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THE FORUM

FORUM: INTERLINGUAL RELATIONS: APPROACHES, CONFLICTS, AND LESSONS IN THE TRANSLATION OF GLOBAL POLITICS

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At stake in this forum are the politics of translation in the study of global politics. More specifically, the following interventions aim to consider the ways that scholars can recenter the utility of language toward more flexible conceptions of relationality. As each contribution reveals, translation is indispensable to individual theorizations of international politics; yet taken together, the forum aims to mitigate the alleged necessity of a *lingua franca* in IR scholarship. We go beyond the linguistic demands of conventional conceptual history in that each intervention employs a reflexive disposition to consider both their subject position and normative aspirations in the experience of translation. The forum's overall goal is to illustrate the ethical imperative to acknowledge the contextual specificity of linguistic encounters—past, present, and future—and in the process breathe life into the prose of world politics.

Keywords: global politics, language, translation

Introduction

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Most scholars of world politics have no trouble thinking about the power of words. Be it declarations, communiqués, treaties, or treatises, the languages of international politics have long been subject to scrutiny by academic and policy communities alike. Yet the way that political language use is studied resembles another aspect of how global politics takes place. To paraphrase Rufus Miles (1978) and Ann Tickner (1997), where you stand determines not only where you sit but also the risk of mutual linguistic estrangement. In the same way that war, trade, migration, and myriad other global processes are products of conflict, negotiation, and exclusion, so too is language or, at least, the ways in which language becomes a palpable avenue for action and exchange. Translation is a fundamental, yet often overlooked, practice in such everyday political operations and no less so in academic IR, where the potential for translation is all the more valuable.

As we argue below, realizing that international relations are in fact *interlingual* relations is not premised on a particular linguistic theory or philosophical approach to language.¹ Rather, the following forum highlights this very point: that the question of translation in global politics occurs across the scholarly, geographic, and historical boundaries between (partly) incommensurable languages. The political possibilities of language therefore rest on the conditions that mediate their use; that is to say, interlingual relations is more about mutual intelligibility rather than incommensurability. In this forum we are more concerned with whether translation is necessary for social interaction to function smoothly (obviously a question of degree), than in the more philosophical questions of whether it is possible to fully render a statement from one language into another language (or whether one person may *fully understand* what another person *means*). While the contributions below spring out of a part of IR scholarship that has been concerned with the logics of language and power for some time (Debrix 2003; D'Aoust 2012; Bially Mattern and Zarakol 2016), our claims take on a less (post)structuralist ontology. We wish to build on conceptions of global political power that fall under the purview of states, institutions, and a wide range of nonstate actors but go beyond them toward what people *do* with language. We take as our point of departure that the main way to recover the “lost voices” of international relations is through translation and making sense of what this entails. We pay particular attention to the relational vibrancy that determines who has the authority to speak in IR and how translation is a *relation of power* in the social world (Rutazibwa 2017; Alejandro 2019).²

The following contributions explore the power dynamics behind IR's engagements with the politics of translation and the hegemony of academic English in the field's past and present. By theorizing the role of translation as a constitutive feature of global politics, we aim to contribute a theory of the interface through which the languages of IR scholarship analytically operate. Put differently, we ask: *On what linguistic grounds do individuals meet, interact, and co-construct different worlds? Indeed, whose voices speak loudest across time and how?*

¹ See Stritzel 2014 for a rare take on translation in IR.

² Consider, for example, laudable attempts to translate scholarly abstracts. See: Bertrand, Goettlich, and Murray 2018.

Beyond establishing a distinct research agenda, we see interlingual relations as a critical avenue for the broader study of imperial transitions, cultures of global competition, and histories of domination, such as those that are engaged by IR scholars and other interdisciplinary communities. Our goal is to open, not close off, the possibilities of global relationality, attending to different facets of translation that reveal distinct layers only cursorily theorized.

As we shall show, the essays below broach three overlapping areas of concern for interlingual relations research and IR scholarship today: configurations, conventions, and memories. We start with Wigen's contribution on *interlingual configurations*, which lays out a catalogue of different types of intermediaries that the Ottomans used to run their empire and interact with internal and external actors in a multiplicity of languages. His piece highlights how various intermediaries are positioned within power hierarchies and have to apply their linguistic skills differently, hence providing a scaffolding for thinking about how translation is conducted by people embedded in relations of power. Julia Costa Lopez follows suit by dealing with how the translation of legal texts was used to exercise agency and power at the height of the Holy Roman Empire. Specifically, she focuses on how imperial law and order were shaped using grammatical conventions in Latin that have long since been forgotten. Amanda Cheney's essay picks up on the theme of *interlingual conventions*, highlighting how the contextual history of the West's diplomatic engagement with China shaped emerging conceptions of hierarchy and world order. By rethinking the conventional Eurocentrism inherent in theories of a world system, she draws attention to how historical interlingual research can recover the ways important international *configurations* are reproduced and *normalized* through the grand narratives of IR theory. Jelena Subotic's essay shows how mutual unintelligibility between inscriptions makes possible multiple narratives of what the Holocaust was about in the very same memorials across Eastern Europe. By engaging in what she terms a "linguistic ethnography," she demonstrates how opposing statements may exist quite literally side by side, making mutual unintelligibility and a lack of language training evidence of the impoverished potential of IR scholarship to overcome the discipline's Anglophonic bias. Lastly, Mauro Caraccioli returns to the history of conquest narratives and their role in the politics of *interlingual memories*. As New World indigenous translators inherited an imperial grammar of violence from Spain, he shows how the power of language was used to allegedly civilize backward peoples while simultaneously ingraining them into the imperial fold. He concludes that recovering the lost historiography of linguistic exchanges at the contact zones of empire points toward new opportunities for rethinking the translational character of global politics.

We end the forum with a brief conclusion that emphasizes the centrality of interlingual translation as a living political practice. By unpacking the areas of interlingual *configurations*, *conventions*, and *memories*, we aim to provide the beginnings of an analytic vocabulary for future interlingual research by and for IR scholars, as well as other disciplines in the human sciences.

Interlingual Configurations: Who Does the Work of Translation?

EINAR WIGEN

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International and interlingual relations are separate but related phenomena. Because boundaries in interlingual networks partially follow the political boundaries dividing the world into territorial states (often legitimized as ethnolinguistic

communities), they sometimes overlap. Yet interlingual relations are more common phenomena than international relations and include a broader scope of exchanges. In order to get a better understanding of what interlingual relations are, we need to disentangle them from relations between states, specifying what different roles are played by those who are tasked with the job of mediating across linguistic boundaries.

While a turn to interlingual relations in the study of global politics could easily slip into a mode of focusing on relations between diplomats and state leaders, it is important to note that these networks involve a great number of other individuals who engage in translanguaging practice in other capacities—as traders, as travelers, employed in NGOs, as professional interpreters, or simply helping family members interact with authorities. From an interlingual perspective, it is not given that the people with the most formal political power are the most interesting for understanding what is going on or explaining political outcomes. Moreover, an interlingual network is also interesting as a whole because the existence and practices of others in the network shape the scope of action that political actors have. The interlingual relations at the top are not fully understandable without also getting a sense of how they are embedded in a wider network.

In this essay, I take the multilingual Ottoman Empire as a case of how mediation happens in different roles both within the empire and in the center's interaction with other politics. The aim is to catalogue the different interlingual mediators at work in the running of the Ottoman Empire, focusing on six different roles for intermediaries interacting across linguistic boundaries.

The first group is that of envoys sent by the sultan to other courts over whom the Ottoman sultan had no formal authority. The second is imperial middlemen within the empire, people who set themselves up as provincial power brokers and mediated between the Ottoman court and provincial subjects. The third is that of the *arzuhalci*: professional translators of petitions from subjects to the sultan or other Ottoman officials. The fourth is that of merchants whose trade extended either between imperial peripheries within the empire or between the Ottoman polity and polities further afield and who used multiple languages to conduct their affairs. Penultimately, I describe the most famous of these roles—namely, the role of the *dragoman*, the translators used by both the Ottoman court and foreign ambassadors in Istanbul. Finally, I look at the role of the intellectuals, men of letters, or scientists, engaging with foreign texts as a matter of learning and observation. It is important to note that, although these are six different *roles* of intermediaries, individuals frequently played more than one such role in their careers.

Brokerage and the Boundaries of Meaning

Language is humans' primary medium of social interaction and it is difficult to envision a relationship between humans without some mutually intelligible meaning-making practices. Speaking about something as *interlingual* 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 go straight for a "speakers before languages" approach to interlingual relations (Jackson and Nexon 1999), acknowledging that languages in themselves are not things or actors that can have relations. Individuals engage in relations with other individuals; they are the ones who make meaning.

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 because of geographic distance and physical isolation. But unintelligibility may also be produced deliberately as a means of segmenting populations. The most blatant example of the latter is the unintelligibility between Arabic and Hebrew, which Lital Levy (2014) argues emerged through deliberate Israeli

nation-building that sidelined the language of Arabic-speaking Israelis (see also Abboud et al. 2018). Although it is also a Semitic language that could potentially have had many commonalities with Hebrew (depending on how Hebrew was shaped in Israeli nation-building), and many Jewish Israelis have or had Arabic as their mother tongues, Arabic is associated with Israel's Other. Arabic, one of Israel's two official languages, is not just "unimportant," it is politically expedient to police the boundary that keeps it keep distinct and separate from Hebrew.

The tasks of translation and interpretation typically fall to someone who has some bilingual 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 typically entails being a bridge tying together network clusters, giving the mediator competitive advantage through brokerage (Granovetter 1973; Burt 2010; de Jong 2018). It is also a position fraught with risk, since mediators and translators are easily represented as liminals and potential traitors. Finally, although merchants use their role as intermediaries specifically for profit, and some actors use theirs' for political gain, it is seldom translation itself that is profitable, and the labor of interlingual mediation is seldom recognized.

Types of Ottoman Intermediaries

For much of world history, empires have been the dominant form of political organization (Cooper and Burbank 2010). Empires are configured as a hub and spoke network of segmented peripheries and characterized by rule via intermediaries (Nexon and Wright 2007). Linguistic boundaries are one way of segmenting peripheries, but there can also be linguistic boundaries between the center and at least some of the peripheries. In the Ottoman Empire, the center operated in Ottoman, a primarily written language that was distinct from the everyday affairs of subjects and largely exclusive to the elite. The Ottoman language has been claimed to be intrinsically linked with "a worldly, belletristic tradition . . . embracing what the Turks ultimately came to refer to as both *edeb*, 'good breeding,' and *edebiyat*, 'literature'" (Findley 1980, 9). Taking part in the Ottoman belletristic tradition was part of elite status across much of the empire, and these elites used Ottoman to communicate with the center.

The Ottoman language was in many ways connected to the operation of the state itself. It emerged alongside the development of the dynastic state and it also disappeared soon after the abolition of the sultanate. Rather than being a case of the political center conceiving the community in terms of linguistic similarity, the Ottomans developed their own "high register" of Turkish, a feature that they shared with all other languages within the empire (Strauss 1995). While Ottoman was based on Turkish grammar and syntax, the language was suffused with loanwords and formulations that were incomprehensible outside the Ottoman elite. This meant that the imperial center interacted with a broad range of actors through a network of interlingual relations that involved translation at multiple levels.

Envoys

In addition to being the apex of a linguistically diverse imperial network, the Ottoman Empire also had interlingual networks reaching beyond the Sultan's realms. Since the foundation of the Ottoman polity in Anatolia in the thirteenth century, political elites in the Ottoman Empire and various European states were never isolated from one another. There was continuous interaction across various linguistic and cultural boundaries. Relatively thinner networks between Ottoman elites and, say, French elites, may have as much to do with relative geographical distances as with cultural differences or reciprocal boundary-making. Networks seldom tied the Ottoman state elite *directly* to its peers in politics beyond the Balkans and the Adriatic littoral (Wigen 2018, 57). Yet there also existed a wide network

of weaker ties made up of merchants, renegades, and go-betweens (Windler 2001; Philliou 2011; Gürkan 2017).

From the early eighteenth century, the Ottomans increasingly started sending their own statesmen as ambassadors to Christian European states, and from the 1790s, they established permanent embassies in key European capitals (Yurdusev 2004). These embassies were also used to train individual statesmen in European languages, most notably French, so that they could interact competently with their interlocutors without the need for further intermediaries. This was a move to centralize control over how the Ottoman polity interacted with other polities, which had paradoxical consequences for how the polity was run, since it made translational practice with cultural and political foreigners part of the job of statesmen with prestige and power. While this may not have made the practice more visible, it was no longer the domain of liminals.

Imperial Middlemen

The relationship between Ottoman subjects and the imperial suzerain was a hierarchical chain of patron-client relations. At the top stood the sultan and at the bottom were the lowly subjects. Since the Ottoman center worked in a language not used outside formalized settings—and one whose existence in spoken form is questionable—any and all interaction between the palace or its scribal service and the subjects involved some form of interlingual practice. In the case of Turkish-speaking Muslims living just beyond the palace walls, this would entail translation into vernacular Turkish. Further afield, it might involve multiple nodes of translation in a hierarchy of imperial middlemen, from the lowly subject's village headman or sheikh, via a provincial notable, to a governor, and so on, all the way to the palace or Sublime Porte. Most of this hierarchy would largely operate orally, and only at the higher levels would there be written interaction in the form of letters. An example could be a Syriac-speaking villager interacting with a Syriac/Arabic bilingual headman, and the headman could be speaking Arabic to the provincial notable, who would then use Ottoman in his interaction with the governor, and from the governor on up, the chain would function in Ottoman. The linguistic make-up of Ottoman imperial hierarchies and the extent to which “domestic politics” involved interlingual relations is too broad a question to cover exhaustively here. Suffice to say is that what we have is a network: a chain of interlingual relations that do not transcend formal political boundaries.

Petition Writers

Petitions are a way for subjects to short-circuit the hierarchies used to rule an empire and to appeal directly to someone further up the hierarchy, such as the sultan, without the mediation of the headman, chief, sheikh, or even governor (see Ben-Bassat 2014; Sievert 2014). While the individual scribes and the organs of the state using their services may have been multilingual, the Ottoman scribal service as such operated in its own narrow conception of the Ottoman language (see Topal and Wigen 2019). Exceptions might be made for letters from the Safavid Shah, who sometimes wrote in a different kind of Turkish (Floor and Javadi 2013), but not for lowly subjects. Even if they knew how to write, subjects petitioning their higher-ups, including the sultan, would have to have their requests and complaints translated into the highly formulaic and convoluted *proper* Ottoman of the scribal service. In fact, there were so many people specializing in petition writing—what were called *arzuhalcis*—that they had their own guilds. Their job involved listening to the complaint in whatever vernacular language the complainant used (and typically the *arzuhalci* worked in), rephrasing it, probably censoring the contents (though we do not know how exactly this worked), and writing it in a language that could be understandable and *legible* within a scribal context. Petition-writers can

therefore be seen as freelance imperial intermediaries who made their services of translation available to common subjects for a small fee.

Merchants

Where most of this catalogue deals with intermediaries acting in hierarchical relations, merchants typically connected peripheries and polities in a lateral manner. Moreover, while trade requires a certain degree of trust, at least for generic goods, it is largely transactional and does not necessarily require a great deal of mutual understanding. Consequently, it easily transcends linguistic boundaries in ways that perhaps other types of relations do not. However, as these relations were sustained over time in the Mediterranean, they gave rise to a specific historical language called *Lingua Franca* (Dakhliya 2008).

Ottoman merchants have traditionally been divided into two groups: Ottoman non-Muslims, who traded goods over longer distances, and Ottoman Muslims who traded mostly within the empire and with polities to its east. The supposed reason for this was that the non-Muslims were more cosmopolitan and outward-looking, and Muslims were more centered on “their own world.” The reason may be something else—namely, that Muslims traded in European ports such as Marseille but that this was made difficult because of the locals’ distrust of Muslims. Hence, Ottoman Christians profited from their acceptability in both sets of ports, and because they were Christians, they could also set up trading houses further afield, hence keeping the long-distance trade *within the family* and mediating at both ends.³ This is a type of trading network that seems to have dominated in much of the Eastern Mediterranean for centuries and to have been the backbone of the Genoese and Venetian maritime empires. Such trading families could also be called upon for other services, such as acting as envoys or relaying news about other polities (Windler 2001; Philliou 2011).

Dragomans

Early modern Ottoman diplomacy generally relied on actors outside the palace for its conduct of foreign affairs. Translators known as *dragomans* were used both by the palace and the various organs of the emergent Ottoman state and by European embassies in Istanbul, who had their own dragoman. At first, these were primarily Italian-speaking Peraiois⁴ and later Greek Phenariots.⁵ There were also some Armenians, most famously the Swedish dragoman Mouradgea d’Ohsson. Dragoman typically served as oral interpreters in meetings between diplomats, or they acted as literal go-betweens, relaying messages between embassies and government offices in Istanbul. Since the position typically required language skills and networks that were easily passed on from father to son, it was not uncommon for sons to follow in their father’s footsteps. Furthermore, the specific linguistic skills and networks ties were also useful for other purposes, and hence there was a part of the Ottoman elite that was able to variously play the roles of merchants, middlemen, and dragomans (Philliou 2011).

Intellectuals

While a handful of Ottoman diplomats received their education in the French language at the turn of the nineteenth century, it was not until the establishment of the *Tercüme Odası* (Translation Chamber) in 1821 that the state institutionalized its training of well-connected Ottomans in French language for the purpose of

³ This is a point made by Ouchi (1980) in a different context.

⁴ That is, from the Genoese colony at Pera, across the Golden Horn.

⁵ Upper class Greeks living close to the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul.

interaction with other states. This is an important change from exploiting weak ties because by developing translators in-house, the state not only had less agency problems, it also enabled an important sector of state elites to engage directly in interlingual relations. Possibly because of this, the *Tercüme Odası* fostered some of the most intellectually innovative and influential individuals of the second half of the nineteenth century (Wigen 2018, 120). This made them brokers, not of goods and merchandise but of intellectual networks that enabled them to engage in dialogues across structural holes that few others had access to. These networks and dialogues were crucial for some of the most prolific and influential intellectuals of the final decades of the Ottoman Empire (Çiçek 2010).

Imperial Transformation

The Ottoman language had been inextricably tied to the exercise of the Ottoman dynasty's political power, and both the response to its decline and its final collapse meant reconfiguring its interlingual networks. One political response to the perceived decline of the Ottoman polity in the early nineteenth century was centralization. In its drastic attempts to limit the role of intermediaries, the Ottoman center also reconfigured its networks of interlingual relations. As the center expanded in terms of personnel and capacity, it encroached first on the local middlemen in the first half of the nineteenth century, who were increasingly replaced by Ottoman governors on rotation, and then on individual subjects through the expansion of military service and education in the second half of the nineteenth century (Deringil 1998). With the political emancipation and enfranchisement of the 1908 Constitutional Revolution, the Ottoman public sphere blossomed, and individual subjects increasingly interacted with others across the peripheries (Campos 2010). The imperial segmentation largely broke down, which led to conflicts over language in such arenas as the parliamentary assembly (Kayalı 1997). There was also a movement for the vernacularization of Ottoman, including evocations by Namık Kemal and later the Genç Kalemler (Young Pens) to write in "simple Turkish." This program started as an attempt by intellectuals to translate between Ottoman and vernacular Turkish and was completed by the Turkish Republic in the 1920s and 30s, when it became a deliberate move to do away with the need for translation in direct state-subject affairs and to expand unmediated access to the public sphere.

With the end of the Ottoman Empire, its successor states all reconfigured according to "one state, one language" ideals, however successfully or partially these reconfigurations may have been carried out (Anscombe 2014). A feature of this is that rather than subjects being segmented and ruled, citizens of a nation-state are equal before the law and access these rights in the language of the state, which, in theory, should be the same language as they themselves use. This was to some extent a case of trying to make the linguistic landscape fit the political map, but it follows from the ideal that citizens are supposed to have a direct bond to the state, to claim their rights and do their duties unmediated by middlemen, dealing directly with the state and being equal before the law.

Conclusion

This catalogue may prove helpful when trying to locate intermediaries at political interfaces that are not necessarily those of state-to-state interaction. If we go for a broader set of questions and a more encompassing take on global politics, we also need tools to make sense of those categories of actors who do mediation at the interface between collectives, groups, cultures, or languages but who are not official state representatives. Attempts at typologies need to be founded on a richer set of empirical cases than a single empire. Therefore, this catalogue of Ottoman intermediaries does not claim to hold any validity for other political contexts but could serve as a starting point for discussing the roles taken by people doing interlingual

mediation. The roles of envoy, middleman, merchant, petition-writer, *dragoman*, and *homme des lettres* have all transformed, and few would recognize themselves within the Ottoman catalogue. Envoys, merchants, translators/interpreters, and intellectuals are perhaps the most recognizable, with imperial middlemen and petition writers being perhaps more problematic. I might have also included jurists, who translate and formulate complaints in a legal vocabulary that a plaintiff or defendant may not know or understand, even though they may know “the language” in which the legal proceedings take place. Interlingual mediation takes place across the board and is a feature of what the polity does, both at the interface between the state apparatus and its subjects and at the interface with other polities.

Translating More Than Words: Language and the End of the Holy Roman Empire

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Whether it concerns interlingual relations as an object of study or the necessity to translate from different and sometimes older languages into contemporary academic language, IR research is intrinsically concerned with matters of translation. And yet, while this is the daily bread of any IR scholar, explicit reflections about the interlingual dimension of research have been largely preoccupied with the conceptual dimension of language—that is, with whether the original language does or does not have words and concepts that match our own and how to deal with “the fact that no two languages are made up of identical words.” (Wigen 2015, 430; see also Costa Lopez et al. 2018, 490–94). In this short intervention, I consider whether this focus on concepts as units of meaning entails an understanding of language that obscures at least part of its operative and constitutive function in politics. Indeed, following Wittgenstein (1997), although language is commonly understood as a system of meaning in use, the elements of language and its use that go beyond concepts and words are rarely theoretically or empirically discussed.

Against this, I argue that taking seriously the notion of language requires more explicit attention to the (micro)dynamics of language use. Two additional interrelated aspects deserve attention here: First, language use is a rule-governed activity. While this is frequently acknowledged, its implications are notably absent from IR studies. Matters of grammar or punctuation, for example, take at best a side-role to concepts, and, as a result, their generative—and ultimately political—function is missed. Second, language use occurs in particular social situations that affect its meaning. For example, many of the reflections on interlingual relations concern so-called natural languages (Wigen 2015). While this poses a particular challenge for IR—and one that, as the introduction highlights, has significant effects on political *configurations*—an adequate consideration of interlingual affairs requires going beyond natural languages and also unpacking the social embedding of language. For one, particular terms acquire specific meanings within certain specialized communities that have their own language games. The meaning of sovereignty, for example, cannot be understood to be the same within the international law community as within political theory, where it acquires a broader use (Kalso and Skinner 2010). Similarly, different communities deploy the same natural language in different ways through differences in text or genre but also, as we will see, in different social contexts that entail a different way of engaging with words (for a broader argument about the role of communities, see Adler 2005). My argument is that taking these broader dimensions of language use into explicit account is not only fruitful but also essential in order to understand

the type of systemic processes in which IR scholars are interested and the politics of language more broadly.

I illustrate this importance through a specific historical example: the end of the Holy Roman Empire (HRE). The transition from a universalist Christian order dominated by the Church and the HRE to a system of sovereign states has been portrayed as the foundational moment of international relations (Osiander 2001; Bull 2002). And yet, we have at best a partial understanding of how this transition took place. While some have pointed to the centrality of processes like war, economic competition, and the structure of property (Spruyt 1994; Tilly 1994; Teschke 2003), an increasingly large body of literature focuses on the role of language and ideas in this transformation (Ruggie 1998; Branch 2014; de Carvalho 2016). Central within this thesis is the emergence of the concept of a sovereign state and the abandonment of alternative political imaginaries.

However, these explanations remain mostly at the level of comparative statics, whereby a medieval universalist imaginary was replaced at a subsequent time by a modern statist one (see Reus-Smit 1999; Philpott 2001). The process by which such a fundamental change in ideational structures took place is, however, left unexplained: how did the sovereign state come to replace a previous concept? How can we explain the weakening of universalism? In the context of a universalist worldview, what made the idea of the state possible in the first place?

In this short text, I examine how this more nuanced understanding of language use can shed light on both the process and the microdynamics of the transition between medieval universalism and sovereign states. To be clear, the argument is not that the rejection of the universalism of the HRE and the emergence of the sovereign state depended (very literally) on a comma. Rather, it is that restricting analysis of such a historical transformation to a concept replacing another precludes an understanding of how this transformation occurred and, with it, of the politics of language in IR.

Ambiguities in Latin Syntax

I begin with a brief sketch of the interpretative debates over a very short passage of Roman law in the later middle ages. Roman law played an important role in late-medieval legal thought: nominally it comprised a series of late-Roman legal texts and compilations issued by Emperor Justinian in the sixth century, in addition to some medieval constitutions. After the recovery of these law books in the eleventh century, they formed the basis for legal teaching at universities and legal practice in courts throughout Europe (Bellomo 1995; Brundage 2008). In terms of claims to universalism of the HRE, their origin in late antiquity gave Roman law particular prominence, and it is perhaps the locus where we would expect the most rigid insistence on this universality; it was, after all, in these books that the affirmation of the emperor being “Lord of all the world” (*dominus mundi*) was made (D.14.2.9).

The passage in question is the first law of the *Codex Iustinianus*, a legal compilation issued in 529. Known by its incipit as *cunctos populos*, it had as its goal to establish the Christian religion for all the subjects of the emperor in the following way:

Cunctos populos quos clementiae nostrae regit imperium in tali volumus religione versari quam divinum Petrum apostulum tradidisse romanis . . . (C.1.1.1)

Although it might be unconventional in an IR context to cite it in this way, the Latin text in its medieval form is crucial in this case. The passage contains a fundamental ambiguity that is both irresolvable in its original form, given the language use at the time, and not translatable to English as it is currently used. The problem is easily captured by the asterisks in the following translation:

We desire that all peoples (,)* who are subject to Our benign Empire (,)* shall live under the same religion that the Divine Peter, the Apostle, gave to the Romans. (C.1.1.1)

The issue in question is the function of the relative pronoun *quos* and the subordinate sentence that it introduces—*clementiae nostrae regit imperium* (subject to our benign rule). In particular, in Latin there is no way of differentiating on syntax alone between a declarative meaning of the clause (“all peoples [all of whom are] subject to our benign Empire”) and a restrictive meaning (“[of] all peoples [those who are] subject to our benign Empire”). As the—admittedly complicated—additions to the English translation of the passage show, modern English has a similar problem insofar as the order and form of the words themselves cannot convey the sense in which the sentence should be understood. What then is doing the work of differentiating between both options?

The answer lies in punctuation. Indeed, modern punctuation serves to differentiate not only paralinguistic elements such as intention and intonation but also syntactical functions (Parkes 2016). A translation of the passage that reads: “all peoples who are subject to Our benign Empire shall . . .” would automatically convey to the reader that the provision applies restrictively only to those peoples who are subjects of the empire, whereas “all peoples, who are subject to Our benign Empire, shall . . .” would automatically convey the declarative meaning that all peoples are part of the empire.

This was, however, not the case in the medieval Latin used by lawyers to discuss these texts and conduct their practice: punctuation offered no way of resolving the ambiguity. In order to understand this impasse, we need to consider the social embedding of language use and how this affects linguistic practices and meaning. Indeed, our contemporary Western system of punctuation evolved slowly out of a Roman writing tradition that prioritized the oral dimension (Parkes 2016). In antiquity, texts were written in *scriptio continua*, whereby all letters were written next to one another without spaces, and punctuation served to differentiate words and allow for clearer oral delivery. While words were already separated by spaces in the Middle Ages, punctuation was used to abbreviate, distinguish a variety of units of meaning, and sometimes still aid with reading out loud. There was, however, not a developed system of punctuation that allowed for the differentiation of syntactical functions, and, as such, the meaning of the passage remained ambiguous.

Punctuation and the Holy Roman Empire

This rather lengthy discussion of the ambiguities of a single passage serves more than to point to the problems of thinking of language historically merely in terms of concepts but also opens up a way of exploring the politics of language. Indeed, the short explanation of punctuation already drew attention to a second element: the fact that language use occurs in a particular context that affects how language itself evolves. The move from an oral tradition to a textual one and how this affected writing is a case in point, but we can also consider it in more circumscribed contexts. In the case of the aforementioned passage, for example, the situated linguistic practice of a particular community—medieval civil lawyers—was essential in exploiting this ambiguity. Indeed, had the language used among lawyers focused on mere memorization, the ambiguity may have remained just that. However, lawyers engaged with texts in a scholastic fashion: seeking to discern the meaning by considering opposing interpretations of a passage and reconciling contradictions between passages. They did so both orally in the context of teaching and in written form through commentaries. As for the former, legal teaching at medieval universities included, for example, the genre of the *disputatio*, whereby a particularly problematic topic or interpretation would be debated between experienced jurists. Regarding the latter, professors would write detailed commentaries on each passage of the law, which would then be copied and used for students and practitioners alike (García y García 1997).

In light of these situated linguistic practices of a particular linguistic community, the ambiguity of the passage could not be left unproblematized and thus paved the

way for important political transformations. Indeed, a short sketch of the successive commentaries of the passage from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century shows how the inherent ambiguity was productively used in terms of first understanding and then legitimizing the geographical circumscription of the Holy Roman Empire and thus contributing to the end of its universalism.

Early thirteenth century commentaries on the passage, such as that of Italian jurist Azo (1150–1220), do not remark on its ambiguity; it is only in the mid-to late thirteenth century, and particularly within French juristic spheres, that the ambiguity comes to be actively commented on. Some of these commentaries attempt to resolve the ambiguity at a syntactical level, trying to discern whether the attribute of “being subject to the Empire” was an essential quality of all peoples (see Révigny 1967), but many went beyond. The Italian jurist Cinus de Pistoia argued at the beginning of the fourteenth century with his French teachers that “the emperor is de facto lord of all the world, but de facto there are some who resist [him],” which led the Emperor to mean the *quos* in a restrictive sense, “first, so that his laws are not mocked” and, second, “because those who do not recognize the emperor are vile and unworthy of being bound by his law” (Cinus de Pistoia 1578, ad C.1.1.1). Although this might seem counterintuitive from a staunch imperial supporter like him at the time, his reasoning denotes an attempt to preserve the honor of the emperor at the same time as dealing with the evident political situation in which, despite all rhetorical claims to universal lordship, the empire was indeed circumscribed.

His solution, however, was not accepted by all jurists, who came from different positions to use the text’s ambiguity and make a variety of different political claims. Cinus’ own student, Bartolus de Saxoferrato, proclaimed that he thought that the emperor intended it in a declarative sense—that is, meaning that all peoples were subject to him, even if he admitted that de facto this was not the case (Sassoferrato 1552, ad C.1.1.1). By the fourteenth century, however, the discussion about *quos* was no longer restricted to the scope of the HRE. On the contrary, the social context in which these commentaries occurred—that of university teaching through a scholastic method that included public exchanges—had broadened the debate, which now openly and at length used the opportunity afforded by the text’s ambiguity to consider the sources and nature of the HRE’s power. And within the context of this latter debate, traditional arguments for its universality and legitimacy could actively be denied.

Italian jurist Albericus de Rosate, for example, could claim that the HRE “is not sanctioned by divine law” but rather had been founded by force (Albericus de Rosate 1979, ad C.1.1.1), while French jurist Guillelmus de Cuneo proclaimed that the passage was “restricted to those subject [to the emperor] . . . The reason is that one cannot exercise authority over an equal [*par in parem non habet imperium*].” Thus, he concluded, “equals should not be understood as subject, and the emperor cannot make laws for them” (Canning 1987, 65). Although, in the end, Albericus somewhat recovered the universality of the empire with a rather dubious argument about the permissiveness of God in allowing it as the basis for legitimacy, the undermining of the traditional bases through which the legitimacy of the Roman Empire had been articulated took place within Roman law and also opened a space for alternative political imaginaries.

Conclusion: The Politics of Language in IR

The previous section provided a brief sketch of how an understanding of language that goes beyond concepts to include aspects such as grammar, punctuation, and the social context of language use can provide a better and more nuanced account of the role of translation in international politics. In the case shown above, merely focusing on attempting to find in late-medieval Latin a concept of the state that replaced the HRE would have left virtually everything about the interlingual

process unexamined. Instead, paying attention to the situated dynamics of language use shows two developments: first, how a syntactic ambiguity, coupled with a punctuation system that did not allow its resolution in a context of legal teaching, opened up space within Roman law for an examination of the universality and legitimacy of the HRE and, second, how such *interlingual configurations* ultimately contributed to its political undermining.

What does this tell us about interlingual politics in IR more broadly? Although I focused on a specific historical case that concerned translation as a research practice, the importance of thinking of interlingual relations beyond the matter of conceptual equivalence has broader relevance and is also a concern for the everyday practice of international relations. Indeed, there are a number of well-known cases where nonconceptual differences across languages have become issues of political contention. Most famously, for example, UN Security Council Res. 242, which calls for an Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian territories, became the object of fierce political contestation over a difference between the French and English text.⁶ The inclusion of a definite article in the French version of the resolution implied that it called for the withdrawal from all territories, while the lack of such an article in the English version allowed for limiting the withdrawal to only some territories (Rosenne 2007, Ch. 24). Needless to say, this is not an isolated case of interlingual interpretive problems in international law, let alone more broadly (Shelton 1997).

A richer understanding of language that goes beyond words and concepts is therefore essential to opening up spaces within which the specific role of language, interlingualism, and translation can be carefully theorized. Of course, it would be nonsensical to reduce the evolution of conflict within the HRE to a matter of (multi)language use. Similarly, it would also be a mistake to see these linguistically driven disputes as a mere byproduct of power politics. In the latter case, it would mean ignoring that the dynamics of power politics take place through linguistically constituted actors and that even admittedly strategic uses of language operate within the rules of the specific language game. As for the former, it would mean ignoring the social embedding of language, as well as adopting an overly deterministic understanding of it. Ultimately, looking at language beyond concepts, in conjunction with the social embeddedness of language use, allows us to bypass these false reductionisms and gain a fuller appreciation of the politics of language in IR and of (interlingual) international political processes more broadly.

How (Mis)Translation Shaped China's Transition from Empire to Nation State

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Translation is ubiquitous in international politics. Given the fact that there is no single, universal language, when actors that speak different languages interact with one another, many of the practices that constitute “international relations”—trade, diplomacy, coercive bargaining, alliance building, norms diffusion, and so forth—have to, at some point, go through the process of being conceived in one language and communicated in another. Despite widespread recognition among IR scholars that language matters, and the words actors use more so, the discipline has given surprisingly little attention to the role of linguistic translation in the making of international politics.

In this essay, I argue that translation is not merely a conduit through which more conventional elements of international politics are made possible. Translation is

⁶ I thank reviewer 2 for bringing this to my attention.

itself constitutive of international relations and the practices that give concepts their meaning. Since translation involves “the discursive production of the subjects, the fixing of meanings and the terms of action of world politics,” it should be thought of as a site of productive power (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 55). The role of translation is particularly evident during times of radical change: the “first encounter” with a “foreign” actor or system or a dramatic transformation in the governing institutions and norms of an international system. These are times in which actors are forced to grapple with the emergence of new concepts, discourses, words, and linguistic codes. Under these circumstances, the challenge of establishing what Lydia Liu calls “hypothetical equivalence or makeshift translatability between the political discourses of two very different languages and intellectual traditions” (2004, 131) can become a matter of existential proportions. As actors grapple with questions about the commensurability of concepts across languages and what constitutes a “correct” translation, the practices and *interlingual conventions* of translation interact with military capabilities, economic interests, and other variables that shape outcomes spatially and temporally.

In order to illuminate the role of translation in international politics, I use China’s transition from empire to nation-state as an illustrative case study focusing on three key elements: (1) the Opium Wars, which marked the beginning of the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911); (2) Tibet’s incorporation into the modern Chinese state after the collapse of the Qing; and (3) Outer Mongolia’s independence from China, the existence of which is an important exception to narratives that the People’s Republic of China is the single modern state to have retained (nearly) all the territory and peoples of its imperial predecessors.

“Yi” and the Opium Wars

The Opium Wars (1839–1842 and 1856–1860) are widely considered to have spurred the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and China’s subsequent transition from empire to nation-state. These conflicts, however, were not merely driven by clashes over the British trade of opium and the Qing’s right to sovereignty, as is commonly understood. They were also shaped by questions of translation: specifically, whether or not the Chinese character “yi” 夷 is commensurate with the English word “barbarian” and who has the power to make such determinations.

The 1858 Anglo-Chinese Treaty of Tianjin, which helped end the Second Opium War, not only forced the Qing to grant Western powers the right to station legations in Beijing, obliged it to open more ports for foreign trade, and levied crippling indemnities but also contained two articles pertaining to China and the West’s interlingual relations. These were Article 50, which specified that all official communications henceforth would be written in English, and “there being any difference of meaning between the English and Chinese text, the English Government will hold the sense as expressed in the English text to be the correct sense” and Article 51, which formally banned the usage of the Chinese character “yi” 夷 from being used to refer to the government of the British Crown or its subjects. Why did the British care enough about this Chinese word as to issue a complete ban on its usage in a formal treaty?

British remonstrance of the word *yi* can be originally traced to 1832 when the British East India Company had been instructed to sail up the coast of China in order to determine the prospects of opening additional trade ports (Liu 2004, 40). Contrary to conventional narratives of China’s imperial “closure,” Chinese markets had, in fact, been open to trade with the West, including Britain, since 1684. Trade was, however, tightly regulated—first under the auspices of the Thirteen Factories and later restructured into the *cohong* or Canton System. The British sought to circumvent these institutions. The trade mission was quickly ordered to return to Canton by Qing Admiral Wu Qitai, but the British refused to turn back until Wu agreed to remove the word *yi* from his official order, as the British translator was adamant

that it meant “barbarian”—this despite the fact that all previous translators hired by the company understood it to mean “foreigner” (Liu 2004, 42).

Wu tried to explain that this was a misunderstanding: *yi* was simply a term used to refer to foreigners from the east and ought not to connote offense. This fell on deaf ears, and the supercargo Hugh Hamilton Lindsay responded that “when you apply the word *yi* to the subjects of Great Britain, you are humiliating . . . our country, offending its people and provoking anger and retaliation” (Liu 2004, 43). Not wanting the situation to escalate, Wu eventually complied.

Nevertheless, the British persisted in their efforts to undermine the Canton System through their mistranslation of the word *yi*. In 1834, Lord Napier arrived in China as the first official representative of the British government and proceeded to Guangzhou (Canton) without Qing permission. Qing documents referred to his formal title, chief superintendent of British trade in China, as *yimu*, which means “foreign principal” or “headman.” Napier’s interpreter, however, translated *yimu* literally to mean “the barbarian eye” (Liu 2004, 46). Napier regarded this as “an outrage against the British Crown” (Liu 2004, 47) that necessitated punishment. On September 11, 1834, he ordered British ships to attack Canton in the first British military action against China.

According to Li Chen, it is critical to appreciate the extent to which the Qing had “maintained a dominant position in deciding the terms of the Sino-Western economic, cultural, and political relationships for almost three centuries before the First Opium War. In consequence, the British and other Westerners in China often felt vulnerable or humiliated for much of that period. This sense of insecurity and insult, in conjunction with their imperial ambitions and interests, constantly shaped their routine interactions in the Sino-Western contact zones” (2015, 8). Changing the dynamic of Sino-Western interactions from one favorable to Qing interests toward one favorable to British interests entailed changing the literal terms of the relationship. Whether or not the (mis)translation of *yi* was merely a pretext for military confrontation, the new English meaning of *yi* that emerged in 1832 made possible new terms of action, namely military action, which had not existed previously. Likewise, the establishment of Articles 50 and 51 after the end of the Second Opium War suggests that once Britain had defeated the Qing militarily, British diplomats understood linguistic and translational conventions as vital to their exercise of power.

“Zhuquan,” “Rang bstan,” and Tibet’s Status

Despite the devastation brought about by the Opium Wars and so-called century of humiliation that followed (1839–1949), the Qing’s successor state, the People’s Republic of China, managed to maintain possession of nearly all the territorial holdings of its imperial predecessors, something no other successor of a nineteenth century empire was able to do. At the turn of the twentieth century, however, roughly half the territory of the Qing was inhabited by Tibetan Buddhists (Tuttle 2005, 1). Thus, the incorporation of Tibet into the modern Chinese state was a cornerstone of China’s “successful” transition from empire to nation-state.

Crisis over Tibet’s modern international status began with the 1904 British invasion of Tibet. Throughout the diplomatic negotiations that followed the invasion, the Qing asserted that the British had violated their *zhuquan* 主權 in Tibet. Albeit a neologism, the Chinese term *zhuquan* is completely commensurate with the English word sovereignty. While assumptions about the commensurability of political concepts must be asserted with caution, *zhuquan* was introduced as an expression of Western international legal concepts and has remained stable for well over a century (Cheney 2017). The British, however, rejected not only the Qing’s claims to supreme authority in Tibet but also their appropriation of European international legal terminology—including the exact Chinese-language linguistic codes

used to express such concepts—favoring instead the deliberately vague terminology of “suzerainty,” which defied clear definition.

Nevertheless, throughout the tumult of the early twentieth century, and despite the fact that Tibet is widely recognized to have been *de facto* independent in the years 1912–1951, the Chinese consistently deployed the same linguistic code *zhuquan* to assert their claims in Tibet and prevented the word “suzerainty” from being used in any formal agreement regarding Tibet’s status.

Tibet during this time asserted that it was *rang bstan*, which in the modern Tibetan language is fully commensurate with the English language word for “independent.” However, there were important doubts about the commensurability of these linguistic codes in 1914 (Kobayashi 2014b, 287). *Rang bstan* was the term used by the Dalai Lama to declare Tibet’s “independence” to a domestic audience in 1913; however, *rang bstan* was also used in the Tibetan-language version of the article of the 1914 Simla Convention that recognizes the “autonomy” of Outer Tibet. Likewise, *rang bstan* was also used in a 1913 letter from the Dalai Lama to King George V asking for support, in which, rather than being straightforwardly translated as “independence,” it was expressed with explanatory language stating that the Tibetans want to be able to “enjoy their own power in Tibet” (Kobayashi 2016, 296).

These fine-grained details may pale in comparison to other factors that prevented Tibet’s *de facto* independence from becoming *de jure*, including Britain’s retreat from the subcontinent in 1947 and subsequent Cold War power politics. Indeed, conventional accounts of its subordination to Chinese sovereignty attribute this outcome to the arrival of the People’s Liberation Army in Lhasa in 1950. However, this ignores the puzzle of why Tibet’s status was not settled at some earlier point in time. The lack of fixed translations and linkages between the Tibetan language and key European international legal concepts can hardly be said to have been of no consequence for Tibet’s pursuit of external recognition. Absent China’s discursive commitment to *zhuquan*, and the lack of commensurability between the Tibetan language and European international law, it is easy to imagine a different fate for Tibet, perhaps one more similar to that of Mongolia.

“автономия”/“өөрөө эзэрхэх” and *Mongolian Independence*

The previous section began with the statement that the People’s Republic of China succeeded in controlling *nearly* all the territorial holdings of its imperial predecessors—that is, with the exception of Outer Mongolia. Just as making sense of the incorporation of Tibet into the modern Chinese state is essential to understanding China’s “successful” transition from empire to nation-state, grappling with the exception of Outer Mongolia’s independence is necessary to dissuade any implication of predestined continuity. Here too, questions of interlingual commensurability and translational practice were of paramount importance but to opposite effect.

Mongolia’s status was explicitly (re)defined in several formal agreements in the early twentieth century. The 1912 Russo-Mongolian Agreement defined the status of the Bogd Khanate as “autonomous” (Russian: Автономный; Mongolian: өөртөө тогтнож өөрөө эзэрхэх). However, groundbreaking work by Makoto Tachibana (2014) has shown that the Mongolians understood these terms to mean “independence” (240–41). Yet, this agreement was only the beginning of Mongolia’s protracted struggle for external recognition.

At the negotiations for the 1915 tripartite Treaty of Kyakhta between Russia, Mongolia, and China, Mongolian representatives insisted on recognition as an “independent” or “autonomous nation.” Russia also insisted that Mongolia should be an “autonomous nation” but under Chinese “suzerainty,” while China claimed that Mongolia should be an “autonomous region,” which, being under Chinese suzerainty, made it part of Chinese territory and, therefore, though not explicitly

stated, actually subordinate to Chinese *sovereignty* (Tachibana 2014, 256–57). If the reader's head is spinning reading the positions of these three actors, that is because they are mutually incompatible.

Each side also disagreed with the others' translations of their linguistic codes for the key concepts of "autonomy," "suzerainty," and "independence." In fact, the delegates so intensely disagreed on how to establish interlingual commensurability of concepts that, in order to prevent talks from breaking down, they dropped the issue entirely and simply refrained from defining their essential meanings. Instead, the concepts of "autonomy" and "suzerainty" were transcribed in the Mongolian text using transliteration as "автономи" and "сюзеренитет," respectively (Tachibana, 2014, 258). This meant that all three sides were able to interpret these words according to their own divergent understandings and conventions. Mongolia was, as Tachibana aptly points out, trapped somewhere between "autonomy" and "independence." Nevertheless, in the 1921 Mongolian Revolution, Mongolians succeeded in making Mongolia's independence from China an accomplished fact. To be sure, shortly thereafter the Mongolian People's Republic came to be closely linked to, if not controlled by, the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, in 1945, China officially recognized Outer Mongolia's independence, and today, Mongolia is universally recognized as an independent, sovereign state.

Conclusion

In this short essay, I have argued that translation is itself a constitutive practice of international relations and have shown how questions of interlingual commensurability of concepts shaped China's transition from empire to nation-state. Throughout this period, processes of determining whose translations stick and whose translations matter were integral to larger dynamics of power and influence by which not only the boundaries but also the ontologies of contemporary actors in the region were determined. More broadly, to the extent that acts of (mis)translation are capable of being a driving force of history, this essay has also shown that it is necessary to examine international politics in the original languages in which they are conducted. Thus, anyone who believes that "words matter" in international politics should care about questions of translation.

The Promise of Linguistic Ethnography in IR

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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 Walter 2013; Lake 2016; Colgan 2017; Subotic 2017), and, especially in the United States, not very theoretical (Colgan 2016; Oren 2016). The renewed visibility of discrete schools of IR has developed somewhat in isolation from the American-dominated discipline, such as Chinese IR (Kristensen and Nielsen 2013; Zhang and Chang 2016; Eun 2017; Peng 2019), Canadian IR (Guterman 2017), Russian IR (Makarychev and Morozov 2013; Tsygankov and Tsygankov 2014), or German IR (Wemheuer-Vogelaar and Risse 2018). In response to all of 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 short essay 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, 20011b; 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 bodies and vocabularies on such fundamental questions at the core of IR inquiry as 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 versus 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.⁷

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?

The practice of interlingual exclusion 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).⁸

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 whether such evidence, in fact, exists, claims are made from the position of scholarly privilege, arrogance, and, more often than not, profound ignorance of the epistemic world that exists elsewhere.

⁷ 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 and was, in fact, most pronounced in Australia (Maliniak et al. 2018). Further, this is an issue for the broader political science community as well.

⁸ 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 or Pierre Bourdieu (D'Aoust 2012).

The role of language is critical not only for intrascholarly debates but also, obviously, for the very manner in which we conduct scholarly inquiry. I next want to highlight one specific dimension of interlingual relations as it relates to the possibilities of everyday ethnography in IR.

Translation and Everyday Ethnographies in IR: Linguistic Politics at Sites of Memory

It is clear that translation affects conceptual clarification, but it also transforms processes of documentation and *interlingual memories*. 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 post-communist Europe. As part of my larger project (Subotic 2019), 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 also international others the narratives about the Holocaust—what it was, who were the victims, and who were the perpetrators. Language—or rather, *languages*—were a critical feature of this analysis because it became obvious very quickly that very different, sometimes diametrically opposed messages and memories 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, especially in Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe. Hebrew inscriptions—especially the common gravesite motif “may his soul be bound in the bonds of eternal life” inscribed into the memorial—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, and a series of mass *aliyot* to Israel after WWII 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 religious inscription, also provided a small space to maintain a 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 a 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, not being politically 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.

For instance, in Lithuania, many Communist Holocaust memorials had completely different inscriptions in Hebrew and Lithuanian. The 1958 memorial in Šiaudviečiai says in Hebrew:

Here lie buried in Eternal Memory 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 *anational* Soviet citizens, stripped them of any ethnic designation and, most important, placed the blame on “bourgeois”—that is, anti-communist—Lithuanian “nationalists,” retroactively narrating both the Holocaust and World War II as a struggle between communism and its enemies and not, fundamentally, 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 a thousand 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 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 of 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 transcriptions memory wars in Lithuania continued after communism. 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 seventy thousand 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, 143–4). 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.⁹

Yet, sometimes, Holocaust memorials also included inscriptions in English, such as at the Ninth Fort in Kaunas (the site of the October 1941 shooting of ten thousand Jews) and at Kupiškis. During the communist era, the presence of English indicated that these monuments were likely put up by the English-speaking Jewish diaspora, mostly from the United States. In post-communist Lithuania, English transcriptions indicate an attempt to place Lithuanian Holocaust remembrance within the larger European memory and also showcase Lithuanian post-communist 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. But these linguistic choices also demonstrate 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. Not paying attention to linguistic politics at these locations would have completely missed a key part of analysis. Languages and interlingual relations, then, are a critical part of the ethnography of everyday IR. This case also speaks to 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.

Conclusion

The purpose of this short intervention was to point to some important aspects of linguistic politics as it relates 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 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 least we can do is to cite authors who write in other languages, summarize their arguments for the broader readership, and put their scholarship in conversation with Anglophone IR.

My larger point is to reinvigorate the discussion of the politics of 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

⁹ The Lithuanian inscription has since been replaced to include the full sentence.

hegemony in the discipline makes our scholarship poorer and structural hierarchies within IR that much stronger and more difficult to abolish.

The Stories Translators Tell

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Imagine what it would take for a conqueror to learn a new language. The proposition isn't quite as ludicrous if language itself is regarded as key to a conqueror's success. Conquest narratives in international relations are few and far in-between, but scholarly interpretations have almost always invoked a continuity to their vocabularies. From Athens to the Soviet Union, for instance, empires are often represented in the political language of ambition, growth, or more simply, might makes right. Similarly, the New Imperialism of the nineteenth century was read as inaugurating the "civilizational mission" of modern political domination, only recently drawing scholarly attention to the power of rhetoric in Europe's creation of its others (Jackson 2006; Daggett 2019).

Casual observers might assume the language of a conqueror is something simply imposed from the outside, a feature increasingly recognized as part of the West's unique style of subjugation (Barder 2015). What is less acknowledged, however, is the role that translators have played in the midst of major early modern historical transformations—that is, how translators have helped to establish the standards of memory, history, and forgetting that allow for future interpretations of politics. So, what difference would attending to the *interlingual memories* behind such moments entail, both for a framework of interlingual research and for theories of global politics?

My aim in this brief essay is to unpack the interface at which languages meet as a feature of historical relationality. Rather than thinking of imperial encounters as unidirectional moments, I use the memory of conquest and its reproduction in distinct linguistic and rhetorical settings to interpret an empire's evolving meanings. Specifically, I consider 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. As Wigen and Subotic write above, looking at the competition between linguistic meanings in their historical context shows how different communities rely on those exchanges in crucial ways. Put another way: taking apart the historical contingencies of interlingual relations helps interrogate the extent to which concepts such as relationality are regarded as always progressive.

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 be said about the historiography of conquest in the New World and how relationality was, can, and has been used as a means of domination. Particularly important was the conscription of a Nahua woman into the services of the conqueror Hernán Cortés and how her trajectory mirrored other stories of translational conquest across the Americas (Scully 2005). In the spirit of Gayatri Spivak's (1988) famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?," I propose below a similar account of the relation between hegemony and who gets to speak on behalf of power, focusing on the dynamic interplay between imperial and subaltern appropriations of language.

I begin by examining the first Castilian grammar book as a "tool for empire," a theme with rich insights into the cultures of conquest born on the Iberian Peninsula and exported across the Atlantic. Yet looking at how the Spanish conquest

of the New World was aided and empowered by the discovery of indigenous languages, I further aim to show how the study of what translators actually did and do strengthens our scholarly understanding of *interlingual memories* as explanations of why certain political events took place at all. Translators, I maintain, not only mediate meaning but also create the standards under which meaning endures over time. More critically, I go on to argue that the history of translation as conquest not only reflects the motivations of the powerful but also presents a more relational view of those whom conquest has allegedly left behind.

Grammars of Violence

Having overtaken the Caliphate of Granada (the last Moorish kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula) in January 1492, the Catholic monarchs Fernando of Aragon and Isabella of Castile turned their attention to the matter of state-building. At the same time, the famed humanist scholar Antonio de Nebrija ceremoniously dedicated his *Grammatica Antonii Nebrissensis* to the victorious Queen Isabella. As he famously wrote in the prologue to the grammar book, “language always accompanies empire, both have always commenced, grown and flourished together” (Kamen 2004, 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 century of conquest that Spain inaugurated in August 1492. Yet I want to venture a more nuanced understanding of Nebrija’s legacy and the broader interlingual character of imperial Spain’s encounter with the Americas.

Nebrija’s story is especially relevant for the phenomenon of conquest narratives, a genre of historical and political literature little studied by IR scholars yet central to many of the field’s founding myths. 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 have often achieved a monolithic character (Dussel 1995; Seed 1995; Restall 2003). Central to the contemporary historiography of the conquest genre, however, has been the ways that debates between chroniclers gave way to the perspectives and voices of the vanquished (Adorno 2007). Bartolomé de las Casas long held a monopoly on these testimonies with his notorious *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias* (2003). Yet his own narrative and legacy belie the wider range of endeavors that missionaries and explorers were engaged in, as they fought conquistadors and colonial bureaucrats alike for the knowledge of indigenous people (Herzog 2015).

Indeed, today’s popular and scholarly attention to these narratives is 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 burgeoning empire around him. Using his sojourn among the Nahuatl peoples of the Aztec world to learn, document, and reproduce the intricacies of their language, Sahagún encountered fundamental conceptual, political, and cosmological dilemmas (Caraccioli 2018). 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 and what spiritual opportunities could emerge from an interlingual exchange.

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, one that conscripted indigenous scribes and translators as human vectors to make imperial rule possible. The spread of empire via the mutual imposition and study of language thus shaped both indigenous and colonial subjectivities alike. In this spirit,

translation was not just a part of early modern global politics, it is the core of why global politics matters.

The Politics of Historiography in IR

While vital to the emergence of Colonial Spanish America as a site of imperial knowledge production, the story of missionary friars and their translation of 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 language sources, translations, and authors writ large. Much of this forum has highlighted how translation is an indispensable feature of the reflexivity needed to unpack logics of domination in global politics. But as Costa Lopez and Cheney show above, histories of translation in the context of imperial and conquest narratives are particularly key for the study of how interlingual relations shape political relations, both past and present.

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). Indeed, 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). As Subotic notes in her essay, however, the field's Anglophonic bias all too often leads to the reinvention of preexisting debates and exchanges, as well as the further exclusion of works that tackle the ambiguous place of native expertise as sources of global insight (Zarakol 2010; Rabasa 2011; Barkawi 2017). The polemics of Spanish missionaries, jurists, and their native scribes are in effect replaced by the writings of colonial bureaucrats who did not venture to learn the language of subjugated peoples but rather imported the emerging language of modern political thought to the New World *sans* spiritual disputations (Silverblatt 2008; Premo 2017).

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 the interlingual encounters of the past show, subaltern translators—both indigenous and European—are 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 linguistic exclusion.

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. Nebrija's own reasoning again merits consideration here. His reflections on the marriage between language and empire were not only hegemonic in character but also allegedly tutelary and intent on cultivating a spirit of learned upbringing among imperial subjects:

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 2004, 3; Nebrija 2014: 14)

Monumental ethnographies like Sahagún's *Florentine Codex* (1963) or José de Acosta's *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* (2002) all reveal the sophistication and

profoundly relational character of imperial politics in the New World. The translation of conquered worlds and cosmologies served to strengthen, not dilute, the dissemination of imperial ideology. A generous reading of these encounters would venture to say that the master's language evolved alongside the efforts of learned men to capture what the indigenous conscript or black slave brought with them to 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). Here 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).

En Otras Palabras: Global Politics as Imperial Translation

I want to close with an illustration from 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. As Camilla Townsend describes, 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 key figure in Cortés's efforts to conquer the Aztec Empire, illustrates the power of “grand narratives” about the Spanish experience to occlude interlingual nuance and complexity. Indeed, Malintzin's story is paralleled by hundreds if not thousands of other indigenous interpreters, scribes, and illustrators—particularly women—who served (no less as a means of survival) to literally render comprehensible the political vocabulary of the New World to European tongues, albeit at the price of being made invisible for centuries (McDonough 2014).

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 conquest 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 slave girl, given to Spanish militants as a conventional war prize, goes on to become the central negotiator and advisor to Hernán Cortes (and give birth to his children, the first of a mixed-race people), all before her death at the age of thirty, is the stuff of epics. And although scholars have debated the evidentiary substantiation of Malintzin's case, the power of her example resonates with us today as a living *interlingual memory*.

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 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 case and name are often used to pejoratively describe the ways that indigenous women survived during the trials of conquest (she is often disparaged as *la chingada*) 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 than asking what translators themselves do and how are they remembered for it.

Conclusion

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 trans-Atlantic 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 a time of migrant crisis, fake news, academic hoaxes, and generalized suspicion over the power of stories—of both victims and perpetrators. Imagine what it would take for us to learn just one of those new languages.

Conclusion: More Than Words

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We opened this forum with an exploratory ambition to formulate a consistent research program on interlingual relations. In trying to capture what happens at the interface between different linguistic groups and relate that to questions of international relations, the above interventions are themselves reflections of *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 (Wigen 2018).

For an interlingual research program to realize its potential, it is important not only to take this perspective to a broader set of cases and topics of research but to approach them by way of different methods. On this point of cases, we see the evolution of international organizations, public diplomacy, international law, diplomatic negotiations, the dissemination of labor and other rights networks, and the racial diasporas of the modern era as particularly fruitful avenues of future research. As Cheney argued, the English school's "expansion of international society" is one such topic of research that could benefit from an interlingual perspective. Similarly, Costa Lopez has shown that the interpretive grounds for such inquiries already exist, if only we pay attention to the contextual details of our most cherished ideals, norms, and manners of expression.

As for method, we maintain that philological and historical research should be complemented with ethnography, where the main notable work thus far has been

done by Frederic Schaffer (1998). As Subotic's and Caraccioli's pieces highlight, ethnography is a practice that begins from an interrogation of the perspective of the dominant culture, as much as it interrogates the beliefs and norms of subaltern communities. The need for a multiplicity of methods in the study of interlingual relations goes for both "high politics" and everyday life, as well as many of the arenas and sites in the in-between spectrum. As Wigen argues above, these are parts of the same interlingual configurations, not separate arenas. "High politics" is embedded in a wider network of interlingual relations, from which it cannot be kept separate, as politicians, diplomats, and others use knowledge developed in everyday life to interact in their professional life. A number of other social arenas occupy an ambiguous position along this continuum, where translation is part of the everyday office practices of foreign ministries and secretariats of international organizations. What might an interlingual ethnography of twentieth century world order look like if we paid attention to the configurations, conventions, and memories that brought its participants together?

Interlingual relations are the unacknowledged core of international relations, both as a discipline and as a political practice. This lack of acknowledgement is in itself politically significant. Translation and interpretation is often done by those on the boundary between two political communities, and many of those are (at least in a nation-state setting) liminals: people who are what Bahar Rumelili (2012) would call "betwixt and in-between." The occlusion of interlingual relations and the work of liminals could easily be claimed as deliberate, but as this liminal position has also fostered more great intellectuals than we can enumerate, there is something more complex about this type of work that is difficult to grasp. We would exhort scholars working on global politics to pay attention to interlingual relations around them and the nuances of their very own labor.

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