

Gordon Martel (ed.), 2018. *The Encyclopedia of Diplomacy*, 4 vols. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell. 2168 pp. \$878.75 Hardback ISBN 978-1118887912.

If only God can know everything, it follows that scholars should rest content with painting their cameos or reproducing already known grand celestial schemes. The Enlightenment philosophers famously did not agree. Their ambition was to catch the world in its entirety. It was not just that nothing human should be foreign to a scholarly mind, which had been the credo of the Renaissance, but that everything should be identified, collected and classified (Bjørnstad, Jordheim, and Régent-Susini 2018). Whether it was Jean-Baptiste le Rond d'Alembert and Denis Diderot's editing of the first *Encyclopédie* in the 1750s that brought Reinhard Koselleck to place the beginnings of the *Sattelzeit* or Saddle Time that bridged the early modern period with our own at exactly that time is open to debate, but it is hardly a coincidence. The ambition of the two main *Encyclopédistes* stands as a fitting portal to modernity. The ambition to know the world in its entirety is a very modern ambition.

As everything modern, the encyclopedic ambition of telling grand narratives about where we are and where we come from has been poked fun at by postmodernists (Lyotard 1984 [1979]). Jorge Luis Borges famously wrote a short story about "a certain Chinese dictionary" which included an exhaustive categorization of animals, as follows:

Those that belong to the emperor
 Embalmed ones
 Those that are trained
 Suckling pigs
 Mermaids (or Sirens)
 Fabulous ones
 Stray dogs
 Those that are included in this classification
 Those that tremble as if they were mad
 Innumerable ones
 Those drawn with a very fine camel hair brush
 Et cetera
 Those that have just broken the flower vase
 Those that, at a distance, resemble flies
 BORGES 1999 [1942]: 231.

Borges' point was the typically postmodern one that categorizations are, in the final instance, arbitrary and unexhaustive (Foucault 1994). Borges seems

to have been inspired by an actual Chinese dictionary from 1911 which is available on the internet as Giles 1911. We could discuss, probably endlessly, what rationality is and what its basis is. For our purposes, that is not necessary. Suffice it to say that, as per the postmodernists, there are two basic problems with the genre of encyclopedias: they are predicated on a grand narrative that everything can be revealed, and they try, futilely, to order that revelation exhaustively. The very existence of the Chinese encyclopedia makes us able to add a third point, which is that by the 19th century, the ambition of the *Encyclopédistes* to capture fields of knowledge in their entirety had reached China. As did other civilizations, China already had a long and distinguished tradition of King's Mirrors and dictionaries. However, King's Mirrors do not aim to capture all known knowledge, but only that which is deemed of interest to a ruler. Dictionaries aim for completeness, but only on the level of semantics. Modernity tops these already hubristic ambitions.

Since the invention of encyclopedias, we have had further developments. There is by now an entire continuum of genres between encyclopedias on the one hand and research articles and books on the other. There are guides; Ernest Satow's guide to diplomatic practice first emerged in 1917, and appeared in its sixth edition in 2016 (Roberts 2016). The handbook, not in its engineering gestation but in its scholarly one, presents itself as a mini-encyclopedia, both in terms of its reach of topics and its exhaustiveness in treating those topics. It is at present a much-loved genre by publishers. There seems to be handbooks for just about everything. Publishers like Oxford University Press, SAGE, Edward Elgar, and of course Wiley Blackwell are particularly fond of them, one result of which being that there are often a number of competing handbook titles in print. Diplomacy is certainly no exception. Then there are the stock-taking exercises – companions, readers, compendia – and then there are the annotated bibliographies and the plain bibliographies, all of which sometimes run to book's length.

The dream of cataloguing knowledge exhaustively is still alive. It is by now global. It is also a productive dream. There is a sense in which, despite my postmodern leanings, I even share it. Hardly a day goes by without me being on Wiki, and I always start my research projects by looking up key terms and events there. In order to produce further knowledge, facts must be chosen, storylines developed, and narratives produced. There is no end to our business. To turn to postmodernists again, the task of the scholar is sublime, for it is endless (Lyotard 1991). While Wikipedia is a nice place to begin one's research, it is hardly a place to discontinue it.

The four volumes under review here make for a nice place to continue. Given that the items on display are more scholarly and informative than are

their Wiki counterparts, these four volumes make up a nifty item on the reference shelf of international historians, International Relations scholars and practitioners alike. For those who have been completely Wikified, there is even an electronic version.

Catching everything must remain a dream, even in an encyclopedia such as this one, which does not pretend to be the last word even on its specialized subject. For what has been called the master institution of international relations (Wight 1977), 2,000 pages-plus may even be said to be a humble number. At least it does not come as a surprise when, in his short preface, the editor, the historian Gordon Martel, notes that brevity was a challenge. It must have been a great consolation that Martel is no newcomer to the adjacent genres; he has previously edited a reader on the Second World War, two companions (to Europe 1900–45 and International History 1900–2001, respectively) and *The Encyclopedia of War* (2011). The present rendering must be seen as a sequel to the latter, which was also published by Wiley Blackwell. Keeping this encyclopedia relatively – I repeat, relatively – short has its advantages. The primary gain is probably that it may double as a handbook, and as such, it is fully up to speed compared to what is available from Oxford, SAGE, and other publishers.

There is a lot to choose from. The total number of entries is almost as plentiful as the days of the calendar year. Several of them are full-length articles. Given the genre and the format, it would be miserly to criticize the overall formal lay out of this encyclopedia.

While the items are ordered alphabetically, an initial overview usefully orders them in 15 categories. Categories that sport a baker's dozen or less articles include alliances, concepts, conferences and congresses, culture, diplomatic organizations, disputes, International Organizations, and law and rights. The categories crises, techniques, and theorists have more entries. There are 33 articles on "Wars and Conflicts" and 37 entries under "Types of diplomacy," whereas 48 articles concern treaties. A little less than half of the total entries are on diplomatists. Around 73 per cent of the diplomatists covered are Westerners, and of those who are not, almost half are Japanese (the reason probably being that, among the eleven professors serving on the encyclopedia's board of advisory editors, we find a professor of Japanese History).

Most articles are impressively up to date both where developments and references to extant literature are concerned, but there are exceptions. For example, consular affairs are covered by one article only, and in that article, with one exception, the oldest specific work referenced is from 1990. Given that the consular institution has finally received some of the attention it so richly deserves during the three decades since then, this is a bit thin (see *inter*

alia Melissen and Fernández 2011; Ulbert and Le Bouëdec 2006 and works cited therein). Intellectual interest in consuls has peaked when their tasks have been in flux, and the room for innovation is the greatest. The growing interest in consular tasks and affairs among practitioners and academics alike in recent decades must necessarily be understood in light of the challenges that globalization presents to principles of state sovereignty, in response to which consuls seem to be more favorably positioned than many diplomats. Consuls and their equivalents in history have handled issues of trade, law, and politics for millennia, but in a more routine and less spectacular manner than diplomats, who have generally dealt in high politics; treaties, intrigues, war, and peace. The consul has not depended on the existence of a network of polities with reciprocal relations among themselves; on the contrary, consuls have often emerged where diplomatic relations for some reason or other have been impossible or simply unthinkable. Diplomats are always sent from one polity and received in another; they follow and are accredited to the sovereign or government of a receiving polity and are thus to be found in recognized capital cities or with governments in exile. Consuls, on the other hand, follow trade and people, and can in principle be found anywhere. All this should have been worthy of attention in an encyclopedia of this scope.

Some articles are craven in their use of sources from the author's home discipline and make for highly valuable reading while at the same time ignoring scholarly output from other disciplines. The article on Iroquois or Haudenosaunee Diplomacy is a case in point. The topic is of crucial interest to scholars of diplomacy, for it concerns a social diplomatic institution that reaches back to before first contact, and therefore patently evolved, in its early instances, independently of all the known diplomatic systems of the Old World. Haudenosaunee Diplomacy has therefore been of interest to people studying social institutions, from Goldstein (1969) via Crawford (1994) and beyond.

Overall, though, the editor and his team are to be congratulated on the sheer number of scholars that they have successfully herded, and also on the interdisciplinary character of that herd. There are some outstanding scholars who are missing – from my own discipline, Costas Constantinou, James Der Derian, Jan Melissen, and Paul Sharp come to mind – but the list of contributors nonetheless reads a bit like a diplomatic scholars' who's who.

The choice of items must have been excruciating. The focus is squarely on European modernity, with some items covering the early modern European period and some attention paid to Rome and Ancient Greece. A question that is bound to be raised by some readers concerns the neglect of African and Latin American affairs, and the downplaying of Asian ones. For example, items on

treaties and alliances overwhelmingly pertain to those between Western powers, and of the rest, almost none are entirely without Western participation. This is the kind of choice that would have raised few eyebrows already when I was a student in the 1980s, and that is becoming increasingly problematic.

If this is an *au courant* point, I should like to add a *contre-courant* one. The encyclopedia covers only half of known history. To take only what is perhaps the most pressing issues, one would look in vain for items covering the oldest known treaty text (the Treaty of Kadesh from 1258 BCE, between Egypt and Hatti), or of the so-called Amarna diplomacy it was part of. While the traditional conceit of counting the system of Greek city states as the world's first international – or better, inter-polity – system is still sometimes evoked, scholars of diplomacy have by now firmly established the Amarna system as the world's first fully-fledged states system and the conventional bookend of historical scholarship. Its existence in the fourteenth century BCE is well documented among other things through Pharaoh Akhenaten's (r. 1353–36) library (Moran 1992). Martin Wight (1977) should be credited as the first scholar to systematically acknowledge Amarna as the first interstate system. Cohen and Westbrook (2000) fleshed out the main practices and institutions that constituted the system by scrutinizing the archive of tablets that gave the system its name – the letters from other kings and vassals to the Egyptian Pharaoh in his capital of Amarna. Some archival work has also been done on Mesopotamian affairs that predate the Amarna system. Work *inter alia* on the city archives of Ebla and Mari demonstrate that, while early literature stressed the despotic character of Mesopotamian rule, the situation seems to have been one where leading cities engaged in what has been called heterogenous contracting with the other cities that it dominated, meaning that there were all kinds of diplomatic games being played (e.g. Postgate 1992; Seri 2012).

Ancient diplomatic practices that are the genealogical forerunners of present-day ones – the transmutation of messenger sticks into the folded documents that ancient Greeks used for accreditation purposes and that gave diplomacy its name comes to mind – have been left unexplored. Given the wealth of other material covered, the passing up of the opportunity to investigate beginnings stands out. The editorial choice made is of course wholly legitimate, and so is criticizing it. The situation reminds me of going to a book shop; the better the shop, the deeper I miss the items that are not there. And let it be no doubt: as places to browse go, this one is outstanding. George Martel and his editorial team are to be congratulated for having done the community of diplomatic scholars a great service. Their encyclopedia

would probably have pleased even *les philosophes des lumières* themselves. This work is likely to remain the go-to work in the genre for decades.

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