They had to be made so. Essentially similar arguments can be found in Yasemin Yildiz's work on German, Yiddish, and Turkish speech codes in pre- and postwar Germany; and in recent attempts to jointly recast the memory of Palestinian and Jewish loss (Levy 2014, 28; Yildiz 2012; Bashir and Goldberg 2018).

Perhaps these interventions can tell us something about the nature of Glücklich's insistence that his Canadian comrades-in-arms could not possibly have understood him. One cannot know how deeply he felt this, or whether he later might have had occasion to revisit or discuss it. But the "stakes" are clear: if they could feel with him, then Jews were not quite so alone; and, if so, then the urgency of the national-linguistic struggle upon which the Yishuv and *Ma'arakhot* had embarked became harder to sustain. As the memory of the Shoah has solidified and widened, so too has the zero-sum quality of such concerns (Alexander 2009; Rothberg 2009). All the more so, since the outbreak of the 2023 Gaza-Israel war.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that the claim of linguistic "intimacy" is wholly reducible to claims of sovereign-political ownership (Subotic and Zarakol 2013; Derrida 1998). Nor do I mean to contest the claim that suffering cannot fully appear in language (Friedländer 1992; Scarry 1985). Nor that certain linguistic traditions may feel more authentic, immediate, or capacious than others with respect to certain expressive figurations. None of that excuses us, however, from retracing such appropriations or their effects.

Meanwhile, the insistently inexpressible nature of the Shoah seems to have merged with other "inexpressibles," further blurring the line—admittedly never too clear—between theology and politics. Did not Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu compare Donald Trump to Persian Emperor Cyrus the Great in March 2018?[16] It has, it would seem, become harder and harder to represent suffering and loss, save by means of transcendent or redemptive frameworks that give them meaning and purpose sub specie aeternitatis—precisely the point from which this chapter began. If the conflict between Israel and Palestine matters, it is surely not as a "test case" for this or that exogenously derived universal. No solidarity worth its salt would require this. Yet it appears suffering cannot appear otherwise. What sort of "Machiavellian moment" would be needed to remember that language both is, and is not, identical with the things it names?

Notes

1. Rawidowicz (1983), 43 and 90, here thanks to Shavit (2017).

2. The term lexis denotes "the total word-stock of a language." OED Online, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/107786, accessed June 5, 2021.

3. Viz., Koselleck (1988, 3): "the sense that we are being sucked into an open and unknown future, the pace of which has kept us in a constant state of breathlessness ever since the dissolution of the traditional ständische societies; and the pressure on our post-theological age to justify politics and morals without us being able to reconcile the two."

4. The exchange was recorded in the diaries of Shimon Rawidowicz, his interlocutor – also a highly regarded Hebrew-language author and editor. Though chagrined by Bialik's choice of words, Rawidowicz seems to have confined this reaction to his diary ("Oy, oy—is it thus with Bialik?") (1983, 43).

5. "Lo tin'af" See Ex. (20:14). On *no'efn,* see Harkavy (1928), 324.

6. Gardening metaphors ("tending the plot of Hebrew" and similar) were also popular; compare to Caraccioli (this volume).

7. See Schiller (ND [1801]). I am indebted to Shapiro (2018) for this reading.

8. On Palestinian-Arab service in the British army, see Abbasi (2017).

9. Composed of German-speaking Palestinian Jews, the "German Platoon" was a Haganah force that received British special-operations training. Formed in 1942, its mission was to infiltrate and harass German forces in the event Palestine was overrun (Naor 1994, 241).

10. For this paragraph and the next one, see Ben-Eliezer (1998); Pa'il (1979), chaps. 4–5; Ratner (1978), 246–70; Sadeh (1950); Shapira (1985); Slutzky (1976), 38–55.

11. I. F. Stone, "Middle Eastern Tories," *The Nation*, December 29, 1945, 726–28; Lt. Fritz Wegmüller, *Stosstrupps* (Aarau [Switzerland]: R. Sauerländer, 1942). On *Volokolamsk Highway*, see Schechter (2009) and Ginsberg (2013), 142–50. Dubno was a key early doctrinal thinker in the Haganah who was killed in May 1948; the essay referred to here is published under a pseudonym [as "Y. Allon"]; see Bogner (1998 and *Ma'arakhot* 87–88 (1955): 196.

12. See also Nir (2018), 44–67; Avineri (1981), 147–68; Shapira (1999). The Histadrut was the largest trade union within the Yishuv, as well as its largest employer.

13. Viz., Ketlinskaia (1948); "Rajput" (1948).

14. The byline under which the essay appears states that it was published "from letters"; the reader is given to understand that while the voice is the author's own, the presentation has undergone at least some degree of revision (Glücklich 1946, 59). Some circumstantial/biographical details on the origins of the piece can be gleaned from other sources. In March 1945, Glücklich lost a foot to a shoe-mine. He survived and was sent back to Palestine (Dromi 2008). Letters to the editor published in local newspapers (*Ha'aretz*, July 8, 1945; *HaMashkif*, July 17, 1945) indicate he spent the next several months convalescing at a military hospital adjacent to the Sarafand military base. The recollections reviewed here appeared in *Ma'arakhot* a little less than a year later. Glücklich later married, traveled to the UK to study civil engineering, and ultimately joined the faculty of the Technion. He died of natural causes in 2008.

15. Friedman (1945, 63): "[The letters] are intended for a very intimate circle: a wife, a child, friends and colleague, the kibbutz. To those whose hearts are anyway wide open to them at any time—for any word, or detail that might reach them." For that reason, these letters "had no need to avail themselves of literary accoutrements . . . polishing and tweaking would likely detract from their immediacy."

16. https://www.jta.org/2018/03/07/culture/king-cyrus-netanyahu-comparing-trump

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CHAPTER 11

Interlingual Politics of Linguistic Choice

Jelena Subotic

The discipline of International Relations has been engaged in much soul-searching over the last few years. There is an increasing awareness that IR as we most commonly conceive of it is not global (Maliniak et al. 2018), not diverse (Maliniak, Powers, and Walters 2013; Lake 2016; Colgan 2017; Subotic 2017), and, especially in the United States, not very theoretical (Colgan 2016; Oren 2016). There is a renewed visibility of discrete schools of IR that have developed somewhat in isolation from the American-dominated discipline, such as Chinese IR (Kristensen and Nielsen 2013; Zhang and Chang 2016; Eun 2017; Peng 2018), Canadian IR (Gutterman 2017), Russian IR (Makarychev and Morozov 2013; Tsygankov and Tsygankov 2014), and German IR (Wemheuer-Vogelaar and Risse 2018). In response to all this, there are calls for a truly "global IR" that would "decolonize" our currently Western and European-centric discipline and offer a more inclusive space for subaltern voices and perspectives (Jones 2006; Acharya 2016; Capan 2017; Hellmann and Valbjørn 2017; Tucker 2018).

This chapter contributes to these debates by arguing, simply, that the monolingual practices of IR scholarship deeply affect it as a discipline. They present methodological roadblocks, limit professional and scholarly networks, curb innovation, and constrain the possibilities of everyday ethnographies in IR. I first outline some of the main problems associated with monolingual (specifically, monolingual Anglophone) IR. I then present some illustrations from multilingual ethnographic IR research to demonstrate the richness and promise of true linguistic engagement and the theoretical payoff multilingual analysis can bring to our scholarly enterprise.

Unpacking the Field's Anglophonic Bias

While scholars of English and linguistic studies have for a while now grappled with the implications of English-language domination for global cultural practices (Ives 2006; Prendergast 2008; Pennycook 2017), the very concept of an "Anglosphere" and its political, racial, ideological, and normative commitments and implications for IR has only recently received the theoretical treatment it deserves (Vucetic 2011a, 2011b; Vitalis 2015).

The largely unproblematized Anglophone bias in International Relations scholarship produces visible and invisible pathologies. The first, and most obvious one, is the lack of awareness of already existing scholarship written and published in languages other than English. The way in which English-speaking IR goes about our business is to ignore volumes and volumes of theoretical work and vocabularies on such fundamental questions at the core of IR inquiry—sovereignty, legitimacy, hierarchy, ideology, power, and liberalism. In our neglect of non-English literatures, we end up reinventing long-traveled concepts, theories, and arguments and presenting them as novel and original (such as, for example, the debate about cultural relativism vs. universalism, which is the main axis of contention in Chinese IR; see Kristensen and Nielsen 2013), which of course perpetuates institutionalized disrespect for scholars writing outside of the Anglosphere.[1]

This, in turn, has immediately limiting consequences on actual scholarship and theory-building. It is this myopia that has led major IR scholars, such as Stephen Walt, to declare that there is a "relative dearth of 'big thinking' on global affairs from people outside the trans-Atlantic axis" (Walt 2011). But what if big thinking exists, but it is not in English? If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?

This practice has led to the implicit presumption that in order to count as contributing to IR, non-Anglophone scholars need to write in English. This seemingly pragmatic advice, however, hides serious political, cultural, and professional challenges for non-English-speaking scholars. It also leads to the creation or re-creation of linguistic networks outside of English that develop scholarship in isolation from the Anglophone mainstream (D'Aoust 2012).[2]

The frequently nonreflexive insularity of Anglophone IR is also evident in the ever-present obsession with theoretical and empirical generalizability, which comes at the exclusion of already existing scholarship in non-English languages that could either provide the necessary "evidence" of generalizability or completely refute it. But in the absence of any knowledge if such evidence, in fact, exists, claims are made from the position of scholarly privilege, arrogance, and more often than not, of profound ignorance of the epistemic world that exists elsewhere.

The role of language is critical not only for intrascholarly debates, but obviously for the very manner in which we conduct scholarly inquiry. I next want to highlight two specific dimensions of interlingual relations as they relate to the possibilities of everyday ethnography in IR—the linguistic politics at sites of memory, and the linguistic politics of alphabets.

International Linguistic Politics at Sites of Memory

It is clear that translation affects conceptual clarification, but it also transforms processes of documentation. This indicates not only the critical value of scholarly translation but also its place in the broader ethnography of everyday IR.

I want to illustrate these points with some insights from my current research on Holocaust remembrance in postcommunist Europe. As part of my larger project, I analyzed Holocaust memorial practices during and after communism in Eastern Europe. A big element of this analysis was looking at the way in which Eastern European states communicated to both their domestic constituencies (ethnic majorities and any remaining Jewish minorities) and to the international others the narratives about the Holocaust—what it was, who were the victims, and who were the perpetrators. Language—or rather, *languages*—was a critical feature of this analysis because it became obvious very quickly that very different, sometimes diametrically opposed, messages were being communicated in different languages through very different inscriptions on Holocaust memorials.

For example, in 1952, as part of a large effort coordinated by the Federation of Jewish Communities in socialist Yugoslavia, a major (and very early, even for broader European remembrance in this period) monument to the victims of the Holocaust was erected at the Jewish Sephardic Cemetery in Belgrade. This unique monument incorporated elements of the demolished Jewish houses in the Belgrade neighborhood of Dorćol, subtly indicating the Jewish identity of the victims. But more significantly, the monument included translated inscriptions in Hebrew, clearly identifying the object of representation as Jewish victims of the Holocaust, a direct identifier highly unusual so early after the war, and especially in communist Eastern Europe. Hebrew inscriptions—especially the common gravesite motif "may his soul be bound in the bonds of eternal life"—inscribed into the memorial also provided a private space for Jewish-only mourning and remembrance, detached from the otherwise strong communist push to de-ethnicize Yugoslav nations.

Most Belgrade Jews certainly did not know enough Hebrew to read a narrative memorial and understand its political subtleties, considering that at the time hardly anyone in the diaspora spoke or read the language. Hebrew was not there for legibility; it was there for representation. Hebrew was inscribed onto the monuments to provide some form of Jewish narrative framework that could serve as a foundation for rebuilding Jewish identity after the Holocaust decimated Jews, and a series of mass *Aliyah* to Israel after World War II further reduced the Jewish community to negligible numbers, "the remains of the remains," as the Jews often referred to themselves. Hebrew—especially its use here in a religious inscription—also provided a small space to maintain the modicum of religious observance, which was under constant attack by the communist state (Kerenji 2008, 207–8).

As part of the same memorialization project undertaken by the Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia, another monument was unveiled in Zagreb, also in 1952. This monument included an inscription, "To Jewish fighters fallen in the struggle for liberation of the peoples of Yugoslavia and to Jews victims of Fascism." The Zagreb memorial also contained the Hebrew inscription, which differed in a subtle way from the inscription in Serbo-Croatian, as it mentioned fighters and victims *in Croatia* (not Yugoslavia, as the Serbo-Croatian version read).

This difference in the text of the inscription indicates the continuing reluctance of Yugoslav authorities to showcase the larger crimes against "victims of fascism in Croatia." Yugoslav communists realized that the acknowledgment of specific crimes that occurred *in Croatia* would include not only the Holocaust as it was carried out by Croatian forces in the fascist-allied Independent State of Croatia, but also the larger genocide against the Serbs carried out by the same Croatian regime (Kerenji 2008, 212). Communist Yugoslavia did much to suppress this memory as it fundamentally undermined the Yugoslav communist myth of multicultural and multiethnic "brotherhood and unity." So here, the language used is not only quite directly political, but it serves to discipline political memory at home for the majority population. At the same time, the Hebrew transcription allows for private memory and mourning that is confined to a small, almost negligible surviving Jewish minority, which, as nonpolitically threatening, is allowed its own marginal narrative. The linguistic and translation politics at work here are, in fact, power politics, but only for those who understand the language and the urban spaces where this language is displayed. It is in the everyday ethnographic and linguistic findings such as these that IR's overwhelming monolingualism has real empirical and analytical costs.

Even more extremely, in Lithuania, many communist Holocaust memorials had completely different inscriptions in Hebrew and Lithuanian. For example, the 1958 memorial in Šiaudviečiai says in Hebrew:

> Here lie buried in Eternal Memory of the Martyrs of the Community of Nayshtot, may God avenge their blood, murdered and annihilated by the Germans and their local assistants, may their names be blotted from memory, in the year 5701–1941, the day of memory is the twenty-fourth of Tammuz. Their sacred memory will forever be in our midst. May their souls be tied to the lands of the living.

Under this inscription is etched a different one in Lithuanian: "Here lie buried Soviet people, shot by German occupants and bourgeois nationalists in 1941." Here, then, the Soviet Lithuanian authorities made all victims posthumously a-national Soviet citizens, stripped them of any ethnic designation, and, most important, placed the blame on "bourgeois"—that is, anticommunist—Lithuanian "nationalists," retroactively narrating both the Holocaust and World War II as a struggle between communism and its enemies, and not, fundamentally, as a race war. This historical reinterpretation also fits a broader narrative purpose for the Soviet state, which was to de-emphasize ethnicity, suppress religious identity, and instead focus relentlessly on the construction of Soviet *citizens*, who would replace Soviet *Jews*, or *Russians*, or *Lithuanians*.

Sometimes, the only indication that a memorial was, in fact, a Holocaust memorial was the presence of a Yiddish inscription. For example, at the site of the murder of 1,000 Jews at Batiškės in 1941, a memorial was placed in 1957 that read, "At this place, in 1941–1944, German fascists and Lithuanian bourgeois nationalists murdered about four thousand innocent residents of Šakiai District." The inscription was in Lithuanian, Russian, and Yiddish, which was the only subtle indication that the victims were Jews. What is at work here, then, is not so much the existence of Yiddish *text*, but the presence of the Hebrew *alphabet* that forms Yiddish words.

Yiddish would be illegible to most people other than to Jews, but the Hebrew alphabet is visible to everyone, and is thus representing Jewishness. The text itself, translated from Lithuanian, is semiotically vacant; it does not convey much if any narrative. But the presence of the Hebrew alphabet invokes a private sphere of communal mourning for the Jewish survivors. The alphabet *is* the communal narrative.

The transcription memory wars in Lithuania continued after communism. The new memorials constructed after Lithuanian independence in 1990 needed to be renegotiated to fit the new Lithuanian political landscape. The mass execution site at Ponary, just outside of the capital, Vilnius, proved particularly difficult because it is a site of central importance for the Holocaust of Lithuanian Jews—more than 70,000 Jews were shot in Ponary forest—but it is also the site of clear Lithuanian participation—the executioners at Ponary were Lithuanians, not Germans. In the newly open political space after post-Soviet independence, Holocaust survivors lobbied the Lithuanian government to allow construction of a memorial at Ponary, which would be financed by private donations, mostly from abroad. The inscription was to read: "Here in the Ponary forest, from July 1941 to July 1944, the Hitlerite occupiers and their local assistants murdered 100,000 people, of whom 70,000 were Jews—men, women, and children." The Lithuanian authorities, however, rejected this inscription because of the phrase "their local assistants" and the project was for a while at a standstill (Gitelman 1994, 143–44). Eventually a compromise was reached—the inscription would remain in full, but only in Yiddish and Hebrew, and a redacted version without mention of local collaboration would be placed in Lithuanian, so as not to cause "offense" to Lithuanian visitors.[3]

And yet, sometimes, Holocaust memorials also included inscriptions in English, such as for example at the Ninth Fort in Kaunas (the site of the October 1941 shooting of 10,000 Jews) and at Kupiškis. During the communist era, the presence of English indicates that these monuments were likely put up by the English-speaking Jewish diaspora, mostly from the United States. In postcommunist Lithuania, English transcriptions indicate an attempt to place Lithuanian Holocaust remembrance within the larger European memory and also showcase Lithuanian postcommunist participation in global Holocaust remembrance.

The significance of these examples is to point to the importance of language as a *political* tool. Language, or rather different languages, did the work that marginal political groups could not—they sent messages about the past, they preserved political memory, and they conveyed a resoluteness that minority life would continue, even after catastrophe. Only a careful attention to issues of language, translation, and inscription could tease out these nuanced meanings and help us fully understand the incredibly high political stakes of the use of language in the world of international political memory.

International Politics of Alphabets

Another area of study in which language should be understood as a political tool of international relations is the politicized use of different alphabets.[4] Outside of linguistics, we don't think much of alphabets and politics, and we certainly have not thought much about alphabets at all in the context of IR. But how the language is written is critical as it projects issues of national identity, culture, and political representation (Sebba 2007). The lack of interest in alphabets in IR is unfortunate as the construction, use, and regulation of alphabets is not only inherently political, but it has clear international purchase. States regulate their alphabets in order to project a certain national-historical origin story—which cultural space they want to belong to and draw a historical connection to, but also, just as much, which cultural space they do not want to be a part of.

Alphabets are also political tools of domestic control of various ethnic groups, as which alphabets are designated as official state alphabets, and which are marginalized, and sometimes outright banned, is often a practice of majority rule and disciplining of ethnic and linguistic diversity. Choice of alphabet script is, therefore, an "act of identity" (Hatcher 2008), or "a way of reaffirming identity or signaling new associations" (Wright 2004, 51).

Alphabet changes are not new—they have been used by empires and various postcolonial regimes to signal a break with the previous state authority and the beginning of something new. Efforts at "modernization" throughout the twentieth century have often led to destruction of indigenous alphabets. For example, under the Land Rights Act of 1976, the Australian government Anglicized the pictorial alphabet of the indigenous Warlpiri people. While bilingual English/Warlpiri education was allowed in some schools, the change of the alphabet effaced and largely designated to oblivion the original Warlpiri language and script (Biddle 2002).

The Soviet Union, for example, Latinized the indigenous Central Asian languages in the 1920s, in order to unshackle the working class from the perceived backwardness of the Arabic script and, more broadly, from Islam (Clement 2018). Proficiency in Latin script, then, was seen as an instrument of further cultural and identity shift necessary for the new Soviet Union, and it was followed by extensive efforts at secularization and, in 1928, a devastating campaign of seizure and burning of all books written in Arabic script (Hatcher 2008). Some prominent Central Asian state leaders supported this change themselves as a sign of their nations' leap forward into modernity. An Azerbaijani leader, for example, notably said, "The old Arabic alphabet stood like a stone wall in front of the beautiful and cultural language of the Azerbaijani people for many long years. By banning the use of this alphabet, the Azerbaijani people made a great stride forward in its history" (quoted in Hatcher 2008, 108).

Beyond banning Arabic, in the early years of the state, the Soviet Union also preferred to use the Latin alphabet as the Cyrillic was associated with tsarist Russia (Bahtiyar 2019). For the Soviet leaders, Latin script was seen as representing "a world international identity" (Fierman 2009, 1211). In fact, almost all languages of Turkic, Iranian, and Uralic origin were Latinized during this early campaign, but the effort ended in 1939–40 on Joseph Stalin's orders and the scripts were converted to Cyrillic instead as part of the major Russification campaign (Andresen and Carter 2016). The "world international" of Latin was replaced with the "Soviet international" of Cyrillic (Fierman 2009, 1213). Stalin's concern with Latinized Turkic languages was that this would allow for the creation of a sort of "pan-Turkic" cultural identity in the aftermath of Turkey's own conversion to the Latin alphabet in 1928 under the regime of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, as part of a much broader attempt at cultural modernization. While Turkic languages in the Soviet Union had to convert, Armenia and Georgia were allowed to maintain their own unique scripts, fueling much national resentment in Central Asian republics, which perceived this as an anti-Turkic and anti-Muslim move (Hatcher 2008).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, post-Soviet governments in Moldova, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan all changed their scripts into Latin as a way to signal their new independence and orientation against the "Soviet [Russian] International" (Fierman 2009). Some post-Soviet states, like Uzbekistan, even briefly considered changing their alphabet to Arabic, but decided against it out of a desire to belong to the Turkish-dominated cultural space, and away from Russia (Fierman 2009).

Azerbaijan changed its scripts three times in the last 100 years—from Arabic to Latin, from Latin to Cyrillic, and back from Cyrillic to Latin—and each time the change was carried out within a particular political environment that was focused on specific national identity claims—of modernization, Westernization, Sovietization, or post-Soviet independence (Hatcher 2008). In December 1991, only four days after declaring independence from the Soviet Union, the Azerbaijani parliament voted to switch the script from Cyrillic back to Latin, as a sign of a new cultural and political era. This decision came amid serious lobbying by Russia, Iran, and Turkey, which each advocated for a specific alphabet script that would represent its respective cultural imprint in Central Asia (Hatcher 2008). Turkey's outreach—which won in the end—included convening multiple international conferences and opening Turkish schools and universities across post-Soviet Central Asia (Landau 2010).

In 2001, by decree of president Ilham Aliyev, August 1 was declared the Day of the Azerbaijani Alphabet and Azerbaijani Language. While the Latinization of Azerbaijani script produced an alphabet most similar to Turkish, the Aliyev regime put much effort in constructing the distinctness of the Azerbaijani script by, for example, emphasizing (often in larger font size) the three letters that are distinct between Latinized Azeri and Latinized Turkish (Marquardt 2011). In practice, however, the Latinization of the Azeri script was difficult to implement because of the lack of economic resources necessary for such a major endeavor. A decade into the script switch there was a dearth of textbooks or other educational materials printed in the Latin script (Garibova and Asgarova 2009).

Kazakhstan began a massive process of Latinization much later, in 2017, with a decree by President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who ordered the gradual phasing out of the Cyrillic script and full Latinization by 2025. Taking pains to demonstrate the distinctiveness of the Kazakh script, Nazarbayev also claimed that the Cyrillic script used in Kazakhstan was not really Cyrillic, but a different "Kazakh alphabet" with roots in Cyrillic (Fierman 2009, 1220).

The international politics of alphabets also played out quite dramatically in the aftermath of the collapse of the former Yugoslavia, especially in the relations between Serbia and Croatia as the two states each began to construct their post-Yugoslav state identities in sharp opposition to each other. This process of post-Yugoslav cultural divorce was extremely fraught as Serbia and Croatia belonged to the same linguistic space, shared the same language with minor dialect differences, and wrote the language in two different scripts—Croatians in Latin, and Serbs in both Latin and Cyrillic.

After declaring independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, and especially after the end of the war of Yugoslav succession in 1995, Croatia actively engaged in a form of "language secessionism"—separation of the Croatian language variant from the larger Serbo-Croatian language—which was manifest in the introduction of many new "Croatian" words into the official language and the replacement of words of Serbian origin with their "translations," often newly constructed Croatian versions (Greenberg 2004).

Alphabet script played a key role in this political linguistic effort. Croatia began to regulate the use of scripts and allowed bilingual (or, in the case of the Serb minority, bi-alphabetical) language use only in municipalities with more than one-third minority population. Croatia had multiple bilingual signs in Croatian and Italian (but both in Latin) in the northern province of Istria, which were installed without public controversy. The installing of Cyrillic-script public signs in cities with large Serbian minorities, however, created a huge political maelstrom. In the city of Vukovar in 2013, Croatian war veterans organized a series of often violent protests against the public display of Cyrillic in the city, under the slogan "For a Croatian Vukovar, No to Cyrillic." The salience of the Cyrillic alphabet in Vukovar, especially, was powerful because Vukovar was the site of some of the worst atrocities against the Croatian population carried out by Serb forces during the war in the 1990s. From the perspective of Croatian war veterans and their supporters, the Cyrillic script is a reminder of the suffering of Croatia during the 1990s war (Reuters 2013). Opposition to Cyrillic signage in Vukovar went beyond just protests—Cyrillic signs were vandalized or removed amid a torrent of violence that gripped the city in 2013. After escalating violence, the city of Vukovar—in violation of the Croatian constitution—decided to disallow bilingual signage at official town buildings, institutions, squares, and streets, effectively criminalizing the use of Cyrillic for the city's 35 percent ethnic Serbs.

At the same time, Croatian Serb insistence on the use of Cyrillic is also squarely political—most Croatian Serbs have historically used Latin script or both Latin and Cyrillic interchangeably. Insisting on Cyrillic has to do with a particular form of Serbian nationalist revival where Cyrillic is a marker of Serbian identity, a clear visual separator from other groups that use the same language. Vukovar's Serbs, then, were marking their presence as a distinct ethnic group through the use of an alphabet script.

In tying their identity so firmly to the Cyrillic script, Croatia's Serbs were also reflecting the broader Serbian identification with Cyrillic. In Serbia proper, while both the Latin and Cyrillic alphabet used to be taught at school and widely used, since the 1990s there has been a tremendous push to make Serbian a Cyrillic-only language. The 2006 constitution declared Cyrillic script the only official script in use, with the government and many academic institutions only accepting materials submitted in Cyrillic. There has been an increased social pressure for posts on social media or in email communication to be in Cyrillic under the popular slogan "write in Cyrillic" (Marković 2017). In many ways, the choice of Cyrillic has become a form of culture war where the political left chooses the Latin script and the political right insists on Cyrillic. More broadly, the move for exclusively Cyrillic script maps onto the larger nationalist project of disassociating Serbian from the larger Serbo-Croat linguistic identity and reaffirming Serbian identity as distinct, separate, and unique (Jovanović 2018). Many activists involved in the "Cyrillic only" movement considered the fight for Cyrillic as a fight for the heart of the Serbian nation, as in the words of one academic activist, "the Cyrillic script . . . is one of the most important elements of the spiritual and cultural identity of the Serbian people" (quoted in Jovanović 2018, 618).

Finally, the international politics of alphabets also manifests itself in revivals of long forgotten and unused historical alphabets that are now put in pursuit of contemporary nationalist needs. In Croatia, for example, as part of a broader nationalist resurgence, there has been a renewed interest in the Glagolitic script—a Church Slavonic script used in the medieval Croatian language that increasingly serves as a marker of Croatian national uniqueness and distinctiveness from either Bosniaks or Serbs, regardless of their shared Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian language. There are summer schools that teach reading and writing in Glagolitic, and a standard Unicode for Glagolitic was developed for internet use (Kamusella 2020). In 2014, Glagolitic script as a "cultural good" was inscribed into law. Glagolitic signage is increasingly visible on monuments, plaques, and road signs, oftentimes directed at tourists.

Similarly, in Hungary, as the country has taken a sharp turn to the far right under the leadership of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, the Rovás script—a Hungarian version of the Old Turkish script of Central Asia written from right to left—has begun to appear as signage in a number of villages (Kamusella 2020). The Unicode for Rovás was officially adopted in 2012 under the name "Old Hungarian alphabet." Hungarian books were transliterated and published in Rovás, teachers were trained to provide Rovás instruction in schools (Pap and Glied 2018), and road signs in Rovás began to pop up. Hungarians can now even choose to sign their names on official documents in Rovás. Orbán's government enthusiastically supported and promoted these efforts, as they fit within the broader Hungarian regime's nationalist framework of Hungary's long history of distinctness from the broader European cultural space (Hann 2014). This official support made the use of Rovás much more widespread and mainstream than was the case with Croatia's Glagolitic revival. It has also now started to serve as a direct tool of Hungary's nationalism, even territorial expansion, as the Rovás Foundation began promoting books and educational materials that advocate for Hungary's "return" to its pre-1918 Hungarian borders (Kamusella 2020).

Language scripts and alphabets are clearly important elements of state domestic policy, the construction and maintenance of nationalism and national identity, and even as tools of secession and expansion. But they also should be understood as part of broader state international politics—signaling desirable cultural groups or the rejection of undesirable cultural associations. The politics of alphabets that I described demonstrates what messages the state or groups within the state want to convey to international observers, what larger international society they want to belong to, and what international identity they want to obtain—issues that are of core interest to IR.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to point to some important aspects of linguistic politics as they relate both to the IR discipline as a whole and to the possibilities presented in the ethnographic approach to everyday IR. While I emphasized the structural problems our discipline is facing with the almost complete domination of a monolingual, Anglophile approach, the solution to these problems is not to expect IR scholars to suddenly become multilingual or fluent in multiple alphabets overnight (although that would help), but to at least be aware of the biases our own shortcomings produce and how they affect our scholarship.

The cases I described speak to the larger issues in IR, such as state narrative power, state identity, and issues of genuine or performed multiculturalism. In all of these areas of scholarship, attention to language and translation and specifically to the politics of interlingual relations should be a key part of scholarly inquiry. The broader purpose of this chapter, then, was to reinvigorate the discussion of the politics of language and translation in the study of global politics itself. Language is political, and linguistic practices in IR scholarship impact the politics of the discipline. The continuing linguistic hegemony in the discipline and the lack of interlingual dialogue makes our scholarship poorer and structural hierarchies within IR that much stronger and difficult to abolish.

Notes

1. This is not a problem that uniquely plagues American IR—a recent survey showed that while 30 percent of US-based IR scholars spoke only one language, monolingualism was a problem across the English-speaking world, in fact most pronounced in Australia (Maliniak et al. 2018). Further, this is an issue for the broader political science discipline as well.

2. For example, French-Canadian scholars have built networks with scholars from France and found kinship on linguistic but also theoretical grounds, building on key Francophone contributions of, for example, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu (D'Aoust 2012).

3. The Lithuanian inscription has since been replaced to include the full sentence.

4. While in linguistics there is a nuanced difference between a "script," which is a written form of language, and an "alphabet," which is a particular type of script, for my broader purposes here I use them interchangeably.

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CHAPTER 12

"The Most Important People Here Are Not Us—It's Those Translators"

The Hidden Labor of Afghan and Iraqi Local Interpreters

Sara de Jong

"We want justice, don't ignore us!," a group of men chants in front of Camp Marmal in Mazār-i-Sharīf, Afghanistan, the largest military base of the German army outside Germany. It is September 2018 and the group, which grows in size to 150 persons (Salloum 2018), will continue to protest weekly at the entrance of the base for over a year. The collective, which calls itself the German Local Employees Union, consists of Afghan military interpreters and other locally employed civilians (LECs). They demand protection from the German government in the face of mounting threats against those who worked for Western military forces. Exasperated by the lack of response to their requests for resettlement to Germany, the group declares on their Facebook page: "Germans should understand it was not possible to win the hearts and minds of Afghans without local employees specially Translators. We were not just simple staff, we were cultural advisors, we were area specialists, we were day and night reporters" (German Local Employees Union Facebook page, September 8, 2018). Three years later, on June 30, 2021, one of the leaders of the protest sent me a picture from Afghanistan. He stands on the airport tower watching a plane leave with the last German soldiers, as part of the NATO withdrawal. It is accompanied by the message: "They left us behind, feeling so lonely."

Local interpreters and translators are not only at peril of being ignored by the Western states that employ them, but also by the discipline of International Relations. The silence on the role of interpreters in global politics is particularly striking in the context of the doctrine of population-centric counterinsurgency. As Julia Welland notes, "Soldiers were expected to live, move and work amongst the local population, to talk with them, listen to them and earn their trust" (2016, 130). The Afghan local interpreters who would mediate those encounters, and without whom most Western soldiers with limited Dari or Pashtu language skills would have little means to either "talk with them" or "listen to them," remain marginal to the discipline, in spite of their central role (for exceptions, see C. Baker 2010a, 2012; Bos and Soeters 2006; Kristensen 2019; Van Dijk, Soeters, and de Ridder 2010). It is also remarkable because the stories of Afghan and Iraqi interpreters have been subject to extensive media coverage. Media interest further intensified during the NATO drawdown from Afghanistan. However, the most extensive academic scholarship on interpreters in conflict zones comes from language and translation studies (M. Baker 2010; Collin 2009; Footitt and Kelly 2012a, 2012b, 2018; Gaunt 2016; Gómez-Amich 2018; Inghilleri 2010; Kremmel 2016; Palmer 2007; Rafael 2007; Lucía Ruiz Rosendo 2020; Lucia Ruiz Rosendo and Muñoz 2017; Stahuljak 2000; Tipton 2019). From the 2000s, translation studies started engaging with this topic, partly as a response to the emerging media stories of interpreters in conflict (Footitt and Kelly 2018) and in line with a growing disciplinary interest in the subject of the interpreter and their biographies (Kremmel 2016). As Hilary Footitt and Michael Kelly note, "until the turn of the twenty-first century, foreign languages, translation and interpreting were almost totally absent from discussions about war and conflict," as "the tacit assumption seemed to be that most wars are fought with allies, and against enemies, who obligingly speak our own language" (2018, 166).

This chapter centers local interpreters in Afghanistan and Iraq and will develop the argument that their labor is both constituted by global politics and constitutive of global politics. With its aim to investigate the practices of local interpreters as meaningful for understanding conflict and war, it loosely situates itself at the intersection of what has come to be called the "practice turn" in International Relations (Adler and Pouliot 2015) and the interlingual relations research program set out in this volume (see also: Caraccioli et al. 2021). This chapter will consider the way in which local interpreters' labor of translation is on the one hand hidden in global politics, while also recognizing that it has become hypervisible in media stories in distinct and limiting ways. I employ the term "hidden labor" rather than "invisible labor" as it draws attention to the (political) work needed to hide this labor. I will insert insights from language and translation studies into the study of global politics, while also complementing this body of work by asking different questions and employing different methods. I will move away from the preoccupation common to language and translation studies with interpreter neutrality in a context of war and the lack of professional training for lay locally recruited interpreters, and instead ask how global politics shapes their role and how their practices shape global politics. This includes looking at how translation is embedded in power relations, and recognizing that the interpreter is being subjugated to those relations himself.

Where publications in language and translation predominantly rely on secondary data—especially the ubiquitous media stories and fiction in which the stories of Afghan and Iraqi interpreters have been popularized—I draw on primary data, consisting of forty-eight semistructured interviews with male Afghan and Iraqi interpreters and other LECs who are now based in the US, UK, Canada, France, Germany, and the Netherlands. As Mona Baker has argued, locally recruited interpreters in conflict zones tend to be narrated in terms of "rigidly defined and mutually exclusive" binaries, such as victim vs. villain, friend or foe (2010, 218). In my discussion I will hence foreground interpreters' voices to disrupt simplistic binaries, while also recognizing that interpreters' own accounts are constrained by and framed within larger contextual discourses and structures. The research is also informed by interviews with forty-six advocates and service providers[1] in the aforementioned countries, including veterans who had worked with local interpreters, lawyers, representatives of professional interpreting associations, civil society activists, and refugee resettlement caseworkers. Finally, I conducted a document analysis of (social) media, reports, government statements, court cases, and so forth, and carried out (participant) observations of several national and international political meetings on the protection of Afghan and Iraqi interpreters and other LECs.

Emancipation from the Labor of Translation

The doctrinal focus in Afghanistan and Iraq on "winning hearts and minds" made the role of linguistic and cultural mediators particularly pertinent. With insufficient linguistic and cultural skills present in Western militaries (Collin 2009) and based on cost considerations (Bos and Soeters 2006; Moerman 2008), a significant number of interpreters were employed locally, either directly or through private contractors. It is difficult to obtain reliable data on the numbers of interpreters or LECs per country or mission, however combining estimates from various national policy documents, NGO reports, Freedom of Information requests, and parliamentary questions gives an approximate picture.[2] For example, the US and UK already employed more than 150,000 LECs in Iraq alone. The global hegemony of English, and to a lesser extent German and French, provided a recruitment pool of lay interpreters for NATO troops. Their employment reflects a broader structure of the international division of labor that exploits "cheap military labor of the global South" (Henry 2012, 15). English language proficiency became an even more important currency postinvasion, which inaugurated an increase in international troops and organizations and a decrease of other viable job opportunities. One young interpreter who I interviewed in Germany told me that he learned most of his English after high school when he was volunteering at the American Abraham Lincoln Learning Centre (170326_001). Another person was an English language teacher before he started working as an interpreter and translator of documents (170618). Their Western counterparts operated under a different set of logics and power relations. As Vicente Rafael aptly notes for the US imperial context, "Monolingual citizenship is assumed to be a kind of achievement rather than a limitation[; an] achievement [that] brings with it a certain freedom, which is nothing less than the emancipation from the labor of translation" (2009, 10–11). This sets the tone for understanding the unequal linguistic encounters between Western soldiers and local interpreters. With English being the lingua franca of the missions, English-speaking Western soldiers could afford being monolingual. While most troops from non-English-speaking countries had to be at least bilingual to communicate with other International Security Assistance Force staff and with local interpreters, they could still largely outsource the labor of translation to local staff.

The emancipation of Western soldiers from the labor of translation operated in parallel with a dependency on translation by local interpreters (de Jong, 2022). To mask this dependency and accompanying vulnerability, the labor of local interpreters remains—to an extent—hidden in the ways in which war is told and soldiers are trained. As former US Army captain Matt Zeller shared with me, some of his colleagues "walked in thinking that they were going to come in and they were going to dictate to an Afghan military unit, 'this is how you train and we do it this way,' and it would be verbatim spit out by the translator next to them. They were just like a machine and they were there just to be a mouthpiece. Word for word, simultaneously say what I'm saying, and that it would just culturally come across as perfect and everything would be 'hunky dory.'" Longer-term exposure to the realities of a tour in Afghanistan and Iraq, however, tends to upset Western soldiers' faith in their cultural and linguistic hegemony. Matt hence contrasted the linguistic and cultural arrogance of incoming soldiers with the increased humility of those leaving their tour. Returning to his own memories of his first arrival in Afghanistan, he recounted "the very first thing that happened was that we got to our little outpost and the people we were replacing that had been there for fifteen months before us, one by one universally pulled us aside and said: 'Look, the most important people here are not us—it's those translators that were here for the rotation before us, and the rotation before that.'"

Since local military translators are often employed for several years, in contrast to the international military who rotate on a yearly or six-month basis, they are essential in providing institutional knowledge in a volatile environment. Matt called the interpreters "the knowledge center" and related that at the end of their tour of duty, he and his colleagues repeated the advice that they had been given to the next incoming soldiers: "They're going to be the difference between you being alive or dead at the end of all of this—it would really behoove you to trust them. And it was interesting that the guys who replaced us initially did not take that advice and treated the translators very poorly and found themselves in a world of hurt as a result." The serious implications of not recognizing the knowledge of interpreters was echoed by Liaqat, an Afghan interpreter who worked for the British armed forces. He narrated how an incoming regiment ignored his advice not to go to a certain location where he had witnessed several ambushes previously. The incoming regiment indeed faced an attack and the officer subsequently apologized to him for not heeding his advice. This demonstrates that the recognition of interpreters' work in military operations tends to remain as short lived as the length of a tour of duty. Hence, despite the micro-level challenges to cultural and linguistic hegemony experienced by Western soldiers, once they spend more time on the ground outside the wire and the accompanying shift in balance in favor of the knowledge and experience of local interpreters, this does little to puncture the myth of linguistic superiority and sense of liberation from the labor of translation.

The Hidden Labor of Cultural Brokerage

The Afghan and Iraqi former local interpreters, including the protesting Afghan interpreters in front of the German military Camp Marmal with whom this chapter opens, invariably presented their own roles as combining cultural brokerage, political diplomacy, and intelligence gathering. Some of the Afghan and Iraqi local interpreters that I interviewed moved on from their original employment as interpreter to take on formal roles as "cultural advisors" to Western troops (see also: interviews 180624, 171227). However, because many were cultural advisors in practice, while only interpreters in name, this substantive additional labor remains hidden. A former Afghan military interpreter whom I interviewed in the UK stressed: "The interpreter was twenty-four hours with the army. And they are giving cultural advice and they are giving sources of information. . . . There is no operation conducted without the interpreter" (171113). Another Afghan former interpreter in the US elaborated:

> My job was not to provide only interpretation, it was also to be tactful and sometimes just handle the situations and sometimes soften the speeches between the, e.g., village elders and [the female representative of the U.S. task force], and also sometimes just intervene. . . . I mean, just help [her] to be successful in her meeting with the elders, which was not an easy job, by the way. . . . So this task force had a security department and they made sure that the road is clear, that the building that we meet in is fine, but you know, sometimes there are cultural hazards too, in a meeting between a young lady and close-minded, old, village leaders [which I had to mediate]. (170404)

Local interpreters' self-understanding of being an interpreter-cum-cultural mediator was confirmed by the way in which Western soldiers described their role. As veteran and British Member of Parliament Tom Tugendhat explained: "These guys, who may have been classed as interpreters, were in many ways much more than that. They were helping British soldiers and civilians to understand the local context, to be aware of stories that we would perhaps never have heard but which shaped the way people acted. . . . So, it is much more than interpreting; it is a complete cultural lesson" (Oral evidence, UK Defence Select Committee, November 2017).

These individual narratives fitted the overarching discourse of the so-called War on Terror, represented as a "clash of cultures." The cultural translation expected from local interpreters (and local "cultural advisors") should hence be placed in the wider interest in culture as a military strategy, expressed in the introduction of "Human Terrain Teams" consisting of anthropologists embedded in combat units in Iraq and Afghanistan (Joseph 2014). As Madeleine Campbell notes, "The use of Iraqi interpreters as cultural translators—and the larger weaponization of culture of which their work was a part—grew out of an orientalist theory of cultural translation in which 'culture' can be deciphered, decoded, and deployed in the interests of power" (2016, 78). Indeed, contemporary interpreters in neoimperial wars follow in the footsteps of the many earlier brokers that preceded them in colonial encounters. Research in history and anthropology has shown that the formation and sustenance of colonial and settler societies depended on "go-betweens" who engaged in the overlapping tasks of linguistic translation, cultural mediation, and political negotiation between what were considered radically different communities and lifeworlds (Hinderaker 2002).

As Maria Gómez-Amich notes, "The capital of locally-recruited interpreters represents their main value for the international troops, as their insight [inside *sic*] knowledge regarding the geography, the history and the languages/dialects of the country in conflict, as well as the *wastah* (contacts) that they may possess, is, precisely, what will allow the troops to successfully complete their missions while deployed" (2018, 38). The validation of this capital is, however, limited by the fact that cultural competence was assumed as a natural, embodied skill that local interpreters had by virtue of their cultural background, rather than as something that needed to be acquired and trained. It was also seen as practically unhindered by the fact that most local interpreters' exposure to the West was limited to their inclusion in the global circulation of cultural hegemonic images about "Western culture." One Iraqi former interpreter whom I met in the United States reflected back on the time that he taught "intercultural awareness" to Western soldiers. "I'm now in a better position to inform them. [When I was teaching then], I didn't know what they'd heard, how did they translated [what I told them] in their mind. . . . I wish I could go back in time and explain to them like, 'this is what it is, this society, and this is why people think this way" (170301). Hence the intercultural translation and mediation practiced by local interpreters was shaped by a complex interplay between the cultural habitus of local interpreters, local staff's anticipation of the expectations of Western soldiers, and the cultural imaginations of Western soldiers themselves. The intercultural mediation practiced by local interpreters also remained centered around the hegemonic figure of the Western soldier, rather than the local population.

This hidden labor of cultural mediation in translation contained certain risks for local interpreters. In some instances expectations of cultural brokerage could conflict with the requirements of translation. As Walter Benjamin (1968) has famously described in "The Task of the Translator," two key concepts for evaluating translations are "fidelity" and "license," or "freedom," and they are traditionally regarded as being in tension. In contentious situations, deliberate mistranslation might be necessary to de-escalate situations. As one Afghan interpreter explained to me in Germany: "You have to be smart. In some situations I had to lie because if you tell the truth you're going to produce a conflict between the Afghan and the German side. . . . There was a mix-up among Afghans and other guys, and I was trying to make the German guy calm down and not use a lot of vile language, and I told him later that if I were to have translated the same thing what you were telling him, then it would have been a big clash between you guys, and then later he was like 'you're really smart.' I said, 'you have to be, you just have to be really good. . . . in some cases you have to have the role of mediator'" (170326). Another Afghan man who was interpreting during trainings for the Afghan National Police, told me that when American trainers referred to "dogs" to describe bravery, telling the local officers to attack the enemy "like a dog," he translated this with the word "lion," aware that being compared to a dog would be considered offensive in Afghan culture (171227). These examples echo the findings of Madeleine Campbell's study of former Iraqi interpreters, who shared "stories of mistranslating as a badge of . . . commitment to mutual understanding between Iraqis and Americans" and who credited their "mistranslation with potentially saving lives" (Campbell 2016, 74; cf. Gómez-Amich 2018; Hoedemaekers and Soeters 2009; Lucía Ruiz Rosendo 2020).

While mistranslation can reflect being "faithful" to the situation that needs mediation, this could play into suspicions about the reliability of local interpreters. Reliance on a stranger's translation, whose competence and reliability cannot be checked because of one's lack of proficiency in that language, exacerbated structures of mistrust (Collin 2009). There's a preoccupation in translation studies with the erosion of the professional etiquette of interpreter neutrality in the conduct of lay local interpreters who display a "tendency to make decisions based on gut feeling, and without abiding by certain professional guidelines" (Lucía Ruiz Rosendo 2020, 56), but this was not reflected in the personal accounts of local interpreters that I interviewed. However, the related, more fundamental issue discussed in language and translation Studies of translation as inevitably involving a betrayal of the original source, casting the interpreter in the position of *traduttore-traditore* (translator-traitor), resonated strongly with the lived experiences of local interpreters in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Local interpreters who were the messengers of house searches, investigations, and negotiations about financial compensation for destroyed property and land tended to be identified with the message they conveyed. Many of the former interpreters that I interviewed told me that they were viewed as the "tongue of the infidels," or in the words of Vicente Rafael, "faithful to their task by being unfaithful to their origins" (2009, 17). As a result, they feel ostracized within their local communities and also find themselves shunned by part of the diaspora community in the West that they become part of after fleeing their countries of origin. Distrust also comes from the side of Western military staff and Western governments, who assess the asylum and visa applications from former local interpreters. As Maya Hess notes, this distrust needs to be contextualized within current broader anti-Muslim politics (2012). At the same time, this suspicion toward local interpreters needs to be situated in "the [ongoing] parallels between colonial and contemporary anxieties around [boundary] crossing" (de Jong 2018, 621). Local interpreters in particular, but also brokers in general, are often caught in an impossible double bind in which "mixed loyalties are [. . .]the enabling factor for successful mediation" as well as regarded as a threat to the trust and allegiance demanded of recruited mediators (de Jong 2018, 621).

Campbell, in her study of Iraqi former interpreters in the US, develops a nuanced perspective to capture the ambivalence around faithfulness by noting that they might feel they have no choice but to "betray" their origins by "taking on the language of the occupation," in order for their voice to register within hegemonic discourses (2016, 80). Some of the interpreters that I interviewed emphasized forcefully and unprompted their adoption of so-called Western values, their religious tolerance, and commitment to women's and gay rights, echoing some of the justifications of the War on Terror (Ferguson 2005; Manchanda 2015). Campbell concludes that this "betrayal" hence is a route to "fin[d] recognition and a certain degree of freedom" (2016, 80). Other interpreters that I interviewed were openly critical of Western claims to moral superiority. "I now have to conclude that I was a traitor to my community," one of them said (171214). Many others expressed disillusionment with the treatment they received once they relocated to the West and found that their former comrades and the state did not honor the promise of mutual loyalty. As one former interpreter resettled to Germany put it: "I have loved this country, the culture, the people, everything. I still do so, but I realized it was one-sided" (170326). These accounts persuasively complicate the binaries contained in (un)faithful translation and the traitor/translator figure, by openly questioning whether the civilizing message of the military intervention that local interpreters had been tasked with faithfully translating and facilitating is itself duplicitous. In the end, they had been loyal to a mission, which had betrayed their own trust (de Jong, 2023).

Hidden Soldiering

The division between civilians and combatants, still the cornerstone of international humanitarian law, is increasingly disputed in modern warfare practices (Sweney 2005). As local interpreters are described in English under the umbrella term of "locally employed civilians"—which is echoed in the French classification of local military interpreters as *personnels civils de recrutement local*—at first sight their civilian status seems uncontested. However, as Baker (2010b) has argued in her study of interpreters for peacekeeping forces in 1990s Bosnia-Herzegovina, local interpreters disrupt some of the central distinctions between civilian and military personnel. This includes the wearing of the uniform and the carrying of arms (cf. Footitt and Kelly 2018, 162; Gómez-Amich 2018, 35; Lucía Ruiz Rosendo 2020). A former interpreter for Dutch forces explained, "I had the Dutch flag on my arm, I wore the Dutch uniform, which means I was one of the soldiers" (200630). As noted by Campbell (2016), Iraqi local interpreters wore uniforms and sometimes carried weapons. Afghan former frontline interpreters told me that they would sometimes carry equipment for the soldiers they accompanied. They also would be ordered to perform everyday soldier's tasks such as cleaning the latrines, and be reprimanded if they refused. Hence, interpreters' "disruption [of the civil-military distinction] went well beyond the level of appearance in the ambiguities of the uniform" as they accompanied soldiers, sharing risks and spaces (C. Baker 2010b, 143). A former interpreter from Afghanistan exclaimed, when I met him in the Netherlands, "If there is IED [improvised explosive device], it will not recognize 'Hey, you're a translator, you shouldn't be killed!'" Indeed, both this sharing of risks and insecurity in conflict spaces made many local interpreters identify with their military colleagues rather than with civilians. When "interpreters act in the capacity of soldiers" (Hoedemaekers and Soeters 2009, 342), but remain officially classified as civilians, their soldiering labor remains hidden. Moreover, as pseudo-soldiers, local interpreters are excluded not only from the core training but also from several of the protections and privileges afforded to soldiers.

While the carrying of weapons seems a more obvious means of self-defense, the wearing of military uniforms was also considered a measure of protection, since interpreters could be targeted by local populations if they looked distinct from the soldiers and therefore easily identifiable (C. Baker 2010b). In the earlier stages of the British armed forces mission in Afghanistan, "British soldiers had a full body armor, which covers the areas around the tummy and also the heart, but we were given a body armor which only covered the heart, not the areas around the stomach" (170404). An Afghan former interpreter for the German armed forces told me that they were not given uniforms and that they were only provided with what he described as lower quality, older, dirty, and ill-fitting Dutch army vests (170326). These distinctions do not only have practical significance but are imbued with symbolic meaning. In the context of Bosnia-Herzegovina, where local interpreters could wear uniforms, "the civilian/military distinction became refocused onto smaller details," such as the UK flags on the upper arm, which remained reserved to UK soldiers (C. Baker 2010b, 140). The insistence on the German army base in Afghanistan to reserve the high-quality flak jacket to German soldiers gave the Afghan local interpreter the feeling that "Ah, he wants to create some distinction between us!" Receiving the same protective vest, army boots, and the permission to wash their clothes in the same launderette became a matter of principle, an indication of trust and respect and therefore a right deserving insistence.

How interpreters narrate themselves is context dependent and constrained by which discourses and subject positions are available, as underlined by Campbell who suggests the concept of "*subject formation in translation* to frame the conditions of subjectification and agency of which military interpreters are a part" (2016, 14 emphasis in original) in her study of Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa holders. For instance, Western media has tended to present the deaths of local interpreters alongside Western soldiers' deaths, rather than narrating them as part of general Iraqi civilian casualties, thereby further aligning civilian local interpreters with the military mission (M. Baker 2010). Interpreters expressed their own allegiance to the International Security Assistance Force first by echoing dominant military frames and by inserting themselves in soldiers' linguistic subculture. An Afghan former interpreter who worked for the British forces explained in the interview that they were unarmed in contrast to the soldiers, but still stood "shoulder to shoulder with the British armed forces." An interpreter in Germany explained to me that the interpreters called themselves "the unarmed soldiers" (170326). Through proximity and close collaboration with military personnel local civilian interpreters had access to military culture. Local interpreters in Bosnia-Herzegovina "acquired military and regional slang" through their interpreting role (C. Baker 2010b, 147). Similarly the Afghan and Iraqi former military interpreters that I met tended to be young men when they started working, often eager to learn, and fascinated with Western culture. As one former Afghan interpreter now resettled to the UK recalls: "I can still remember, I asked one of the officers, Alex, and I said, 'Alex, how can I speak

English?' He said, 'You already speak English.' And I said, 'No, how can I speak the English you speak?' He is a bit rude, so he said, 'start swearing.' So, every day he was giving me five swear words. In about two months' time, I knew swear words that even British people didn't understand" (202406). When I arranged an interview with a former interpreter in the Netherlands, sending him the link and password for a virtual meeting, he replied to me in English "Roger that." Other former interpreters had adopted a distinct Scottish twang in their accent, because they had been attached to Scottish regiments. As a UK former army captain described it to me, "These guys are culturally soldiers. They're British army soldiers; they have the dark sense of humor, they love to complain!" (180528).

The evocative military language employed by local interpreters that references "military brotherhood" and having "served" "shoulder by shoulder" needs to be placed within global political dynamics. At the micro-level, it expresses felt identifications, but it also sustains strategic claims to the rights, support, and protection afforded to military personnel and veterans in a context in which local interpreters have been left exposed to threats and insecurity. Whereas in some cases security and protection could be attained by insistence on civilian status, in most cases during their employment local interpreters relied on pseudo-military status to access the protection of the uniform, proper equipment, and the military base. With many local interpreters finding themselves targeted postemployment, the language of being "brothers in arms" that should not be "left behind" regains new poignancy. Finally, the military identification, through, among other means, language, is also key to claims to rights, services, and support post-resettlement. For instance, US-based No One Left Behind, the advocacy and support organization set up by veteran Matt Zeller, started a petition to Congress to recognize military interpreters resettled to the US under the Special Immigrant Visa scheme as "veterans." The petition text asked "for Congress to name them heroes so that they can check the veteran's preference box on job applications and 56,000 veteran focused charities to include them in their missions."[3]

Hidden, Objectified, Disposable

The recognition of the essential work of local interpreters that enabled Western military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq has always operated alongside exploitative and precarious employment practices. Equally, the celebration of interpreters in the moral language of bravery and heroism, which has accorded some interpreters temporarily with a hypervisibility, has gone hand in hand with the active concealment of their role. The Danish government, for instance, relied for translation on interpreters employed by the UK government's Labour Support Unit and the US company Mission Essential Personnel. This construction allowed them to deny legal responsibility for the protection of former interpreters who found themselves at risk because of their work, but to recognize a (limited) moral responsibility. In 2014, the UK decided to shift from direct payment to subcontracting, due to a "combination of money and juridical liability," according to the British Ministry of Defence (Plambech and Skov Danstrøm, 2014, 4). With this move, the local interpreters working for but no longer employed by the British armed forces were rendered invisible. When a UK Labour MP asked the secretary of state for defence in June 2021, "How many Afghan interpreters were employed by the UK Government *during the past twenty years*" (emphasis added), the reply was "from the available data held between the years 2001–2014 the number of Afghan interpreters employed by the Ministry of Defence was 2,821." This figure excluded and concealed anyone employed as a subcontractor post-2014 (UIN 16036). In a press release circulated to British newspapers in May 2021, the secretary of state for defence expressed "a debt of gratitude to our interpreters . . . who risked their lives working alongside UK forces in Afghanistan" and indicated a commitment to the resettlement of those who "supported the UK Government to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan" (Ministry of Defence press release, May 30, 2020). The same press release anticipates potential questions from journalists about Iraqi interpreters and hence explains that their resettlement scheme has already closed in 2016 and continues: "Since then, we have not directly employed interpreters in Iraq, but *adopted a contracted solution to service our requirements*" (emphasis added). The neoliberal language, as well as the material contractual arrangements underpinning this sentence, renders the work of local interpreters into a disembodied service, one that cannot be traced back to Western governments as employers.

"Thingification" of people, defining them by their productive value and treating their lives as disposable was, as anticolonial critic Aimé Césaire noted, one of the central elements of colonialism (2001, 42). The "thingification" of local interpreters renders them invisible as human beings, as they become part of an undifferentiated group defined by their function. The nicknames given to many local interpreters, such as Rambo, Johnny Walker, and Jim Carrey, could positively be read as a sign of interpellation into a Western army culture. At the same time, it was indicative of a refusal to recognize local interpreters' personhood as some Western soldiers considered it too much trouble to learn "difficult" Iraqi or Afghan names. The thingification of interpreters does not only reflect racial dehumanization, but it is compounded by the requirements of neutrality, nonintervention, and nonintrusiveness associated with the professional codes of interpreters. This leaves local interpreters' labor particularly vulnerable to invisibility, lack of recognition, and undervaluation, despite powerful political actors' obvious dependency on them.

A Spanish International Security Assistance Force officer quoted in Rosendo's study (2020, 53) explained that he was not keen for his local interpreters to intervene: "He is there to be me, but in Afghan. Interpreters have to understand that they are our shadow" (author's translation). In this quote, the interpreter disappears completely, leaves any personhood, with his presence being absorbed by the speaker. As Rebecca Tipton explains, "Interpreters in the war zone . . . are also confronted by the fact that their bodily presence generates an enduring set of compromises to which they permanently need to attend for their own safety and that of others. This creates an existential and ethical burden . . . that is arguably poorly understood among institutional interlocutors and employers of interpreters" (2019, 538). In this evocative quote, embodied interpretation and translation pose an inconvenient burden that, as I would argue, is not only "poorly understood" but also conveniently ignored. In Catherine Baker's study of local interpreters and peacekeepers in Bosnia-Herzegovina, she observed that while shared social spaces and experiences could facilitate the development of camaraderie between the two groups, "a tendency to view interpreters as tools not as comrades" posed an obstacle (2010b, 146). A local interpreter that she quotes expressed her resentment about one exchange during her work at a British base in Republika Srpska in the 1990s in which interpreters were mentioned in the same breath with equipment: "we were like, as if I am [a] tool, sorry, excuse me?" (2010b, 146). Interpreters who worked for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights during its mission in Nepal (2005–11) used similar language to describe their treatment: "I often felt like I was treated like a kind of expensive machine. There was one Human Rights Officer who would ask: did you sleep all right? Did you have enough to eat? which most of them wouldn't even think to do. But it was like: is the machine well-oiled? Because you are not really noticed as a person" (Kunreuther et al. 2021, 8).

One Afghan interpreter, who expressed to me that he had felt discarded, compared local interpreters with other pieces of equipment bought by the army, but highlighted that even objects, when they are considered indispensable, come with a duty of care: “When you need something, you have to take care of it.” He had claimed asylum in the UK and faced an extremely precarious and uncertain situation after his initial asylum claim was rejected. Reflecting on his circumstances, he told me that he felt as if he had been thrown into the (trash) bin (171113). Thingification hence also serves to justify disposability once interpreters’ “use value” has expired. Many of my informants told me that interpreters were treated as disposable and replaceable goods. They could get fired on the spot even after years of faithful service, without any right to appeal, for relatively minor infringements, such as bringing a nail clipper or a phone onto the base, arguing with a Western soldier, or stealing a bottle of water. Such redundancies (layoffs) tended to coincide with a decrease in the demand for interpreters, for example, because of a drawdown of troops. For local interpreters, their redundancy would not only mean loss of employment but also subsequently affect their right to protection through international relocation. Local interpreters are caught in a tension between structures that objectify them—expressed in employment contracts that could have them fired without recourse and racial Othering reinvigorated in the neoimperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—and moments that rupture these structures, born in personal friendships and intimate shared experiences of war between local staff and Western soldiers.

One former interpreter with an insecure legal status whom I met in Germany explained that he was disappointed and sad about his treatment and had felt “disposable”: “I was on a mission with my American friends and one of my American friends was holding a soda can. A Coca-Cola soda, which he was drinking. [. . .] And I said, ‘We’re being treated like this. As soon as you are finished with the soda, you can throw it away.’ . . . It’s not fair. Especially when it comes to humans” (170618). An interpreter in the Netherlands wondered how his former colleagues, whom he considered lifelong friends, could go to sleep at night knowing that he was in danger. He exclaimed, “I am human!,” but felt he had been treated like “plastic” (200630). The group of former LECs who engaged in an extended protest at the German army base gate in Mazār-i-Sharīf, with whom this chapter opened, asked an Afghan artist to draw a profile image for their Facebook page (private correspondence, September 17, 2018). The image shows a man with a German and a European Union flag colored scarf around his neck. He seems in a rush and on his way out, holding a rolled-up carpet and some office folders with the German Eagle coat of arms. With one of his legs, he kicks an Afghan young man into a bin, from which the arms of another man, who apparently has already been discarded, are still sticking out.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented local interpreters from Afghanistan and Iraq as central actors of international relations and relevant "objects of study" for International Relations. By foregrounding the role of interpreters, I have reemphasized that international politics involves interlingual politics. As actors in war, local interpreters are witnesses to and participants in the mediation of everyday encounters between local communities and international forces structured by power inequalities. The chapter has shown that language and translation studies and International Relations research can usefully complement each other, for instance when analyzing local interpreters' risk of thingification and disposability at the crossroads of the specific institutional context and the professional ethics of translation, and a global neoimperial political context that determines which lives are considered worthy of protection. By challenging and problematizing the marginalization of local interpreters, a new research agenda on interlingual relations helps disrupt the mechanisms that keep their labor hidden, despite its essential role in global politics. It exposes the linguistic and cultural hegemonies that "emancipate" some from the labor of translation, while delegating that work to others who cannot afford such "liberation." It also makes visible the additional labor of mediation that both accompanies and compromises translation in global politics. Focusing on local interpreters in conflict, this chapter has drawn attention to the ways in which they are drawn into the labor of soldiering, but that their inclusion is conditional and partial. Finally, I have shown how local interpreters' objectified and hidden labor increases their vulnerability to disposability. Attending to their objectification, however, should not distract from recognizing their agency as political actors. Local interpreters in war zones are not only constituted by structures of global politics but also strategically work with and around and against their interpellation as both instruments and brothers in arms.

Notes

1. In line with research ethics guidelines, the decision was made to anonymize the interview data from the LECs, while advocates and supporters could be identified, if they so agreed or desired.

2. Human Rights First, a US-based nonprofit organization, posits that around 146,000 Iraqis worked in different capacities with the US government, private contractors, and NGOs. The UK Ministry of Defence estimated that they employed approximately 20,000 Iraqis between 2003 and 2007, while admitting that their

records of former staff were incomplete, as stated in documents released under a Freedom of Information request by legal firm Leigh Day (Haynes et al. 2008; private correspondence) , and 7,000 Afghan LECs (House of Commons Defence Committee 2018). The French state had approximately 800 Afghan LECs under contract (Andlauer and Mülle 2019). Despite the drawdown in October 2018, the German state still had 576 Afghan LECs under direct employment, with a larger number (around 1,300) employed by organizations subcontracted by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Antwort der Bundesregierung 2018). The Dutch minister of defence indicated in 2014 that the Dutch army had hired about 220 Afghan local interpreters (Defensie 2014).

3. https://www.change.org/p/afghan-iraqi-translators-saved-american-lives-tell-congress-to-recognize-them-as-heroes?source_location=movement

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CHAPTER 13

Interlingual Relations and the Limits of Hegemony

US Public Diplomacy in the Arab World, 2002–2003

Jane Darby Menton

This chapter takes up Einar Wigen's (2018) exhortation to follow legitimacy claims across linguistic borders through an empirical assessment of US public diplomacy in the Arab world before the invasion of Iraq. This case study introduces a new directionality to the interlingual relations research agenda. Instead of focusing on how nonhegemonic states navigate dominant discourses and concepts, I am interested in what happens when a hegemonic state makes legitimacy claims in a linguistically distinct public sphere. My argument, briefly, is that although the burden of translation generally falls on nonhegemonic states, hegemony can also occlude the world to those that live within it, contributing to both self-destructive—and generally destructive—foreign policy decisions.

In 2002 the Bush administration faced a dilemma: its planned invasion of Iraq was wildly unpopular, especially in the Arab world (Lynch 2006). Although the United States possessed unrivaled coercive capabilities, the Bush administration also wanted to build consensus. To this end, it designed a discursive intervention to precede and bolster the military one (US Department of State 2002). Amid the fallout of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is easy to forget that legitimation was once a strategic priority. After 9/11, US policymakers recognized that they had an image problem in the Muslim world. The "War on Terror" conceptualized "hearts and minds" as an arena of battle; to fight on this front, the Bush administration heavily invested in public diplomacy. By early 2002, this broader project manifested in a targeted attempt to justify the looming invasion of Iraq to the Arab public. In the year before the invasion, high-ranking officials including National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of State Colin Powell granted lengthy interviews and made appearances on broadcast networks such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya (Zaharna 2010). The United States also funded new media outlets including Radio Sawa and the broadcast channel Al Hurra.[1] But efforts to legitimate the invasion not only failed but backfired months before any boots hit the ground. By 2003, the Pew Research Center concluded that "the bottom has fallen out of support for America in most of the Muslim world" (Pew Research Center 2003).

Of course, failure to build consensus did not stop the United States from invading Iraq. But if hegemony is more than pure coercion, what should we make of the fact that, at the height of its material power, US efforts to legitimate policies in the Arab world actively undermined its position? In this chapter, I argue that an interlingual perspective can help us understand this puzzle. To be clear, it is hard to imagine any narrative that would have made the invasion of Iraq palatable; however, recentering translation surfaces dynamics that merit further exploration.

As I argue in the first section, approaching this case study as an example of *interlingual legitimation* highlights the *monolingualism* of US hegemony. While scholars have described how translation both enables international relations and inscribes international hierarchy, I am interested in how insulation from the imperative to translate affects decision-making at the hegemonic core. The second section focuses on monolingualism in the context of strategic image cultivation. I argue that US public diplomacy reflects an essentially referential theory of language: practitioners treat meaning as inherent to their claims rather than contextually mediated. Focusing on language can shed new light on why US policymakers thought the invasion of Iraq was "sellable" and how they pursued legitimation.

An interlingual lens also encourages attentiveness to the agency of translators, which here means the Arab journalists who served as intermediaries between the Bush administration and the Arab public. In the third section, I show how Arab journalists recontextualized American claims through three narrative frameworks—the Gulf War, sanctions on Iraq, and Palestine—to produce an alternative narrative that undermined US strategic objectives. However, the monolingualism of the American foreign policy establishment ultimately rendered Arab dissent illegible at the hegemonic core. I conclude the chapter with some reflections on hegemonic power in a multilingual world.

Monolingual Hegemony in a Multilingual World

Most IR scholars agree that hegemony entails more than the specter of violence (Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990; Cox 1983). As Ronald Krebs and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson put it, "The acquisition and maintenance of rule ultimately hinges as much on legitimacy as on physical coercion, and such legitimacy can be established only through rhetorical action" (Krebs and Jackson 2007). Yet consensus-building *across* languages—or *interlingual legitimation*—remains undertheorized. IR's so-called linguistic turn has overlooked how different languages are differently constituted. Recently, however, some scholars have begun to challenge IR's pervasive monolingualism (Capan, dos Reis, and Grasten 2021; Caraccioli et al. 2021). In this chapter, I hope to build on their insights by turning the lens of translation back onto the hegemonic state.

In international relations, translation is usually *essential*, *invisible*, and *asymmetrical*. At the most basic level, translation is what allows policymakers to practically overcome linguistic differences. This is important because most forms of interaction require a degree of mutual intelligibility. Ironically, the ubiquity of translation also contributes to its erasure. Scholars such as Einar Wigen and Christopher Hill describe how the expansion of international society in the nineteenth century generated a dense network of associations that reduced the friction of interlingual exchange (Wigen 2015; Hill 2013; Strizel 2014). Indeed, the language of contemporary international politics often appears homogeneous. Jaakko Heiskanen proposes that the modern international order itself "effectively functions as the socially recognized 'meta-language' that undergirds the miracle of global translatability and makes international/interlingual relations possible on a global scale" (Heiskanen 2020). The proliferation of multilingual agents has further internalized translation costs.

But the appearance of seamless communication comes at a cost—and that cost is not equally distributed. Although mutual intelligibility is a prerequisite for communication, the particular languages and concepts that function as the substrate of international politics are contingent products of relations of power (Asad 1986). The burden of translation is unequally shared because hegemonic states establish the parameters of international discourse.

As Wigen puts it:

> One conceptualization of hegemony may be said to be exactly this—a situation where other polities have to legitimize their survival, their existence, and their actions in your language game, even though that language game is different from their own. (Wigen 2018, 2)

The incongruity between domestic and international discourses varies according to hegemonic proximity. Translation both enables international relations and enforces international hierarchy.

To date, most scholars have focused on the consequences of asymmetry for nonhegemonic states. Heiskanen, for example, emphasizes the inherent violence of translation in the institutionalization of the modern international order (Heiskanen 2020). In a similar vein, Talal Asad suggests that the convergence of Arabic and European discourses since the nineteenth century reflects the relative "weakness" of non-Western languages (Asad 1986). Wigen points to a more contemporary manifestation of linguistic inequality: policymakers from states that are closer to the hegemonic core can more easily move between international and domestic legitimation games than their counterparts on the non-Western periphery (Wigen 2015; see also Subotic and Zarakol 2012).

But is exemption from the imperative to translate always a good thing? I do not deny that hegemons set the terms of international discourse in a manner that reinscribes hierarchical power structures. What I want to suggest is that the asymmetrical burden of translation might also have consequences for the hegemonic state. Wigen writes that "scholars who take politics to be constituted in language and yet ignore the interlingual aspect of international relations implicitly assume the universality of their own language" (Wigen 2018). I argue that the same can be said of states. Monolingualism, both in scholarship and in governance, generates blind spots. Recentering translation can help explain certain paradoxes of international politics, such as why hegemonic states pursue self-defeating policies in the face of vocal opposition.

To make this argument, I propose two interventions. First, I sharpen the conceptual distinction between intelligibility and legitimacy. Although intelligibility is a prerequisite for communication, it is conceptually thin. Legitimacy, on the other hand, is negotiated through linguistically and culturally distinct discourses. The difference is obvious to anyone who regularly toggles between linguistic registers. However, in hegemonic states, policymakers can—and sometimes do—mistake the congruity of domestic and international discourse for proof of the universal validity of their claims.

My second intervention focuses on US hegemony in particular. The prevalence of universalizing mindsets at the hegemonic core is hardly news, but the United States is almost obtusely *monolingual*.[2] According to the US Census Bureau, only 20 percent of Americans are conversant in another language compared to roughly half of the world's population (Matthews 2019). Language training is systemically undervalued; only eleven US states require students to study foreign languages (9/11 Commission Report 2004). Most importantly, monolingualism extends to the highest levels of the US government. In the last two decades, numerous studies have remarked upon the shortage of "critical language" speakers in the foreign policy establishment. Despite attempted reforms, the State Department currently trains nearly twice as many Portuguese speakers as it does Arabic or Chinese speakers, and at least a quarter of its positions are filled by people who do not meet the language requirements of their jobs (Burns and Thomas-Greenfield 2020). In the rest of this chapter, I explore the consequences of monolingual hegemony through the example of US public diplomacy in the Arab world.

US Public Diplomacy and National Image

What happens when a particular hegemonic state (the United States) tries to legitimate a particular policy (the invasion of Iraq) in a particular foreign public sphere (the Arab world)? First, we might wonder why the United States bothered with legitimation in the first place. The Bush administration did not face any material obstacles, and failed legitimation clearly did not stop it from doing as it pleased. Yet states do generally care about how they are perceived. This is not just a matter of vanity.[3] As Robert Jervis puts it:

> The image of a state can be a major factor in determining whether and how easily the state can reach its goals. A desired image . . . can often be of greater use than a significant increment of military or economic power. An undesired image can involve costs for which almost no amount of the usual kinds of power can compensate and can be a handicap almost impossible to overcome. (Jervis 1970, 6)

Most states try to align their international image with their national interests (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2014). In the US case, these efforts fall under the banner of public diplomacy.

The US State Department defines public diplomacy as "the cultural, educational, and informational programs, citizen exchanges, or broadcasts used to promote the national interest of the United States through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign audiences" (US Department of State 2002). Public diplomacy differs from traditional diplomacy on the grounds of audience—the masses, not elites—and orientation—public, not private (Gilboa 2000).

Although political elites have sought to sway foreign publics since ancient Greece, US public diplomacy emerged in a particular context. According to Justin Hart, the United States began to conceptualize "image" as a national security priority in the years between the First and Second World Wars. During this period, the proliferation of communications technologies presented policymakers with the opportunity to extend US influence without incurring the costs of managing a territorial empire (Hart 2013). Whereas previous hegemons such as the British Empire projected power through administration, US efforts have historically revolved around exposing foreign publics to American narratives and culture.

US public diplomacy was expanded and institutionalized during the Cold War. At the heart of this effort was the United States Information Agency, created in 1953 to "tell America's story to the world." The US Information Agency effectively functioned as a public relations organ for the American state, rejecting overt forms of propaganda in favor of more subtle interventions in the media space.[4] Its tactics included funding (nominally) independent media organizations such as the Voice of America, organizing speaking tours, and cultivating relationships with foreign journalists (Cull 2008). Underpinning this approach was an abiding faith in the universal appeal of American narratives. One might attribute this to what Michael Desch calls America's "liberal illiberalism," but I want to emphasize the monolingual aspect of US hegemony (Desch 2007/8). US public diplomacy treats meaning as intrinsic rather than contextual. In other words, it reflects an essentially referential theory of language. Through this lens, the antidote to opposition is always exposure.

After the Cold War, public diplomacy temporarily fell to the wayside. At the "end of history," liberal values were assumed to speak for themselves. This changed after 9/11, when the evident success of Al Qaeda's propaganda efforts generated a renewed emphasis on public diplomacy. From the outset, the War on Terror framed America's tarnished image as a national security threat. As Charlotte Beers, the under secretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs, testified to the US Senate:

> We are talking about millions of ordinary people, a huge number of whom have gravely distorted, but carefully cultivated, images of us—

> images so negative, so weird, so hostile that I can assure you a young generation of terrorists is being created. The gap between who we are and how we wish to be seen, and how we are in fact seen, is frighteningly wide. (Committee of Foreign Relations 2003)

For most policymakers, the solution was obvious. As veteran diplomat Richard Holbrooke wrote in the *Washington Post*:

> Call it public diplomacy, or public affairs, or psychological warfare, or—if you really want to be blunt—propaganda. But whatever it is called, defining what this war is really about in the minds of the 1 billion Muslims in the world will be of decisive and historic importance. (Holbrooke 2001)

The *New York Times* described the revitalization of US public diplomacy after 9/11 as "the most ambitious wartime communications effort since World War II" (Becker 2001). The Freedom Promotion Act of 2002 injected $497 million annually into America's public diplomacy budget. State Department public diplomacy funds were increased 34 percent in Fiscal Year 2002 and 13 percent in Fiscal Year 2003 for the South Asian geographic bureau, and 15 percent in Fiscal Year 2002 and 19 percent in Fiscal Year 2003 for the Near Eastern geographic bureau.[5] And in 2002, the State Department allocated an additional $35 million in supplemental funding for public diplomacy initiatives targeting Muslim-majority countries (Committee of Foreign Relations 2003).

That the administration prioritized public diplomacy is clear, but how did it conceive of the task? The choice of Charlotte Beers to oversee the effort is indicative. Beers was an advertising executive, not a regional specialist (Becker 2001). US policymakers construed anti-Americanism in the Middle East as a rectifiable misunderstanding. As a result, they prioritized the dissemination of US justificatory narratives over serious engagement with Arab concerns. The problem with this strategy—as I will show in the next section—is that an approach premised on a referential understanding of language cannot anticipate the transformative potential of translation.

Lost and Found in Translation

The blind spots of US public diplomacy become apparent when we look at the reception and interpretation of American narratives in the Arab public sphere. This section describes what happened to US claims when they crossed linguistic boundaries through a critical discourse analysis of pan-Arab press coverage of George W. Bush's 2002 State of the Union address. I highlight what was lost in translation—the administration's intended meaning—and what was created—an alternative account of US motives.

A Note on Linguistically Defined Public Spheres

While there is no such thing as a homogenous "Arab public sphere," it is possible to use language as an organizing principle to talk about an environment in which knowledge is created, consumed, and acted upon in a meaningful way. Despite the diversity of regional vernaculars, the pan-Arab press is published in Modern Standard Arabic, which Naomi Sakr suggests makes the region uniquely conducive to media flow (Sakr 2007a). According to Marc Lynch, the self-conscious transnationalism of the Arab press conjures a distinct "Arab public":

> There is simply no doubt about the abundance of voices that address an Arab public as an Arab public, creating the public sphere through this act of address . . . they understand themselves to be speaking as Arabs, to Arabs and about Arab issues. What makes the Arab public "a public" then is that self-identified Arabs routinely and frequently address and invoke it as such, via media that reach the prospective members of the public, about matters collectively defined as of common interest. (Lynch 2006)

My analysis focuses on three pan-Arab newspapers: *Asharq Al-Awsat*, *Al Hayat*, and *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*.[6] I selected these sources because they had the widest circulation during the relevant period and because they were frequent targets of the Bush administration's overtures. Although newspaper audiences are rarely representative, a survey of the pan-Arab press provides insight into how information was consumed and acted upon in the Arab world.[7]

Narrating the Axis of Evil

George W. Bush's 2002 State of the Union address signaled a new phase in the War on Terror. Pivoting away from nonstate actors, Bush decried the so-called Axis of Evil. From the outset, however, the Axis was lopsided. After paying lip service to North Korea and Iran, the president launched into the case against Iraq.

> Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax and nerve gas and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens, leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world. (Bush 2002)

In the months that followed, the administration aggressively peddled this narrative both at home and abroad. While efforts to sell the war domestically and within international institutions are well documented, I focus on the less examined case of public diplomacy in the Arab World (Isikoff and Corn 2006).

The American public diplomacy strategy centered on disseminating justificatory narratives in the Arab media sphere. Consistent with the history of US public diplomacy, officials took legitimating claims developed in one context and transposed them wholesale into another. Engagement was premised on the assumption that claims would retain their meaning across linguistic boundaries. But this assumption was misguided. Instead of legitimating pro-war arguments, the Arab press raised serious doubts about American motives. My analysis focuses on *recontextualization*—how new information becomes meaningful in relation to existing narratives (Wodak and Ludwig 1999; Wodak and Busch 2004). As I show in this section, Arab journalists made sense of American rhetoric by drawing upon three scripts that were already imbued with affective resonance in the Arab public sphere: the Gulf War, US sanctions against Iraq, and Palestine.[8] US policymakers failed to anticipate that translation is not just about words; the same talking points can assume a different meaning through differential contextualization.

Script 1: Bush vs. Hussein

That George W. Bush's aggression toward Saddam Hussein evoked a historical parallel is hardly surprising. After the State of the Union, the Arab press played up the link between the younger Bush and his father through frequent references to "Bush al-ibn" (Bush the son). This emphasis served two primary purposes: it informed calculations on the likelihood of invasion and provided grounds for a comparative critique.

The Arab press framed the looming invasion of Iraq as a continuation of the policies of the first Bush administration. References to the next "Gulf War" began months before the United States launched military action against Iraq despite US officials' vociferous denials that anything had been predetermined (Asharq Al-Aswat 2003). This linkage was both semantic and semiotic. In *Asharq Al-Awsat*, the disembodied heads of Bush and Saddam Hussein glared at each other across a multipage spread.

In many cases, the analogy contained a critical edge with writers presenting the elder Bush as a foil to his son. Writing in *Asharq Al-Awsat*, Radha Mohamed Larī claimed that the second Bush lacked his father's ability to "deal intricately with problems" (Larī 2002). In a front-page editorial the day after the State of the Union, the editorial board of *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* highlighted the younger Bush's immaturity:

> President Bush whom many agree lacks experience in international and strategic affairs, knows nothing but war, and acts as if he is a gang leader, not a super power who is supposed to adhere to laws. (Al-Quds Al-Arabi 2002a)

A political cartoon in *Asharq Al-Awsat* (see fig. 3) was blunter, showing "George al-ibn" as a naked baby, guzzling a nuclear warhead (Asharq Al-Aswat 2002c).

By emphasizing historical precedent, the press framed the invasion of Iraq in terms of inevitability rather than possibility. Pan-Arab press coverage iterated points of continuity: the family name, the location, the "enemy," suggesting that the Gulf War, rather than the War on Terror, was the salient context for the State of the Union. Yet the inflection of this coverage suggested that things were unlikely to end well. In short, the Arab press presented Bush as a trigger-happy cowboy, embarking upon a futile attempt to fill his father's shoes.

Script 2: Sanctions

Western involvement in Iraq during the Gulf War had not been confined to military action. Four days after Iraq invaded Kuwait, the UN Security Council levied extensive sanctions on the Iraqi regime, igniting a widely publicized humanitarian crisis. As Marc Lynch puts it, "When Arabs heard American arguments for invading Iraq, they could not help but interpret them through a powerful narrative of Iraqi suffering" (Lynch 2006).

Figure 3. *Statue of Liberty*

Over the course of the 1990s, the human consequences of sanctions became emblematic of a broader narrative of Arab suffering at the hands of the international community. In 1999, the Arab press widely circulated a UNICEF report that claimed that sanctions were responsible for the death of over 500,000 Iraqi children.[9] When Secretary of State Madeleine Albright defended the policy as “difficult” but “worth it,” she was roundly criticized across the Arab world (Albright 1996). This particular narrative also prominently featured in Al Qaeda’s propaganda. Bin Laden’s 1996 fatwa described sanctions as the “unjustifiable aggression . . . responsible for shedding the blood of these innocent children” (bin Laden 1996). In 2002, he again cited the sanctions as justification for 9/11 (bin Laden 2002).

Despite the prevalence—and salience— of this narrative in the Arab public sphere, US policymakers did not seem to grasp its significance. This disconnect is evident in interactions between US officials and Arab journalists. In a November 2002 roundtable with journalists from the three major pan-Arab newspapers, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman dismissed the suggestion that the international community bore responsibility for the suffering of Iraqi civilians. Grossman was not ignorant of the facts—he cited the vote margins of relevant UN resolutions off the cuff—but he did not appear to appreciate the contextual weight of the question. Indeed, his detached response only played into the script of Western callousness (Grossman 2002).

The sanctions narrative frustrated the Bush administration's efforts to frame Saddam Hussein as uniquely culpable for regional suffering. Although US officials argued that Saddam's obstinacy in the face of a humanitarian crisis proved his depravity, many in the Arab world held the West responsible too.[10] Indeed, few Arab journalists seemed to believe that sanctions relief was genuinely on the table. In response to the suggestion that the UN might lift sanctions if Saddam changed his behavior, *Al Hayat* journalist Camille Tawil wrote:

> These are diplomatic words, which the administration insists on putting out to the public, but they don't sound very convincing. You can't help but feel that the administration is preparing something to topple Saddam.

In fact, Tawil added that high-ranking officials in Washington were worried that Saddam might "torpedo" their plans to invade by striking a deal with the United Nations to return inspectors in exchange for sanctions relief (Tawil 2002). Although Arab journalists disseminated US claims, their framing implied an alternative interpretation.

Script 3: Palestine

Perhaps no issue receives more coverage in the Arab media than Palestine. As Shibley Telhami writes:

> For historical reasons, the Palestinian issue remains at the core of every major Arab, Islamic and anti-western political movement, providing the lens through which Arabs view the world. . . . Palestine remains the subconscious cue that the Arab public employs in evaluating the behavior of the outside world toward the Middle East: a friend is he who supports the Palestinians; and an enemy is he who opposes them. (Telhami 1993)

Although the symbolic value of Palestine does not necessarily map onto the realities of support for the Palestinian people, this narrative functions as a litmus test for legitimacy in the transnational Arab public sphere.

The immediate political context made Palestine particularly salient. Bush's State of the Union was delivered in the middle of the Second Intifada, a conflict that had dominated the pan-Arab dailies for nearly two years (Lynch 2006).[11] Articles about American intentions in Iraq ran alongside dramatic headlines about fighting in Palestine. The spatial organization of the front page itself primed the reader to associate America's role in one conflict with the other.

The Palestinian narrative presented a ready counterargument to the Bush administration's espoused commitment to nonproliferation. As Adwan al-Bari ʿAtwan wrote in *Al Quds Al-Arabi*, "President Bush wants to launch a war against Iraq and Iran because the two are seeking to possess weapons of mass destruction, but he does not see these weapons stacked in the Israeli military arsenal" (Lynch 2006). When Condoleezza Rice brought up weapons of mass destruction with *Asharq al-Awsat*'s Mohammed Sadiq, he immediately asked her about the Israeli nuclear arsenal. Rice's reply, which differentiated between "rogue" and "legitimate" states, drew upon American conceptions of legitimacy rather than those of her audience (Sadiq 2002). The United States' unwillingness to criticize the Israeli nuclear arsenal undercut its argument about weapons of mass destruction.

Events in Palestine also generated questions about what the Bush administration meant when it talked about "terrorism." When Bush claimed Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was "compromised by terror," many journalists pushed back.[12] An indignant article in *Asharq Al-Awsat* declared that "Yasser Arafat was as much a terrorist as George Washington and Charles de Gaulle were terrorists" (Sharif 2002). As columnist Halim Barakat put it:

> The American administration uses . . . negative terminology in distorting even positive behavior that differs from them politically. For example, this explains America's use of the term terrorism for the resistance of weak people to occupation and injustice. The American administration has begun defining terrorism however it wants in the service of establishing [American] dominance and the dominance of its allies. (Barakat 2002)

Arab journalists distinguished between actions carried out in the name of taḥrīr—liberation—and *irhāb*—terrorism (Hawatmeh 2002). By equating Al Qaeda with figures that much of the Arab world did not consider terrorists, the Bush administration undercut its ability to generate consensus on the legitimacy of its "War on Terror" as a whole. Journalists argued that a label that applied to both Arafat and Bin Laden was functionally meaningless. While the question of Palestine clearly provided grounds for skepticism,

Figure 4. *Aggressive American Discourse*

it also suggested an alternative set of motives. As the editor of *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* put it in a front-page editorial:

> The Axis of Evil of which the American president spoke poses no genuine threat to U.S. security and interests, yet this Axis, primarily the Iraqi and Iranian sides, jeopardize Israel's aspirations of expansion. (ʻAtwan 2002)

A political cartoon in *Al Hayat* depicted Dick Cheney wading through a puddle of blood in the West Bank. The speech bubble reads: "I'm sure Saddam did it" (Al-Hayat 2002).

Script Summary

A few days after the State of the Union, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice granted an extended interview to Mohammed Sadiq at *Asharq*

Al-Awsat (Sadiq 2002).[13] Sadiq opened the interview with the question of intent: "President Bush said that the war against terrorism is only in its beginning . . . is it possible to clarify that?" When Rice deflected, Sadiq doubled down:

> QUESTION: What are U.S. intentions towards Saddam Hussein? Is it changing him and his regime completely? Or continuing to punish him?
> QUESTION: Is the administration intending and planning to overthrow him or to continue punishing him?
> QUESTION: You're saying the same thing . . . so is it ten years? Five years? Three years?
> QUESTION: The administration is bent on and intending to dislodge Saddam Hussein from power, so will you draw upon the Kurds and groups of other oppositional Iraqis?
> QUESTION: What is required, specifically, for Saddam Hussein to avoid future war?
> QUESTION: And if he continues to refuse these demands?

Rice stuck to the talking points: the ball was in Saddam's court; nothing had been decided; Saddam was a threat to peace in the Arab world. Yet the importance of this exchange lies in the interaction itself: Sadiq's iterated skepticism; Rice's refusal to go off script.

In the year leading up to the Iraq War, public diplomacy led to unprecedented interactions between the Arab press and administration officials; however, engagement brought about an outcome far from the United States' desired ends. Although the Bush administration would not formally declare its intentions for months, the Arab press presented the State of the Union as a declaration of war. "Bush Announces War on Iraq and Iran and Hamas and Hezbollah and Jaish Mohamed" blared the banner headline of *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* (2002b). *Asharq Al-Awsat* described the "Axis of Evil," as America's next "targets," and ran a political cartoon depicting carrion birds in Uncle Sam hats ominously circling Saddam Hussein and Iranian president Mohammed Khatami (Asharq Al-Awsat 2002a).[14] *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* depicted Bush sharpening a sword behind his podium (see fig. 4) (Al-Quds Al-Arabi 2002). The Bush administration justified hostility toward Iraq within the framework of the "War on Terror," a campaign legitimized by American suffering in 9/11; however, Arab journalists delegitimated the expressed casus belli by presenting these claims in light of other narratives that were significant in the Arab public sphere.

The Blindfold of Hegemony

The disjuncture between American and Arab narratives was not impossible to anticipate; indeed, some people did. In a February 2003 Senate hearing on public diplomacy and Islam, Professor R. S. Zaharna argued that US efforts were backfiring because “the cultural style, content, and tactics used resonate positively with the American public, but negatively with non-American publics” (US Congress 2003). Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center, testified that hostility toward America was driven by US policy, adding that “the unpopularity of the potential war with Iraq can only further fuel hostilities in this region toward us among the Arab world” (US Congress 2003). But most policymakers dismissed those critiques. Senator Joe Biden captured the prevailing mindset: in his words, “If you build a better mousetrap . . . they will listen.”[15] Less than a month later, the United States invaded Iraq.

In this section, I want to return to the question of monolingual hegemony in a multilingual world. Although hegemonic states set the parameters of political debate at the international level, this case study suggests that nonhegemonic discourses are not always legible at the hegemonic core. In other words, hegemony enables but it also occludes. In the lead-up to the Iraq War, the Bush administration made two key errors. First, policymakers saw Arab journalists as targets and overlooked their agency a translators. And, second, they conflated the intelligibility of American discourses with the legitimacy of their claims. Cocooned in monolingual hegemony, the United States discounted reasonable criticisms of an ultimately catastrophic foreign policy.

Polyglot Power

US policymakers initially identified Arab journalists as “highly effective, highly credible messengers” who could influence discursive construction in the Arab world without appearing to be agents of a foreign power (Peterson 2003). In reality, however, exposure to multiple linguistically distinct public spheres meant that Arab journalists were able to use scripts of established significance in the Arab world to challenge American claims. This discrepancy suggests that under conditions of monolingual hegemony, there may be some power in multilingualism.

At first, American policymakers thought that the multilingualism of Arab journalists would work in their favor. The medium of a shared language eliminated the hassle and expense of third-party translation. Many officials also assumed that English-speaking Arabs would be more sympathetic to their claims. But internalizing translation does not eliminate it. In the previous section, I described how costs that remained latent in interaction became apparent at the point of publication. The transformation of meaning is a feature of translation, not a bug; that this surprised US policymakers suggests an ignorance of the processes through which meaning is constructed.

Returning to the question of asymmetry can help us account for this ignorance. The empirics of this case study suggest that asymmetries of power generate inverse asymmetries of exposure. The Bush administration saw the Arab world as a journalistic vacuum. Public diplomacy programs included training sessions for Arab journalists. The president of the Broadcasting Board of Governors described Radio Sawa and Al Hurra (literally, "the free one") as sources of truth in the darkness (US Congress, 2003). But this interpretation reflected a fundamental misunderstanding of the Arab world. Although censorship and authoritarianism are undeniable features of the Arab media landscape, the administration was still targeting newspapers that were headquartered in London and staffed by reporters who lived and worked in the Western world. Indeed, increasing exposure was a bizarre objective given the pan-Arab press's dialectical relationship with the West.[16]

In fact, the reality of US hegemony and the long history of Western involvement in the Arab world meant that Arab journalists had significantly more access to the Anglo-American public sphere than Americans had to the Arab public sphere. As journalist Rami Khouri put it:

> We in the Arab world are slightly better off than most Americans because we can see and hear both sides, given the easy availability of American satellite channels throughout this region; most Americans do not have easy access to Arab television reports, and even if they did, they would need to know Arabic to grasp the whole picture. (Lynch 2006)

In writing about American foreign policy, Arab journalists consulted both Western and non-Western sources. *Al-Quds*'s analysis of the Axis of Evil speech quoted Stephen Hayes of the Brookings Institute and Larry Sabato, an academic at the University of Virginia (Al-Quds Al-Arabi 2002b). In February 2002, the *Washington Post* granted *Asharq Al-Awsat* permission to reprint an eight-part series by Bob Woodward and Dan Balz about the ten days after September 11, 2001 (Woodward and Balz 2002). This means that readers of *Asharq Al-Awsat* were exposed to some of the most comprehensive Western reporting on the internal deliberations of the Bush administration. Arab newspapers also regularly published US-based writers (Barakat 2002; Owen 2002). For example, the New York-based intellectual Edward Said decried American Islamophobia in the pages of *Al Hayat* (Said 2002). Other Arab-American columnists criticized the "self-righteous" tone of US policy and framed aggression toward Iraq as the product of America's quest to "impose unipolar dominance (Barakat 2002; Owen 2002).

In the name of public diplomacy, the Bush administration granted the Arab press unprecedented access to high-ranking officials, but in many cases engagement actually *strengthened* existing critiques. Raghida Dergham, who interviewed Colin Powell and UN ambassador John Negroponte while working at *Al Hayat*, described a "lack of self-questioning" among members of the Bush administration. Increased access only confirmed her impression that the invasion of Iraq had been "predetermined" (Dergham 2017). Although Arab journalists welcomed the opportunity to interview high-ranking officials, most of them were already engaging with Western discourses beyond these intentional overtures. Indeed, US hegemony made exposure to American narratives almost unavoidable.

By comparison, American interaction with the Arab world was minimal. Few of the so-called terrorism experts who dominated the American media after 9/11 possessed extensive knowledge of the region's languages or culture.[17] Nor were things much better within the government itself. In the words of former diplomat William Rugh,

> as far as I can tell there are no prominent American politicians, state governors, members of congress, members of the government, or members of the national press corps among those reading Arabic newspapers. In the entire U.S. government . . . only a handful of people can read Arabic and they are so busy these days that they generally do not have time to read Arab newspapers. (Whitaker 2005)

Efforts to fill this gap from groups such as the Middle East Media Research Institute were incomplete and often partial.[18]

Why Do They Hate Us?

Asymmetrical exposure can help explain why policymakers did not anticipate the limitations of public diplomacy, but what happened once the failure of their efforts became apparent? In this section, I argue that the monolingualism of the US foreign policy establishment also warped their interpretation of Arab dissent.

Underpinning US public diplomacy is the assumption that exposure breeds consensus.[19] Through this lens, negative perceptions of the United States reflect misinformation rather than a meaningful disagreement. As Kenneth Tomlinson, president of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, told the Senate, "We in America are fortunate: telling the truth works to our long-term advantage" (US Congress 2003). State Department reports concluded that rising anti-Americanism reflected envy of US power (Peterson 2003). Policymakers just needed to "set the record straight" (US Department of State 2002).

The problem with this diagnosis is that it negates context. As Ussama Makdisi argues, the decline of the US image in the Arab world fits into a longer history. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most Arabs had a favorable, even idealistic view of the United States; however, a series of political choices—including Woodrow Wilson's acquiescence to British and French colonial projects after World War I, US support for Israel, and the pursuit of oil in Saudi Arabia—precipitated disillusionment and hostility (Makdisi 2002, 2011). In attributing anti-Americanism exclusively to misinformation and resentment, policymakers disavowed the legitimacy of Arab dissent.

When it became clear that efforts to sell the invasion of Iraq had failed, the United States turned on the outlets it had recently courted. The Arab press, policymakers claimed, was stoking anti-Americanism. To be fair, criticism of America did increase during this period. According to Madawi al-Rasheed, the Saudi regime hoped that unmuzzling the pan-Arab press would provide a safe outlet for popular dissent; however the Bush administration interpreted even reasonable criticism as a national security threat (Al-Rasheed 2006). On the one hand, this reflects the extent to which the War on Terror militarized the US national image. It also suggests that peripheral dissent had become unintelligible at the hegemonic core.

As the War on Terror ground on, many people within the upper echelons of the US government came to believe that the Arab press was actively working against US national interests. The brunt of this criticism was directed at Al Jazeera, which had once been heralded as the CNN of the Middle East.[20] Donald Rumsfeld repeatedly claimed to have "evidence" that Al Jazeera was working with insurgents (Lynch 2006). Dorrance Smith, a senior media advisor to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, claimed that Al Jazeera and Al Qaeda "have a working arrangement that extends beyond a modus vivendi" (Smith 2005).

In April 2003, a US warplane bombed Al Jazeera's headquarters in Baghdad, killing correspondent Tarek Ayoub. Shortly before that, American forces had opened fire on the Baghdad headquarters of Abu Dhabi Television and fired at the Palestine Hotel, which was popular among journalists in Baghdad who were not officially embedded with US military forces (Goldenberg et al. 2003). Although the United States vehemently denied targeting journalists, many in the Arab world were skeptical. Announcing the death of his colleague on the air, Al Jazeera correspondent Majed Abdel-Hadi declared:

> I will not be objective about this because we have been dragged into this conflict. We were targeted because the Americans don't want the world to see the crimes they are committing against the Iraqi people. (Sakr 2007b; Cozens 2003)

The editor in chief of *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* also condemned the attacks:

> I believe that considering the use of force against a media station is the worst kind of media terrorism practiced by a country which pretends to lead the free world, democratic values and media freedom. (Al-Quds Al-Arabi 2005)

Whether or not these bombings were intentional, the fact that American officials had repeatedly linked the Arab media to Al Qaeda made this a plausible interpretation to many in the Arab world.

Conclusion

At the start of the twenty-first century, the United States was the uncontested global hegemon. Its material capacities were unmatchable. After 9/11, it was also extremely popular. What is remarkable, in retrospect, is how quickly all of that dissolved. Although this chapter has focused on the Bush administration's failure to sell the Iraq War to the Arab public, it's worth noting that the United States did not have much success among its European allies either. Indeed, the only public that accepted the Bush administration's narrative was the one at home.

Why did US officials make such a huge miscalculation? Was the "better mousetrap" that Biden envisioned possible? While I do not think the invasion of Iraq was "sellable" on any terms, approaching this case study as an example of interlingual legitimation can tell us something about hegemony in a multilingual world. Although hegemony places the burden of translation on nonhegemonic states, it can also obscure the world to those who possess it.

Hegemony is inscribed in language. When nonhegemonic states conduct policy at the international level, they must legitimate themselves through languages and concepts that are not their own. By extension, policies that are articulated on these terms are generally intelligible across linguistic boundaries. However the invisibility of alternative discourses at the international level does not correspond to their erasure. Indeed, grappling with the incongruous legitimation demands of domestic and international politics is routine practice for most policymakers. The leaders of hegemonic states, however, are largely insulated from this process. This dynamic is magnified in the case of the United States, whose hegemony is monolingual. While exemption from the imperative to translate is generally considered a privilege of hegemony, this case study suggests that insulation from alternative discourses can also contribute to politically consequential miscalculations.

In the lead-up to the Iraq War, US policymakers mistook the intelligibility of Western-centric discourses for the universal validity of their claims. As a result, they misconstrued Arab opposition, overestimated their ability to improve the image of the US, and ignored numerous indications that their policy might be misguided. At the same time, the Arab press recontextualized American claims through the act of translation. According to a 2003 public opinion survey, when asked why the United States was interested in Iraq, the overwhelming majority of Arab respondents cited oil (80 percent) and Israel (70 percent). The least common answers were "democracy," "economic development," and "peace" (Telhami 2003a, 2004). Instead of countering Arab opposition to the war, the Bush administration's public diplomacy strategy contributed to an alternative understanding of not only the Iraq War but the War on Terror as a whole. While the broad consensus in the Arab world about American efforts in Iraq cannot be attributed to press coverage alone, in translating Bush administration rhetoric into what Stuart Hall (1978) calls "the public idiom," the pan-Arab press developed a framework through which the Iraq War became meaningful in the Arab public sphere.

Notes

1. Radio Sawa and Al Hurra did not build the kind of audiences, or establish sufficient credibility, to significantly affect image construction. For more, see el-Nawawy (2006) and Zaharna (2010).

2. Not all hegemons are monolingual. The British Empire, for example, developed an extensive language-training apparatus for colonial administrators.

3. Although it's also not a matter of vanity. Scholars of ontological security might argue that being perceived as a bully would run against the United States' image of itself as the enlightened leader of the liberal international community. See Steele (2014).

4. The term "public diplomacy" was officially adopted in 1965 as a more palatable alternative to "propaganda," although the tactics themselves stayed the same.

5. The shift from South Asia to the Near East reflects the changing theater of war.

6. *Asharq Al-Awsat*, which is owned by the Saudi Research and Marketing Group, is usually considered the most conservative of the major pan-Arab newspapers. Its primary competitor is *Al Hayat*, although both are London-based and Saudi-owned. *Al Hayat*, which is known for adopting an Arab-nationalist line, is popular with the Arab diaspora. *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* distinguishes itself with its independent ownership and more populist stance on regional politics (Fandy 2007; Mellor 2005; Lynch 2006).

7. Scholarship on the Arab media during the early 2000s disproportionately focuses on "new media" outlets. See Zayani (2005), Mellor (2005), and Lynch (2006). However, I follow Walter Armbrust's critique of "technical orientalism" in Arab media scholarship (Armbrust 2012).

8. Teun Van Dijk's defines a "script" as knowledge that is socially shared within a particular group of people (Van Dijk 1988).

9. More recent research has discredited this report. According to researchers at the London School of Economics, Saddam Hussein's government manipulated data to discredit the international community. However, the human consequences of sanctions were significant, and at the time most people believed these numbers to be accurate. Tim Dyson and Valeria Cetorelli, "Changing Views on Child Mortality and Economic Sanctions in Iraq: A History of Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics," *BMJ Global Health*, March 2017.

10. Concern about the consequences of sanctions should not be interpreted as support for Saddam. The tension between disapproval of the regime and distrust of Western intentions posed a conundrum for many Arab journalists. Reporting often treated the suffering of the Iraqi people as an independent humanitarian issue.

11. This issue would become even more fraught in the spring, when Ariel Sharon launched a bloody campaign to recapture areas under Palestinian control. During this period, Sharon's policies dominated the front page of every Arab newspaper, every day.

12. By contrast, in April 2002, Bush called Sharon "a man of peace." Quoted in Zaharna 2010, 49.

13. That Rice should make herself available indicates the administration's concerns over the speech's reception.

14. It is worth noting that the list only included those "targets" in the region and omitted North Korea.

15. Toward the end of the hearing, Zaharna and Biden got into a heated exchange

about the roots of anti-Americanism in the Arab world. Biden argued that cultural sensitivity, while important, would not solve the problem of the American image, which was instead rooted in resentment of American power: "If Middle Eastern Countries want to be treated like mature nations, they have to start acting like mature nations."

16. Newspapers were introduced to the region by European colonial powers. For more, see Armbrust (2012) and Ayalon (1995).

17. For more context, see Said 1997.

18. The Middle East Media Research Institute is a media monitoring agency that was founded by former Israeli intelligence officers. It has come under fire for selectively highlighting the most extreme, anti-Western, and anti-Israeli aspects of the Arab press (Sakr 2007).

19. In the 1950s, scholars such as Daniel Lerner argued that exposure to modernity through mass media would lead non-Western societies to abandon traditionalism, and, in the process, become more sympathetic to the West. Although Lerner's modernization theory has been discredited in academia, its influence persists outside the ivory tower. Indeed, the Bush administration was directly inspired by his arguments (Lerner 1958; Bernstein 1971; Shah 2011).

20. Al Jazeera provoked the ire of many policymakers when it broadcast Osama Bin Laden's video statement after September 11, but attacks on the network escalated in scale and intensity as the failure of public diplomacy became more evident.

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Conclusion

Einar Wigen and Mauro José Caraccioli

Interlingual relations is not a new phenomenon. As the above contributions have shown, they traverse time, space, culture, and various iterations of world order. To that end, to propose interlingual relations as a discrete research agenda for scholars of global politics should not elicit the view of a single direction or set of principles. Rather, as the present volume shows, the insights informing these networks of scholarship can and should be taken in different directions, specifically with the outcome of becoming conversant with potentially conflicting areas of research. Having staked out a course by claiming that interlingual relations is the unrecognized core of international relations, and that these relations take place in interlingual configurations that transcend state borders, we set out in this volume to explore these interfaces and encounters in different sites, using different methodologies. The findings of interlingual relations may not apply to all IR scholars, yet they reflect the coming together of multiple subfields, approaches, and disciplinary paradigms across the field's history.

From a sociological perspective, the benefits of convening a collection like this is that we recruited people with different competencies and taking different approaches. We sought out colleagues sharing our concerns, taking the research agenda into more practice-oriented studies based on fieldwork, archival research, and distinct positions within multilingual sites of knowledge production. So in Anatoly Reshetnikov's and Sara de Jong's chapters, for example, the practical and existential struggles of interpreters were systematically examined. Studying the practice of interpretation in international organizations and in a military field situation, such as the most recent Western occupation of Afghanistan, centers our attention on actors whom IR theory affords no agency. Similarly, in Julia Costa Lopez's and Mauro Caraccioli's chapters, the afterlives of conscription practices of translators were positioned against the normative assumptions of how past logics of domination operated on a day-to-day basis. Imperial rule needed more than just channels for survival, but also for the gradual accommodation of those who counted as subjects. Hence these examples are the interface, the very medium via which relations between states and peoples are played out. So too in both Amanda Cheney's and Jane Darby Menton's cases, we get an insight into how the capacity for translation shapes a state's ability to deal with foreign encroachment, as well as how Anglophone hegemony blinds those solely enlivened in the hegemonic language from its limits and from what goes on beyond those limits. Relative translation power is possibly as important as the ability to impose one's linguistic hegemony on the world. But as Einar Wigen's chapter shows, it still requires bodies and political motivations for such exchanges to happen across vast spaces and differing rationales for allegiance.

This is conceived as an exploratory volume, where we try to take insights from existing works of global political analysis (some familiar, others less so) and see how they fly in other contexts to give us better leverage over important aspects of international relations. As editors typically do, we believe we manage to show their wide applicability. Yet taking these insights in multiple directions means no single field of inquiry is systematically mapped out. So, while we can claim that the United States was blindsided by its own Anglophone hegemony in 2001–3, we do not know the extent to which this applies for other countries and at other times.[1] Even as imperial hubris may have waned, Anglophone hegemony remains and still blinds its participants, but in what ways and to what extent remains to be systematically studied.

One direction that we have not explored here, more for reasons of who accepted our invitations and who did not, is the implications of interlingualism for pedagogy. How does one teach the study of international relations when one knows that (a) the literature that lays out its premises is part of the hegemonic discourse (i.e., IR is part of Anglophone hegemony) and (b) most of the relations in the world take part beyond the scope of this Anglophone hegemony? In other words, what implications does the privileging of what takes place in English have for teaching IR and global politics more generally? Both moving "IR beyond the West" and historical IR are important currents in the field, ones we are fully on board with. However, we believe neither can be fully achieved without recognizing the acts, arrangements, and processes of translation that take place as part of writing about people speaking other languages. Indeed, historical polities have conducted politics in interlingual configurations for much of world history, often outsourcing the conduct of diplomacy to networks with the necessary linguistic skills in their near geographic vicinities and far beyond.

While we do have a nascent literature on the historical and philological aspects of translation in relations between polities, international relations at the interlingual interface between politicians, diplomats, and officials is far from being systematically studied. Studies of interpretation do exist, such as Mona Baker's *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation* (1992), but these tend to tackle the problem with questions other than those that primarily concern IR scholars. In other words, taking translation and interpretation studies methods to IR is a pivot that needs systematic inquiry, as the chapters by Patrick Jackson, Filipe dos Reis and Olive Kessler, Daniel Levine, and Jelena Subotic show. In each of their interventions, we are invited to consider both the added value of centering translation and interpretation within IR scholarship and the disciplinary limits to such a move.

Prompted by interactions we had with Iver Neumann when we asked him to pen the book's preface, we also believe that there is work to be done on what Gramsci calls "organic intellectuals" and whether their role as interlocutors can be better understood in terms of translation—that is, making "the world" legible and understandable to in-group audiences. While in this book we have shied away from what Roman Jakobson calls "intralingual translation" as a key area of study within interlingual relations, it may be fruitful to look at reinterpretations of messages and knowledge between different registers "within a language," as Senem Aydın-Düzgit and Bahar Rumelili's chapter shows and Jane Darby Menton's chapter invites us to reflect upon. The reason we shied away from a more systematic exploration of the intralingual dynamics of translation in the current volume is that we insist on privileging an exploration of relations taking place *at* or *beyond* the limits of Anglophone hegemony. This does not mean that intralingual translation is not important, as any social network needs bridges "yoking together" individuals and meanings between different clusters and contexts. In fact, one tack here might be using translation as a lens to question the polarization of discourse and segmentations of audiences. Put another way, translation can be used to examine the extent that communicative breakdowns have to do with more direct access to specific audiences and the declining role of the organic intellectual as a mediator.

Attending to these processes demands shifting the focus from translation as purely a matter of discourse—which has been a tendency in how translation studies has approached questions of politics—to centering the practical implications of translation. In other words, the practical consequences of the translation of politics are a different way of looking at this than the *politics of translation*, which centers analysis on outcomes *in the text*. Instead, we want to know the practical consequences of translations as they are taken up *by people*.

The directions we take the insights of this book in thus have three dimensions, where most have some kind of realization in scholarly practice. First, there is the question of studying interlinguality in "out there" political practices (interlingual relations in the wild) versus "inside" scholarly methods. How does the latter become more important over time? Does it involve greater distortion and is hence imbued with greater power the further from the hegemonic language one goes? What are the ethical and methodological implications of rendering, say, indigenous political expressions in "political science English" as opposed to not rendering them at all? Frederick Schaffer's work (1998) gives us some clues, and Patrick Jackson's, Julia Costa Lopez's, and Mauro Caraccioli's chapters in this book offer an altogether different approach to this question, but the conversation should not end there. Whether or not we *should* translate a set of goals, ideals, practices, or visions elides the material and intellectual potentiality of *knowing we can*.

The second dimension this volume articulates is textual translation and philological work versus interpretation and its study through fieldwork. This does not fall along a simple discourse versus practice dimension, as we would insist that both discourse and practice be made part of the analysis of any interlingual context. Contra translation studies, we would claim that any IR or political science approach to interlinguality would have to possess a strong emphasis on the practical "outcomes" of interlingual relations. In other words, if one does not ask how interlinguality matters *for something else*, one shies away from its implications, its importance, and the crucial "so what?" questions we have aimed to engage above. Although it may not always *need* to be included, the study of interlingual relations should preferably also take the materiality of a situation into account. Not only because we as human beings have/are bodies that prime and shape our linguistic abilities, hence making the capacity for translation an embodied experience, but also because the material reference points for questions of translation disclose a contention between implicit meanings.

In the words of Lene Hansen:

> A tank is not a mere material assemblage of rubber and metal, but an object of warfare—or peacekeeping—that can only be understood through its situation within the discourse that gives it meaning. The

> strategy of discourse analysis is to incorporate both material and ideational factors rather than to privilege one over the other. (Hansen 2006, 23)

Claiming the importance of interlingual relations, translation, and interpretation for the study of international relations is not somehow to say that the tank is not real; it is instead to say that its use and its meaning is not singular even when that meaning becomes hegemonic in one language. Hansen's work not only shows the practical implications of shifting the discourse on particular aspects of the Balkan Wars of the 1990s but also how hegemonic representations may shift within particular sites of decision-making. Insisting (in English?) that the tank is a means of peacekeeping may be more or less difficult to translate depending on the interlingual configuration, hegemony, and the relative translation power of the parties. Yet tanks, both literally and figuratively, only serve to blow things up.

In other words, without accounting for interlinguality, translation, and interpretation, it was never possible to realize the full benefits of IR's linguistic turn beyond the English language. Without such tools and theoretical insights, any account of political discourse on the world "beyond the West," indeed beyond the Anglosphere, would miss the relational aspects of the very terms of interaction between cultures and polities. If IR and global politics is to take interactions at the limits of the Anglosphere, as well as beyond, seriously, it needs to develop analytical tools to account for interlingual relations, and it needs to follow up the exploratory insights put forward in this volume.

Third, and lastly, is the question of interlinguality's ethical commitments. Our work aims to know what happens after linguistic hegemony: Who are the interpreters and worlds left behind in the schools and fields of empires past? Whose ghosts inhabit the abandoned airports and bases of Kabul, Saigon, and New York? Is the tank really what is at stake in the situations and discourses that shape international lives and memories? To think about translation as part of an ethical imperative is not just the result of challenging intellectual hegemony, but of reflecting on the ongoing violence that affects interpreters, immigrants, transplants, ex-pats, their families, and the broader subset of worldly communities that we as scholars try to make sense of. Indeed, this same ethical imperative opens up a broader conception of IR that should be taken up by all its various subfields: the radical humanism behind signs and symbols that are always in flux. And while this ethical imperative may underpin our own endeavors, it need not do so for all scholars of global politics.

The analytical and methodological pluralism that flows from our efforts certainly has policy and practical dimensions that transcend the contents of our investigations. The practicality of taking up new languages in the pursuit of graduate study is (and will likely remain) curtailed by the realities of funding packages and methodological nationalism. All translations evoke encounters with the interlingual, but not all translations privilege the relational ethos of those encounters. Yet in spite of these realities, we nevertheless hope those communities positioned within the more practical effects of living in a polyglot world also engage in their own normative reflections. Doing so might not make for better translations, but just might make for the translation of a better global politics.

Note

1. Anecdotally, it seems British popular discourse was not quite as blind to the limits of the English language during this time, although British decision-makers may have been disciplined by the power of American discourse on Iraq. Robin Cook's resignation from the cabinet in March 2003 indicates a bit more friction, but whether this indicates more awareness of what was going on "beyond the boundary of the English language" remains to be seen.

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