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H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Akira Iriye. *Global Interdependence: The World after 1945. A History of the World Series.* Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2013. 1,008 pp. \$35.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-674-04572-9.

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Global Interdependence begins with an evocative epigraph: “A man without bias cannot write interesting history—if, indeed, such a man exists.” The quote, which comes from Bertrand Russell’s memoirs, introduces this diverse overview of the world after 1945. As editor, Akira Iriye explains, his biases include a commitment to contributing a fresh perspective on the recent past, a desire to place this perspective in a truly global frame, and a devotion to explicating the layers of transnational history. Although these layers, which he identifies as geopolitics, economics, the environment, and cultural exchange, converged at different points after 1945, each has a distinct story and chronology, and each layer receives separate treatment in *Global Interdependence*’s five chapters. Readers looking for a new take on the driving force of history will have to look elsewhere; this is a tome about interactions. Transnational exchange happened “across borders, among people and their communities, ideas, and goods, to such an extent that, whether we are talking about political, economic, social, or cultural affairs, the destinies of nations, civilizations, individuals, and the natural habitat become closely linked” (p. 4). Presented with an admirable terseness, Iriye’s argument straddles the line between understatement and provocation: the world achieved interdependence after 1945.

Clocking in at over nine hundred pages, *Global Interdependence* can be unpacked in various ways. Like its predecessor, *A World Connecting, 1870-1945* (2012), which was edited by Emily Rosenberg and published in 2012, Iriye’s volume consists of long interpretive essays that both synthesize recent scholarship and reflect the predilections of each contributor. Historians of U.S. foreign relations will recognize many of the authors—Petra Goedde, J. R. McNeill, and Thomas W. Zeiler, among

others—and *Global Interdependence* might be read as an intervention in U.S. and the world history. That field, which barely existed a decade ago, emerged arguably from the confluence of diplomatic history with immigration and global studies during the early 2000s.[1] When viewed alongside Rosenberg’s volume, *Global Interdependence* provides a capacious starting point to think about this nascent historiography. The United States percolates nearly every page of Iriye’s tome, but the authors are as interested in the world as in the United States. Wilfried Loth explores the superpower contest through the prism of European unity; Zeiler illuminates how Washington shaped (and was shaped by) postwar capitalism; McNeill and Peter Engelke place this period in the context of population and energy concerns; Goedde explains the way diversity and homogenization interacted in the age of cultural globalization; and Iriye offers a précis on transnationalism. Paired with Rosenberg, *Global Interdependence* articulates a vision of the field that is less about the United States than about the line that defines this curious category of U.S./world. The book walks this line expertly—a challenge that has organized recent meetings of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR)—and does so in a way that showcases the field’s obvious methodological diversity.[2] The resulting narrative invites historians to rethink the context around and the significance of America’s rise to power during the twentieth century.

Yet *Global Interdependence*’s intellectual ambitions go beyond the United States. Iriye’s volume is the sixth book of the History of the World series, which he is assembling with Jürgen Osterhammel and publishing jointly with Harvard University Press and C. H. Beck. Beginning in prehistoric times, this multivolume project promises

to articulate a genealogy of a peculiar historical subject: transnational consciousness. The journal *New Global Studies* has cultivated this scholarly agenda since 2007, feeding on recent writings by Christopher Bayly, Charles Bright, Michael Geyer, Bruce Mazlish, Osterhammel, and Saskia Sassen, among others, and Iriye's book is an elaboration of this larger pedagogical endeavor.[3] World historians will not find references to peripheries, cores, or *longue durées* in *Global Interdependence*, nor will they learn anything new about the rise and fall of great powers.[4] Iriye's project is about connections and interactions. "We need a conceptual hold on the experience of a world that is defined by its globality," Bright and Geyer wrote recently. It is not enough to define this effort by scale or theory; what is needed is a history that reveals why communities became interlocked and how they found meaning in that experience.[5] The History of the World series might be read as an answer to this clarification call; Iriye's *Global Interdependence* undoubtedly has much to say about the history of "globality" or the horizontal planes of action that give life the globalization experience. "Post-1945 history shows numerous instances of incomprehension toward unfamiliar people and objects," Iriye admits. But more important is the "growth of the realization that men, women, children, the spaces they inhabit, and animals, birds, fish, and plants are all interdependent beings" (p. 8). The story of this realization, unfurled here with editorial acumen, represents one way to conceptualize global history.

Each chapter provides its own twist on Iriye's larger theme. Loth's piece about the Cold War, for instance, is an interesting alternative to scholarship about the superpower contest in the Third World. His narrative begins and ends in Europe and explores how American-Soviet tensions interacted with the rise of an American-European duopoly and the growth of state-making experiments in Asia.[6] Zeiler's essay is equally accessible. Starting with a nuanced portrait of U.S. power after World War II, he turns attention to political economy, showing that while the recovery of the industrialized world eroded Washington's primacy during the Cold War, the United States never abandoned its commitment to opening economic doors around the world. This commitment has been the beating heart of modern globalization.[7] McNeill and Peter Engelke shift attention to the environment and themes of energy consumption, climate change, and population growth. We are living through the dawn of the Anthropocene era, they argue, which has seen humans supplant microbes and orbital wobbles as the principle cause of environmental change. The bold-

ness of this claim is matched by the authors' skepticism toward geo-engineering, giving their essay an ambiguity distinct from *Global Interdependence's* other chapters.[8] On the topic of culture, Goedde and Iriye provide similar accounts about non-state activism and global consciousness. Goedde is more interested in women and local tradition than Iriye—her essay wrestles fruitfully with cultural hybridity—but her final conclusions do not depart from Iriye's wider assessment of the post-1945 world: interdependence is too big to fail.[9] In the face of a tightening network of people, goods, and ideas, where intellectuals grope daily for a cosmopolitanism that befits our global condition, these individual chapters ultimately assemble to answer the most basic of questions: How did we get here?

A book this ambitious invites big questions and constructive criticism. Periodization, for instance, will always vex historians and Iriye's decision to begin this story in 1945 carries baggage. On the one hand, 1945 is the obvious marker because it marks the origins of the Cold War. On the other hand, this choice masks the impact of World War II. While Rosenberg's contributors mostly oriented their chapters backward toward the nineteenth century, treating the Second World War as an afterthought in the drama of industrialized globalization, the gaze here is cast forward toward contemporary times, leaving the most destructive conflict in human history out of focus for History of the World readers. Considering that conflict's impact on ideas about planning and citizenship, this is no small oversight.[10] One might counter that the arrival of the atomic bomb operated as a cross-cultural "reset" button, but nuclear questions are at *Global Interdependence's* periphery and few of its chapters would be less cohesive if they covered World War II itself. There is even an argument for beginning in 1914. The First Great War not only repudiated European norms about civilization, but also marked New York's arrival as the industrial world's preeminent financial center. By 1916 America was the largest economy on the planet, and even after Woodrow Wilson's downfall in 1919, the United States continued to influence how countries came to terms with the vagaries of modern life.[11] Beyond facilitating a comparison of the 1920s and 1990s, a history that moved forward from 1914 might better illuminate the strange careers of import-substituting industrialization, global governance, and postcolonial nationalism.[12] What are the trade-offs of dating globality's triumph to 1945?

Essay selection is also a topic that invites scholarly debate. Iriye provides an excellent balance here with two

chapters about diplomacy and economics, another two essays about interactions and consciousness, and a middle piece on the environment. One critique of *A World Connecting* was that the essays were inadequately integrated, and a comparable argument can be made of *Global Interdependence*.^[13] The contributors occasionally talk past each other and their overlaps—which are especially evident in the final two chapters—can be frustrating when read in light of the book’s omissions. China, for instance, is everywhere and nowhere. Although Beijing shaped relations between the United States and Soviet Union and eventually altered the geography of capitalism, the country does not receive the same treatment as Europe and North America, the lodestars of Loth’s and Zeiler’s chapters respectively.^[14] Similarly, the information revolution is omnipresent yet opaque. The contributors are interested in technology but ignore “big science,” or the story of how public money fused with private research after the 1940s.^[15] Change did not just happen, and while treating this marriage as a lubricant of transnationalism may reflect how people experienced new technology, it also diminishes the political history of invention and diffusion. Likewise, *Global Interdependence* handles decolonization perfunctorily. Whereas Rosenberg’s *A World Connecting* provided separate essays on statehood and imperialism, empire’s end is subsumed here by the dramatic growth of globalization and the arrival of transnational consciousness.^[16] Essay selection is almost too easy to critique in a project with this many moving parts, but each of these jabs points toward open-ended questions: Where does power reside in the modern world? How should global historians balance causation and description? As narrators, where should we plant our feet—and who are “we”?

Finally, there is bias. Russell would surely have thoughts about the above questions and he would be fascinated by Iriye’s answers. Iriye has done much to historicize the global community and his biases are more interesting than he suggests on *Global Interdependence*’s opening pages. There is a Kantianism to his scholarship since the mid-1990s, rooted in a deep, sophisticated interest in the connective tissue of world affairs. Having spent three decades writing about war and conflict—namely, the American-Japanese antagonism during the early twentieth century—Iriye’s turn toward transnational history hints at a cosmopolitanism that is both placid and cavernous.^[17] *Global Interdependence* pushes readers to think about themselves in the widest possible frame, urging scholars and laypeople alike to recognize the essential commonality of humankind—and realize the

relevance of a history of global interdependence. This sentiment finds expression throughout the current volume, especially as the contributors move from the historical past to the political present.^[18] It also contrasts with the recent proliferation of scholarship about inequality, violence, and imperialism.^[19] Indeed, in Iriye’s concluding chapter one can hear echoes of earlier refrains about the world’s flatness, which will surely frustrate readers who have joined Thomas Piketty’s bandwagon or find intellectual sustenance on the pages of *n+1* and *Jacobin*.^[20] My students are certainly angrier than Iriye, even if they disagree about where to direct their frustration. Most of them have part-time jobs and outsized loans; they come to the State University of New York with limited resources and heightened anxieties, and tend to take their cultural cues from either Bill O’Reilly or Jon Stewart. Comparable questions inform their interest in and awareness of global interdependence: Will they be better off than their parents? What will technology change? Can this planet sustain itself? ^[21] All of which raises the specter of politics: In the face of these questions, is Iriye’s cosmopolitanism too synonymous with the universalism of a bygone age? Have past experiments with the *Outline of History*—predicated on the conviction that transnationalism would cultivate habits coexistence and prevent the recrudescence of “great” wars—already revealed the shortcomings in the pedagogical enterprise that animates *History of the World*? ^[22]

Iriye has earned his answers to these questions. Born in Tokyo on the eve of World War II, he entered academia at the Cold War’s highpoint and he has spent a lifetime reflecting on the themes of *Global Interdependence*. The book, and the series to which it belongs, is admirable and impressive. It challenges U.S./world and global historians in equal measure, nudging them to see globalization as a historical object that unifies the disparate insights of political, social, and cultural history. The individual chapters are excellent. But do not open these pages expecting a compelling critique of power. Iriye’s call to arms is subtle, mature, and elitist: *we are one*. The question remains, is that enough?

Notes

[1]. For representative examples of this confluence, see Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origin of the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Mai M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); and Akira Iriye, *Global Community:*

The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). Recent historiographical reviews include Thomas W. Zeiler, "The Diplomatic Bandwagon: A State of the Field," *Journal of American History* 95, no. 4 (March 2009): 1053-1073; Erez Manela, "The United States in the World," in *American History Now*, ed. Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 201-220; Thomas Borstelmann, "A Worldly Tale: Global Influences on the Historiography of U.S. Foreign Relations," in *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations since 1941*, 2nd ed., ed. Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 338-360.

[2]. For a conversation about the field, see Matthew Connelly, Robert J. McMahon, Katherine A. S. Sibley, Thomas Borstelmann, Nathan Citino, and Kristin Hoganson, "SHAFR in the World," *Passport: The Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations Review* 42, no. 2 (September 2011): 4-16.

[3]. For a conversation about the field, see C. A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed, "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (December 2006): 1440-1464. Representative scholarship includes C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Bruce Mazlish, *The New Global History* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); and Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[4]. For older variations on global history, see Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, 4 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974-2011); Fernand Braudel, *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); and Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Vintage, 1989).

[5]. Charles Bright and Michael Geyer, "Benchmarks of Globalization: The Global Condition, 1850-2010," in *A Companion to World History*, ed. Douglas Northrop (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 286.

[6]. For an alternative approach, see Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and*

the Making of Our Times (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[7]. The chapter complements Zeiler's impressive work on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), as well as Alfred E. Eckes Jr. and Thomas W. Zeiler, *Globalization and the American Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[8]. The chapter enhances arguments in J. R. McNeill, *Something New under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Penguin, 2000).

[9]. Useful reflections on hybridity include Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004).

[10]. Some relevant work includes Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies: Britain's Asian Empire and the War with Japan* (New York: Penguin, 2005); Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars: Freedom and Revolution in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); David Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain 1920-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[11]. Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order* (New York: Penguin, 2014).

[12]. Some relevant reflections include Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Sugata Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle against Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Patricia Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920-1946* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (New York: Penguin, 2012); Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania

Press, 2013); and John Waterbury, "The Long Gestation and Brief Triumph of Import-Substituting Industrialization," *World Development* 27, no. 2 (1999): 323-341.

[13]. Donna R. Gabbacia, review of *A World Connecting*, ed. Emily Rosenberg, *H-Diplo Roundtable Review* 14, no. 40 (July 2013): 20.

[14]. Overviews of China's journey include Odd Arne Westad, *Restless Empire: China and the World since 1750* (New York: Basic Books, 2012); and Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012). China's return to global prominence can be seen fruitfully in the context of R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); and Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[15]. David Reynolds, "Science, Technology, and the Cold War," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 3, ed. Melvyn Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 378; and David Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History since 1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[16]. Charles S. Maier, "Leviathan 2.0: Inventing Modern Statehood," in *World Connecting: 1870-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 29-284; and Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, "Empires and the Reach of the Global," in *ibid.*, 285-434.

[17]. Some his early scholarship includes *After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East, 1921-1931* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965); *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897-1911* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972); and *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War, 1941-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981). His more recent scholarship includes "The Internationalization of History," *American Historical Review* 94, no. 1 (February 1989): 1-10; *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); *Global Community*; and, with Petra Goedde, "Introduction: Human Rights as History," in *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History*, ed. Akira Iriye, Petra Goedde, and William Hitchcock (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3-24. Some wider reflections about cosmopolitanism include Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: Penguin, 2006); Pheng Cheah and Bruce Rob-

bins, eds., *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); and Immanuel Kant, *Kant: Political Writings*, 2nd ed., ed. Hans Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1-53.

[18]. Loth, "Equations of Power," 197-199; and Zeiler, "Opening Doors," 352-361.

[19]. This literature has been eclectic, having grown in the shadow of America's imperial wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Some representative scholarship includes Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Craig Calhoun, Frederick Cooper, and Kevin W. Moore, eds., *Lessons of Empire: Imperial Histories and American Power* (New York: New Press, 2006); Martti Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law, 1870-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); and Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). For a relevant historiography review, see Paul Kramer, "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World," *American Historical Review* 116, no. 5 (December 2011): 1348-1391.

[20]. Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005); and Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014). For a critique of Piketty, see Chris Giles, "Piketty Findings Undercut by Errors," *Financial Times* (March 2014), <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/e1f343ca-e281-11e3-89fd-00144feabdc0.html#axzz33ixedkJL>. For a thoughtful assessment of millennial Marxism, see Timothy Shenk, "Thomas Piketty and Millennial Marxists on the Scourge of Inequality," *The Nation* (May 2014), <http://www.thenation.com/article/179337/thomas-piketty-and-millennial-marxists-scourge-inequality?>

[21]. Relevant commentary includes "The Onrushing Wave," *The Economist* (January 2014), <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21594264-previous-technological-innovation-has-always-delivered-more-long-run-employment-not-less>; Tyler Cowen, "The Robots Are Here," *Politico Magazine* (November 2013), http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2013/11/the-robots-are-here-98995.html#U4_CpV60b1p; Dereck Thompson, "What Jobs Will the Robots

Take? ” *The Atlantic* (January 2014), <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/01/what-jobs-will-the-robots-take/283239>; Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (New York: Henry Holt, 2014); and “A Sensitive Matter,” *The Economist* (March 2013), <http://www.economist.com/news/science-and-technology/21574461-climate-may-be-heating-up-less-response-greenhouse-gas-emissions>.

[22]. The reference is to H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History: Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind* (New York: Macmillan, 1920).

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