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HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: THE QUESTION OF ADDITIONAL NOMENCLATURE

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Abstract

The nature of this argument stemmed out of the protracted and obvious devaluation attached to the word 'History' as a discipline. History is a course and not a curse and so there is no basis for it to go into extinction neither is there any reason for it to change its nomenclature before the value and importance of history could be acknowledged and appreciated. The position of this paper therefore is that 'the hood does not make a monk.' International Relations as a concept came after the failure of the League of Nations to prevent further destruction in the global arena. International Relations concerns herself chiefly with political discourse and action which indeed is an integral part of history. It is therefore the argument of this paper that we do not need additional nomenclature to make the study of History attractive to the students.

Key words: *international relations; nomenclature; history; human activities*

History and International Relations: Why the Change?

History is looked down upon in most developing nations. It is believed that history has no direct relevance to nation building. It is also believed that history has no clear aim, methodology, sense and purpose and anybody can be an historian. This belief has made some people to look down on history as a course of study (Adeyemi, 1999). To some people, history is often the subject of students whose real interest is in athletics or drama. Academically, what he wants is a soft option. History is the subject of the dullards who merely wish to continue in the familiar book learning they have acquired in school, i.e. most people who study history do not have interest in it but have no other option (Agbo, 2012).

History has not been regarded as one of the higher sciences because it is believed that anybody can just pick it up and start learning it. The whole idea of history being relevant is most recent. Between the 17th and 19th centuries there had been struggles by historians to establish history as one of the serious academic study. Rene Descartes who was one of the most prominent French philosophers simply dismissed history from the realm of knowledge. Voltaire, another philosopher said history operates within a straight-jacket as the study of history is confined to stories of kings, rulers, wars and conquests. Hegel's view that man does not learn from history has implicit value of history to contemporary development.

The history that most people are familiar with is not scientific history but history taught at a level of Oduduwa coming from the sky etc. History has not been able to develop a coherent methodology like philosophy until very recently. There have often been misconceptions about history is, what the historian does and how he does his work, what are his aims, purpose and what methodology to use in achieving its aim (Okpeh, 2007). The original Greek word "Historia" means inquiry. The two major operative words in the definition are human and past. However, the historian studies the past in a dynamic way. The nature of history imposes a limitation on the practitioner. First is the fact a historian cannot study his own time. He is concerned about the past. The history of his own time is preserved for the future generation. There is this question of how much of the past can the historian study. This point has led to the idea that historical knowledge is impossible, whereas historical knowledge is quite possible because no historian would aim at recapturing the whole of human experiences on a global scale and for all time. Such an exercise is virtually impossible because; there is a limit to human intellectual ability and there is the impossibility of collecting enough material that will be viable enough to study all of human histories in a particular situation at a particular point in time.

History as a phenomenon is seen as the product of the past. It sheds light on the past events and illuminates the dark corners of our society. The impetus to the new development in history is the search for new concepts. Thus, the most significant feature is the fusion of history and other disciplines in name. Today, what we are witnessing among younger generation is a reaction against pure history as a discipline. They clamour for a change in nomenclature. It is against this background that this paper will examine if truly the changes in nomenclature add value to history or it is just a celebration of idea.

Conceptualising History

According to the Webster's Dictionary, History is from the Greek word 'Historia' which means inquiry. The two major operational words in the definition of history are human and past. However, a historian studies the past in a dynamic way. History as a discipline is concerned with the study of everything and anything related to man's past in time and space. History is the totality of human experience in the past. It is a scientific study of how things happened and the way they did. History may be defined as the study of man through the evidence of his past actions. This is therefore the activities of man as he interacts with his fellow man and his environment in the process of production of material things and life in the past leading to change (Alagoa, 1994).

Carr (1964) described history as an unending dialogue between man and man or between man and his environment. History deals with the thesis, synthesis and the antithesis of the past. Geoffrey (1956) describes history as an attempt to discover on the basis of fragmentary evidence, the significant things that happened in the past. In essence, history deals with human past activities and the changes that occurred during the course of studying the past. The nature of history imposes limitation on the practitioners first; it is a fact that he cannot study his own time. The history of his own time is preserved for the future generation. Second, there is the question of how much of the past the historian can know or recollect.

Conceptualising International Relations

In 1935, Sir Alfred Zimmern, (1939:7-9) Professor of International Relations at Oxford University, argued that "the study of international relations extends from the natural sciences at one hand to moral philosophy at the other" (Zimmern, 1939:7-9). Thus international relations is a study that examines the state affairs in the international system. Frederick Dunn (1948:143) contends that International Relations "may be looked upon as the actual relations that take place across natural boundaries." Trevor Tailor (1978:57) defined the subject as "the discipline which tries to explain political activities along state boundaries and to date, it has been chiefly concerned with the political relations between governments, and the official representatives of the states".

Nicholas J. Spykman (1930:98) on his part describes International Relations as "relations between individuals belonging to different states ..." Quincy Wright (1955: 6) argued differently that International Relations

"include relationship between many entities of uncertain sovereignty. He further contends that as a subject of study, it is not limited by the legal formulation which alone could not at any moment precisely indicate what entities are sovereign or what are not". Also, some scholars like Hoffman (1960:5) see power as the key to International Relations as the subject that deals with these relations among nations which involve states. In this regard Quincy Wright defines it as relations between powerful groups (1955:9). According to Stanley Hoffman, (1960:8), International Relations is concerned with the factors and the activities which affect the external policies and power of the basic is concerned with all the exchanges, transactions, contacts, shows of information and the attending and resulting behavioural responses between and among separated organised societies.

The Nature of Argument

The 20th century ushered in the discipline of International Relations when it became clear that countries must have a diplomatic understanding among each other to arrest impending/looming war. The circumstance of the birth of International relations is a milestone in history. The entire component that made up International relations as a discipline sprouted from history. This is because the study of past engagements between a country and another is what produces International Relations and the underlining factor of these engagements is history. The question that now begs for answer is why the change of history in name as a discipline?

Historically, early man was committed to the development of its immediate environment by making it conducive for himself. As time goes on he started the domestication of animals and cultivation of land for food crops. Gradually, he developed the skills and process of leading and ruling his people. In the middle-ages, history shows that communities and states were at loggerhead seeking to dominate one another. The display of the military prowess of some communities during these periods was outstanding and as such the strategy employed by these rulers were studied and examined by a historian. Thus, critical examination of all these communities, empires and states enables historian to understand the strategies used by the rulers of that period. The point I am driving at is that strategic studies is not new to historical study. Therefore, a strategic study is also a vital component of International Relations.

Many historians attribute this change in nomenclature to the pressure from the students that there should be need for a change because of the

discriminatory attitude of employers in the labour market. Students who earned B.A. History and International Relations tend to be more appreciated in the labour market than students with purely B.A. History. This situation forced a large population of historians to appreciate the need for this uncelebrated and unnecessary change in order for students to compete favourably with other counterparts in the labour market. The above understanding of the people who are not historians may have informed the majority of the clamour for this change in nomenclature. There is the need therefore for them to understand that history is a dynamic discipline that at best can compete favourably with all the various disciplines in the sciences and social sciences.

We must not be swayed in our understanding of inter – disciplinary approach in history. Some people tend to agree with the change in nomenclature as a result of clamour for inter – disciplinary approach in historical research. However, inter – disciplinary approach is a component of historiography. Historiography which is the art of writing history requires historians to marry together various disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, sociology, geography among others, in order to produce a quality research work. In essence, it will be wrong to understand inter-disciplinary approach as the change in the nomenclature of History as a discipline.

Again, history has not been fully appreciated by the government of today, especially in Nigeria despite the efforts of historians to bring to the notice of government the importance of history to the socio-economic and political development of the country. For instance, history as a subject in Secondary School is gradually going into extinction. Thus, this situation is a lacuna as universities are now left to admit students without the background or knowledge of history as a subject in Secondary School. This situation has always led to poor performance of students who eventually find it difficult for to cope properly with their studies in the university. It is noteworthy that International Relations is a product of history and the value of history will be undermined if it can no longer stand on its own. The erroneous ideas or beliefs surrounding history as a discipline should be a challenge on the part of historians in order for them to establish history not only as a discipline but a pivot on which other disciplines revolve.

The Moral Lessons of History

1 The Christian View of History

Both Islam and Christianity see history as having been ordered by God. Their views are linked with the role of providence or God in human affairs, thus, one can tag those views as the providential views of history. This view as stated in St Augustine's *City of God*. (cited in Odeh, 2006:530) was aptly captured by Odeh, as an example of the Christian view of history. According to him, history is ordered by a higher power. Great turning points in history are representatives of the divine providence of God; the rise and fall of states thus depended upon God. Odeh therefore saw in St. Augustine's categorized view how the world history broken into seven epochs, is related to the creative powers of God. He used the Bible which in a sense is another historical work as the basis of his categorization. He traced human history from Adam to the advent of Jesus Christ. The contemporary world according to him is the second last stage in human history God shall close human history at the end of the world by judging mankind and bringing the righteous back to Paradise from where man was initially expelled.

This view of history can be described as a cyclical one because it traces human history from Adam in the Garden of Eden-Paradise, through several other stages and returns back to paradise again. A number of other early Christian writers like St Jerome, Venerable Bede, and Sextons Julius Afrianuis shared this view of history. They could discern the workings of God in the universe, within the context of the central purpose of God to return man to paradise. And this is where Jesus Christ comes into the picture. He is seen as one sent by God to show man the way to salvation (Odeh, 2006: 531). Thus, the Christian view of historical development is intricately linked with the role of God in human affairs. History is seen as the fulfilment of certain prophecies as certain plans of God. They also see history as a means to study the past and as a vehicle of moral and religious teachings. According to them, it possesses practical utility and educative value (Odeh, 2006: 531).

2 Islamic Views on History

Islam is imbued with history as manifest in prophetic revelations and works. First Prophet Mohammed himself was the culmination and fulfilment of a historical process which began at the beginning of the world and was leading to the end of the world. He thus fostered an awareness of history. Secondly, in the development of Islamic civilization, great emphases were

placed on historical precedent. The events and ideas of the early Islamic era were provided as the precedent for later age. This helped to sharpen the historical consciousness of Muslims according Ibn Battuta (1957:120). Muslims see history as God's chosen instrument for the gradual improvement of mankind and for man's preparation for the final reckoning at the inevitable end of world. Thus, the purpose of history is clearly revealed to all by the birth of Prophet Muhammed and Islam. The control of history's progress from then on was within the reach of human beings if they follow God's plan for their lives as laid out in Islamic injunctions.

One such notable Islamic scholar was Ibn Khaldun of Tunis 1332-1406. Ibn Khaldun's work, *Universal History* covered even non-Muslim areas. In 1377, he constructed a coherent system of the historical process in purely human terms and devoted his Muqaddimah (Introduction to his Universal History) to its exposition. According to him, human society is patterned on certain material and psychological forces where operations provoke changes in the society. He saw history as a cyclic motion, with slight but continuous forward movement of growth and decay within the various forms of human societies (Ibn Battuta, 1937:40).

Thus, it is clear now that the Muslims see history as serving the purpose of God in human affairs. They also consider the study of history to be of immense practical importance. According to Muslim historiography, history is useful because of the following reasons:

1. It teaches by giving both negative and positive examples
2. It teaches people how to handle their own affairs in this fleeting world.
3. It teaches political leaders how to govern properly.

Lastly, it is instructive and edifying as a handmaiden religion. It proves the truth of Islam and the correctness of the world view as expounded by Islamic injunctions (Ibn Khaldun, 1377:18)

History and International Relations: Why the addition in Nomenclature?

History and International Relations are separate but inter-related disciplines. While one works at the past activities of individuals in society, the other uses their premise of the past to analyse present issues and attempts a prognosis into future trends. However, it is of interest to note that at the

very outset, History has been comfortable as an Art/Humanities subject, while social sciences have accommodated International Relations as phenomena and practice. But recent developments in the academics, coupled with the demands in current changing nature of society have necessitated the marriage of the two disciplines, i.e. History and International Relations. Although this development has been seen by orthodox schools of History as a fracture of the originality of historiography, it has nevertheless been welcomed as a nomenclature that secures the future by other recent intelligentsia. It is from this clime that this paper seeks to provide an argument for the change and nomenclature amalgamation of pure history into History and International relations.

Though the word History looks simple on the ordinary surface, it is not easy to pin down to a single acceptable definition. However, scholars, historians, historiographers, statesmen and powerful thinkers of all times have always given their own views of what the subject meant. For instance, Arthur Marwick (2006:212) sees history as the necessary recollection of activities of past men and society which gives them orientation necessary amid bewildering current of human diversity. On the other hand, International relations can be viewed as a very complex discipline with complex definitions. However, a clear but co-ordinate contra-distinction must be made between the phenomena on the one hand; and study of International Relations on the other hand. The phenomena of International Relations are generally accepted to have started at the end of 30 years war in Europe with the peace of Westphalia in 1648 (Russell, 1936). Why it was so, was that, the milestone actually introduced the legal concept of sovereignty which is undoubtedly the spice and determinants of any form of International Relations – across boundaries.

Be that as it may, the study of International Relations was reflected to some extent at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth in 1919 and much greater in the London School of Business and Economics after the Second World War (Kirk, 1947). Just like the discipline and definition of History, International Relations also has no single definition but scholars have tried to project ideas of what it meant.

Argument

In an attempt to delve into the pool of discussions on the major thrust of this paper, having conceptualized the two disciplines in question the fact must be established that there is no International Relations without History.

Likewise, history is continually made when International Relations occur systematically. Thus, the push and pull factors influence the marriage between these two disciplines. Looking at history, there was a time when it faced the crisis of relevance and indeed became a weeping child in the syllable of various countries, especially Nigeria. Therefore, various means are continually devised to make the discipline attractive, because it is too crucial, and indispensable to the task of nation building and social development.

Looking at International Relations, it is a contemporary field of study which cannot exist in isolation of present realities without tracing past activities and that endears its practice and profession to the knowledge of History. Since this is the case, it is convenient that the two disciplines be reflected so as not to produce half – baked institutions and intellectuals. The factor of the current work opportunities has made historians to carry along the “International” tag so as to be accorded a prestigious place in the labour market. But the fact not to be forgotten here is that since History covers the world, the historian undoubtedly is also International in mind and scope of the study. In essence, the change was brought about by a pressing desire on the part of history graduates in modern times to be relevant to the ever changing labour market and the human societies at large.

Conclusion

History exists among all human societies, pre-literate Africans were conscious of their past to such an extent that minute historical details were always carefully preserved in various forms and were transmitted from generation to generation. Among the method of preservations of myths, legends and folk-tales historical occurrences were turned into folk-tales using common features like birds, animals, trees, rivers, spirits and other super-humans as dramatists personae, particularly for remembrance purpose. This method enabled children who were not present then to easily remember these events. This should not in any way be taken to mean that history has no methodology or was unscientific as the case may be. The historian employs very careful calculated method and approach in carrying out his findings like every other subject like sciences and social sciences. If that be the case no historian should feel any sense of inadequacy in terms of operational methodology and feel that by adding international relations his study assumes a more scientific method. No argument could be more far from the truth. Contemporary world has proved this assertion so rightly that today you

find Economic Historians, Diplomatic Historians, and International Economic Historians amongst others in all facets of human economic endeavours contributing to the nation building.

The argument of this study stemmed out of the protracted and obvious devaluation attached to the word 'History' as a discipline. History is a course and not a curse and so there is no basis for it to go into extinction neither is there any reason for it to change its nomenclature before the value and importance of history could be acknowledged and appreciated.

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