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Too Important to Leave to the Other

Jack S. Levy

History and Political Science in the Study of International Relations

Historians often complain about the abuse of history by international relations theorists, and international relations theorists often complain about the atheoretical orientation of much historiography. Although both charges are exaggerated, they do raise the question of how the disciplines of history and political science differ in their approach to the study of international relations. This is important because it bears on the question of whether the cumulation of knowledge in the two disciplines can be mutually reinforcing. In their introductory essay Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman note many of the ways in which historians are said to differ from political scientists: historians construct narrative-based explanations rather than theory-based explanations; they study the past rather than focus on the present or attempt to make policy-relevant predictions; they seek to understand single unique events rather than generalize about classes of events; and they prefer complex, multicausal explanations to more parsimonious monocausal explanations.

Although each criterion captures general tendencies that distinguish most historians from most political scientists,¹ the idiographic/nomothetic distinction best reflects the distinct "identities" of the two disciplines and the differences between them.² Historians describe, explain, and interpret individual events or a temporally bounded series of events, whereas political scientists generalize about the relationships between variables and construct lawlike statements about social behavior. This difference in orientation between the two

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1. On the last point, political scientists prefer parsimonious but not necessarily monocausal explanations.

2. The idiographic/nomothetic terminology goes back to Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert in the late nineteenth century. Georg G. Iggers, *New Directions in European Historiography*, rev. ed. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1984), p. 81.

disciplines has enormous consequences for the nature of their respective explanations, their conceptions of causation, their methodologies for validating explanations, and their criteria for evaluating those explanations.

Identifying the distinctive differences between history and political science is extraordinarily difficult, in part because of the wide variation of work in each discipline. We can think of each discipline as being characterized by a distribution of approaches, distributions that differ in central tendency but that substantially overlap. This means that we will always find exceptions in our comparisons of central tendencies. In fact, the variation within each discipline may be as great as the variation between them. Historians and political scientists who study the causes of war, for example, share more in common than do positivists and postmodernists within either discipline.

Differences between the two disciplines are not fixed but instead vary over time as a function of trends within each, which further complicates any comparison. In the 1960s leading schools of thought in each discipline were quite confident in the feasibility of "scientific" knowledge of social and political behavior and in the utility of quantitative methods for discovering that knowledge. Today, however, after the "revival of narrative"³ and the "linguistic turn" in history, and after the further spread of quantitative methods and particularly game-theoretic models in political science, the two disciplines have moved further apart. Thus any comparisons between disciplines must be sensitive to questions of timing and historical context. We must also acknowledge the gap that frequently exists between what philosophers say historians or social scientists ought to be doing and what practitioners actually do.

Despite these obstacles, there are some clear differences between historians and political scientists. They receive different kinds of graduate training, give different emphasis to questions of methodology and to the value of primary sources in particular, publish in different journals, identify different criteria for good scholarship, and generally face different disciplinary incentives. There are exceptions, to be sure, but the differences are significant enough that history departments rarely hire people trained as political scientists, and political science departments rarely hire people trained as historians.⁴

3. The term is from Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative," in Stone, *The Past and the Present Revisited* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), chap. 3.

4. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, "The Benefits of a Social Scientific Approach to Studying International Affairs," in Ngaire Woods, ed., *Explaining International Relations Since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 49–76, at p. 53.

The Idiographic/Nomothetic Distinction

A number of contemporary analysts in several disciplines share this view of the distinction between idiographically oriented historians and nomothetically oriented social scientists. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita argues that “many historians—certainly not all—are primarily interested in explanations that emphasize particularistic factors that distinguish one event, one sequence, one location from another. The meaning or explanation of events and actions is often assumed to be revealed through culturally and temporally bounded interpretations.” He goes on to say that “the social scientist is more likely to emphasize general explanations of social phenomena, while the historian is more likely to emphasize particularistic, unique features of individual episodes of social phenomena.”⁵

Sociologists make similar distinctions. Edgar Kiser and Michael Hechter note that “historians’ methodology stresses the accuracy and descriptive completeness of narratives about particular events. . . . the events they seek to describe and explain are both unique and complex . . .” Robert Bierstedt notes that “History, as idiographic, is interested in the unique, the particular, the individual; sociology, as nomothetic, in the recurrent, the general, the universal.” As a result, “sociology is abstract and history is concrete.” Similarly, the philosopher Michael Oakeshott insists on the “absolute impossibility of deriving from history any generalization of the kind which belong to a social science,” noting that “where comparison begins, as a method of generalization, history ends.”⁶

This idiographic conception of historiography is also shared by many historians. Leopold von Ranke argued over a century ago that the aim of historians was to discover the unique in every event, the “infinite in every existence.” If historians were forced to generalize, he argued, “all that which is interesting about history would disappear” and “history would lose all scientific footing.” Lawrence Stone argues that “the discipline of history is above all a discipline of context. It deals with a *particular* set of actors at a *particular* time in a *particular* place.” Louis Mink states that historians’ aim is to “understand an event as

5. Bueno de Mesquita, “Social Scientific Approach,” pp. 52–53.

6. Edgar Kiser and Michael Hechter, “The Role of General Theory in Comparative-Historical Sociology,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (July 1991), pp. 1–30, at p. 2; Robert Bierstedt, “Toynbee and Sociology,” *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (June 1959), pp. 95–104, at pp. 96–97. The Oakeshott quote is from Thomas W. Smith, “Histories and the ‘Science’ of International Relations,” presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association/South, Atlanta, Georgia, October 20–22, 1995, p. 13.

unique rather than as typical.”⁷ Other historians recognize this as an accurate description of most historiography but argue that historians ought to be more nomothetic. John Lewis Gaddis, for example, faults many historians in the security field for their lack of comparative focus and for their tendency “to preoccupy themselves with the particular.”⁸

The idiographic/nomothetic distinction should not be confused with the argument that whereas social scientists aim for explanations that are based on theoretical models, historians seek narrative-based interpretations that emphasize factors unique to an individual event or episode. In this view historians either allow the facts “to speak for themselves” or rely on wisdom, judgment, and immersion in the case to generate an “intuitive interpretation” of events.

The primary goal of historians may be to interpret singular events, and many historians may try to explain those events mainly in terms of factors unique to that particular case, but these are two different statements. The first concerns the question of what we are trying to explain, and the second concerns the question of how we explain it. We can use theories to explain generalized patterns of social behavior, but we can also use theories to help explain and interpret behavior in a particular case or a series of events that are temporally and spatially bounded.⁹

My argument is that historians’ idiographic orientation does not necessarily imply that they are atheoretical in their interpretations of singular events. The difference between political science and history lies not in the use or nonuse of theoretical concepts and models, but rather in how they use those concepts and in the importance they attach to being explicit about their analytic assumptions and models. Political scientists are more interested in (and receive greater disciplinary rewards for) explaining general patterns than individual events, but for either task they base their explanations on theoretical models. The

7. Leopold von Ranke, “On the Character of Historical Science,” in Georg G. Iggers and Konrad von Moltke, eds., *The Theory and Practice of History* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), pp. 36, 38; Stone, *Past and Present*, p. 31 (emphasis in original), and Louis O. Mink, *Historical Understanding*, Brian Fay, Eugene O. Golob, and Richard T. Vann, eds. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 81.

8. John Lewis Gaddis, “Expanding the Data Base: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Enrichment of Security Studies,” *International Security*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Summer 1987), pp. 3–21, at p. 13.

9. The latter use of theory fits Eckstein’s conception of a “disciplined-configurative” case study and Lijphart’s conception of an “interpretive” case study; it is different from a hypothesis-generating or hypothesis-testing case study. Harry Eckstein, “Case Study and Theory in Political Science,” in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science*, Vol. 7: *Strategies of Inquiry* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), pp. 79–137; Arend Lijphart, “Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (September 1971), pp. 682–693.

primary goal of historians is to explain the particular, but they often do so with resort to the general.

The Role of Theory in Historical Explanation

The argument that all empirical observations are filtered through a priori mental frameworks and that explanations are necessarily based on underlying theoretical assumptions and concepts is now conventional wisdom in both political science and history, among practitioners as well as philosophers. Historians, however, have not always believed that empirical facts are interpreted through intervening mental frameworks. The first school of "scientific history," which dominated historiography in the nineteenth century, insisted that historians should not only focus on explaining unique events but should also let the facts speak for themselves.¹⁰ As Ranke argued, the historian's aim is to show history "as it really was," to re-create the past that exists independently of the preconceptions and prejudices of the historian. Through immersion in the documents and application of the critical hermeneutic method, the historian could re-create the past through narratives and achieve value-free, scientific certainty.¹¹

By the end of the century many historians had become critical of the Rankean notions that it is possible to re-create history "as it really was" and that truth resides in the documents. Historical idealists emphasized that history is solely an interpretive construction of meaning. For Oakeshott, "history is a historian's experience. It is 'made' by nobody save the historian; to write history is the only way of making it." Moreover, the writing of history necessarily reflects contemporary concerns and culture, so that, in Benedetto Croce's words, "all history is contemporary history."¹²

Others besides historical idealists have emphasized the theory-laden character of all empirical observation. E.H. Carr spoke for most historians and political scientists alike in criticizing the Rankeans' "fetishism of facts" and

10. We might call this the "Dagnet" conception of history: "Just the facts, ma'am, just the facts." This view of empirical observations is reflected in John H. Goldthorpe's argument that the key difference between history and sociology is that historians *discover* evidence while sociologists *invent* evidence, in Goldthorpe, "The Uses of History in Sociology," *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (June 1991), pp. 211-230, at pp. 229-230.

11. On Ranke and his influence on historiography, see Iggers, *New Directions*, chap. 1; and Georg G. Iggers, "The Image of Ranke in American and German Historical Thought," *History and Theory*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1962), pp. 17-40.

12. Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 99; Croce quoted in E.H. Carr, *What Is History?* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Books, 1964), pp. 20-21. One does not have to be a historical idealist to recognize that what historians choose

emphasizing that all observation involves the “selective filtering of the facts.” Staking out a middle ground between Rankean positivism and historical idealism, Carr argued that “the historian is neither the humble slave nor the tyrannical master of his facts,” and that history is “a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past.”¹³

This brings me to a related point, the argument that a key difference between historians and political scientists is that historians tend to construct narrative-based explanations while social scientists tend to construct theory-based explanations.¹⁴ Although the narrative/theory distinction has some appeal, it is analytically flawed, insensitive to significant variations over time, and characterized by too many exceptions to serve as a useful criterion for demarcation between history and political science.

Analytically, a narrative is a method, and as such it is compatible with nearly any theoretical orientation.¹⁵ Narrative analysis cannot escape from theoretical assumptions, although clearly historians vary in the extent to which they self-consciously follow a well-specified theory in their narratives. To take one example, although many scholars view a narrative approach as incompatible with rational choice theory, that is highly misleading. In fact, some scholars have recently expressed an interest in “analytical narratives” or “rational choice narrativism” in both political science and sociology.¹⁶

to study often reflects contemporary policy concerns. It was not coincidental, for example, that Paul Kennedy wrote *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987) at a time of great concern about the prospective decline in American power and influence.

13. Carr, *What Is History?* pp. 16, 29–30. Similarly, the political scientists James Lee Ray and Bruce Russett argue that although “observations are inevitably theory-laden” they are not theory-determined, in Ray and Russett, “The Future as Arbiter of Theoretical Controversies: Predictions, Explanations, and the End of the Cold War,” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (October 1996), pp. 441–470, at p. 447 (emphasis in original).

14. See Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman “Diplomatic History and International Relations Theory: Respecting Difference and Crossing Boundaries,” *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Summer 1997), pp. 5–21, and Kiser and Hechter, “The Role of General Theory,” p. 2.

15. I follow Stone, in *Past and Present Revisited*, p. 74, and define narrative to mean “the organization of material in a chronologically sequential order, and the focusing of the content into a single coherent story, albeit with subplots.” Because of the narrative, historiography is often more diachronic in orientation than is political science.

16. Barry Weingast, “Analytic Narratives: Applications to Political Economy,” paper presented at the 1996 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, and Edgar Kiser, “The Revival of the Narrative in Historical Sociology: What Rational Choice Theory Can Contribute,” *Politics and Society*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (September 1996), pp. 249–271. My own use of a rational choice framework to explain the outcome of the July 1914 crisis is consistent with rational choice narrativism. Jack S. Levy, “Preferences, Constraints, and Choices in July 1914,” *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Winter 1990/91), pp. 151–186.

The utility of the narrative/theory distinction also varies over time. It might accurately distinguish the Rankean paradigm from the new field of sociology in the nineteenth century, but it would be much less useful in distinguishing historians from political scientists in the 1960s, when the more analytical, theory-driven, and often quantitative orientation of the *Annales* school in France and the “New Economic Historians” or “cliometricians” in the United States had risen to a leading position in the discipline.¹⁷ These schools clearly reject the view of history as narrative containing its own explanation, and seek to base historical explanations on social science theories and demonstrate their validity through accepted scientific methods. They accept a modified version of Carl Hempel’s classic “covering law model,” in which explanation consists of subsuming a phenomenon under general, empirically confirmed laws of behavior.¹⁸

The narrative/theory distinction between history (at least social and cultural history) and political science may be more useful once again in the period since the 1970s, with the “revival of the narrative” and the decline of quantitative history.¹⁹ The new narrative history is more analytically oriented than the Rankean narrative, and its substantive focus is more social history than politics or diplomacy, but its method is still traditional. The recent influence of postmodernism is more profound and involves substantive focus as well as epistemology and methodology. It has continued the shift away from diplomatic history toward social, cultural, and intellectual history. In contrast, postmodernists and constructivists in political science, who are smaller in number than their counterparts in history, often deal with traditional questions in international relations and security studies but investigate those questions through new methodological approaches. Most political scientists, however, believe that it is possible to evaluate the validity of competing theories on the basis of their analytical coherence and empirical accuracy.²⁰ In history, by contrast, the

17. On the *Annales* school, see Iggers, *New Directions*, chap. 2; on the “new economic history,” see R.W. Fogel, “The New Economic History, Its Findings and Methods,” *Economic History Review*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (December 1966), pp. 642–663. The influence of the “new history” is suggested by Stone’s comment, in *Past and Present Revisited*, p. 16, about “the successful triumph of the revolutionaries within the profession of history from 1930–1975.”

18. Carl G. Hempel, “The Function of General Laws in History,” *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (1942), pp. 35–48.

19. Stone, *Past and Present Revisited*, chap. 3.

20. This includes some social constructivists, who are also more willing than their counterparts in history to generalize about the construction of identities and relationships between agents and structures than are postmodernist historians. See Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring

influence of postmodernism and the "linguistic turn" has led many scholars to reject empirical criteria and see history as fiction or rhetoric, concerned with the historicity of texts and the textuality of history.²¹

There is an important qualification. Relative to other fields of history, diplomatic history has been less affected by methodological fads of the discipline, from the new quantitative history to the rise of postmodernism. It has been consistent in its insistence on the empirical validation of its interpretations and in the utility of narratives and primary sources for that purpose. In important respects, it has also become more theoretical in the last couple of decades. Some historians are quite explicit about the analytical assumptions and theoretical models that guide their historical interpretations,²² and some organize the presentation of their material by analytical categories instead of a chronological narrative.²³ Some historians are not only quite conversant with international relations theory or other social science theories, but have made important contributions to the theoretical literature, either by constructing theoretical generalizations²⁴ or by contributing to debates on the methodology of international relations research.²⁵

1992), pp. 391–425. This more nomothetic orientation of constructivists in international relations reinforces the central argument of this essay.

21. John Toews, "Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 92, No. 4 (October 1987), pp. 879–907; John H. Zammito, "Are We Being Theoretical Yet? The New Historicism, the New Philosophy of History, and 'Practicing Historians,'" *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (December 1993), pp. 783–814; and Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner, eds., *A New Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

22. See, for example, Paul W. Schroeder, in *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) and in much of his other work.

23. John Lewis Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," *International Security*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Spring 1986), pp. 99–142; James Joll, *The Origins of the First World War* (New York: Longman, 1984); and John A. Lynn, "The Evolution of Army Style in the Modern West, 800–2000," *The International History Review*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (August 1996), pp. 505–545.

24. See Schroeder's work on balancing and bandwagoning in alliances, his constructivist account of international systems and the balance of power, and his analysis of the role of norms and learning in security regimes, which I summarize in Jack S. Levy, "The Theoretical Foundations of Paul W. Schroeder's International System," *International History Review*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (November 1994), pp. 715–744. Historians have also made important contributions to our theoretical understanding of the impact of domestic politics on international conflict. See Arno J. Mayer, "Internal Causes and Purposes of War in Europe, 1870–1956," *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (September 1969), pp. 291–303, and Fritz Fischer, *War of Illusions: German Politics from 1911 to 1914*, Marian Jackson, trans. (New York: Norton, 1975).

25. Gaddis, "Expanding the Data Base," and Gaddis, "History, Science, and the Study of International Relations," in Woods, ed., *Explaining International Relations*, pp. 32–48.

There are exceptions to the idiographic/nomothetic distinction between history and political science. Some historians formulate or systematically test general propositions in some of their work, and some political scientists construct idiographic explanations of individual events. But this is not the kind of research that each discipline most values, rewards, or trains its graduate students to do. Scholars engaged primarily in this kind of work are sometimes tolerated, but are more often marginalized and rarely are seen as role models in their fields.²⁶ Doctoral dissertations that stray from disciplinary identities in this way do not generally advance the academic careers of their authors.

The most obvious exception among historians is Arnold Toynbee,²⁷ although the critical response to Toynbee's "speculative history" reinforces my point about the idiographic identity of historiography.²⁸ One scholar noted that this work "is not, in fact, a history of anything at all. It is . . . a search for sociological principles of a most general and universal kind." The question is "not whether *A Study of History* belongs to history or to sociology, but only whether it is good sociology or bad sociology."²⁹

Most attempts by historians to generalize are either quite incidental to their primary task of describing and explaining a series of events or episodes, implicit rather than explicit, or restricted to generalizations about a well-defined period of time. Thucydides argued that the events of the Peloponnesian War would repeat themselves and that he was writing for all time. As Stanley Hoffmann notes, however, the *History of the Peloponnesian War* contained neither explicit generalizations of an "if . . . then" nature or analytic categories.³⁰ Thucydides' history may have been driven by a clear set of theoretical assumptions, but he was not explicit about what they were, and scholarly debate continues about whether he was a realist and about the relative weight that he gave to different explanatory variables. We can generalize from the insights of Thucydides, but to validate those generalizations we must go beyond Thucydides' *History* and construct more comparative research designs.

26. One exception is the influence of idiographically oriented area specialists in political science in the 1960s.

27. See also William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

28. Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 10 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954); William H. Dray, "Toynbee's Search for Historical Laws," *History and Theory*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1960), pp. 32-54; and Karl R. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (New York: Basic Books, 1960).

29. Bierstedt, "Toynbee and Sociology," pp. 95-96.

30. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Rex Warner, ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), p. 48, and Stanley Hoffmann, *Janus and Minerva: Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Politics* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1987), p. 3.

Other historians generalize, but their generalizations are usually not universally applicable and are instead restricted to a well-defined historical period. The same is true of course for political scientists, who recognize that their generalizations are conditional rather than universal. Any theory or attempt to generalize must include a specification of the “scope conditions” under which the theory is valid. The difference between history and social science lies in how these scope conditions are specified. Historians use temporal and spatial criteria whereas social scientists use analytical criteria, as contained in the assumptions underlying their theories.³¹

There are other differences in theory and methodology in the two disciplines. Political science emphasizes the value of parsimony, the explanation of as much as possible with the fewest assumptions possible.³² The empirical world may be complex, but political scientists abstract from that world to provide a first-order explanation of its essential features. They explicitly state their analytical assumptions and hypotheses, demonstrate how the latter are derived from the former, and attempt to test those hypotheses systematically.

Most historians are less concerned about explicitly stating the assumptions and causal laws that drive their interpretations. They place less value on parsimonious explanations and prefer to provide “total explanations” of events in as much of their complexity as possible. They believe that no single theory can provide such an explanation, and consequently they are willing to draw on many different theories. As Melvyn Leffler argues in explaining his multi-level focus in his study of the Cold War, “I applied no single theory. . . . if reality is too complex to be captured by a single theory, different theories may help the historian to make sense of different parts of the phenomenon or event or process under scrutiny.”³³

This view of theory as a “toolbox”³⁴ of instruments from which to draw—with the assumption that a different set of tools will be used in different cases, depending on the particulars that need to be explained—may be helpful in providing total explanations of particular phenomena. It does not, however,

31. Kiser, “Revival of Narrative,” pp. 256–259. The social science emphasis on analytical scope conditions is reflected in the argument by Adam Przeworski and Henry Tuene that in our theoretical propositions we should replace the names of countries, places, and dates by variables, in Przeworski and Tuene, *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* (New York: Wiley, 1970).

32. Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba refer to this as “maximizing leverage,” in King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

33. Melvyn P. Leffler, “New Approaches, Old Interpretations, and Prospective Reconfigurations,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Spring 1995), pp. 173–196, at p. 179.

34. The term is Kiser’s, “Revival of Narrative,” p. 258.

facilitate the formulation or testing of theoretical generalizations. Generalizations require a single, well-specified, and integrated theoretical structure and validation over an empirical domain that is carefully selected on the basis of theoretical criteria to maximize the power of the research design. This is reflected in both large-*N* statistical studies and in the methodology of structured, focused comparison for a smaller number of cases, in which the analysis of each case is structured by a single set of questions and focused on that aspect of each case that is relevant to the theory.³⁵ The more nomothetic orientation of political scientists is reflected in their greater concern with problems of external validity—of how to draw inferences from the particular to the general—whereas historians are more interested in issues of internal validity related to a temporally bounded set of events.³⁶

Conclusion

I argue that the distinctive difference between history and political science is that historians describe and explain the connections between a series of events, whereas political scientists formulate and test general theoretical propositions about relationships between variables or classes of events. When historians attempt to generalize, those generalizations are limited to a domain of phenomena defined by temporal and spatial boundaries, whereas the generalizations of political scientists are limited to a domain defined by the analytical assumptions of the theory. The difference between the disciplines is not that one is theoretical while the other is not, but rather that they use theory in different ways. Political scientists build general theories and test them, whereas historians use theory—or a set of theories—primarily to structure their interpretations of particular events.

This is not an attempt to pass judgment on the relative importance of the two tasks, just to argue that they are different. In fact, history and political science have much to offer each other. A complete description of the connections between events is not sufficient for good history, because all history is

35. Alexander L. George, "Case Studies and Theory Development," paper presented to the Second Annual Symposium on Information Processing in Organizations, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, October 15–16, 1982.

36. It is significant that graduate training programs in political science usually include courses on methodology, in which considerable emphasis is placed on how to validate theoretical statements about an analytically defined universe with data drawn from a more restricted sample or set of cases. Graduate training programs in history, on the other hand, are currently much less likely to offer courses devoted primarily to methodology.

driven by theoretical assumptions and models, and more theorizing could make those models more explicit and analytically sound. Similarly, the rigorous formulation of a logically coherent theoretical structure is not sufficient for good theory, because good theory must be empirically validated over a wide range of conditions, and more sensitivity to historical context would help reveal the spatial and temporal (and hence analytical) bounds of the theory. The worst abuse of each discipline is to ignore the other. History is too important to leave to the historians, and theory is too important to leave to the theorists.