

Before the West

How would the history of international relations in ‘the East’ be written if we did not always read the ending – the rise of the West and the decline of the East – into the past? What if we did not assume that Asia was just a residual category, a variant of ‘not-Europe’, but saw it as a space with its own particular history and sociopolitical dynamics, not defined only by encounters with European colonialism? How would our understanding of sovereignty, as well as our theories about the causes of the decline of Great Powers and international orders, change as a result? For the first time, *Before the West* offers a grand narrative of (Eur)Asia as a space connected by normatively and institutionally overlapping successive world orders originating from the Mongol Empire. It also uses that history to rethink the foundational concepts of international relations, such as order and decline.

AYŞE ZARAKOL is Professor of International Relations at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow at Emmanuel College. She is the author of *After Defeat: How the East Learned to Live with the West* (Cambridge University Press, 2011) and the editor of the prize-winning *Hierarchies in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

LSE INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

SERIES EDITORS

George Lawson (Lead Editor)
Department of International Relations, London School of Economics

Kirsten Ainley
Department of International Relations, London School of Economics

Ayça Çubukçu
Department of Sociology, London School of Economics

Stephen Humphreys
Department of Law, London School of Economics

This series, published in association with the Centre for International Studies at the London School of Economics, is centred on three main themes. First, the series is oriented around work that is transdisciplinary, which challenges disciplinary conventions and develops arguments that cannot be grasped within existing disciplines. It will include work combining a wide range of fields, including international relations, international law, political theory, history, sociology and ethics. Second, it comprises books that contain an overtly international or transnational dimension, but not necessarily focused simply within the discipline of International Relations. Finally, the series will publish books that use scholarly inquiry as a means of addressing pressing political concerns. Books in the series may be predominantly theoretical, or predominantly empirical, but all will say something of significance about political issues that exceed national boundaries.

Previous books in the series:

Culture and Order in World Politics Andrew Phillips and Christian Reus-Smit (eds.)

On Cultural Diversity: International Theory in a World of Difference
Christian Reus-Smit

Before the West

The Rise and Fall of Eastern World Orders

AYŞE ZARAKOL
University of Cambridge



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-83860-3 — Before the West
Ayşe Zarakol
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108838603

DOI: 10.1017/9781108975377

© Ayşe Zarakol 2022

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2022

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-108-83860-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-97167-6 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-83860-3 — Before the West
Ayşe Zarakol
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

A Cihannüma
*dedicated to the memory of my father,
Cihan Zarakol (1949–2016),
who taught me to love history as if it were a puzzle.*

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-83860-3 — Before the West
Ayşe Zarakol
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Contents

<i>List of Figures and Maps</i>	page viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
1 What Is the East? Theorising Sovereignty and World Orders in Asia and Eurasia	1
Part I Cihannüma	45
2 Making the East: Chinggisid World Orders The Empire of Genghis Khan and Its Successor Khanates (Thirteenth–Fourteenth Centuries)	47
3 Dividing the East: Post-Chinggisid World Orders The Timurid and the Ming (Fourteenth–Fifteenth Centuries)	89
4 Expanding the East: Post-Timurid World Orders The Ottomans, the Safavids and the Mughals (Fifteenth–Sixteenth Centuries)	124
5 How the East Made the World: Eurasia and Beyond Chinggisid Influences on a Globalising World (Sixteenth Century)	173
Part II Lessons of History	215
6 Rise and Fall of Eastern World Orders Lessons for International Relations	217
7 Uses and Abuses of Macro History in International Relations Am I a ‘Eurasianist’?	244
<i>Bibliography</i>	273
<i>Index</i>	302

Figures and Maps

Figures

2.1 The house and empire of Genghis Khan	<i>page 65</i>
3.1 Post-Chinggisid Great Houses	105
4.1 Post-Timurid Great Houses (<i>Sahibkiran</i>)	138
5.1 A Eurasian world	207

Maps

0.1 The world empire of Genghis Khan	xiii
0.2 The Timurids and the Ming Dynasty	xiv
0.3 Post-Timurid world order	xv

Acknowledgements

Any book, especially one so long in the making, is a product of the generosity of friends and family towards the author. This is compounded in my case by the fact that I wrote this book during a particularly difficult time, partly due to reasons specific to my personal situation and partly due to the state of the world. I owe a lot of gratitude to a lot of people, many even beyond those I am able to list here by name.

Initially I had set out to write a more straightforward book challenging the conceptions of ‘rising powers’ operating in International Relations (IR).¹ The sudden passing of my father in 2016 made me rethink the project. My father was a lifelong (amateur) student of history. My best childhood memories involve traipsing around half-excavated archaeological sites around Turkey with him. I decided to try to write something a bit more durable in my father’s memory. I was doing some research at the time for other projects around the concept of sovereignty in Islam, as well as the early modern period of the Ottoman Empire, and those readings led me to think bigger about the problem of ‘rise and decline’ by digging deeper into history and exploring the legacy of the Chinggisids in world politics.

A number of encounters at this early stage gave me the courage to continue down this path. At the ISA panel where I first presented my initial notions for this project, both Bob Denmark and Victoria Tin-bor Hui told me I had a good idea that I should keep pursuing. Julia Costa Lopez and Benjamin de Carvalho organised some ‘early sovereignty’² panels where I first played with some of the ideas here, and I was encouraged by the feedback from other participants,

¹ This research eventually led to Zarakol (2019).

² This eventually became Zarakol (2018a), a part of a broader forum in *International Studies Review*.

especially Iver Neumann. I met James Millward at a workshop, and his reading suggestions made the project immediately more doable. I am also grateful to Christian Reus-Smit and Andrew Phillips for both facilitating that workshop and commissioning some of my early research into the Ottomans³ from which I got some great research ideas. Andrew also shared his own research with me. Similarly, I am thankful to Einar Wiggen for sharing his work. Aslı Niyazioğlu also gave me helpful reading suggestions about *sahibkîran* and the Ottoman–Safavid–Mughal connections. Deniz Türker gave me some excellent reading suggestions about Timurid influences on art history. I emailed David Sneath, a world-leading expert on the Mongols and the anthropology of Inner Asia, to express my admiration for *The Headless State*, and he not only kindly met me but spent hours of his time discussing the Mongols and giving me suggestions.

I am of course very privileged to be at an institution like Cambridge, where I can read a best-in-its-field book like David's one week and then meet up with the author the next. That privilege extends also to my own department, POLIS. It is no small luxury to feel that one's research is understood and appreciated. I am grateful to my colleagues with whom I co-convene the IR & History Working Group: Jason Sharman, Duncan Bell and Giovanni Mantilla. During the course of writing this book, I was also lucky to supervise a great group of PhD students from whom I learned a lot (they know who they are!). I cannot thank everyone in POLIS by name, but let me also mention Devon Curtis (for making my college tasks easier), Adam Branch (for making our shared introductory IR course work so well), Brendan Simms (for involving me in discussions I would not get to otherwise), Chris Bickerton (for teaching me how to box and thus keeping me sane) and Mette Elstrup-Sangiovanni (for getting me involved in rowing, which really helped with getting over the lockdown malaise). Yi Ning Chang contributed as an undergraduate research assistant. I also want to take this opportunity to remember my colleague Aaron Rapport and his wife Joyce Heckman. They were both lost to cancer at a very young age in the summer of 2019. I think of both of them often; Joyce and Aaron's cats, Ollie and Dixie, have kept me company during writing, along with my Çörek (2000–19) and Fırça.

³ Zarakol (2020a), in Phillips and Reus-Smit (2020).

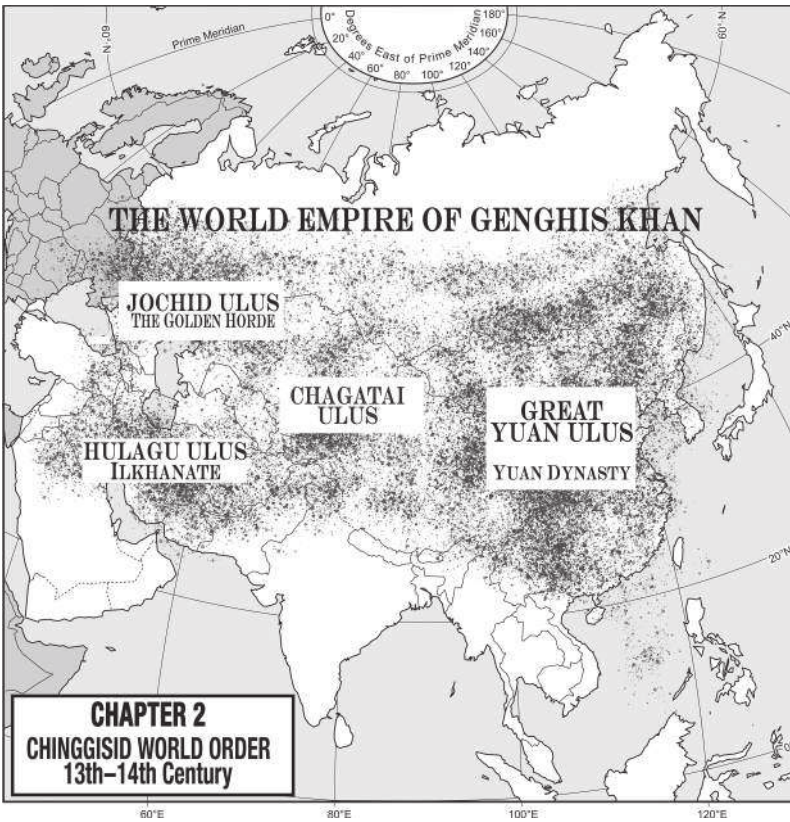
Beyond POLIS, I am grateful to the historical IR community in the United Kingdom and beyond for giving my work a home. Colleagues at the LSE immediately welcomed me into their history-theory network upon my arrival in the United Kingdom in 2013. George Lawson, whose judgement I trust implicitly, has enthusiastically supported this book from the very beginning. Tarak Barkawi, Martin Bayly, Barry Buzan, Or Rosenboim, Edward Keene, James Morrison and John M. Hobson have given me helpful suggestions at different stages of the project. I am also happy to be involved in the larger Nordic research community. I would like to especially thank Halvard Leira, Benjamin de Carvalho, Ole Jacob Sending, Jens Bartelson and Rebecca Adler-Nissen, both for their friendship and for making possible, through various grants, lots of great things. Rebecca involved me in her ERC-funded project DIPLOFACE, allowing me to buy myself out from teaching for two terms. And of course, there is an even wider community of IR scholars that I feel lucky to belong to. This book has directly or indirectly benefitted from my conversations with Zeynep Gülşah Çapan, Jelena Subotic, Brent Steele, Manjeet Pardesi, Dan Nexon, David Lake, Lerna Yanik, Frederic Merand, Srdjan Vucetic, Julian Go, Hendrik Spruyt, David Kang, Ian Hurd, Maj Grasten, Jon Askonas, Stacie Goddard and Ron Krebs. I am also grateful for many other friendships in my academic community.

I presented drafts in a number of great settings. The first time was in person at Ohio State University in early 2020, thanks to the generous invitation of Bear Braumoller, putting me on the correct course for finishing up during a pandemic. I presented a version at the LSE in March 2020 and was very encouraged by the reception there. Later drafts were presented during the course of the pandemic (usually over Zoom) at the University of Kent, the University of Chicago, the University of Oxford, the University of Queensland, the European University Institute, McGill University, the University of San Francisco, Johns Hopkins University and the University of Cambridge Central Asia Forum. I have received amazingly useful questions and feedback in all of these sessions and would like to thank the audience members. I am also grateful to the convenors of these seminars for facilitating these conversations: Karen Smith, Philip Cunliffe, Austin Carson, Duncan Snidal, Andrew Payne, Seb Kaempf, Marius Ghincea, Juliet Johnson, Nora Fisher Onar, Sebastian Schmidt and Prajakti Kalra.

I am also blown away by everyone who read and provided comments on the finished manuscript (during a global pandemic!), starting with my former PhD advisor, Michael Barnett, whose support and kindness I very much rely on still, and continuing with George Lawson, Jason Sharman, David Sneath, Aslı Niyazioğlu, Manjeet Pardesi, Jaakko Heiskanen, Lucas de Oliveira Paes, George Gavrilis and Iver Neumann. I am more grateful than I can express for all of their suggestions. Any remaining errors are my own entirely. I am also in debt to the two anonymous reviewers at Cambridge University Press for their very helpful feedback. I am also grateful to my indexer, David Prout, and my copy editor, Wade Guyitt, for their thoughtful handling of my manuscript. I would also like to thank John Haslam: since my first book, it has been an absolute pleasure to have John as my editor at Cambridge University Press.

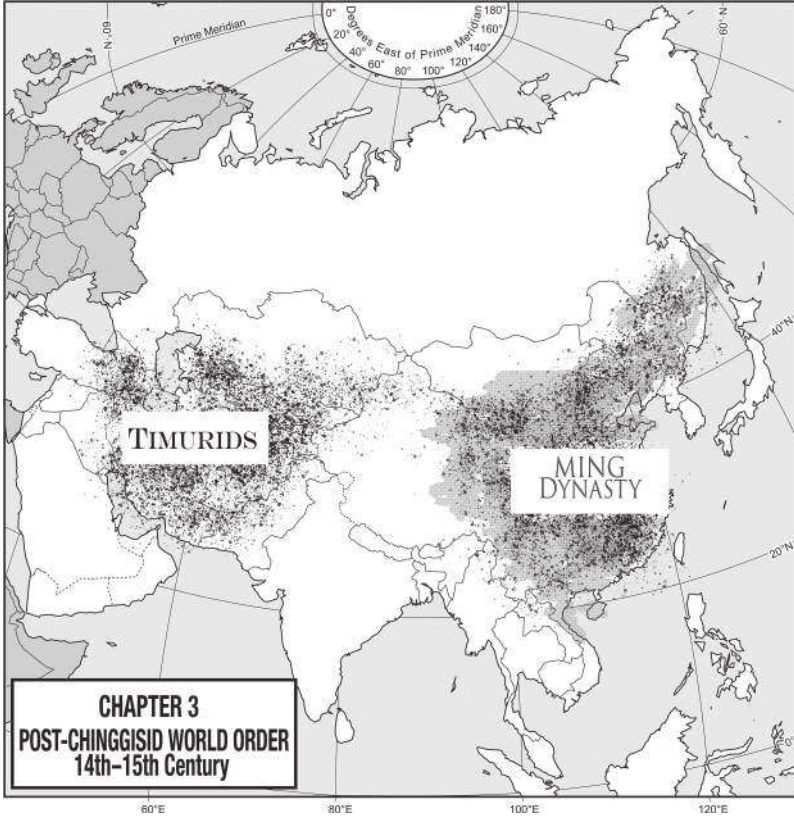
Finally, I would like to acknowledge a few of my non-academic friends and family members. First, I am thankful to Ed Richens, for keeping me on track during the pandemic with strength training and tolerating my research-related chatter during workouts. Heather Webb and Pierpaolo Antonello, together with Catherine and Mike Vilhauer, make us feel at home as a family in Cambridge. I am also thankful to my gang in Istanbul, who have put up with me for all these decades. Liz Amado, Pelin Ariner, İrem Çavuşoğlu, Irazca Geray, Elif Özerman, Ayşe Özler, Arzu Soysal and Aylin Ülçer: without them my life would be much more boring. Our WhatsApp chat ‘Bu Cumartesi’ kept me going during lockdown. Petek Salman also deserves a mention here. My aunt, Nurcan Akad, helps me worry less about what is happening back home. Aras Zarakol has been a devoted uncle to my son. And of course none of this would be possible without the support and the understanding of my husband, Dmitri Jajich, and my son, Kaya Zarakol Jajich, who – at eleven – is already an incisive interlocutor. Last but not least, my mother, Necla Zarakol, continues to inspire with her resilience: far from retiring at seventy-two, she works harder at her job than anyone. Not even being randomly jailed for five days in 2019 by what has essentially become a mafia state has broken her spirit. I admire her more than anyone I know.

Maps



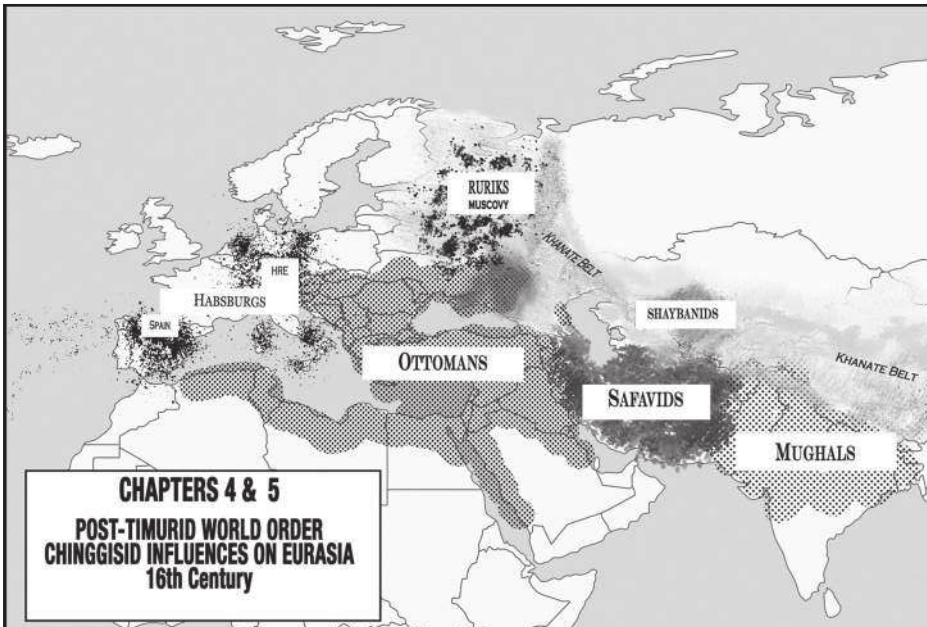
This map is an approximation of the furthest reach of these sovereigns during the period covered in the relevant chapter.

Map 0.1 The world empire of Genghis Khan



This map is an approximation of the furthest reach of these sovereigns during the period covered in the relevant chapter.

Map 0.2 The Timurids and the Ming Dynasty



This map is an approximation of the furthest reach of these sovereigns during the period covered in the text.
Map 0.3 Post-Timurid world order

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-83860-3 — Before the West
Ayşe Zarakol
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)
