

Comparing Apples and Oranges?: Leading and Misleading Uses of Historical Analogies

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Abstract. Which uses of historical analogies help us compose an intelligible picture of international relations and which ones mislead us? This paper deals with this question on three levels: First, my epistemological argument makes a case for a rhetorical-pragmatist stance on historical analogies. I contend that *critical discussion and adjudication* make it possible to extract leads for a better understanding of the world from historical analogies. Second, my methodological argument proposes a *frame of guiding questions* for such discussions. These address the *repertoire* from which we select historical interpretations for analogies, the manner in which we *interpret* them, the *similarities and differences* between the past and present phenomena that the analogy compares, and the *new insights* that this comparison generates. Third, I employ these questions to put under scrutiny the historical analogies that the protagonists of the American Empire use to make their case for the supposedly benign American imperialism.

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Introduction

Historical analogies are important tools to make sense of the world. This applies to the decision-makers we study as well as to us as students of world politics. Tony Blair and George W. Bush, for example, relied to a very considerable degree on the Munich analogy in their reasoning on Iraq. Saddam Hussein was seen as a Hitleresque dictator who had to be removed from power before he had the capabilities to embark on a devastating war of aggression. Likewise, historical analogies are pillars of scholarly reasoning on world politics. No matter what particular school of thought, its proponents weave historical analogies, ranging from dynamics between Athens and Sparta in ancient Greece¹ to 19th century European alliance patterns,² from medievalism³ to mid-20th century configurations of identity and foreign policy⁴ and from democracy in ancient Greece and Rome⁵ to contemporary forms of imperialism⁶ into their accounts of international relations.

¹ Martin Wight, *Systems of State* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), 46-109.

² Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1956), 155-201; Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964).

³ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Rodney Bruce Hall and Friedrich Kratochwil, 'Medieval Tales: Neorealist "Science" and the Abuse of History', *International Organization* 47 no. 3 (1993): 479-491.

⁴ John Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Organization* (London: Routledge, 1998), 203-228.

⁵ Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

⁶ Roxanne L. Doty, *Imperial Encounters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

As important as historical analogies are for us to cope with the world, however, some lead us seriously astray. Commonsense cautions against the pitfalls of analogical reasoning: A well-known English expression urges not to compare apples and oranges, a French saying cautions not to confuse cabbage with carrots, and a German proverb warns against comparisons that limp. Classical logic is equally sceptical. As much as Aristotle endorses analogies as rhetorical means to get a message across,⁷ he is highly sceptical about reasoning that arrives at this message through analogies. To him, the ideal mode of reasoning is syllogistic. And the syllogism also serves him as a means to caution against the pitfalls of analogies. Extrapolating from his *Prior Analytics* and *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle's case against the Munich analogy would have been as follows: The protagonists of the Munich analogy assume that Hitler could not be appeased. They further assume that dictators cannot be appeased. From this, one would have to conclude that all dictators are like Hitler, which is clearly false.⁸

The problem of equating two phenomena that are not the same is a move that is as problematic as it is inescapable for any kind of analogical reasoning, including historical analogy and metaphor. After all, it revolves around 'giving the thing a name that belongs to something else.'⁹ Applying Richard's terminology to historical analogies, a historical analogy consists of two building blocks: tenor and vehicle. The vehicle is an interpretation of a historical event, series of events or era. The tenor is the phenomenon

⁷ Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

⁸ Aristotle, *Prior Analytics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989); Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994). The technical term for this logical error is the fallacy of the undistributed middle.

⁹ Aristotle, *Poetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 1457b.

that we want to make intelligible to ourselves.¹⁰ The historical analogy makes sense of the tenor in light of the vehicle by equating the former and the latter in a more or less qualified manner. The cognitive and discursive power of an analogy stems from this equation. With tenor and vehicle not being the same, however, to some extent historical analogies always compare apples and oranges.

Does this amount to an irresolvable dilemma? Do we need historical analogies to understand the world but the equations that constitute these analogies are necessarily misleading? The existing literature on historical analogies evades this fundamental question in three ways: First, it focuses on how historical analogies make decision-makers opt for a particular foreign policy, and not on what makes an analogy sound or unsound.¹¹ Second, with many authors criticising the uses of historical analogies by decision-makers, the discrimination between good and bad analogies is part of the literature, but the criteria for this discrimination are hardly ever made explicit.¹² Third, if

¹⁰ Ivor A. Richards, 'Die Metapher', in *Theorie der Metapher*, ed. Anselm Haverkamp (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996), 31-52.

¹¹ Michael Fry, ed., *History, the White House and the Kremlin: Statesmen as Historians* (London: Pinter, 1991); Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow, 'Introduction', in *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis*, eds. Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1-21; Marijke Breuning, 'The Role of Analogies and Abstract Reasoning in Decision-making: Evidence from the Debate over Truman's Proposal for Developmental Assistance', *International Studies Quarterly* 47 no. 2 (2003): 229-245; Benjamin Goldsmith, *Imitation in International Relations: Observational Learning, Analogies, and Foreign Policy in Russia and Ukraine* (London: Palgrave, 2005).

¹² Richard Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 217-287; Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Dan Reiter, *Crucible of Beliefs: Learning, Alliances, and World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, 'The History of a Lesson: Versailles, Munich and the Social Construction of the Past', *Review of International Studies* 29 no. 4 (2003): 499-519; Jeffrey Record, *Dark Victory: America's Second War Against Iraq* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 78-89.

the criteria are made explicit, the issue of good and bad analogies is understood as a methodological challenge that is to be met by scientific standards of logic and inference.¹³ Yet this amounts to jumping to methodological conclusions before addressing the deeper epistemological issue of whether seeing the tenor in light of the vehicle can be a fruitful endeavour even though tenor and vehicle are not the same.

The entry point of this article is epistemological. Embracing a rhetoric-pragmatist stance, my epistemological argument proposes that historical analogies come to constitute useful knowledge through discussion and adjudication. Open debate, coupled with the always provisional judgment of the arguments exchanged in this debate by one's peers, makes it possible to extract leads for the understanding of a phenomenon from the identification of the plausible and implausible aspects of a historical analogy.

Building on this epistemological stance, my methodological argument proposes a methodological frame for discussions about historical analogies. This frame consists of four questions: (1) What is the range of the repertoire of historical interpretations from which a particular phenomenon is selected as vehicle? (2) How is the vehicle interpreted? (3) What are the similarities and differences between vehicle and tenor? (4) How does the vehicle help us see the tenor in a new light? The frame can be filled – i.e. the four questions addressed – with a variety of different methods.

I illustrate my epistemological and methodological arguments by putting under scrutiny a historical analogy that has become increasingly influential in scholarly and

¹³ May and Neustadt are somewhat less rigorous in this regard than Vertzberger: Richard Neustadt and Ernest May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers* (New York: Free Press, 1986); Yaacov Vertzberger, 'Foreign Policy Decisionmakers as Practical-Intuitive Historians: Applied History and Its Shortcomings', *International Studies Quarterly* 30 no. 2 (1986): 223-247.

decision-making circles, particularly in the United States: the notion of a benign *Pax Americana*.¹⁴ I contend that, while the analogy provides some useful leads to think about post-Westphalian sovereignty, its repertoire of vehicles is highly limited, it takes dubious interpretations of the vehicles for granted, filters out critical similarities and differences between tenor and vehicles, and, in the tradition of imperialist writings, covers up the detrimental effects of empire.

This paper is organised into three parts: First, I deal with epistemological perspectives on historical analogies and make a case for rhetorical pragmatism. Second, I develop the four questions. Third, I discuss how leading and misleading it is to understand the global order as a benign American empire.

Three Meta-theoretical Perspectives on Historical Analogies

Any argument about the usefulness of a historical analogy is underpinned by a set of epistemological assumptions. This section deals with three influential perspectives: positivist, post-structuralist, and pragmatist. I contend that the latter perspective – especially its rhetorical strand – is best suited for a meta-theoretically sound scrutiny of the usefulness of a particular historical analogy.

¹⁴ Key protagonists of this literature set include Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Thomas Donnelly, 'The Past as Prologue: An Imperial Manual', *Foreign Affairs* 81 no. 4 (2002): 165-170; Niall Ferguson, *Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2002); Robert Kagan, 'The Benevolent Empire', *Foreign Policy* no. 111 (Summer 1998): 24-35; Depak Lal, *In Praise of Empires: Globalization and Order* (New York: Palgrave, 2004).

Positivists use historical analogies – without reflecting upon their use – to describe, explain and predict a supposedly objective reality. In the early 1990s, for example, some scholars relied on historical analogies to make sense of Europe’s present and future. Amid the violent break-up of Yugoslavia and the ethnic conflicts triggered by the demise of the Soviet Union, they looked back to Europe’s inter-war years in order to describe, explain and predict post-Cold War European relations. The forecast was grim. They equated Europe’s past of ethnic conflicts and devastating wars with Europe’s future.¹⁵ Fortunately, this scenario failed to materialise. The positivist strand of the literature on war to peace transitions also illustrates the pervasiveness of historical analogies. When the government and the rebels in Mozambique embarked on a war to peace transition in 1992, the literature, aiming to predict the outcome of the peace process, relied on the Angolan analogy. The Angolan peace process had recently collapsed. Based on this failure, the literature provided dire predictions for Mozambique. Fortunately, this forecast failed to come true. The peace process in Mozambique was successfully concluded. Then, based on the Mozambican analogy, the literature predicted the success of a new peace process in Angola in the mid-1990s. Tragically, this prediction failed to materialise.¹⁶

¹⁵ John Mearsheimer, ‘Back to the Future. Instability in Europe after the Cold War’, *International Security* 15 no. 4 (1990): 5-56; Robert Jervis, ‘The Future of World Politics: Will It Resemble the Past?’ *International Security* 16 no. 1 (1991): 39-73. Stephen Griffiths, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict: Threats to European Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

¹⁶ Assis Malaquias, ‘UN Peace Operations in Lusophone Africa: Contrasting Strategies and Outcomes’, *Journal of Conflict Studies* 18 no. 2 (1998): 66-88; Fen Osler Hampson, *Nurturing Peace: Why Peace Settlements Succeed or Fail* (Washington: United States Institute for Peace Press, 1996): 125; Yvonne Lodico, ‘A Peace That Fell Apart: The United Nations and the War in Angola’, *UN Peacekeeping, American Politics, and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s*, ed William J. Durch (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996):

Post-structuralist reflections on analogies help understand why positivist uses of analogies, such as the ones above, frequently generate misleading arguments. To post-structuralists, it is puzzling that positivists use analogies. On the one hand, positivists model the social sciences after the natural sciences. Positivists believe that the discovery of the truth is possible if the correct methods – variations of the controlled experiment – are used. On the other hand, they use historical analogies that cannot live up to these mighty methodological and epistemological standards.¹⁷ At least two problems arising from this tension come immediately to mind: First, to some extent historical analogies always compare apples and oranges. Tenor and vehicle are full of ideosyncracies that a historical analogy, for the sake of clarifying the tenor, glosses over. Second, our knowledge of the vehicles used in historical analogies is usually shaped by actors and processes that do not share positivist rules to conduct research. Yet this is – from a positivist perspective – the prerequisite for a historical analogy to be true. The vehicle must be a true historical fact and it can only be a true historical fact if it was derived through positivist standards of inference.

While post-structuralists provide a sobering critique of positivist uses of analogies, they do not provide any guidance for adjudicating between plausible and implausible analogies. Post-structuralists shun away from endorsing particular historical analogies or aspects of them as useful vocabulary to make sense of the world. Their emphasis is not on making the world intelligible but on deconstructing dominant ways of

103-134; Phyllis Johnson, 'Lessons Unlearned', *Work in Progress* no. 89 (1993): 7; Christopher Pycroft, 'Angola: The Forgotten Tragedy', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20 no. 2 (1994): 241-262.

¹⁷ Rob Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 97-98.

how the world is made intelligible. Genealogy is the principal method to achieve this.¹⁸ Genealogies provide a historically and culturally contingent critique of the present by inquiring into how the present has come to be. Serving the purpose of deconstructing the present, historical analogies are woven into genealogical accounts. Without being named as such, they are tools for denaturalising discursive constructs such as diplomacy,¹⁹ the Idea of Europe²⁰ and International Relations as a discipline.²¹ Yet they merely denaturalise. They are not building blocks of a however tentatively formulated alternative picture about the world.

Pragmatism, in contrast to positivism, rejects claims of objective truth, and, in contrast to post-structuralism, is concerned with introducing new analogies that help us make the world more intelligible. To pragmatists, the purpose of inquiry is the generation of useful knowledge, i.e. knowledge that helps us cope with the world. Useful knowledge is not objectively true. Yet, through assent generated by an open debate, it comes to constitute a working truth. As Rorty puts it succinctly, truth is ‘what our peers will, *ceteris paribus*, let us get away with saying,’²² This working truth is always provisional. New debates may generate new working truths.

¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral: Eine Streitschrift* (Leipzig: C.G. Naumann, 1887).

¹⁹ James Der Derian, *On Diplomacy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

²⁰ Stefan Elbe, ‘We Good Europeans...: Genealogical Reflections on the Idea of Europe’, *Millennium* 30 no. 2 (2001): 259-283.

²¹ Richard K. Ashley, ‘The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics’, *Alternatives* 12 no. 4 (1987): 403-431.

²² Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979): 176.

Since the pragmatist notion of truth revolves around debate, argumentation, and persuasion, it is not surprising that many pragmatists hold rhetoricians in high esteem.²³ Rhetoric, in particular the Philosophical Sophists²⁴ they admire, approaches the world with what Zeno called the open hand as opposed to the logic's closed fist.²⁵ The logician – with Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* and *Posterior Analytics* as founding texts – individually strives for objectivity and truth through the use of rigorous methods. The Philosophical Sophists, by contrast, engaged in collective attempts to establish working truth through open dialogue. This is very close to contemporary pragmatism, especially its rhetorical strand. Schiller may be regarded as the founder of an explicitly rhetorical strand of pragmatism.²⁶ Following him, Mailloux advocates a rhetorical pragmatism,²⁷ and Fish postulates to 'move rhetoric from the disreputable periphery to the necessary center.'²⁸

Rhetorical pragmatism provides a promising epistemological perspective for making sense of historical analogies. There are two reasons for this: First, it recognises the need for using analogies to make the world more intelligible. Analogies spark our imagination and are important ingredients of our reasoning and argumentation. Second,

²³ I elaborate on this link in Markus Kornprobst, 'Closed Fist, Empty Hand, or Open Hand? Globalization and Historical Analogies,' in *Metaphors of Globalization: Mirrors, Magicians, and Mutinies*, eds. Markus Kornprobst et al. London: Palgrave, forthcoming.

²⁴ Philosophical Sophists, for instance Gorgias, Isocrates and Protagoras, were concerned with reasoning about deeply philosophical questions whereas Pure Sophists focused merely on selling an argument: George Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 38-41.

²⁵ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De finibus bonorum et malorum* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1994), II [VI] 17.

²⁶ Ferdinand Schiller, *Humanism: Philosophical Essays* (New York: MacMillan, 1903).

²⁷ Stephen Mailloux, 'Introduction: Sophistry and Rhetorical Pragmatism', *Rhetoric, Sophistry, Pragmatism*. ed. Steven Mailloux (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 21.

²⁸ Stanley Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), 480.

rhetorical pragmatism provides some guidance for how to distinguish leading from misleading uses of historical analogies. It clarifies that such a distinction requires debate and adjudication. No single method – no matter how elegant and rigorous it may be – can replace argumentation and assent. To be sure, a variety of methods can – and should – shape the contributions to the debate. There is, of course, room for, say, Dewey’s and Peirce’s stringent methods²⁹ as well as Rorty’s deep scepticism of these methods and emphasis on imagination³⁰. There is also plenty of room for methods used by non-pragmatist scholars. Methodological pluralism enriches debate. But there is no methodological shortcut available to eclipse the need for debate and adjudication.

Hence, discussion is of paramount importance from a rhetorical-pragmatist perspective. But what could foster such pluralism and debate? Philosophical Sophists provide an important insight. They frequently mixed a methodological frame with methodological pluralism. The Sophistic (and rather Platonian) interpretation of dialectic as cross-examining statements by the interplay of questions and answers frequently served as a methodological frame, which was then filled, depending on the subject matter under investigation, by stringent comparative designs, the search for a middle path between the ideal and the actual, the use of counterfactuals, the juxtaposition of opposing arguments, and the creative play with language.³¹

²⁹ John Dewey, *The Later Works: 1925-1953 XII* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 367-527; Charles Sanders Peirce, *Reasoning and the Logic of Things: the Cambridge Conferences Lectures of 1898* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

³⁰ Richard Rorty, *Objectivism, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers*, vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 63-77.

³¹ G.B. Kerferd, ‘The Sophists,’ in *From the Beginning to Plato*, 244-270, ed. C.C.W. Taylor (London: Routledge, 1997); John Poulakos, ‘The Logic of Greek Sophistry,’ in *Historical Foundations of Informal Logic*, eds. Douglas Walton and Alan Brinton,

A methodological frame has to be wide enough to allow for contributions from different perspectives but also narrow enough to ensure that the contributors do not speak past one another. This is not squaring the circle. Similarly to the Philosophical Sophists, whose interpretation of dialectic put questioning at the core of debate, and to Meyer, whose problematology revolves around explicit questions as means to foster discussion,³² the next section develops a set of questions as frame for discussing historical analogies.

A Methodological Frame for Discussing Historical Analogies

This section discusses Cicero's conceptualisation of the process of analogous reasoning and then, based on this discussion, develops four guiding questions as a methodological frame for debating the plausibility of a given historical analogy.

Cicero's thought on rhetoric provides a number of important hints on how analogous reasoning usually proceeds. Reasoning on analogy revolves around four key ingredients: repertoire of commonplaces, commonplaces, unfamiliar or disputed phenomenon, and equation. The repertoire of commonplaces is the hidden starting point of an analogy. It contains those understandings within a particular subject area that seem so familiar and self-evident that it is inconceivable to question them. Few understandings reach this level of taken-for-grantedness. The repertoire, therefore, is finite.³³ In the case

(Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 12-24; Christopher Tindale, *Rhetorical Argumentation: Principles of Theory and Practice* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2004), 47-50.

³² Michel Meyer, *Rhetoric, Language, and Reason* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

³³ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Oratore* (London: William Heinemann, 1967), II, 352-360.

of historical analogies, there is only a limited number of taken-for-granted historical interpretations about historical events and chains of events. Actors select a particular commonplace from this repertoire. The commonplace provides the sturdy anchor for the analogy. It is the unquestioned foundation on which the analogy is built.³⁴ The commonplace is related to a phenomenon that is to be made intelligible in light of the commonplace. In sharp contrast to the commonplace, this phenomenon is not authoritatively interpreted. It is unclear or at least disputed what it actually is. The linkage between this phenomenon and the commonplace is an argumentatively established equation.³⁵ This equation may be qualified somewhat. But too much qualification takes away from the argumentative power of analogies. The more qualifications there are, the more difficult it is to see the phenomenon to be made sense of in light of the commonplace. Translated into Richard's useful vocabulary for the study of analogies, the phenomenon to be made sense of is the tenor. The commonplace is the vehicle. The vehicle is selected from a repertoire of vehicles. In the case of historical analogies, these vehicles are interpreted historical facts. Vehicle and tenor are linked through a more or less qualified equation.

Cicero's understanding of analogous reasoning is very helpful for describing how it usually occurs. Yet it is almost diametrically opposed to a pragmatist understanding of rhetoric. To Cicero, rhetoric is merely the means to get a true message across. First the orator sees the truth; then he or she employs the rhetorical means to persuade the audience of the truth. To the rhetorical pragmatist, by contrast, this is a troubling stance.

³⁴ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Orator* (London: William Heinemann, 1967), XIV, 46.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, XXIII, 80 – XXXVIII, 99.

Truth is not something to be seen by crawling out of the cave and seeing the sun³⁶ but the tentative and contingent result of a debate. Where Cicero emphasises certainty, the rhetorical pragmatist, similarly to the Sophist, stresses the need for questioning. As far as historical analogies are concerned, all four elements of the reasoning process need to be put under scrutiny instead of being taken for granted. This yields four questions as a methodological frame for discussing historical analogies:

First, what is the range of the repertoire? A narrowly confined repertoire increases the likelihood that our comparisons limp. It constrains opportunities to reflect upon a number of conceivable analogies and to carefully select an analogy that is particularly suitable. It is, for example, no coincidence that the Munich analogy informed Tony Blair's and George W. Bush's decision to go to war against Iraq. It is not that the analogy was particularly apt. But the repertoire of commonplaces from which decision-makers draw in order to make sense of war initiation is usually severely limited. The lessons of World War II remained fresh on the minds of Blair and Bush, because their memory is deeply ingrained in British and US identity narratives. A host of other conceivable candidates for analogies, say the inter-state military disputes between Kenya and Idi Amin's Uganda or intra-state wars such as in Mozambique and Somalia are entirely outside of the repertoire, although they may have been able to highlight aspects of the Iraq issue about which the Munich analogy is completely silent. This problem of a severely limited repertoire of commonplaces is, of course, not confined to the decision-makers we study. International Relations plays an unfortunate role in limiting historical

³⁶ Plato, *Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), VI 507b-VII 520a.

understanding essentially to the interaction of major powers since WWI with a particular focus on Europe and the United States.

Second, how is the vehicle interpreted? If we believed von Ranke, making a historical analogy would be a simple thing to do. Ranke contended that rigorously scientific methods generate objectively true historical facts, or as he puts it ‘the naked truth, bare any embellishments.’³⁷ Thus, all we would have to do is verify the methodology used to establish a particular historical fact and, provided the correct method was used, we could be sure that this particular historical fact is an irrefutable vehicle. There is, of course, the problem already discussed above. Even if it were epistemologically and methodologically possible to distil true historical facts, the witnesses on whose accounts we need to rely to make sense of the past may not have used the supposedly correct method. Von Ranke is very aware of this problem. Yet there is a more profound problem with the assumption of objectively true historical facts. More and more historians emphasise that historical facts are interpretations by those who tell and write about these facts. The authors of history make history.³⁸ From a rhetorical-pragmatist perspective, it does not suffice to take these interpretations for granted. It is necessary to debate them.

³⁷ Leopold von Ranke, *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494-1514* (Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1874), 24 (Annex: ‘Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtsschreiber’). See also vii.

³⁸ Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 86-168; Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The ‘Objectivity Question’ and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Keith Jenkins, *Re-thinking History* (London: Routledge, 1991). For an application of this insight to International Relations Theory, see J.B. Isacoff, ‘On the Historical Imagination of International Relations: The Case for a ‘Deweyan Reconstruction’’, *Millennium* 31 no. 3 (2002), 603-626.

It is impossible to question every vehicle that we employ. This would make any kind of reasoning impossible. But there is a need to discuss those vehicles that dominate our reasoning.³⁹ Munich 1938 is part of this category. There are a number of questions that warrant discussion and not closure even about a seemingly as self-evident a vehicle as the interpretation of Munich. These include the following: Was Munich really appeasement all the way down? There are some sources suggesting that Chamberlain threatened Hitler with the use of force in case he would not sign the agreement. Why does Chamberlain take all the blame for the agreement? After all, Britain was not the only party to the conference. Why is Munich regarded as the landmark event of appeasement? The democracies did not take action against Nazi-Germany when Hitler started to support General Franco in the Spanish civil war, when the *Reichskristallnacht* foreshadowed the Holocaust, when Hitler re-militarised the Rhineland, and when the *Anschluss* of Austria occurred. Finally, could Hitler really have been deterred at Munich? There is plenty of evidence suggesting that Hitler's decision-making is not very well captured by the assumption of cost-benefit calculation that underpins deterrence. Hitler himself apparently regarded Munich as failure. He did not want to be appeased. He wanted war.⁴⁰

Third, what are the similarities and differences between vehicle and tenor? Equations of the two usually require qualifications. The key insight of scholars dealing with the logic of comparison is that comparisons revolve around similarities and

³⁹ For a similar argument on metaphors see Lynn Tirrell, 'Extending: The Structure of Metaphor', *Noûs* 23 no. 1 (1989): 17-34.

⁴⁰ These questions are taken from David Chuter, 'Munich or the Blood of Others', in *Haunted by History: Myths in International Relations*, ed. Cyril Buffet and Beatrice Heuser (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1998), 65-79.

differences.⁴¹ These form a spectrum. On the one end of the spectrum, two phenomena are entirely different. No aspect of the one phenomenon resembles the other. On the other end, two phenomena are identical. Between these two poles are many different configurations of similarities and differences. Applied to historical analogies, this means that we should beware of analogies that simply equate a phenomenon with another. In the overwhelming number of cases, such an equation is unwarranted. Analogies need to be qualified, spelling out not only the similarities but also the differences. Munich again illustrates this point well. As presented by Bush and Blair, the comparison of appeasement in 1938 and Iraq 2003 was close to the similarities-only end of the spectrum. According to their argumentation prior to the invasion of Iraq, non-action would make it impossible to stop Saddam Hussein from embarking on a similarly devastating war of aggression as Hitler did a year after Munich. This virtual equation brushed vital questions aside, including to what extent Hitler's and Hussein's intentions as well as the destructive potentials of their military machineries were comparable.

Fourth, what novel insights does the analogy provide about the tenor? The purpose of historical analogies is to make the tenor more intelligible. In rare cases, the tenor may be an entirely unfamiliar phenomenon. By comparing the familiar vehicle to the unfamiliar tenor, the tenor becomes comprehensible. Making intelligible in this context means making sense of the unknown. Usually, however, the tenor appears less alien to actors. Under those circumstances, making the tenor more intelligible means to shake up dogmatic ways to make sense of it by highlighting aspects of the tenor that had

⁴¹ John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic: Ratiocinative and Inductive* (New York: Harper, 1874), 278-291; Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune, *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1970), 31-46.

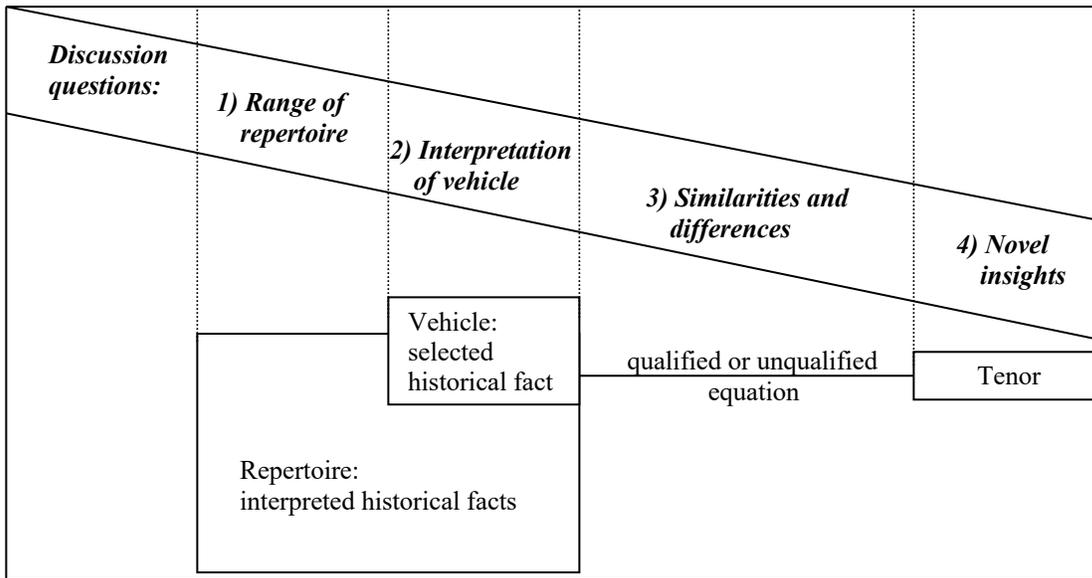
previously been overlooked. To some extent, this resembles the process of defamiliarisation that Šklovskij describes, and it also similar to Brecht's stylistic means of alienation.⁴² What seemed familiar is made strange. Yet providing insights through an analogy is more than defamiliarisation. It is overcoming an orthodox interpretation of a tenor by encouraging novel ways to look at it. To stay with the example of the Munich analogy, alluding to the abuse of this analogy by decision-makers in Washington in the case of Vietnam could have been a means to undermine seeing Saddam Hussein in the context of appeasement prior to WWII. Yet this would only have told us something about who Saddam Hussein is not as opposed to who he is. In retrospect, he was an aggressive dictator with capabilities at his disposal that were sufficient to terrorise those who opposed his rule domestically but insufficient to defend his own country. An analogy between, say, Robert Mugabe and Saddam Hussein would have shaken our image of the latter and, additionally, would have illustrated a side of the Iraqi dictator that remained suppressed by the Munich analogy.

Figure 1 summarises the process of making an analogy and the four guiding questions for discussing the fruitfulness of an analogy. The starting point of a historical analogy is the selection of a vehicle from a reservoir of interpreted historical facts. Then, we equate – in a more or less qualified manner – the vehicle with a tenor that we seek to comprehend. This process invites a four-fold reflection upon the usefulness of the analogy: Does the repertoire range of the repertoire allow for a careful selection of the vehicle? How plausible is the interpretation of the vehicle? What are the similarities and

⁴² Viktor Šklovskij, 'Die Kunst als Verfahren', in *Russischer Formalismus*, ed. Jurij Striedter (München: Fink, 1971), 4-35; Berthold Brecht, *Schriften zum Theater: Über eine nicht-aristotelische Dramatik* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1957).

differences between vehicle and tenor? How does the vehicle help us to see the tenor is a new light?

Figure 1: Methodological Frame for Discussing Historical Analogies



A Benign American Empire?

Empire – whatever concrete vehicles are invoked – is a master analogy. Careful scrutiny, therefore, is warranted. Once this analogy is accepted or rejected, celebrated or vilified, the basic parameters of world politics fall into place. The notion of a benign American Empire, rooted in interpretations of the Roman and British empires, is vision and practice. Its proponents may be characterised as epistemic community.⁴³ They share a set of fundamental normative and causal beliefs, which inform their shared notions of validity and their common policy enterprise. The proponents form a network of scholars, journalists and political practitioners. Notable traces of the community's influence manifested themselves in the Bush administration's initial confidence in exporting its domestic model of governance – if necessary by the use of force.⁴⁴

For the last century, much of what has been written on imperialism has been influenced by Marx. Orthodox Marxists⁴⁵ as well as, more recently, writers attempting to

⁴³ For this concept, see Burkhart Holzner, *Reality Construction in Society* (Morristown: General Learning Press, 1972); Emanuel Adler and Peter Haas, 'Conclusion: Epistemic Communities, World Order, and the Creation of a Reflective Research Program', *International Organization* 46 no. 1 (1992): 367-390.

⁴⁴ The Project for a New American Century (PNAC), for instance, is a think tank advocating for an American Empire that transcends the theory-practice divide and has considerable political influence.

⁴⁵ J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1938); Vladimir I. Lenin, 'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism', in *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), 204-274; Rudolf Hilferding, *Das Finanzkapital. Eine Studie über die jüngste Entwicklung des Kapitalismus* (Berlin: Dietz, 1955); Rosa Luxemburg, *Die Akkumulation des Kapitals: ein Beitrag zur ökonomischen Erklärung des Imperialismus* (Leipzig: Franke, 1921); Nicholai Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy* (New York: International Publishers, 1929).

adapt Marxist thought to the era of globalisation,⁴⁶ have forcefully rejected imperialism in all shapes and forms. The proponents of the *Pax Americana*, by contrast, take a fundamentally different stance. They cheerfully embrace the American variant of imperialism. Garrison, for example, rejoices:

America should acknowledge – even celebrate – its transition to empire and the acquisition of global mastery. What began as a motley band of colonies 225 years ago is now not only the strongest nation in the world, but the strongest nation in the history of the world. Americans should be justly proud of this achievement.⁴⁷

Do we live in the era of American Empire? If so, is there really reason to rejoice? The remainder of this article contributes to the discussion of these questions by putting under scrutiny the historical analogies that constitute the notion of a benign American Empire. The contribution is guided by the four questions outlined above.

What is the range of the repertoire from which the vehicles are selected? The repertoire is severely limited. The global era challenges us. Many aspects of the global order are new and we look for ways to make sense of this novelty. Historical analogies have the potential to help us orientate in this unfamiliar environment. A host of vehicles for such analogies are worth exploring. In *Politics and Culture in International History*, for example, Bozeman includes discussions of the ancient Middle Eastern, Indian, Greek,

⁴⁶ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude*.

⁴⁷ Jim Garrison, *America as Empire: Global Leader or Rogue Power?* (San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler, 2004), 5.

and Chinese polities, medieval Europe, the Byzantine empire, and the advent of modern world society.⁴⁸ All of these historical formations may contain clues to make our world today more intelligible to ourselves. This applies to many others as well that remain even further removed from imaginative attempts to make sense of the new in light of the old, say ancient Dahomey, Ghana, Ethiopia, Mali and Nubia in Africa.

Yet out of the richness of history, proponents of the American Empire consider only a very particular type of polity and only two highly peculiar historical occurrences of this type. They seek to make sense of the current world order by linking it to historical empires. And there is no discussion about which empire may be most apt for comparison because the repertoire contains only two commonplaces, which Western and especially English-speaking human science serve scholars on a silver plate: the Roman and British empires. Other empires, which are much more tainted in scholarly discourse, such as the Portuguese, Spanish and Belgium ones are outside of the repertoire. So is Hitler's German Empire. The Third *Reich* is not even labelled as such. By not translating the German equivalent of empire – *Reich* – into English, the most despicable of all empires is not even called an empire.

How are the vehicles – the Roman and British empires – interpreted? The misleading glorification of empire continues. While the highly limited repertoire makes sure that no empires with a discredited reputation enter the discourse on empire, the interpretation of the vehicles further pushes the abominable aspects of empire aside. *Pax Romana* and *Pax Britannica* are seen in a distinctly positive light. Kaplan, for instance,

⁴⁸ Adda B. Bozeman, *Politics and Culture in International History: From the Ancient Near East to the Opening of the Modern Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

likens U.S. commanders in the Middle East, Europe, the Pacific and the Americas to Roman proconsuls and postulates that U.S. soldiers ought to emulate the Roman and Greek type of warrior in order to keep the empire intact.⁴⁹ The *Pax Britannica* is endorsed even more widely than the *Pax Romana*. In many ways, Ferguson's comparisons between the British and the American empire set the tone of the debate. Ferguson's romantic notion of the British empire emphasises its military and economic successes as well as its ability to export its values to the colonies.⁵⁰ Democracy is one of the exports that are particularly celebrated. Kurtz, for example, portrays what he regards as Britain's efforts of democratising India as exemplary.⁵¹ The alleged success story of the British empire is echoed in the work of a number of writers. They usually do not elaborate on the vehicle. They merely use it as a taken-for-granted short-hand to make sense of the current world order.⁵²

The short-hand is misleading because it is cleared of the dark sides of empire. Humanitarian catastrophes were as much a defining part of the Roman and British imperial experiences as their effective rule. There may be talk about the victory of the warriors that Kaplan glorifies in the Punic Wars but there is silence on the fate of Carthage. Gaius Iulius Caesar is heralded as one of the greatest military commanders of

⁴⁹ Robert D. Kaplan, 'The World of Achilles: Ancient Soldiers, Modern Warriors', *The National Interest* no. 66 (Winter 2001/2002), pp. 37-46. Other authors using an endorsement of the Roman empirical experience as vehicle include the following: Jim Garrison, *America as Empire: Global Leader or Rogue Power?* (San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler, 2004); Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Amerika? In Ulrich Speck, Natan Sznaider, Empire Amerika: Perspektiven einer neuen Weltordnung* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2003), 15-37.

⁵⁰ Niall Ferguson, *Empire*.

⁵¹ Stanley Kurtz, 'Democratic Imperialism: A Blueprint', *Policy Review* no. 118 (2003): 3-20.

⁵² Max Boot carries this analogy furthest: Max Boot, 'The Case for American Empire,' *The Weekly Standard* (15 October 2001), at <http://www.weeklystandard.com>;

all times but the Gauls, victims of his merciless pursuit of glory, would probably find it difficult to join the praise. The British Empire was in many ways far less cruel than the Roman Empire. Yet neglect killed millions of people. In India alone, 30-40 million people starved to death in the latter half of the 19th century and famines continued in British India in the 20th century. The most devastating among them was the Bengal Famine from 1943 to 1944, which killed between 3 and 4 million people.⁵³ Yet there was not only neglect. The Aborigines of Tasmania were exterminated in a campaign that started with a drunken Lieutenant and his wish ‘to see the Niggers run.’⁵⁴ The ruthlessness with which Britain put down rebellions against its rule, such as the Indian Rebellion in 1857 and the Jamaica Uprising in 1865, or acts of cruelty that appear to have been void of any political purpose such as the Amritsar Massacre in 1919, were inherent characteristics of British imperialism as were slavery and forced labour, random killings and sexual abuse. Yet when these crimes were committed, the missionary zeal loomed too large to even imagine any major wrongdoing. Given its supposed racial and civilisational supremacy, Britain had to, in the infamous words of Rudyard Kipling ‘[t]ake up the White Man’s burden’ to enlighten the ‘new-caught, sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child.’⁵⁵

What are the similarities and differences between vehicle and tenor? The severely limited repertoire and the silence on the shocking aspects of those historical empires that

⁵³ B.M. Bhatia, *Famines in India* (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1985). Maria Misra estimates that between 10 and 33 million lives could have been saved by adequate British policies: Maria Misra, ‘Heart of Smugness’, *The Guardian* (22 July 2002), at <http://www.guardian.co.uk>.

⁵⁴ Lieutenant William Moore, quoted in Mark Cocker, *Rivers of Blood, Rivers of Gold* (New York: Grove Press, 1998), 125.

⁵⁵ Rudyard Kipling, ‘The White Man’s Burden’, in Rudyard Kipling, *The Five Nations* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1903).

serve as vehicles filter out most of the disastrous dimensions of empire. The literature then proceeds to explain the few remaining ones away by portraying the American Empire as even more shining example than Rome and Britain. The analogy is qualified in two ways: First, the American Empire is more benign than any previous empire. Ignatieff and Kagan are especially adamant in stressing that the American empire is an ‘empire lite’. Due to its history, the authors assert, the United States is a benevolent imperialist power. The war of independence and the cherished value of liberty that underpinned it are ingrained in the identity narrative. The United States defines itself as a state that promotes liberty, human rights, and democracy.⁵⁶ The United States is the guardian of liberty and has the duty to make liberty spread around the world. Invoking Kipling, Donnelly contends that the United States has to shoulder the ‘Free Man’s Burden’ to liberate the rest of the world. Second, most protagonists of the American empire assert that American power is unmatched by any other historical empires. Ignatieff, for instance, asserts that the US possesses the most powerful military in history.⁵⁷ Donnelly even claims that, due to the enormous capabilities of the United States, the correct question to ask is no longer what is in Washington’s power but what is not in its power.⁵⁸ He adds a comparison to make his point: ‘Nothing has ever existed like this disparity of power; nothing. The *Pax Britannica* was run on the cheap.’⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Michael Ignatieff, ‘Burden’, *New York Times Magazine* (5 January 2003): 22-30; Robert Kagan, ‘The Benevolent Empire’, *Foreign Policy* no. 111 (1998): 24-35.

⁵⁷ Ignatieff, ‘Empire Amerika?’, 17.

⁵⁸ Donnelly, ‘What is Within Our Powers?’ In *The Obligation of Empire: United States’ Grand Strategy for a New Century*, ed. James J. Hentz (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 73-92.

⁵⁹ Thomas Donnelly, ‘The Past as Prologue’, 165. Yet there are some authors within this literature set who consider the United States weaker than previous world empires:

These two demarcations from previous empires are much too stark to make for a sound analogy. In light of how the authors themselves describe the *Pax Americana*, the claim that it is a benign order to be sharply contrasted with past empires is implausible. For Ignatieff, acting in the American interest makes for a benign empire: to craft international arrangements that further this interest; to violate these arrangements when they contradict the American interest. Ferguson echoes this persuasion. Since America is a freedom-loving nation and a reluctant imperial power, pursuing its interest is automatically a benign enterprise.⁶⁰ Kaplan makes the military dimension of such an enterprise explicit. The benign empire ought to be able to fight wars as a continuation of politics with other means and seek to legitimise this after the fact: 'In the 21st century, as in the 19th, we will initiate hostilities (...) whenever it is absolutely necessary and we see a clear advantage in doing so, and we will justify it morally after the fact.'⁶¹ Kaplan echoes this persuasion and adds that the United States should emulate its colonisation of the Philippines a century ago on a global scale.⁶² Suddenly the postulated *Pax Americana* looks far less different from the *Pax Britannica* than the authors admit. The rulers have good intentions. They are more benevolent than many others. Their impetus for rule contains a strong missionary element. Believing in their benevolence, they find it incomprehensible if someone opposes their rule. They are fully prepared to punish and kill those who they believe threaten their rule. And large-scale humanitarian disasters in

Charles Krauthammer, 'The Sleepy Superpower Awakens', *Time* (4 August 2003) at <http://www.time.com>; Niall Ferguson, *Empire*, 286.

⁶⁰ Ignatieff, 'Burden'; Niall Ferguson, 'The Empire Slinks Back', *New York Times Magazine* (27 April 2003), 52-58.

⁶¹ Kaplan, 'The World of Achilles', 45.

⁶² Robert Kaplan, 'Supremacy by Stealth: Ten Rules for Managing the World', *The Atlantic Monthly* no. 292/1 (2003): 65-83.

the distant provinces remain largely unnoticed. No matter whether it is HIV/Aids, malaria, starvation or genocide in Africa today or starvation, cholera, malaria and violent inter-ethnic clashes in British India, the metropolis looks the other way.

But is the United States really an enormously powerful imperial metropolis, able to shoulder such responsibilities? This is also much more doubtful than most supporters of the American Empire acknowledge. Again, the difference between the *Pax Americana* and previous empires is more ambiguous than the authors put it. They focus almost exclusively on military might. Yet this is only one dimension of power. Mann, for example, distinguishes between military, economic, political and ideological power. This yields a much more nuanced discussion of U.S. power: Militarily, the United States is comparable to previous empires. It has superior military capabilities albeit far less manpower at its disposal. Economically, the United States is not more powerful than previous empires. Critical decisions need to be taken multilaterally, especially with Europe and East Asia. Politically, the US is not mightier than previous empires. International organisations prescribe multilateral decision-making procedures and allies sometimes push the United States into taking a particular stance instead of vice versa. Finally, U.S. ideological power is constantly jeopardised by Washington's use of military power. American values such as liberty and democracy resonate on a global level and constitute a power resource for the United States as long as its military enterprises do not violate them.⁶³

The final question to be discussed is the following: How do the vehicles help us see the tenor in a new light? On the one hand, the literature on America's benign

⁶³ Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire* (London: Verso, 2003).

imperialism hampers attempts to gain new insights because it closes space for reflection and debate instead of opening it. Its one-sided interpretation of the *Pax Romana* and the *Pax Britannica* along with its over-statement of differences between these historical empires and the American empire filter out the worrisome aspects about the latter. The purpose of the literature is to legitimise US hegemony instead of trying to provide a plausible account of it, not even to speak of questioning it. It is part of a long tradition of imperialist literature that aims to justify and glorify the allegedly noble role of the metropolis.⁶⁴

On the other hand, discussing this literature, as unconvincing and troubling as it is, generates some interesting leads to make sense of world politics. The empire analogy provokes us to re-think the ‘myth of 1648.’⁶⁵ Debating empire highlights key aspects of world politics about which the still predominant Westphalian perspective remains silent. The Peace of Westphalia may be useful to understand some of the enduring *de jure* principles of global order but it distracts, if understood as a *de facto* condition of international politics, from the radical inequalities in the world and the power processes that generate these inequalities. The discussion of historical empires such as the Roman and the British ones are helpful in this context because they remind us of the dynamics between rulers and ruled as well as the fundamentally different distribution of possibilities and opportunities that these dynamics create for people around the globe.

⁶⁴ See, for instance, Frederick Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1922); Albert Sarraut, *La mise en valeur des colonies françaises* (Paris: Payot, 1923); Pierre Ryckmans, *Dominer pour servir* (Brussels: L’Edition Universelle, 1948); L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan, *Burden of Empire: An Appraisal of Western Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1967).

⁶⁵ Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics and the Making of Modern International Relations*. London: Verso, 2003.

This focus on hierarchy provokes a number of important questions but addressing them in a fruitful manner requires going beyond the confines of the literature on the benign *Pax Americana*.

Two questions come to mind immediately: First, who are the rulers? Washington is not what Rome and London used to be. Since the global order is such a multifaceted phenomenon, it has become more difficult – but certainly no less important – to specify the layers of global hierarchy. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri propose an interesting alternative to the entrenched metropolis-periphery dichotomy, which is well worth putting under scrutiny. Drawing upon Roman and American constitutional theory and practice, they distil Empire. Under this condition, they propose, the global multitude (i.e. the masses) is ruled by global networks of sovereignty that transcend nation-state borders. Second, how are global hierarchies maintained and how do they come undone? The protagonists of the *Pax Americana* put military power at the centre of their writings. Critical studies of American empire tend to focus on economic power.⁶⁶ As important as these forms of hard power – military and economic might to force, coerce or buy another actor – may be, there is, as Nye points out, also soft power.⁶⁷ Soft power attracts and co-opts another actor. This co-optation may cut much deeper than Nye conceives of it. The concept of biopower, developed by Foucault, proposes a radically different understanding

⁶⁶ Enrico Augelli and Craig Murphy, *America's Quest for Supremacy and the Third World* (London: Pinter, 1988); Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization or Empire?* (London: Routledge, 2004).

⁶⁷ Joseph Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Books, 2004).

of power.⁶⁸ Power relations may be so deeply internalised in people's backgrounds that they seem natural to them. Hardt and Negri contend that Empire is built on biopower.⁶⁹

Conclusion

The celebrated poet von Goethe put his reservations about any kind of comparisons in what was for him an unusually unpoetic language: 'Only fools compare.'⁷⁰ If this were true, International Relations would be a rather foolish field of study because all kinds of comparisons, including historical analogies, permeate our discipline. Examining the historical analogies that decision-makers make, we would study foolishness. Using historical analogies in our research, we would engage in foolishness ourselves.

With due respect to von Goethe, I do not share this unequivocal rejection of analogies. This article cautioned against the unreflective but advocated for the reflective use of analogies. Embracing a rhetorical-pragmatist perspective, I contended that historical analogies come to provide leads for making the world more intelligible through debate and adjudication. Attempting to foster such debates, I developed four questions: (1) What is the range of the repertoire of potential vehicles for historical analogies? (2) How are the selected vehicles interpreted? (3) What are the similarities and differences between the vehicles and the tenor? (4) What novel insights does the analogy provide

⁶⁸ Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976): 99-173.

⁶⁹ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 22-41.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Frank H. Aarebrot and Pal H. Bakka, 'Die vergleichende Methode in der Politikwissenschaft', in *Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft*, eds. Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 1991), 51.

about the tenor? These four questions help discuss what aspects of a given analogy are plausible and what aspects are implausible. Debating which aspects of an analogy are plausible and which ones are implausible provides leads for making the world more intelligible to ourselves. Thus, even the discussion of as troublesome an analogy as the *Pax Americana*, provided some leads to better comprehend the hierarchical global order.

A triad of entrenched routines in International Relations runs counter the rhetorical-pragmatist stance that I advocated: First, all too often, scholars in the field take it for granted that the panacea for dealing with a research problem is to step up the methodological rigour. As emphasised repeatedly in this article, however, rigorous methods alone cannot distinguish between leading and misleading historical analogies. Analogies become leading through the exchange of arguments and adjudication. There is no elegant and rigorous methodological short-cut that can eclipse this process. Second, meaningful adjudication requires debate across different sub-communities. Jurors that are all taken from the same camp can hardly be trusted to arrive at a reasonable verdict. In the last two decades, however, the community of International Relations scholars has become weaker and weaker whereas sub-communities have stronger and stronger. Third, it is high time to resolve a paradox that has plagued the study of international relations for a long time. Students of international relations persistently draw upon history but they are equally persistent in remaining aloof of studying history.

Yet there are developments in the field that promise a departure from this triad. There are moves towards adjudication⁷¹, pluralism⁷², and the study of history⁷³. This

⁷¹ Margaret Herrmann, 'One Field, Many Perspectives; Building the Foundations for Dialogue', *International Studies Quarterly* 42 (1998): 605-624; 'Pragmatism in International Relations Theory', *Millennium* (Special Issue) 31 no. 3 (2002).

provides opportunities for more fruitful uses of historical analogies in the field. For a field of study that relies as much on historical analogies as ours does, this is good news.

⁷² Friedrich Kratochwil, The Monologue of ‘Science. *International Studies Review* 5/1 (2003): 124-128; Yosef Lapid, ‘Through Dialogue to Engaged Pluralism: The Unfinished Business of the Third Debate’, *International Studies Review* 5/1 (2003): 128-136.

⁷³ Nick Vaughan-Williams, ‘International Relations and the ‘Problem of History’’, *Millennium* 34 no. 1 (2005), 115-136; Friedrich Kratochwil, ‘History, Action and Identity: Revisiting the ‘Second’ Great Debate and Assessing its Importance for Social Theory’, *European Journal of International Relations* 12 no. 1 (2006), 5-29.