World History: East-West and North-South

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Contribution to Panel "The Third World Today and Tomorrow" at the Congress of Nordic Historians, Oslo, August 1994

This paper shall not be limited to the "third world", but will tackle the whole world. What I want to discuss is how the enormous changes in the last decade should influence our approach to modern and contemporary world history.

I want to ask three main questions:

1) What are the main implications of the ongoing changes in the world for the writing of world history and for research priorities in the field of world history?

2) Is the East-West divide still a useful dichotomy in the research and writing of world history?

3) Is the North-South divide a useful dichotomy in the research and writing of world history?

World History as Global History

Paradoxically, a possible remedy for the endemic fragmentation of history into a number of sub-disciplines might be to establish *world history* as yet another sub-discipline, with its own professors, training programs, international conferences, etc: a sub-discipline with a unifying aim. A step in this direction was the establishment of the World History Association and the *Journal of World History* in 1990. Here in the Nordic countries, 20th century world history can no longer be taught or written either as a compilation of national histories, an extension of European history, or as a set of separate courses or chapters dealing with each continent or civilization. The integration of the whole world into one environmental, economic and political unit has gone so far

that it is high time this is reflected within the historical research agenda, as well as in the writing and teaching of world history.

The new world history must be truly global in character. By this I mean that it must concentrate on processes and events affecting the whole world or most of it. From a global perspective I would say that there are areas that point themselves out as particularly fruitful for world historical research:

The first is the global environment, the relationship between the whole humanity as such and the planet with its soil, water, plants, animals and atmosphere. Paul Kennedy should be seen as a pioneer. With his *Preparing for the 21st Century,* he became the first world famous historian since Arnold Toynbee to include the natural environment as a major factor in the analysis of the world society. Historians have been slow to integrate environmental concerns in their research. There is every reason for Nordic historians to take the lead in this domain and to follow Paul Kennedy's example.

The second area is the spread of communications which has led to a more and more rapidly "shrinking" world. We need to undertake a thorough investigation of this "shrinking" and its economic, social and cultural consequences. Just as much as national historians have been preoccupied with the process leading up to the integrated nation state, world historians must preoccupy themselves with the ongoing integration process in the world at large. In my view the key to a truly global world history is the history of communications: the expansion of roads, rails, sealanes, airways, radio, telegraph, telephone, television, telefax, satellites, computer networks, right up to the creation of the notion of cyber space, much of this facilitated by the emergence of English as the language of global communications (but from now on English may gradually lose its position as a global lingua franca: there is a new assertiveness on the part of French as well as German in Europe, and in Hong Kong and Singapore, people switch from English

to Chinese. Quite frankly, I find this worrisome.) The history of communications is the history of overcoming difference. It is also the history of space, or to be more exact, the elimination of space as an obstacle to human contact, the penetration and growing irrelevance of borders. The history of communications is a growing field internationally. One way for Nordic historians to engage themselves in this field is to study the role that Nordic corporations and personalities have played in the "shrinking of the world". An active role was for instance played by the Nordic Telegraph Company. It is good news for Nordic world history that this company has recently donated its rich archives to the Danish National Archives in Copenhagen and that our colleague Kurt Jacobsen (author of the first comprehensive biography of a Nordic communist/left socialist leader) has been given the task of writing the company's history. Hopefully he will see himself as a world historian when performing that task.

The third fruitful area for the study of global world history is the organized response made by economic and political power groups to the "shrinking" of the world: the attempts by multinational corporations and great powers or power alliances, as well as internationally oriented politicians from lesser powers, to establish either a world-wide hegemony or international organizations to serve or manage the combined interests of mankind. There is no lack of attention among historians to the rise and fall of great powers, a story involving the familiar pattern of conflicts between would-be hegemons and peoples fighting for their liberation. But the histories of multinational corporations, the United Nations, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the OECD, the Group of Seven, and other organizations with global aspirations, certainly need upgrading as fields of study for historians.

I will limit myself to mentioning these three areas here, although I could have taken up others, such as gender, population growth, migration, health, energy, international trade and technology transfers, the spread of ideologies, secularization or

religious renaissance.

There is every reason for shared global concerns and processes to occupy a prominent place in world history, but world historians must of course also divide the world into certain categories or spheres in order to understand contradictions and conflicts.

How to Divide the World

How should we divide the world? Of course there are many options, and it is neither possible nor desirable to reach complete agreement on the principles of division. Various operational divisions shed light on different lines of conflict that may all be important, although to varying degrees. We must continue to toy with multiple dividing lines, but also discuss which are the most important.

For statistical purposes, and in order to measure comparative change over time, it is useful to divide the world in acccordance with the borders of its states, and group them into a certain number of regions. One state can then not belong to more than one region. Turkey must be either in the Middle East or Europe, Burma in either South or Southeast Asia. Intellectually such rigidity is unsatisfactory, and with the sophisticated databases that all of us shall soon have access to, it will be possible to group and regroup regions according to each and everyone's preference, as long as each state is taken as one unit. There is no way we can count black Christian Sudan in "Africa south of Sahara" and arab Muslim Sudan in "North Africa". The enormous variation in the size of states also forms a serious limitation to the establishment of sensible world statistics. But as long as we know what we are doing, statistics can tell us quite a lot. Not only for statistical reasons, but also more generally to make our discussions intelligible, it is recommendable that we agree at least on which states to include under each regional name. We can disagree on whether or not to consider the Middle East, Europe or Southeast Asia as separate regions, but we should agree on which states to include under the terms "Middle East", "Europe" and "Southeast

Asia". Southeast Asia thus consists of Vietnam, Laos, Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, Brunei, Indonesia and the Philippines. It is unacceptable when much of the Nordic press includes East Asian states like Taiwan and Korea in Southeast Asia.

One possible regional division of the world, that makes sense from a statistical perspective, is the following:

South America and the Caribbean (incl. Mexico)
North America
Africa south of Sahara
North Africa and the Middle East (incl. Iran and Afghanistan)
Europe
The former Soviet Union
South Asia
Southeast Asia
East Asia
Australia and the Pacific.

This corresponds quite well with the regions used by the World Bank in its *World Development Reports,* but the usefulness of those reports, as well as other world statistical publications, are hampered by a kind of almost primordial distinction between so-called "developed" and "developing" countries.

Intellectually, the regional division just listed is unlikely to make anyone happy. To retain the Baltic republics and Central Asia within a region called the former Soviet Union makes sense because it facilitates the use of Soviet historical statistics, but does not correspond with the aspirations of the people living there or with cultural affinities in general. The division is also unsatisfactory for comparative purposes. Some of the regions, like Europe and Africa south of Sahara have a great number of states with independent statistics whereas others, such as North America, South Asia and East Asia, have a small number of extremely populous states. This makes regional comparisons methodically difficult;

just consider the effects it would have for states' share of world exports if we decided to count each of the United States of America or each Chinese province, as a single national unit.

Thus, we also need other ways of dividing the world analytically, less rigid, more stimulating, perhaps also more politically appealing, but less useful for statisticians. Let me then first join the chorus that rejects the idea of the three worlds, indeed the whole expression "the third world". I know it figures in the title for this panel, but in my view the expression should be abandoned for all analytical purposes. We should remember it as an idea or a notion that was widely used in the 1970s and 1980s. The two main reasons for abandoning the concept of a "third world" are, firstly, the lack of similarity, affinity and cooperation between Asia, Africa and South America, and, secondly, that the division between the first and second world has disappeared. There is no longer a division between a capitalist first and a socialist second world. Capitalism has become a universal standard. The whole world is now becoming rapidly integrated in a globalized market economy, of course with various degrees of state intervention and participation in economic activities. Today there is no question of finding a systematic alternative to capitalism, only of different ways of stimulating, managing, controlling capitalist enterprise, and repairing the damage and injustices it systematically engenders. The triumph of global capitalism is a subject that should attract much scholarly attention from historians. Why do we write so little about it? Perhaps because those who like it find it self-evident and thus far too easy to explain, while those of us who don't like it, find it depressive as a topic for study. When our dreams vanished, we had to morally accept the capitalist market economy as a kind of lesser evil, but we don't want to talk about it.

However, the global triumph of the market economy should not lead us to believe that we have come to "the end of history", or that there will no longer be any basic conflicts in this world. What will the conflicts look like that characterize the beginning

of the 21st century?

In 1993, in a programmatic article in the Summer issue of *Foreign Affairs* professor at Harvard Samuel P. Huntington tried to formulate a new outlook on the world to replace Washington's lost anti-communism. The article provoked a heated debate through the whole autumn. In the multi-ethnic, missionary political culture of the United States there is a national need for an orderly world of conflict between good and evil. Huntington suggested a conflictual order based on the "Clash of Civilizations". The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural, he said: "The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics". He defined a civilization as "the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species." He found eight such civilizations: the Western (Europe and North-America); the Confucian, the Japanese, the Islamic, the Hindu, the Slavic-Orthodox, the Latin American, and "possibly" the African. Differences between these civilizations were in Huntington's view more fundamental than differences among ideologies and political regimes. Communists can become democrats, and rich can become poor, but Russians cannot become Estonians or Azeris become Armenians. Huntington furthermore contended that it is differences among civilizations that have generated history's most prolonged and most violent conflicts. At present, said Huntington, the West is at the peak of its power, but it is confronting non-Wests that "increasingly have the desire, the will and the resources to shape the world in non-Western ways" ... "The Velvet Curtain of culture has replaced the Iron Curtain of ideology". The West stands against an Eastern economic bloc, likely to be led by China, and the Gulf War was not the world against Iraq (as Bush presented it), but really "the West against Islam". Huntington went as far as declaring: "The next world war, if there is one, will be a war between civilizations". Western culture's influence in the rest of the world is only superficial: "At a more

basic level ... Western concepts differ fundamentally from those prevalent in other civilizations. Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures .... The very notion that there could be a 'universal civilization' is a Western idea, directly at odds with the particularism of most Asian societies and their emphasis on what distinguishes one people from another". Despite the great differences among Asians themselves, Huntington remained convinced that the Asians are going to find together in a Confucian-Islamic connection to challenge Western interests, values and power. The West must meet this challenge, he urged, by promoting greater cooperation and unity within its own civilizations, and by limiting the expansion of the military strength of Confucian and Islamic states.

Let me frankly admit that I find Huntington's views frightening, in particular because they were given such a prominent place in a leading foreign policy journal like *Foreign Affairs*, and even more because there is some tendency in the Clinton administration to conceive of the world in 'Huntingtonian' terms. Fortunately, the USA is enough of an open society to have given Huntington a lot of backlash. Already in the Autumn 1993 issue of *Foreign Affairs* there were a number of critical replies.

Fouad Ajami pointed to the prevailing fact that the actors in international politics are states, not civilizations. Nation states will continue to act upon their own interests with little regard for civilizational duties, both in East and West. Therefore most Arab countries did not side with Iraq in 1990-91, and would certainly not feel any commitment to supporting Confucians against the West if that was not in their interest. Also Ajami rejected Huntington's idea that Western culture had just had a superficial impact in Asia: "The secular idea, the state system and the balance of power, pop culture jumping tariff walls and barriers, the state

as an instrument of welfare, all these have been internalized in the remotest places", said Ajami, from his moderate islamic standpoint. The same point was made by the Chinese dissident Liu Binyan: "though Confucianism is gradually coming back to China, it cannot be compared to the increasingly forceful influence of Western culture on the Chinese people in the last twenty years."

Huntington was also criticized by another scholar based in a Confucian state, Kishore Mahbubani of the Civil Service College, Singapore. He saw Huntington's article as evidence of a dangerous siege mentality: "It will ... come as a great surprise to many Westerners to learn that the rest of the world fears the West even more than the West fears it, especially the threat posed by a wounded West." Mahbubani had some comfort for Huntington: There is no likelihood of a Confucian-Islamic connection, because: "The simple truth is that East and Southeast Asia feel more comfortable with the West." But Mahbubani was concerned for the West's own well-being. Through budgetary undiscipline, low savings, an eroding work ethic, lacking leadership and excessive democracy, the West "is bringing about its relative decline by its own hand."

If we reject Hungtington's idea of hostile civilizational conflicts based on fundamentally different cultural outlooks, and retain the realist idea of conflicts built to a great extent on the interests of states and corporations, can these conflicts still be interpreted in a framework of an East-West and a North-South dichotomy? Before answering, let me just mention that these two dichotomies have formed the basic frame of reference in some of the most influential books on post-WWII history produced by Nordic authors. Geir Lundestad's widely used textbook in international politics 1945-90 is entitled *East, West, North, South* and has six chapters on the East-West relationship, two on internal developments in the East and the West respectively, and two on the North-South relationship (dealing with decolonization and economic relations). The world history published by Cappelen and Politiken in the 1980s called two of its last volumes "The World Divided in

Two" and "The New World Order"; the one (written by Ole Kristian Grimnes) opening with reflections on West, East, The Third World and the shrinking of the whole world into one united whole; the other (written by Erling Bjøl) ending with reflections on East and West, North and South. The competing Nordic history of the world, published jointly by Aschehoug and Bra Böcker, had a volume on the 1945-65 period (written by Bo Huldt) which was called "Three Worlds". It opened with a section on the Cold War and continued with separate sections on each of the "three worlds". The following volume (written by Sven Tägil) dealt with the years 1965-85; it used "East against West" and "North and South" as its major organizing principles and carried the title "Towards an Uncertain Future". In 1986 the future was indeed so uncertain that Aschehoug and Bra Böcker felt compelled to publish a whole additional volume already in 1994 (written by Jarle Simensen and Sven Tägil), dealing uniquely with the years 1985-93. "The World Changes" it was called. This volume was not organized according to the Three World or East-West--North-South model, but simply went through the world region by region: the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Latin-America and Africa, but in between the authors also inserted two more general chapters discussing the question of "a new international order" and whether the concept of The Third World is antiquated. Sven Tägil ends his reflections with the justified hope of many people that the United Nations will finally fulfill its obligations as a world organization, ensuring peace, security and human rights. Jarle Simensen describes how the concept of "The Third World" has been undermined and, in a perceptive chapter based on the latest World Bank report on world development, suggests to divide the countries of the world into "industrialized countries" (i-land), "developing countries" (u-land) and "poor countries" (fattige land). This is a division based on economic statistics, however, and not on lines of conflict. In Tägil and Simensen's supplementary volume, there are no basic lines of conflict in the world, but Simensen makes the comment that in the long run the rise of East Asia may be seen as a more

significant historical process than the fall of communism, and that the combination of capitalism and Confucian morality may become the most interesting alternative to the Western model.

When I first started thinking about this paper, I thought I would be going to reject the East-West and North-South divides and look for alternative ways of carving up the post cold war world. But I came to the opposite conclusion. Indeed I'm now convinced that the two traditional dichotomies will be basic to our understanding also of the current and the future world. But they need modification.

The East-West Divide

The need for modification is most compelling for the East-West divide, which should no longer be seen in Cold War terms with Moscow and Washington on opposite sides. Instead the East should be the real and traditional East with Beijing, Tokyo, New Delhi, Singapore and Mecca as its power centers. And the West should include the whole European civilization encompassing Europe with Russia, the Ukraine and Siberia, the whole of America, as well as Australia and New Zealand. In today's world, this leaves out only Africa, which is neither West nor East, but just South. South America, however, is clearly a part of the West.

In such a perspective the Cold War will appear as a struggle between two great Western, indeed two European, ideologies and economic systems. The first arena of the struggle was the European core area, which was split in two, but the struggle quickly spread to the rest of the world. This meant that the states in Asia, Africa and South-America were marginalized as individual players in world politics and could either sell themselves as allies to one of the Cold War blocks or try to manifest themselves independently through the non-aligned movement or initiatives like the demand for a new economic order. The foremost winners of the Cold War were those who allied themselves with the West, primarily in Asia. They were able to buy enormous economic advantages in exchange for political complacency. But in a sense the communist regimes of

China and Vietnam were winners too. Not economically of course. Their communism did not make their peoples rich. But they used communism to create strong unified states that could eventually link up with the more developed economies and take part in the big run for prosperity, instead of falling apart in the way of the Soviet Union.

The triumph of world capitalism towards the end of the 20th century was marked by a massive dismantling of protectionist barriers to world trade, investments and flows of money. Among the communist regimes, the People's Republic of China was the first to copy the exploits of the East Asian tigers. It started to develop a market and open up its economy already in 1978. When Eastern Europe, Vietnam, the countries of the former Soviet Union, of Africa, South America and India followed suit and proceeded to open up their economies in the late 80s and early 90s, the competition for investments intensified to a degree that considerably reduced the bargaining power of all states in relation to banks and corporations. Never before had international corporations enjoyed such a liberty of choice as to where they would place their investments. With the sudden opening of the world, the slogan "open doors" was turned around. At the beginning of the 20th century it was a US device to prevent the carving up of China into exclusive European and Japanese domains, and keep the country open for international competition in investments and trade. Now, a century later, the same slogan has become a Chinese and East Asian device to keep the US and European markets open. In May 1994, a conference on "Waves of the Future" was organized in Singapore. Prominent leaders from several Asian countries attended. Vice-premier Li Lanqing of the Chinese State Council expressed his concern about trade protectionism and "a tendency towards regional groupings ... To boost the openness of the whole world and every part of it is exactly what we should advocate. Opening up is not only the key to China's development but the key to the common development of all countries and regions in the world." (FEER, 2.6.94, pp. 20-21).

Do "West" and "East" exist in any real sense today? Or are

they just abstractions used by people like me who want a neatly ordered world for reasons of scholarly simplicity? Of course "East" and "West" are abstractions glossing over an enormous lot of internal differences, and fortunately no such thing as a massive Eastern or Western solidarity, alliance or conspiration as yet exists. But the concepts "East" and "West" are very much alive in political discussions around the globe, particularly the concept of the "West". In that sense they are real indeed. Let me demonstrate this with two quotations from the conference on "Waves of the Future":

"Asia's time has come. It is catching up with the West ... sometime in the next century, Asia by its sheer size would shift the weight of global economic power from the West to the East" (Singapore's prime minister Goh Chok Tong; the Business Times (Singapore), 3.6.94, FEER, 2.6.94, p. 21).

"Asia ... must not emerge as a new hegemon, but rather as catalyst for global economic growth and to fill in the vacuum following the moral abdication of the West." (Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, same source).

It would not be difficult to find mirroring quotations from the side of the United States, where "Western values" are defined as opposed to the ideas of non-Western cultures, but since I've already cited Samuel Huntington at length, there should be no need for more. For some reason, there does not seem to be much similar debate in Europe. These last years, European intellectuals have been more inward-looking and less concerned with discussing their relationship to Asia than their US and Canadian colleagues, not to speak of the Australians, who speak and write about Asia all the time.

As Nordic world historians, we should launch a major effort into expanding European awareness of the relationship between East and West, between Asia and the European world. In this endeavour there will be two main concerns. The first is the relationship between the West and the economic and political power centers of East and Southeast, possibly also South Asia. The second is the

relationship between the West and the islamic Middle East. This second concern is quite different from the first. The countries of West Asia and the Middle East have no prospect of catching up with the West in terms of production and technology, but are ridden by social and economic problems and internal conflicts for which the West is sometimes legitimately blamed and most often used as a scapegoat or target of anger. Europe's relationship to the Middle East resembles the North-South divide, which will be no less important in the future than the East-West dimension.

The North-South Divide

Whereas the East-West divide may be seen as a relationship of strong poles between which a pendulum of power and prosperity has been swinging through history, the North-South divide is a relationship where one is rich and strong, the other weak and poor. I see a considerable danger that our rejection of the concept of a "third world" should lead us to also abandon the North-South dimension in world affairs and to overlook the still rapidly growing gap between haves and have-nots in the world we are living in. The concept of a North-South conflict should be here to stay, and should be one of the basic dimensions in the study of contemporary world history. We should not be too preoccupied with latitudes and longitudes as such. In India and China, the worlds two most populous states, the "North" is in the South and the "South" in the North. The point is that the "North-South divide" is a metaphor for the relationship between rich and poor, and that if we stop talking about a North-South conflict, we may simply leave the poor parts of the world outside our conceptual schemes. Then also the North-South divide in the Americas is even in purely directional terms a north-southern affair, and the poorest of all continents, Africa, is clearly in the South. On the other side, there is a certain possibily that Australia/New Zealand, South Africa and Argentina/Chile may find together in a kind of "Far Southern" growth zone. Ideas of closer cooperation between these countries have been advanced from the Argentinian side, but this

should so far be seen just as an interesting idea.

In our studies of the countries in the South, it is important that we consider their relationships with all the three rich and industrialized regions of the world: Europe, North-America and East Asia. We have to distinguish clearly between these three regions in the North, just as we have to distinguish between the various regions in the South. One major research question is what we may call the "africanization of the South". Whereas Africa could, a couple of decades ago, be considered alongside the poor countries of Asia and Latin America, Africa distinguishes itself today with the bleakest and most depressive statistics of all regions in the world. The only similarly depressive statistics that we can find in Asia, are from Bangla Desh, and in several South American countries the economies have recently made a turn for the better.

Why does Africa remain so poor? Two Norwegian Africanists, Jarle Simensen and Tore Linné Eriksen, addressed that question in a book published two years ago, edited by Svein Gjerdåker and Arne Tostensen Jarle Simensen built on John Iliffe's book from 1987: *The African Poor: A History* and mainly demonstrated that poverty did not arise with colonialism, but certainly existed also in precolonial Africa. Tore Linné Eriksen gave a rather traditional marxist reply to the question of poverty's causes. Land had been concentrated on the hands of a few people who had little incentive to improve productivity rather than being distributed among more productive peasants. African countries had neglected to develop an agriculture directed at satisfying the needs of their own populations. Instead they had aimed at exportation, and thus came to suffer from the general reduction in prices for primary products like coffee, cocoa and copper. The new political elites had established a bureaucracy that was overly preoccupied with its own consumption of imported luxury items. There had been many conflicts and wars. Finally the rising indebtedness of the African countries had forced them into a situation where any future income from exports would just have to be paid back to their creditors. In

Linné Eriksen's view the decrease in primary commodity prices and the debt policy of the West amounted to a "war against the poor". Although all of Linné Eriksen's points are relevant to the plight of Africa, I think the idea of a "war against the poor" is misleading. If the Africans "fight back" by cutting off relations with the World Bank and other western warriors, it will merely lead to a catastrophy. The main problem is not Western exploitation, but universal neglect. Africa has been marginalized within the world economy. It can neither manage on its own (at least not with the current population growth) nor compete with Asian or Latin American countries in the race for investments. What is needed is a massive internationally organized aid programme for Africa, in which Africans themselves must play the leading role. This is the only way of avoiding the twin dangers of human catastrophy and "recolonization".

The poverty problem, of course, is not just an African affair. There are many poor countries elsewhere as well, and not only poor countries, but also masses of poor people in countries that are generally better of. Indeed some social scientists have warned against a process of social polarization where the world at large comes to resemble a US city: the rich live in the placid safety of intricate alarm systems while the poor fight each other in quarters where the rich never dare to show their face (if they like, the rich can still take part in the fighting by funding gangs and armies and controlling them from far away computers).

It is to be hoped that historians will go massively into the field of development studies and engage in research and lively discussions on the causes of the growth in certain parts of Asia, the reasons for African poverty and for the continued indeed growing poverty problem in Asia, South-America and also in the so-called developed world.

Conclusions

I shall draw four conclusions:

1) Modern and contemporary world history should be researched,

taught and written as global history, not as a collection of national or regional histories, and not as European history with additional chapters or volumes on Asia, Africa and America. Three fields point themselves out as more clearly global than others and thus as promising areas for the development of a truly global world history: the environment, the spread of communications and the development of international corporations and organisations. A catchword for the globalization of world history could be the "shrinking of the world".

2) The concepts of three worlds or "the third world" should be abandoned altogether. This also means that this should probably be the last panel of Nordic historians dedicated to "the third world". Asianists, Africanists and Americanists do not have more in common than either of them have with Europeanists. Instead of "third world panels" we should aim for panels on "the shrinking of the world" in general, and draw our Asian, African and American examples into panel discussions of topics such as women's history, nationalism, etc.

3) Although it is no longer possible to speak of three worlds we should not abandon the ideas of either an East-West or a North-South divide. The East-West relationship should be redefined as a relationship between Asia and Europe, and on the European level we should try to launch a major research effort concerning the rise of Asia in the 20th century and the role of Europe and the West (including Russia) in Asia's rise. What we should do is to take up again the general perspective of William H. McNeill's classic book *The Rise of the West* from 1963, and let the East-West pendulum swing back towards the Rising East.

4) It is perhaps of even greater importance that historians engage themselves in development research, a discipline that is already well-established by social scientists with contacts to the Nordic aid agencies, the UN system and the World Bank. They tackle the North-South dimension of world affairs, the problem of poverty and the relations between cores and peripheries. I'm convinced that

historians can make significant contributions to this field, for instance by carrying out comparative studies between growing and stagnating or crisis-ridden areas of the world. Perhaps we should take up Jarle Simensen's suggestion and call this "the history of poverty".

So let us think of the modern world as one, with a joint network of communications and common environmental concerns, no longer divided in three, but still with internal conflicts running in both East-West and North-South directions.

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that it is high time this is reflected within the historical research agenda, as well as in the writing and teaching of world history.

The new world history must be truly global in character. By this I mean that it must concentrate on processes and events affecting the whole world or most of it. From a global perspective I would say that there are areas that point themselves out as particularly fruitful for world historical research:

The first is the global environment, the relationship between the whole humanity as such and the planet with its soil, water, plants, animals and atmosphere. Paul Kennedy should be seen as a pioneer. With his *Preparing for the 21st Century*, he became the first world famous historian since Arnold Toynbee to include the natural environment as a major factor in the analysis of the world society. Historians have been slow to integrate environmental concerns in their research. There is every reason for Nordic historians to take the lead in this domain and to follow Paul Kennedy's example.

The second area is the spread of communications which has led to a more and more rapidly "shrinking" world. We need to undertake a thorough investigation of this "shrinking" and its economic, social and cultural consequences. Just as much as national historians have been preoccupied with the process leading up to the integrated nation state, world historians must preoccupy themselves with the ongoing integration process in the world at large. In my view the key to a truly global world history is the history of communications: the expansion of roads, rails, sealanes, airways, radio, telegraph, telephone, television, telefax, satellites, computer networks, right up to the creation of the notion of cyber space, much of this facilitated by the emergence of English as the language of global communications (but from now on English may gradually lose its position as a global lingua franca: there is a new assertiveness on the part of French as well as German in Europe, and in Hong Kong and Singapore, people switch from English

to Chinese. Quite frankly, I find this worrisome.) The history of communications is the history of overcoming difference. It is also the history of space, or to be more exact, the elimination of space as an obstacle to human contact, the penetration and growing irrelevance of borders. The history of communications is a growing field internationally. One way for Nordic historians to engage themselves in this field is to study the role that Nordic corporations and personalities have played in the "shrinking of the world". An active role was for instance played by the Nordic Telegraph Company. It is good news for Nordic world history that this company has recently donated its rich archives to the Danish National Archives in Copenhagen and that our colleague Kurt Jacobsen (author of the first comprehensive biography of a Nordic communist/left socialist leader) has been given the task of writing the company's history. Hopefully he will see himself as a world historian when performing that task.

The third fruitful area for the study of global world history is the organized response made by economic and political power groups to the "shrinking" of the world: the attempts by multinational corporations and great powers or power alliances, as well as internationally oriented politicians from lesser powers, to establish either a world-wide hegemony or international organizations to serve or manage the combined interests of mankind. There is no lack of attention among historians to the rise and fall of great powers, a story involving the familiar pattern of conflicts between would-be hegemons and peoples fighting for their liberation. But the histories of multinational corporations, the United Nations, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the OECD, the Group of Seven, and other organizations with global aspirations, certainly need upgrading as fields of study for historians.

I will limit myself to mentioning these three areas here, although I could have taken up others, such as gender, population growth, migration, health, energy, international trade and technology transfers, the spread of ideologies, secularization or

religious renaissance.

There is every reason for shared global concerns and processes to occupy a prominent place in world history, but world historians must of course also divide the world into certain categories or spheres in order to understand contradictions and conflicts.

How to Divide the World

How should we divide the world? Of course there are many options, and it is neither possible nor desirable to reach complete agreement on the principles of division. Various operational divisions shed light on different lines of conflict that may all be important, although to varying degrees. We must continue to toy with multiple dividing lines, but also discuss which are the most important.

For statistical purposes, and in order to measure comparative change over time, it is useful to divide the world in acccordance with the borders of its states, and group them into a certain number of regions. One state can then not belong to more than one region. Turkey must be either in the Middle East or Europe, Burma in either South or Southeast Asia. Intellectually such rigidity is unsatisfactory, and with the sophisticated databases that all of us shall soon have access to, it will be possible to group and regroup regions according to each and everyone's preference, as long as each state is taken as one unit. There is no way we can count black Christian Sudan in "Africa south of Sahara" and arab Muslim Sudan in "North Africa". The enormous variation in the size of states also forms a serious limitation to the establishment of sensible world statistics. But as long as we know what we are doing, statistics can tell us quite a lot. Not only for statistical reasons, but also more generally to make our discussions intelligible, it is recommendable that we agree at least on which states to include under each regional name. We can disagree on whether or not to consider the Middle East, Europe or Southeast Asia as separate regions, but we should agree on which states to include under the terms "Middle East", "Europe" and "Southeast

Asia". Southeast Asia thus consists of Vietnam, Laos, Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, Brunei, Indonesia and the Philippines. It is unacceptable when much of the Nordic press includes East Asian states like Taiwan and Korea in Southeast Asia.

One possible regional division of the world, that makes sense from a statistical perspective, is the following:

South America and the Caribbean (incl. Mexico)
North America
Africa south of Sahara
North Africa and the Middle East (incl. Iran and Afghanistan)
Europe
The former Soviet Union
South Asia
Southeast Asia
East Asia
Australia and the Pacific.

This corresponds quite well with the regions used by the World Bank in its *World Development Reports*, but the usefulness of those reports, as well as other world statistical publications, are hampered by a kind of almost primordial distinction between so-called "developed" and "developing" countries.

Intellectually, the regional division just listed is unlikely to make anyone happy. To retain the Baltic republics and Central Asia within a region called the former Soviet Union makes sense because it facilitates the use of Soviet historical statistics, but does not correspond with the aspirations of the people living there or with cultural affinities in general. The division is also unsatisfactory for comparative purposes. Some of the regions, like Europe and Africa south of Sahara have a great number of states with independent statistics whereas others, such as North America, South Asia and East Asia, have a small number of extremely populous states. This makes regional comparisons methodically difficult;

just consider the effects it would have for states' share of world exports if we decided to count each of the United States of America or each Chinese province, as a single national unit.

Thus, we also need other ways of dividing the world analytically, less rigid, more stimulating, perhaps also more politically appealing, but less useful for statisticians. Let me then first join the chorus that rejects the idea of the three worlds, indeed the whole expression "the third world". I know it figures in the title for this panel, but in my view the expression should be abandoned for all analytical purposes. We should remember it as an idea or a notion that was widely used in the 1970s and 1980s. The two main reasons for abandoning the concept of a "third world" are, firstly, the lack of similarity, affinity and cooperation between Asia, Africa and South America, and, secondly, that the division between the first and second world has disappeared. There is no longer a division between a capitalist first and a socialist second world. Capitalism has become a universal standard. The whole world is now becoming rapidly integrated in a globalized market economy, of course with various degrees of state intervention and participation in economic activities. Today there is no question of finding a systematic alternative to capitalism, only of different ways of stimulating, managing, controlling capitalist enterprise, and repairing the damage and injustices it systematically engenders. The triumph of global capitalism is a subject that should attract much scholarly attention from historians. Why do we write so little about it? Perhaps because those who like it find it self-evident and thus far too easy to explain, while those of us who don't like it, find it depressive as a topic for study. When our dreams vanished, we had to morally accept the capitalist market economy as a kind of lesser evil, but we don't want to talk about it.

However, the global triumph of the market economy should not lead us to believe that we have come to "the end of history", or that there will no longer be any basic conflicts in this world. What will the conflicts look like that characterize the beginning

of the 21st century?

In 1993, in a programmatic article in the Summer issue of *Foreign Affairs* professor at Harvard Samuel P. Huntington tried to formulate a new outlook on the world to replace Washington's lost anti-communism. The article provoked a heated debate through the whole autumn. In the multi-ethnic, missionary political culture of the United States there is a national need for an orderly world of conflict between good and evil. Huntington suggested a conflictual order based on the "Clash of Civilizations". The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural, he said: "The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics". He defined a civilization as "the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species." He found eight such civilizations: the Western (Europe and North-America); the Confucian, the Japanese, the Islamic, the Hindu, the Slavic-Orthodox, the Latin American, and "possibly" the African. Differences between these civilizations were in Huntington's view more fundamental than differences among ideologies and political regimes. Communists can become democrats, and rich can become poor, but Russians cannot become Estonians or Azeris become Armenians. Huntington furthermore contended that it is differences among civilizations that have generated history's most prolonged and most violent conflicts. At present, said Huntington, the West is at the peak of its power, but it is confronting non-Wests that "increasingly have the desire, the will and the resources to shape the world in non-Western ways" ... "The Velvet Curtain of culture has replaced the Iron Curtain of ideology". The West stands against an Eastern economic bloc, likely to be led by China, and the Gulf War was not the world against Iraq (as Bush presented it), but really "the West against Islam". Huntington went as far as declaring: "The next world war, if there is one, will be a war between civilizations". Western culture's influence in the rest of the world is only superficial: "At a more

basic level ... Western concepts differ fundamentally from those prevalent in other civilizations. Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures .... The very notion that there could be a 'universal civilization' is a Western idea, directly at odds with the particularism of most Asian societies and their emphasis on what distinguishes one people from another". Despite the great differences among Asians themselves, Huntington remained convinced that the Asians are going to find together in a Confucian-Islamic connection to challenge Western interests, values and power. The West must meet this challenge, he urged, by promoting greater cooperation and unity within its own civilizations, and by limiting the expansion of the military strength of Confucian and Islamic states.

Let me frankly admit that I find Huntington's views frightening, in particular because they were given such a prominent place in a leading foreign policy journal like *Foreign Affairs*, and even more because there is some tendency in the Clinton administration to conceive of the world in 'Huntingtonian' terms. Fortunately, the USA is enough of an open society to have given Huntington a lot of backlash. Already in the Autumn 1993 issue of *Foreign Affairs* there were a number of critical replies.

Fouad Ajami pointed to the prevailing fact that the actors in international politics are states, not civilizations. Nation states will continue to act upon their own interests with little regard for civilizational duties, both in East and West. Therefore most Arab countries did not side with Iraq in 1990-91, and would certainly not feel any commitment to supporting Confucians against the West if that was not in their interest. Also Ajami rejected Huntington's idea that Western culture had just had a superficial impact in Asia: "The secular idea, the state system and the balance of power, pop culture jumping tariff walls and barriers, the state

as an instrument of welfare, all these have been internalized in the remotest places", said Ajami, from his moderate islamic standpoint. The same point was made by the Chinese dissident Liu Binyan: "though Confucianism is gradually coming back to China, it cannot be compared to the increasingly forceful influence of Western culture on the Chinese people in the last twenty years."

Huntington was also criticized by another scholar based in a Confucian state, Kishore Mahbubani of the Civil Service College, Singapore. He saw Huntington's article as evidence of a dangerous siege mentality: "It will ... come as a great surprise to many Westerners to learn that the rest of the world fears the West even more than the West fears it, especially the threat posed by a wounded West." Mahbubani had some comfort for Huntington: There is no likelihood of a Confucian-Islamic connection, because: "The simple truth is that East and Southeast Asia feel more comfortable with the West." But Mahbubani was concerned for the West's own well-being. Through budgetary undiscipline, low savings, an eroding work ethic, lacking leadership and excessive democracy, the West "is bringing about its relative decline by its own hand."

If we reject Hungtington's idea of hostile civilizational conflicts based on fundamentally different cultural outlooks, and retain the realist idea of conflicts built to a great extent on the interests of states and corporations, can these conflicts still be interpreted in a framework of an East-West and a North-South dichotomy? Before answering, let me just mention that these two dichotomies have formed the basic frame of reference in some of the most influential books on post-WWII history produced by Nordic authors. Geir Lundestad's widely used textbook in international politics 1945-90 is entitled *East, West, North, South* and has six chapters on the East-West relationship, two on internal developments in the East and the West respectively, and two on the North-South relationship (dealing with decolonization and economic relations). The world history published by Cappelen and Politiken in the 1980s called two of its last volumes "The World Divided in

Two" and "The New World Order"; the one (written by Ole Kristian Grimnes) opening with reflections on West, East, The Third World and the shrinking of the whole world into one united whole; the other (written by Erling Bjøl) ending with reflections on East and West, North and South. The competing Nordic history of the world, published jointly by Aschehoug and Bra Böcker, had a volume on the 1945-65 period (written by Bo Huldt) which was called "Three Worlds". It opened with a section on the Cold War and continued with separate sections on each of the "three worlds". The following volume (written by Sven Tägil) dealt with the years 1965-85; it used "East against West" and "North and South" as its major organizing principles and carried the title "Towards an Uncertain Future". In 1986 the future was indeed so uncertain that Aschehoug and Bra Böcker felt compelled to publish a whole additional volume already in 1994 (written by Jarle Simensen and Sven Tägil), dealing uniquely with the years 1985-93. "The World Changes" it was called. This volume was not organized according to the Three World or East-West--North-South model, but simply went through the world region by region: the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Latin-America and Africa, but in between the authors also inserted two more general chapters discussing the question of "a new international order" and whether the concept of The Third World is antiquated. Sven Tägil ends his reflections with the justified hope of many people that the United Nations will finally fulfill its obligations as a world organization, ensuring peace, security and human rights. Jarle Simensen describes how the concept of "The Third World" has been undermined and, in a perceptive chapter based on the latest World Bank report on world development, suggests to divide the countries of the world into "industrialized countries" (i-land), "developing countries" (u-land) and "poor countries" (fattige land). This is a division based on economic statistics, however, and not on lines of conflict. In Tägil and Simensen's supplementary volume, there are no basic lines of conflict in the world, but Simensen makes the comment that in the long run the rise of East Asia may be seen as a more

significant historical process than the fall of communism, and that the combination of capitalism and Confucian morality may become the most interesting alternative to the Western model.

When I first started thinking about this paper, I thought I would be going to reject the East-West and North-South divides and look for alternative ways of carving up the post cold war world. But I came to the opposite conclusion. Indeed I'm now convinced that the two traditional dichotomies will be basic to our understanding also of the current and the future world. But they need modification.

The East-West Divide

The need for modification is most compelling for the East-West divide, which should no longer be seen in Cold War terms with Moscow and Washington on opposite sides. Instead the East should be the real and traditional East with Beijing, Tokyo, New Delhi, Singapore and Mecca as its power centers. And the West should include the whole European civilization encompassing Europe with Russia, the Ukraine and Siberia, the whole of America, as well as Australia and New Zealand. In today's world, this leaves out only Africa, which is neither West nor East, but just South. South America, however, is clearly a part of the West.

In such a perspective the Cold War will appear as a struggle between two great Western, indeed two European, ideologies and economic systems. The first arena of the struggle was the European core area, which was split in two, but the struggle quickly spread to the rest of the world. This meant that the states in Asia, Africa and South-America were marginalized as individual players in world politics and could either sell themselves as allies to one of the Cold War blocks or try to manifest themselves independently through the non-aligned movement or initiatives like the demand for a new economic order. The foremost winners of the Cold War were those who allied themselves with the West, primarily in Asia. They were able to buy enormous economic advantages in exchange for political complacency. But in a sense the communist regimes of

China and Vietnam were winners too. Not economically of course. Their communism did not make their peoples rich. But they used communism to create strong unified states that could eventually link up with the more developed economies and take part in the big run for prosperity, instead of falling apart in the way of the Soviet Union.

The triumph of world capitalism towards the end of the 20th century was marked by a massive dismantling of protectionist barriers to world trade, investments and flows of money. Among the communist regimes, the People's Republic of China was the first to copy the exploits of the East Asian tigers. It started to develop a market and open up its economy already in 1978. When Eastern Europe, Vietnam, the countries of the former Soviet Union, of Africa, South America and India followed suit and proceeded to open up their economies in the late 80s and early 90s, the competition for investments intensified to a degree that considerably reduced the bargaining power of all states in relation to banks and corporations. Never before had international corporations enjoyed such a liberty of choice as to where they would place their investments. With the sudden opening of the world, the slogan "open doors" was turned around. At the beginning of the 20th century it was a US device to prevent the carving up of China into exclusive European and Japanese domains, and keep the country open for international competition in investments and trade. Now, a century later, the same slogan has become a Chinese and East Asian device to keep the US and European markets open. In May 1994, a conference on "Waves of the Future" was organized in Singapore. Prominent leaders from several Asian countries attended. Vice-premier Li Lanqing of the Chinese State Council expressed his concern about trade protectionism and "a tendency towards regional groupings ... To boost the openness of the whole world and every part of it is exactly what we should advocate. Opening up is not only the key to China's development but the key to the common development of all countries and regions in the world." (FEER, 2.6.94, pp. 20-21).

Do "West" and "East" exist in any real sense today? Or are

they just abstractions used by people like me who want a neatly ordered world for reasons of scholarly simplicity? Of course "East" and "West" are abstractions glossing over an enormous lot of internal differences, and fortunately no such thing as a massive Eastern or Western solidarity, alliance or conspiration as yet exists. But the concepts "East" and "West" are very much alive in political discussions around the globe, particularly the concept of the "West". In that sense they are real indeed. Let me demonstrate this with two quotations from the conference on "Waves of the Future":

"Asia's time has come. It is catching up with the West ... sometime in the next century, Asia by its sheer size would shift the weight of global economic power from the West to the East" (Singapore's prime minister Goh Chok Tong; the Business Times (Singapore), 3.6.94, FEER, 2.6.94, p. 21).

"Asia ... must not emerge as a new hegemon, but rather as catalyst for global economic growth and to fill in the vacuum following the moral abdication of the West." (Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, same source).

It would not be difficult to find mirroring quotations from the side of the United States, where "Western values" are defined as opposed to the ideas of non-Western cultures, but since I've already cited Samuel Huntington at length, there should be no need for more. For some reason, there does not seem to be much similar debate in Europe. These last years, European intellectuals have been more inward-looking and less concerned with discussing their relationship to Asia than their US and Canadian colleagues, not to speak of the Australians, who speak and write about Asia all the time.

As Nordic world historians, we should launch a major effort into expanding European awareness of the relationship between East and West, between Asia and the European world. In this endeavour there will be two main concerns. The first is the relationship between the West and the economic and political power centers of East and Southeast, possibly also South Asia. The second is the

relationship between the West and the islamic Middle East. This second concern is quite different from the first. The countries of West Asia and the Middle East have no prospect of catching up with the West in terms of production and technology, but are ridden by social and economic problems and internal conflicts for which the West is sometimes legitimately blamed and most often used as a scapegoat or target of anger. Europe's relationship to the Middle East resembles the North-South divide, which will be no less important in the future than the East-West dimension.

The North-South Divide

Whereas the East-West divide may be seen as a relationship of strong poles between which a pendulum of power and prosperity has been swinging through history, the North-South divide is a relationship where one is rich and strong, the other weak and poor. I see a considerable danger that our rejection of the concept of a "third world" should lead us to also abandon the North-South dimension in world affairs and to overlook the still rapidly growing gap between haves and have-nots in the world we are living in. The concept of a North-South conflict should be here to stay, and should be one of the basic dimensions in the study of contemporary world history. We should not be too preoccupied with latitudes and longitudes as such. In India and China, the worlds two most populous states, the "North" is in the South and the "South" in the North. The point is that the "North-South divide" is a metaphor for the relationship between rich and poor, and that if we stop talking about a North-South conflict, we may simply leave the poor parts of the world outside our conceptual schemes. Then also the North-South divide in the Americas is even in purely directional terms a north-southern affair, and the poorest of all continents, Africa, is clearly in the South. On the other side, there is a certain possibily that Australia/New Zealand, South Africa and Argentina/Chile may find together in a kind of "Far Southern" growth zone. Ideas of closer cooperation between these countries have been advanced from the Argentinian side, but this

should so far be seen just as an interesting idea.

In our studies of the countries in the South, it is important that we consider their relationships with all the three rich and industrialized regions of the world: Europe, North-America and East Asia. We have to distinguish clearly between these three regions in the North, just as we have to distinguish between the various regions in the South. One major research question is what we may call the "africanization of the South". Whereas Africa could, a couple of decades ago, be considered alongside the poor countries of Asia and Latin America, Africa distinguishes itself today with the bleakest and most depressive statistics of all regions in the world. The only similarly depressive statistics that we can find in Asia, are from Bangla Desh, and in several South American countries the economies have recently made a turn for the better.

Why does Africa remain so poor? Two Norwegian Africanists, Jarle Simensen and Tore Linné Eriksen, addressed that question in a book published two years ago, edited by Svein Gjerdåker and Arne Tostensen Jarle Simensen built on John Iliffe's book from 1987: *The African Poor: A History* and mainly demonstrated that poverty did not arise with colonialism, but certainly existed also in precolonial Africa. Tore Linné Eriksen gave a rather traditional marxist reply to the question of poverty's causes. Land had been concentrated on the hands of a few people who had little incentive to improve productivity rather than being distributed among more productive peasants. African countries had neglected to develop an agriculture directed at satisfying the needs of their own populations. Instead they had aimed at exportation, and thus came to suffer from the general reduction in prices for primary products like coffee, cocoa and copper. The new political elites had established a bureaucracy that was overly preoccupied with its own consumption of imported luxury items. There had been many conflicts and wars. Finally the rising indebtedness of the African countries had forced them into a situation where any future income from exports would just have to be paid back to their creditors. In

Linné Eriksen's view the decrease in primary commodity prices and the debt policy of the West amounted to a "war against the poor". Although all of Linné Eriksen's points are relevant to the plight of Africa, I think the idea of a "war against the poor" is misleading. If the Africans "fight back" by cutting off relations with the World Bank and other western warriors, it will merely lead to a catastrophe. The main problem is not Western exploitation, but universal neglect. Africa has been marginalized within the world economy. It can neither manage on its own (at least not with the current population growth) nor compete with Asian or Latin American countries in the race for investments. What is needed is a massive internationally organized aid programme for Africa, in which Africans themselves must play the leading role. This is the only way of avoiding the twin dangers of human catastrophe and "recolonization".

The poverty problem, of course, is not just an African affair. There are many poor countries elsewhere as well, and not only poor countries, but also masses of poor people in countries that are generally better of. Indeed some social scientists have warned against a process of social polarization where the world at large comes to resemble a US city: the rich live in the placid safety of intricate alarm systems while the poor fight each other in quarters where the rich never dare to show their face (if they like, the rich can still take part in the fighting by funding gangs and armies and controlling them from far away computers).

It is to be hoped that historians will go massively into the field of development studies and engage in research and lively discussions on the causes of the growth in certain parts of Asia, the reasons for African poverty and for the continued indeed growing poverty problem in Asia, South-America and also in the so-called developed world.

Conclusions

I shall draw four conclusions:

1) Modern and contemporary world history should be researched,

taught and written as global history, not as a collection of national or regional histories, and not as European history with additional chapters or volumes on Asia, Africa and America. Three fields point themselves out as more clearly global than others and thus as promising areas for the development of a truly global world history: the environment, the spread of communications and the development of international corporations and organisations. A catchword for the globalization of world history could be the "shrinking of the world".

2) The concepts of three worlds or "the third world" should be abandoned altogether. This also means that this should probably be the last panel of Nordic historians dedicated to "the third world". Asianists, Africanists and Americanists do not have more in common than either of them have with Europeanists. Instead of "third world panels" we should aim for panels on "the shrinking of the world" in general, and draw our Asian, African and American examples into panel discussions of topics such as women's history, nationalism, etc.

3) Although it is no longer possible to speak of three worlds we should not abandon the ideas of either an East-West or a North-South divide. The East-West relationship should be redefined as a relationship between Asia and Europe, and on the European level we should try to launch a major research effort concerning the rise of Asia in the 20th century and the role of Europe and the West (including Russia) in Asia's rise. What we should do is to take up again the general perspective of William H. McNeill's classic book *The Rise of the West* from 1963, and let the East-West pendulum swing back towards the Rising East.

4) It is perhaps of even greater importance that historians engage themselves in development research, a discipline that is already well-established by social scientists with contacts to the Nordic aid agencies, the UN system and the World Bank. They tackle the North-South dimension of world affairs, the problem of poverty and the relations between cores and peripheries. I'm convinced that

historians can make significant contributions to this field, for instance by carrying out comparative studies between growing and stagnating or crisis-ridden areas of the world. Perhaps we should take up Jarle Simensen's suggestion and call this "the history of poverty".

So let us think of the modern world as one, with a joint network of communications and common environmental concerns, no longer divided in three, but still with internal conflicts running in both East-West and North-South directions.

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