

International Relations and the Problem of

Difference. By Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney. New York:

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— Daniel M. Green, *University of Delaware*

Can scholars of international relations dig themselves out from under the weight of several hundred years of world history and their own analytic baggage and remake themselves? This book asks for precisely this, delivering an important message for the discipline. Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney's opening premise is that IR, in spite of what one might logically expect, has always in fact been stymied and wrong-footed by the "problem of difference." Far from being able to understand and deal sensitively with diversity and the other, the practices and discipline of IR have squashed it—internally the state has become an engine of homogenization, while externally international society is a hostile realm of danger and hierarchy, in which forces of an "empire of uniformity" operate to stigmatize difference and tame it. Instead of embracing and theorizing difference, IR is associated from the time of early modern Europe with the crippling dual "legacy of colonialism and religious cleansing" (p. viii). The authors are advocates instead of "heterology," of the study of IR as a "study of differences" in which dominant Western perspectives and leaders are not afraid to be challenged and changed by encounters with diversity and the other, in which such encounters are open questions.

Inayatullah and Blaney draw inspiration from critical and postcolonial authors such as Tzvetan Todorov and Ashis Nandy and, of course, from fellow members of IR's critical wing. Four of the six principle chapters in the book have appeared previously as journal articles, but they are fairly extensively revised for this volume, and the book hangs together very well as an ensemble. The two entirely new chapters are excellent and adroitly add to the arc of their overall argument. Most of the chapters follow a common formula of critical excursions through key texts and even the personal careers of select luminaries. For those who enjoy dipping into the early political theory of IR, there are insightful and innovative discussions of some of the usual suspects—Vitoria, Grotius, Hobbes, and Locke—as well as the less well-known Jean de Lery (1534–1613) and Tomasso Campanella (1568–1637), both mined for their writings on native life in the

New World and Christianity's responses. These are supplemented by later, extended treatments of Adam Smith, F. A. Hayek, and Karl Polanyi, to name a few.

The history of IR, examined from roughly 1492 to the present, is revealed by the authors to be one of closing down of the opportunities for constructive, equal engagement with difference. The encounter with the New World did not go well. Subsequently, sovereignty itself crystallizes the problem, and 1648 is more properly seen as the "Westphalian deferral" when, counter to the popular myth, Europe creates a system that allows it to containerize societies and avoid open encounters with difference.

Somewhat surprisingly, the authors' chief targets and source material are not primarily American realists and neorealists, who are perhaps too far beyond help. Instead, there is a sustained critical engagement with the English School in particular, and some of its main contributors (Hedley Bull, Robert Jackson, Andrew Linklater, Adam Watson, Martin Wight), who are constantly drawn on as examples of good-but-still-flawed work. Beyond these, the authors deliver particularly telling attacks on several of today's IR literatures, for example, on three popular "neomodernizationist" approaches (liberal peace, cosmopolitans, and global civil society; pp. 116–25) and on international political economy (IPE) (Chapter 4). The "neos" repeat the errors of their modernizationist forebears, deploying a "politics of comparison" that makes claims of universal goodness on one side that find concomitant failings among non-European peoples and states. Liberal peace arguments do this most obviously, but even those who might seem to go the furthest to be nonjudgmental and inclusive (Richard Falk, Andrew Linklater) are still found accepting of diversity only in a "truncated form" that cannot delay us on the "inexorable march of humanity toward universalism" (p. 121). Only true dialogue and acceptance of "mixed modes" of being can redeem the situation. These critiques are familiar terrain for some, but they certainly bear repeating as compelling and persuasive indictments of business as usual in IR scholarship.

Opponents of critical approaches will say that tearing down is far easier than building up. So, how do we actually engage with difference, and why would powerful actors really wish to do so? These are tough questions that any reader would have in mind throughout this book. To their credit, the authors themselves raise these and respond beyond the abstract and hortatory, to actually discuss following through on the implications of their positions. This is a risky venture that many who take critical perspectives prefer to avoid, but Inayatullah and Blaney's still might have come off better.

First, the authors rely in part, with a certain wistfulness, on the hope that dealing with the other is inherently necessary, since "the presence of the other within the self makes pure forms illusory" (p. 187)—difference cannot be erased and so its challenge is always there. To go further

and illustrate the potential of new understandings of territory and the permitting of "multiple and overlapping sovereignties," the authors take odd routes, first exploring complex understandings of property in Mughal India and the sharing of revenues, then the shifts in the encounter with British colonialism. An obscure case perhaps, with little said about how it might practically affect development today. The second example is modern Jerusalem, where negotiations about mixed uses and overlapping and contending claims have been inventive, to be sure. This is a good case to deal with (and differs from the more typical example of multiple sovereignties in the European Union), but no one would say that the fate of Jerusalem has yet been resolved, nor that discussions about it have been anything less than tortuous. What can we then say of dialogue and open engagement with difference at larger scales?

The aims of Inayatullah and Blaney are definitely worthy, and *International Relations and the Problem of Difference* contains, in one place, a devastating and thorough indictment of the way mainstream IR and IPE have been historically constructed and are done today. But we may also wonder about their timing. For, arguably, we live in an era in which transnational capital is ever more eager and adept in asserting its property rights to every corner of the world, in which the "war on terror" is enhancing the scrutiny of territory and borders, and deepening the disciplining of the other in international society. Critical voices will hopefully flourish, but in many ways the "empire of uniformity" has probably never had it so good.