

# A ‘priesthood of knowledge’: the international thought of Henri de Saint-Simon

Jan Eijking<sup>1</sup>

Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford

After the French Revolution, radical political theorists across Europe rethought the parameters of international order. Henri de Rouvroy Comte de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) was among the first to imagine the international as a realm at once separable from national politics and reformable by human agents. This was a response to an intellectual challenge that had arisen at the dawn of the nineteenth century: to square reform projects with impartiality; to develop an independent viewpoint as the basis for bringing progress to the world (Abbenhuis 2014; Creighton 2018). It reflected a distinctly modern concern for placing politics on a scientific footing, but also an open-ended desire to explore the potential and limits of what today we call global governance.

This paper makes the case for bringing Saint-Simon to the attention of IR. Saint-Simon was an exceptionally persistent advocate for a technocratic conception of world politics. Most notably in his widely-read *De la Réorganisation de la Société Européenne* (1814/15), co-authored with Augustin Thierry, he urged the Congress of Vienna delegates to pursue a harmonious international order led by scientists, engineers, and savants—the solution to the supposed perils of a ‘Westphalian’ international order beset by constant rivalry. Saint-Simon’s disciples went on to become leading practitioners of this vision: whether the banking innovations of Olinde Rodrigues, the Pereire brothers, and François Arlès-Dufour (Davies 2016); Henri Fournel’s reports on mining prospects in Algeria (Alleaume in Régnier 2002, 305-26); Charles Lambert’s work on the Suez Canal; Michel Chevalier’s campaign for a Channel Tunnel; the 1860 Cobden-Chevalier free-trade agreement; or the involvement of several Saint-Simonians in Frédéric Passy’s 1867 *Permanent League for International Peace* (Pilbeam 2014; Drolet 2015, 2018). One historian has called Saint-Simon the ‘utopian precursor of the League of Nations’ (Polinder 1943; see Swedberg 1994); another characterises him as theorist of ‘a capitalist International’ (Yonnet 2004, 26). This all begs the question: what exactly did Saint-Simon’s international thought consist of?

So far IR has seriously underestimated the importance of this thinker. E. H. Carr’s 1939 classic *The Twenty Years’ Crisis*, adopting Friedrich Engels’ history of socialism, describes Saint-Simon as a ‘utopian socialist’ who ‘made unverified

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assumptions about human behaviour and ... drew up visionary schemes of ideal communities'—his work having been 'the product not of analysis, but of aspiration' (Carr 1939, 7-8; Engels 1886). A few years on, Hans Morgenthau offered a more nuanced reading: 'Saint-Simon meant to reorganize European society', he wrote in *Scientific Man vs Power Politics*, 'by connecting through canals the Pacific with the Atlantic, Madrid with the sea, the Danube with the Rhine, the Rhine with the Baltic.' He pointed out that 'Saint-Simon recommended congresses of scientific societies as a means of promoting international peace. In practical application of this idea, private and public conferences of an international character preceded and accompanied the liberal era of international relations' (Morgenthau 1947, 75-6). Neither Morgenthau nor any other IR scholar has explored this further (by contrast with historians, see Mazower 2012; Kaiser and Schot 2014). Relegating Saint-Simon to a sideshow of liberal internationalism seems instead to have contented most.

But this was neither a straightforward liberal nor an outright conservative—and yet a bit of both. Saint-Simon complicates extant histories of modern international order insofar as he reimagined the relationship between human agency, the driving force of reform, and natural order, its object. Central to his thought was the role of savants, whom he saw as harbingers of social and political change. Influenced by the French radical Enlightenment, and committed to its focus on knowledge and science as cornerstones of well-ordered societies, Saint-Simon grappled with the potential of government after the 1789: the problem the revolution had posed in his eyes, influenced by Joseph de Maistre's reactionary critique of the revolution, was a reopening of old questions of authority and obedience (De Maistre 1797; see Armenteros and Lebrun 2011, 30-3; Wilson 2011). What to do with the rising popular masses? How to content them whilst ensuring that society would continue steadily to advance toward social, cultural, and industrial progress? In Saint-Simon, a liberal desire for progress was bound up with a conservative demand for social control.

Based on a close reading of primary texts IR has thus far paid little to no attention to,<sup>2</sup> this paper introduces Saint-Simon as an international thinker who developed an influential actor category: impartial, knowledge-based agents of change. He modelled such arbiters of specialist knowledge first on scientists, then on engineers. The paper argues that Saint-Simon should be considered part of the history of modern global governance and so deserves much more attention by scholars of IR than he currently receives. In doing so it contributes to IR on four levels: it shows how Saint-Simon's work grounded a conception of international agency and authority in a justification for technical intervention; it reads the history of international thought through the prism of imperial thought; it interrogates the link between international

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<sup>2</sup> Research for this paper is based primarily on the *Œuvres Complètes de Saint-Simon*, 4 vols. (ed. 2012), and supplementary materials accessed via the digitised archives of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. See bibliography.

thought and practice; and it illustrates contested meanings of ‘the international’ and international authority in the nineteenth century.

Given growing attention to the politics of international institutions and practices (Viola 2020; Voeten 2021; Louis and Maertens 2021), but also an ongoing turn to conceptual history in IR (Jordheim and Neumann 2011; Berenskoetter 2017; Leira 2019; Costa Lopez, de Carvalho and Leira 2021), such a historical perspective has significant purchase. Viewing the international as a separate realm conformable to human agency, Saint-Simon reimagined the relationship between human agency and natural order: a necessary if not sufficient condition for the technological interventionism characteristic of later forms of empire and global governance. This shift made it possible and desirable to theorise and experiment with a role in global governance for technical experts with scientific credential, pivotal actors to this day. The impact of his thought also suggests that IR needs to revisit mono-ideological *liberal* histories of global governance and consider conservative and technocratic imports.

The paper proceeds in three sections. First its contribution is situated in current debates in historical IR on canon, genre, and marginalised thinkers. The second section introduces Saint-Simon, guided by three exegetical questions: what *principles* of international order characterise his work? Which *methods* of international order did he prescribe, and how did he justify these? What *actors* of international order did he envision? The third section finally stresses why IR, and disciplinary histories of global governance in particular, should pay attention to Saint-Simon. This was a complex thinker who advanced a technocratic vision for international order cutting across typical divides between realist and liberal “traditions” in IR. His commitments betray a tension that still haunts claims to international authority: a simultaneous endorsement of impartiality, generated by the advice of experts, and normative political goals.

### **I. Canon, genre, and marginalised thinkers in IR**

Problems with an IR canon that is excessively Anglophone, white, and male are subject to much-needed ongoing debate (Vitalis 2015; Owens 2018; Getachew 2019; Hutchings and Owens 2020; Owens and Rietzler 2021). Its implications are of historiographical significance in particular: the ways in which, say, contextualist histories of international thought reinterpret canonical texts are often still bound by a supposed consensus on what exactly constitutes that canon to begin with. Who is ‘in’ and ‘out’ more often than not seems to be an already-established notion. Good intentions notwithstanding, even much contextualist work has reinterpreted but maintained a set of thinkers already deemed “great”. Challenging this demands explicit conceptualisation of the criteria for inclusion and exclusion that are at work in canon formation (Keene 2017). Over recent years scholars have advanced broader definitions of international thought (Vergerio 2019); promoted the inclusion of activists and practitioners as international thinkers (Shilliam 2010); or suggested a wider scope of textual genres that should fall under IR’s

purview (Keene 2017; Wallenius 2019). Each of these dimensions has important consequences for the inclusion of marginalised thinkers and types of text.

Another dimension for reconceptualising criteria of inclusion is language. IR is indeed viewed by many as an Anglocentric discipline, not least given its very origins in the Anglo-American context (Çapan 2016; Vitalis 2015). This is problematic where it produces unwarranted institutional, geographical, and historical boundaries. One result is that IR's histories of international thought tend to be histories of Anglophone international thought (Bell 2020; Owens and Rietzler 2021). This does not have to be a problem, but it poses limitations that needs to be made explicit. Widening the scope of the history of international thought on this latter dimension, this paper will look at the context of a post-1789 French political theorist.

Now certainly this does not 'tick the boxes': Saint-Simon, after all, is yet another white man, and French is far from new ground for IR. The case is illustrative, however, of how canons, revised and rearticulated across time, routinely write thinkers out of their purview: once invoked by prominent IR scholars, Saint-Simon is absent today. This is odd not least given the fact that his thought has had considerable impact on his contemporaries, as on emerging modes of global governance. His disciples—Gustave d'Eichthal, Olinde Rodrigues, Amand Bazard, Michel Chevalier, and many others—were central to transnational mega-projects such as the Suez Canal, modern international banking and investment, and the 1860 Anglo-French free trade agreement that is widely considered a benchmark in the history of international cooperation (see Krasner 1976; Morsy 1989; Régnier 2002; Jennings 2006; Figeac 2012; Pilbeam 2014; Davies 2016). They all engaged in practices of technocratic internationalism, and most—particularly Prosper Enfantin, Suzanne Voilquin, and Ismayl Urbain—maintained a spiritual commitment to Saint-Simon's doctrine of the coming universal association between East and West. There is a history of technocratic internationalism, of which Saint-Simon was a central proponent, that IR is only beginning to explore (Steffek 2021).

## II. Impartiality and reform in Saint-Simon

Saint-Simon tends to be remembered as a pioneer of socialism (Engels 1886; Hayek 1952) or a second-rate figure in the history of sociology (Aron 1965; Ansart 1970)—rarely as a key figure in modern French international thought. Readings of his work through the lens of emerging technocratic international thought are nearly absent (an exception is Kaiser and Schot 2014; see Carlisle 1974). This is at odds with Saint-Simon's life and work. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, first in an anonymous 1802 pamphlet written in Geneva (*Lettres d'un Habitant de Genève*), then in a series of journals (*L'Industrie* in 1816, *Le Politique* 1818-19, and *L'Organisateur* 1819-20), he developed a concept of leadership by savants and *industriels*. Yet in contrast with claims he was a socialist, many elements of his thought can be tied to philosophical radicalism, radical strands of the French Enlightenment, and radical republicanism—chief among which

his commitment to the voluntarist idea, rooted in the 1790s, that ‘a reformed humanity would not come about spontaneously, but required mobilization and collective action’ (Hazareesingh 2020, 4). Saint-Simon stressed utility, commerce, and industry as normative goals; but he specified utility as industry and held a teleological view of history—a notion alien to, say, conjectural histories of law dominant among readers of Scottish Enlightenment thought such as Jeremy Bentham (Pitts 2003; Cello 2021). These departures favoured industrial progress and social hierarchies at the expense of equality: stable order and rule by the wise mattered more than social levelling.<sup>3</sup>

Saint-Simon had witnessed dramatic changes to French politics, protracted warfare, and the transition of his country from absolutism to industrial modernity. These experiences were key to his thought, much of which was framed as a response to what he saw as forces destabilising social order: revolution, war, and the domination of the *oisifs*, those who ruled by virtue of inheritance or lineage. In their stead, though in important ways subscribing to the fundamental premises of 1789, Saint-Simon sketched a project aimed at organic unity, universal peace, and meritocracy. Each of these were inseparable from his understanding of international order: indeed they had to be its very foundations. Before the Saint-Simonians’ rise to prominence in the engineering milieu of the new *École Polytechnique*, there was an intimate connection in Saint-Simon’s political imagination between radical social thought and transnational reform by means of technical intervention. This speculative impetus came to life in particular when Saint-Simon met Auguste Comte, whom he employed as secretary for some time. Positivism and Saint-Simonian international thought saw the light of day in a twin birth (see Pickering 1993).

Below I first sketch out Saint-Simon’s emerging concept of rule by superior knowledge as the basis for the reorganisation of society, and his extension of that principle to international order. Second, I turn to the methods Saint-Simon, more or less consistently, favoured for achieving the end of restored social and international order. Third, I discuss the type of actor Saint-Simon endorsed as a result of his ideas.

### *Principles of international order*

A central concern spanning through Saint-Simon’s work was for the theoretical requisites and practical conditions for rule by superior knowledge in a reorganised post-Revolutionary Europe. This was far from an exclusively French matter; just as his very life had been marked by frequent moves across borders, whether on Lafayette’s 1780 military mission to America or as intellectual émigré writing from Geneva. One of his first writings on the politically restorative power of knowledge, the anonymous 1802 *Lettres d’un Habitant de Genève*, started to sketch out what would become basic principles of his international thought.

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<sup>3</sup> According to Hazareesingh, Saint-Simon was ‘not overly preoccupied with the question of equality’ and committed to ‘industrial expansion’ as well as a ‘belief in legitimate social hierarchies.’ Hazareesingh 2020, 7.

Foremost among them was the premonition of a coming rule by physiologists. Their congregation in a ‘council of Newton’ would form the basis of the only form of government that could ensure social order in an age of scientific progress. At the heart of the proposal was a push for purging belief and embracing positive science. ‘The physiologists,’ he wrote, ‘must expel from their midst the philosophers, moralists, and metaphysicians, as the astronomers have expelled the astrologers, and the chemists the alchemists’ (Saint-Simon 1802 in *Œuvres Complètes de Saint-Simon* (henceforth *OCSS*), vol. 1, 117-18). Prestige and wealth should henceforth be in the hands of the Enlightened—leaving unspecified whether this meant that the latter should automatically receive the former, or only those who had prestige and wealth could be eligible for Enlightenment to begin with (Saint-Simon 1802 in *OCSS*, 1, 118). As an early prototype of a project Saint-Simon would promote throughout his life, the *Lettres* placed emphasis on a connection between science and good government. Science was discovery, and discovery was progress—so progress had to be steered by scientists themselves.

Saint-Simon also incorporated a rudimentary notion of international hierarchy into this picture, distinguishing between ‘educated’ and ‘ignorant’ nations, with the ‘Turks’ as an example of the latter (Saint-Simon 1802 in *OCSS*, 1, 108). As Swedberg has pointed out, the *Lettres* proposed something ‘truly international in character’, juxtaposed to ‘national egoism’. International order would come as a union of all enlightened peoples, but only *European* peoples would qualify: Saint-Simon dismissed ‘Negroes’ as ‘bloodthirsty’ and ‘Asians’ as ‘indolent.’ These racist underpinnings of course implied a fixed international hierarchy: ‘negroes’ would never be enlightened given their ‘basic physical structure’ (quoted in Swedberg 1994, 147-48).

Saint-Simon next wrote a meta-history of science in which he fleshed out the Eurocentric link between science and progress further. His 1808 *Introduction aux Travaux Scientifiques du Dix-Neuvième Siècle*, the first text published under his name, articulated a theory of scientific progress through crises—an early statement of a distinctly Saint-Simonian philosophy of history. Systems of fundamental belief would succeed one another only by passing through phases of crisis, breakdown, and transition. This was a history of science with the nineteenth century at its unsurprising pinnacle. Reflecting a paradox that would survive him and haunt his successors, Saint-Simon saw the passage from one phase to the next as both a natural development, and thus inexorable, *and* in need of correct perception and steering by an epistemic elite. History was a natural, predetermined progression but still needed agents to hasten it. These agents were scientists. The corresponding history of science went as follows: in the seventeenth century, physiologists had undermined the theologians when Cartesian methodical doubt emerged as the preferred way of overcoming superstition (Saint-Simon 1808 in *OCSS*, 1, 240). In the eighteenth century, the world witnessed the triumph of the Encyclopédistes, a ‘resounding victory won by the *savants novateurs* over the clergy that had defended the old system’ (Saint-Simon 1808 in *OCSS*, 1, 297). This was victory, and it was these

‘innovative savants’ who had heralded the new age as they had emerged victorious over the defensive clergy of the old system.

A more systematic outline of the underlying logic of history emerges in the 1813 *Mémoire sur la Science de l’Homme*. Here Saint-Simon proposed a general theory, building on the works of anatomists Vicq-d’Azyr and Bichat, physiologist Cabanis, and mathematician-philosopher Condorcet, in which a ‘priesthood of knowledge’ remedied crisis at each transitory moment in history, ultimately to restore order. Arranging for and organising a ‘general theory of the sciences, both physical and moral, based on the idea of gravitation regarded as the law to which God has submitted the universe, and by which He rules it’ was possible, Saint-Simon proclaimed.

‘As soon as there is a theory corresponding to the [current] state of enlightenment, all shall return to order. The common institution of European peoples will re-establish itself, and a priesthood adequately educated according to the present state of knowledge will promptly return tranquility to Europe by restraining the ambition of peoples and Kings.’ (Saint-Simon 1813 in *OCSJ*, 2, 1225, 1226)

On this view, the ‘incoherence of general ideas’ was responsible for crisis in Europe. Once again, a basic understanding of international relations informed the means to reassembling this fragmented order: ‘national organisations are particular applications of general ideas about social order, and the reorganisation of the general system of European politics will lead to the national reorganisation of different peoples who, by their political union, form this great society’ (Saint-Simon 1813 in *OCSJ*, 2, 1075). Once the ‘general system’—‘positive science’, which alone could produce and maintain social order in the way religion had done in the past—had ‘ameliorated the institutions of general politics’, then ‘national politics are necessarily perfected’ (Saint-Simon 1813 in *OCSJ*, 2, 1076). To Saint-Simon there was a hint at what ought to be done to enable a stable future Europe: order could be regained by establishing a European institution complete with a ‘priesthood’ of knowledge.

The central guiding principle in the direction of a stable international order, Saint-Simon thus thought at this early point in his work, had to be the restoration of social, cultural, and spiritual unity by means of political leadership by savants. Crucially, Saint-Simon emphasised unity and industrial-scientific progress over equality. In fact, as we shall see below, he was deeply committed to upholding and indeed promoting social hierarchies based on property, “civilisation”, and race.

#### *Methods of international order*

Consistent with these premises, in the following year Saint-Simon began outlining the methods he favoured to render leadership by the priesthood of knowledge a workable solution for international politics. In the words of French historian Pierre Musso, from

this point on Saint-Simon began to ‘think and analyse the tools of political action, to conceive and organise the passage from one social system to another’ (Musso 1999, 47). To this end he proposed nothing less than the creation of a pan-European political institution. Together with his assistant Augustin Thierry, the later renowned historian and romantic liberal, in 1814 *De la Réorganisation de la Société Européenne* was published. Its subtitle ‘Of the necessity and means of uniting the peoples of Europe in a single body politic, conserving in each its national independence’ invoked Saint-Simon’s deterministic philosophy of history, but also signalled his definitive turn to internationalism—prompting one historian to liken reading this work to ‘reading [Jean] Monnet’ (Delors in Rougemont [1961] 1990, v).

The text is noteworthy in the context of this paper given that its authors advanced, for the first time, specific structural reforms and institutional innovations to lay out the methods of a future industrial society (Swedberg 1994, 153). Similar ideas were circulating more widely in France at the time, and it would be an overstatement to claim that Saint-Simon invented them. His well-known contemporary Benjamin Constant published *De l’Esprit de Conquête et de l’Usurpation* at around the same time, in which he too argued that industry would bring peace—jointly with a call for European unity. Saint-Simon’s proposal distinguished itself, however, by the clarity of its practical instructions and its broad call for leadership by *industriels*, in contrast with Constant’s less innovative gesture towards a link between commerce and peace (Constant 1813; see Swedberg 1994, 165-66).

The first edition of *Réorganisation* was released to coincide with the opening of the Congress of Vienna. Prince Klemens von Metternich met Europe’s ambassadors starting in November; the first print of *Réorganisation* was dated October 1814. The opening lines of its preface admitted that ‘This work has been hastened by the circumstances’ and already announced a second edition (Saint-Simon and Thierry 1814 in *OCSJ*, 2, 1246). It has been pointed out that each delegate to the Congress of Vienna received a copy of the book, though there is no evidence any of them actually read it (Swedberg 1994, 152). In France in the meantime it did receive a good deal of attention and was fairly well-received by the press. A second edition was published shortly thereafter at the start of the Hundred Days upon Napoleon’s return from exile on the island of Elba in March 1815, this time addressed to Napoleon himself. Henri Fournel later remarked that his fellow Saint-Simonian Olinde Rodrigues had been in possession of a letter by Saint-Simon to Tsar Alexander II, which he supposed to have been a part of the second edition’s revised introduction. Whereas the first edition was an appeal to the group of delegates assembled in Vienna, then, the second urged individual leaders to take the lead in bringing about industrial society. It had notably been altered under a strict royal censorship regime introduced in the meantime. Saint-Simon added a note to several copies of this edition, pointing out that

‘This work, first printed during the little time when the press had been free, could not be reprinted without being submitted to censorship. The censors have altered passages and added others according to their fancy, we have restored by hand what they had disfigured and removed what they had added.’ (Quoted in *OCSS*, 2, 1240)

Saint-Simon took pains to censor the censors, sticking paper strips on top of their additions and manually putting back in what they had redacted out. Three censored passages are worth highlighting for what they reveal about the reactionary response of Louis XVII’s restoration regime to the text: first, a passage in which Saint-Simon argued that ‘one could say with certainty’ that the French Revolution was not yet completed. A note of caution was added to the word ‘certainty’. A second passage was redacted in Chapter VI on the ‘causes of a new revolution in France’. Here the censors removed a half-sentence stating that ‘among so many contrary interests, so many opposed pretensions, a general cry arises: regret for the past and dissatisfaction with the present.’ Third, a passage in Chapter VII in which Saint-Simon characterises Louis XVII as an impulsive and indecisive man was censored too (Grange, Musso, Régnier and Yonnet 2012 in *OCSS*, 2, 1284, 1285, 1287). The message, it seemed, was this: the pamphlet suggestively hinted at further revolution.

Applying his theory of transitions to his own century, the work presented the outlines of Saint-Simon’s principle of rule by superior knowledge applied to a redesign of politics. Key was the concept of reorganisation, wholly in the spirit of rupture and opportunity that the end of Napoleonic France and the restoration of Europe under the Vienna Order stood for. It was no coincidence that this concept drew from a sense of counter-revolution, closely matching as it did the idiom of organicist social thought.<sup>4</sup> Notably the transition Saint-Simon now had in mind was from revolution to organisation, from disarray to order. This transition was meant to bring about spiritual unity, an aspect Saint-Simon would considerably expand upon in his later *Le Nouveau Christianisme* (1825), his most definitive work in the eyes of his more sectarian disciples (Saint-Simon/Thierry 1825 in *OCSS*, 4, 3167-3226). The preface to the 1814 edition of *Réorganisation* proclaimed that

‘The march of the human spirit, this need for general institutions that makes itself felt so imperiously through the convulsions of Europe, all of it tells me that the examination of the great political questions will be the goal of the work of our times. *The philosophy of the last century was revolutionary; that of the nineteenth must be organising.* ... Social order has been upset, because it no longer answered to Enlightenment; it is up to you to create a better one: the body politic has been dissolved, it is up to you to reconstitute it.’ (Saint-Simon and Thierry 1814 in *OCSS*, 2, 1247; emphasis added)

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<sup>4</sup> Saint-Simon here drew heavily on the physiology of Cabanis, Bichat, and Vic d’Azyr, who similarly saw the reorganisation of knowledge as a chief goal. See Haines 1978.

Saint-Simon's declaration here can be read as politically opportunist: to reconstitute the body politic in the name of human spiritual progress was, after all, the order of the day. But Saint-Simon and Thierry saw this as a confirmation of their own understanding of the laws of historical change. Transitioning from revolution to organisation was, in this light, the enabling condition of reconstituting the European body politic. The emphasis on philosophy was more than an appeal to a pre-Marxian sort of super-structure: it was part of the more generally high regard in which Saint-Simon held the idea of benevolent absolute rule by superior knowers. Their merit was knowledge as opposed to blood relations—the 1789 heritage was unmistakable. But reform was more promising than revolution, for only it could bring progress through knowledge, the path to utility (see Bellet 2009). What Louis XIV, Catherine the Great, and Frederick the Great had all had in common was a commitment to the common good that only superior knowledge can secure. And thus, the 1814 edition of *Réorganisation* boldly asked, with an obvious nod to Vienna: who would be next in that glorious line of succession (Saint-Simon and Thierry 1814 in *OCSS*, 2, 1248)?

The principal method Saint-Simon proposed to move from disarray to a new organic state was an Anglo-French coalition that would enable pan-European union. 'This union is possible because France is free and so is England; this union is necessary, for it only can ensure the tranquility of both countries, and save them from the ailments that threaten them: this union can change the state of Europe, for England and France united are stronger than the rest of Europe' (Saint-Simon and Thierry 1814 in *OCSS*, 2, 1251-1252). Such a union, the authors pointed out in another remarkable example of Saint-Simon's international thought, would be a way to overcome the warmongering that had originated in the 1648 'treaty of Westphalia' which had 'established a new order of things by way of a political operation that is called *balance of powers*.' Westphalia, they insisted, had but 'created war and constitutionally maintained it, for two parties of equal force are necessarily rivals, and there are no rivalries without wars.' Indeed, 'since the treaty of Westphalia, war has been the habitual state of Europe' (Saint-Simon and Thierry 1814 in *OCSS*, 2, 1249; emphasis original). Harmony had to replace rivalry; only organic union could fulfill this need.

In the first book of *Réorganisation*, Saint-Simon and Thierry sketched out why they thought the parliamentary form of government was the ideal foundation for a pan-European union. General interests had to supersede particular interests, a task parliamentary government was best equipped for. This was an important foundation for Saint-Simon's international thought, as the structure of the argument reveals:

'Austria will seek to persuade [others] that it matters for Europe's stability that she obtain in Italy a great preponderance; that she maintain Galicia and the Illyrian Provinces; that her supremacy over all of Germany be returned to her; Sweden will establish, a

geographical map in hand, that nature wills that Norway be in her dependency; France will reclaim the Rhine and the Alps, as natural borders; England will claim to be in charge, naturally, of policing the seas, and will want that others regard the despotism she practices, as the most unshakeable fundament of the political system' (Saint-Simon and Thierry 1814 in *OCS*, 2, 1254).

This passage identified what Saint-Simon saw as the fundamental problem of international politics: each nation strove to promote its particular interests at the others' expense. Something else had to come in the place of such quarrels, a mechanism that could stand above it. Saint-Simon warned the Vienna delegates: 'Assemble congress after congress, multiply treaties, conventions, accommodations, none of what you do achieves anything but war, you will not destroy it, you can at most make it change location.' There was but one path to peace and stability: 'For any congregation of peoples, as for any congregation of men, common institutions are needed, an organisation is needed: apart from that, everything is decided by force' (Saint-Simon and Thierry 1814 in *OCS*, 2, 1255). Establishing such a body depended on practicable principles and methods. The architects of the Vienna system needed to recognise the importance of this.

For a blueprint one had to look not to the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, but further back to the veritable priesthood of knowledge that was the fourteenth-century papal order. A religious blueprint for thinking about science-led international order is an odd choice unless we consider Saint-Simon's intention: spiritual unification as the end to which the borderless force of science was the chief means. A theology of international order was fundamental to rearranging it in the name of science. Impartiality beyond borders was a principle for which science was most suited by its very nature, but a stable international order still required spiritual unity. Contrary to present-day understandings of technocracy as the sterile, hyper-rationalist rule of bureaucrats, its choice of clerical imagery shows Saint-Simonian technocratic internationalism's firm reliance on spiritual underpinnings.

The four overarching principles of fourteenth-century papacy were, in Saint-Simon's view, systematic homogeneity at each level of government; independence of general from national government; a general viewpoint of those in the general government; and responsiveness to public opinion. Saint-Simon concluded: 'The papal organisation was founded on these principles and that is what made it useful. But the ignorance of the times had not permitted putting these principles to good use, and that is what rendered her vicious' (Saint-Simon and Thierry 1814 in *OCS*, 2, 1259). Good government, based on this, was a combination of organisation, independence of general (supranational) from particular (national) interest, and the opposite of ignorance: superior knowledge.

To establish this kind of government, the scientific method had to be introduced to questions of politics. 'The method of the sciences of observation must be applied to politics; reasoning and experience are the elements of that method' (Saint-Simon and

Thierry 1814 in *OCSS*, 2, 1267). And ‘Up until this point the method of the sciences of observation has not been introduced in political questions; ... [which is why] as yet we have had neither precise solutions, nor general results’ (Saint-Simon and Thierry 1814 in *OCSS*, 2, 1260). This required two steps: synthesis and analysis. First, the ensemble of objects would be examined conjointly, *a priori*; second, matter was to be decomposed so as to observe it in its details, *a posteriori*. Results from one would be verified by the other. This reciprocity also determined how levels of politics related: the general interest of the nation vis-à-vis the particular interest of members of society; and by the same token the general interest of a European organisation vis-à-vis the particular interests of nations.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Actors of international order*

Saint-Simon’s international thought thus stressed agency throughout. Indeed, he may never have resolved the tension between arguing for reform and upholding a deterministic philosophy of history, but he did present a powerful case for a scientific avant-garde inaugurating the future. Saint-Simon then argued *from* a natural condition for ways of overcoming it. Nature had given humanity the tools to know it, and therefore to master it by speeding up the (natural) course of human progress. Mastery of nature by virtue of knowledge was based on a conception of a particular type of actor. This actor would have to be sufficiently endowed with the qualities needed for accumulating, assessing, managing, and utilising the wealth of information required for true acquaintance with, and objectification of, the world. An actor thus equipped had to be impartial. They were epitomised, Saint-Simon thought, in the *industriel* or the industrious producer and generator of wealth. Developing an idea of industrialism that opposed the industrious to the idle, Saint-Simon’s international thought ran in parallel to early forms of utilitarianism and a vocabulary that exerted lasting influence over French political thought.<sup>6</sup> Reflecting this, a European organisation as laid out in *Réorganisation* would work in a parliamentary Chamber of Deputies whose members should have general views to be able to speak on behalf of the common European interest, admitting only

‘those men who, by virtue of the most extensive relations, of the habits least circumscribed by the circle of native habits, of those works the utility of which is not limited to national use, and spreads to all peoples, are more capable of coming soon to this generality of views that must be the *esprit de corps*, the general interest that must be the interest of the body of the European Parliament. Only merchants, savants, magistrates

<sup>5</sup> The language of ‘general interest’ deserves more attention than fits the scope of this paper, though it is notable that there is a similarity in language with Bentham’s emphasis, and that of the utilitarians more broadly, on a ‘generality of views’, similarly alluding to an impartial justification for political power; see Engelman 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Though Saint-Simon did not coin the term ‘*industriel*’ he did much to advance and precision its meaning. After *Réorganisation* it formed a thread throughout his *œuvre*, and in 1821 he even commissioned Rouget de L’Isle, the famous author of the *Marseillaise*, to write a hymn dedicated to the *industriels*. Swedberg 1994, 159. For usage of the term across Saint-Simon’s work see Saint-Simon 1817/18 in *OCSS*, 2, 1417-1728; Saint-Simon 1821 in *OCSS*, 3, 2323-2632 and 4, 2753-2791; Saint-Simon 1823/24 in *OCSS*, 4, 2861-3016.

and administrators should be called upon to make up the Chamber of Deputies of the Great Parliament.’ (Saint-Simon and Thierry 1814 in *OCSS*, 2, 1270)

Why only merchants, savants, magistrates, and administrators? Because these would be the most impartial knowers of the world. It was them, after all, who entertained the most far-reaching relations, and their habits were the least limited by the confines of ‘native habits’. This was a class of people most inclined to have in mind the utility of their works not merely for their own nations but for all peoples. Theirs was an international disposition, and for that reason—a consequence Saint-Simon notably thought obvious—theirs was a most ‘general’ point of view.

Of course, strings were attached. One delegate of each of the four sectors per one million inhabitants, nominated for ten years, would sit in the General Parliament granted they own a minimum of 25,000 Francs in land rents.<sup>7</sup> This only, though, for as long as enlightenment remained tied to landed property, which Saint-Simon considered regrettable. An additional provision to mitigate this was to include ‘non-owners distinguished by exceptional merit’ and pay them the respective sum so that ‘talent and ownership be undivided, for talent, which is the greatest force, and the most active force, would soon invade property if they would not be united’ (Saint-Simon and Thierry 1814 in *OCSS*, 2, 1270-1271). His preference for superior knowledge notwithstanding, what Saint-Simon implied was rule by educated, property-owning, bourgeois men with a small provision for meritocratic access to rule; and even merit of course extended from a distinction hardly attainable without certain means.

A glance just a little underneath the surface of such industry- and science-led restoration reveals more than the counter-revolutionary projections of someone enthused by the promises of technological progress. One confronts a much weightier normative subscription; here, early forms of technocratic internationalism implied more than leadership by a technical-scientific elite. They were bound up with elitist visions of domestic order on the one hand, and imperial visions of international order on the other. Saint-Simon did not endorse this fully, but he did open up avenues others would tread to their conclusions. For why exactly did Saint-Simon want to advance the cause of European progress? To restore, he seemed to assure his republican readers, national glory. At this point in time, there was no logical contradiction between advancing a national cause and a vision for international order: this much the reactionary coalition of the Congress of Vienna had made clear. But what better way, Saint-Simon added, of restoring glory than to advance that which Europe’s nations claimed to stand for: civilisation? Was there not a legitimate yearning in French society for restoring not only social order but imperial grandeur as well? After all:

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<sup>7</sup> In absolute terms today’s equivalent would be roughly 177,450 Euros; relative to labour power, this is closer to 4.8 million Euros. Based on the historical currency converter, Edvinsson 2016.

‘All classes of society, all French people, speak out against the weakness the government has shown in letting Belgium be taken; one sees with spite Austria being extended by a part of Poland and the Illyrian provinces; Russia by Crimea, Finland, and vast possessions in Asia; Prussia, by Silesia, and a part of Poland; and France humiliated, weakened, reduced to her old borders.’ (Saint-Simon and Thierry 1814 in *OCSS*, 2, 1286)

Best to let France lead the way, alongside Great Britain, in establishing a scientific order for a reorganised Europe. But even more, Saint-Simon also envisioned a racialised internationalism as one of the obligations of a European organisation once established. A note in Book II, Chapter V, of *Réorganisation* on ‘interior and exterior action of the Great Parliament’ offered a glimpse of what kind of project was implied in this respect:

‘Without activity outside, there is no tranquility within. The surest means of maintaining peace within the confederation will be to it out of itself ceaselessly and to keep it relentlessly busy with great works within. To populate the globe with the European race, which is superior to all other races of men; to make it navigable and habitable like Europe, that is the undertaking by which the European Parliament will have to continually exercise the activity of Europe, and always keep it in suspense.’ (Saint-Simon and Thierry 1814 in *OCSS*, 2, 1272-1273)

This was a clear statement of the normative goals of Saint-Simon’s technocratic internationalism. To people the globe with the most superior ‘European race’ was the point, to which end it had to be made ‘like Europe’. Consistently, Saint-Simon stressed the role of national character (a concept later revived by J. S. Mill) in a hierarchical international order. A nation could find itself in three different states: under arbitrary government, ‘happy in servitude’; risen to mid-level ‘through philosophical enlightenment and the nobility of feelings’; or in a third ‘and without a doubt the best’ state of self-government in which ‘anyone can be a member, if they are worthy of it; putting to use all one’s care, one’s work, one’s knowledge’ (Saint-Simon and Thierry 1814 in *OCSS*, 2, 1293). Saint-Simon’s proposal was starkly and, one might say, aggressively Eurocentric.

This motif would make reappearances in his later work. After the journal *Le Politique* ceased publication in May 1819, Saint-Simon advertised a new journal in Benjamin Constant’s liberal paper *Le Minerve*—it launched in August of the same year. Redacted in part by his then-secretary Auguste Comte, *L’Organisateur* (1819-1820) appeared as fourteen serially published letters to ‘fellow citizens’ with the chief goal of promoting and developing the idea of a coming ‘industrial society’. In unmistakably Comtean phraseology equated with a ‘system of positive politics’, this new society would be governed by a parliament dividing its labour across three chambers: a ‘chamber of invention’ for engineers and artists, a ‘chamber of examination’ for savants, and a ‘chamber of execution’ for *industriels*. *L’Organisateur* is notable for winning Saint-Simon a

readership and attention outside of France (Grange, Musso, Régnier and Yonnet 2012 in *OCSS*, 3, 2103). The infamous ‘parable’ of its first letter certainly provoked debate: imagine, Saint-Simon wrote, that France suddenly lost its foremost industrial workers and producers—those citizens ‘most useful to their country, those who procure it most of its glory, who most drive its civilisation as well as its prosperity.’ Upon their loss ‘the nation would become a body without a soul’ and ‘immediately fall into a state of inferiority vis-à-vis the nations whose rival it is today’. What in turn if France lost its noblemen and its councillors of state? What if ‘Monseigneur the Duke of Angoulême, Monseigneur the Duke of Berry, Monseigneur the Duke of Orléans’ all suddenly disappeared? It ‘would not result in any political loss for the State’ (Saint-Simon 1819 in *OCSS*, 3, 2120-2121). Shortly after the piece was published, the Duke of Berry actually was killed, and Saint-Simon could hardly have looked more suspicious.

Two aspects stand out here: first, the social fragmentation that Saint-Simon feared to result from losing France’s most industrious citizens would take place on an *international* level: France would fall prey to rivalry with other great powers. Second, this was one of the strongest articulations of the centrality of actor-type to Saint-Simon’s international thought: the text placed savants, artists, and artisans most firmly at the heart of a society organised around ‘positive utility’ (Saint-Simon 1819 in *OCSS*, 3, 2122).

Saint-Simon’s 1821 *Du Système Industriel*, an elaboration of the industrialist principles of the 1817 *L’Industrie*, once again insisted upon a refashioning of the world as a space infinitely reformable according to the principles of scientific progress, simultaneously objective and objectifying. The text aimed to outline ‘the way to follow so as to operate with calm, with certainty, and with promptness, despite the real obstacles’ and determine ‘the formation of the industrial and scientific system, the establishment of which alone can put the ongoing social torment to an end’ (Saint-Simon 1821 in *OCSS*, 3, 2343). At the dawn of the century, Saint-Simon recalled, the moment had arrived at which the ‘utility’ of ‘legal experts [*légistes*] and metaphysicians’ had borne fruit in the ‘advancement of civilisation’. It was time to move on and ‘organise the industrial and scientific system’—time, Saint-Simon insisted, ‘that the industrials and the savants had to occupy the political scene, each in their natural roles.’ Instead, the ‘legal experts and metaphysicians’ had taken the lead during the revolution, setting the terms of political debate to this day. Only a clear sense of the promise of a ‘positive politics’ could correct this. There could only be one of two forms of social organisation: a feudal-military system, or an industrial system—‘for a nation as for an individual’ these represented ‘two goals of activity, either conquest or work, to which spiritually correspond either blind beliefs, or scientific demonstrations, that is to say, demonstrations based on positive observations’ (Saint-Simon 1821 in *OCSS*, 3, 2345-2347).

What measures should be taken to get closer to the industrial system? First, alliances had to be forged with the industrial class—‘by their position, the industrials are

essentially friends of order’ and so its ideal makers (Saint-Simon 1821 in *OCSS*, 3, 2353). The book then addressed itself to all those Saint-Simon considered to be members of the class of *industriels*, offering arguments as to why their future lay in taking the lead: farmers, traders, manufacturers ought to stop playing a ‘passive role in politics’; only a party rallying around industry and prosperity would be able to ‘triumph’ and ‘end the revolution’ (Saint-Simon 1821 in *OCSS*, 3, 2358-2359). Industrials would be perfectly suited to political leadership given that ‘the foremost political capacity is the capacity of administration’ (Saint-Simon 1821 in *OCSS*, 3, 2363). So long as militaries, metaphysicians and legal experts held sway, this epoch would remain one of ‘ignorance’ and ‘half-science’—but fear not: ‘Gentlemen, the progress of Enlightenment has finally brought the regime of common sense, and common sense is neither violent nor wordy; it is neither military nor legalistic.’ And ‘the natural organs, the only veritable organs of common sense, or of common interest, are the *industriels*’ (Saint-Simon 1821 in *OCSS*, 3, 2370). Saint-Simon ended his panegyric quite fittingly with a letter to the king himself, urging him to see things for what they were:

‘Today, scientific decisions are the only ones that would have the power to command a universal faith. Theological decisions no longer have real influence except over the least enlightened classes of society; and even that influence is rather feeble, and in no way comparable to that which, over the same classes, the opinions of savants exert.’ (Saint-Simon 1821 in *OCSS*, 3, 2377)

Once more, faith and science mingled: science could inspire faith in progress, maintained by the leadership of non-idlers and savants—and this combination would provide the foundations of the only social system adequate to Enlightened modernity.

The impetus of such thinking went on to inspire the Saint-Simonians’ international technological activism well into the later decades of the century. For Michel Chevalier, this would be a call for rendering the globe technologically European; for Prosper Enfantin, the spellbinding ‘Supreme Father’ of the Saint-Simonians, it would require marrying the West with the East in a spiritual union between scientific Man and passionate Woman (see Pilbeam 2014). Deputy and confidant of the latter, Chevalier had studied at the *École Polytechnique* and joined the Saint-Simonians as he was appointed engineer in 1830. The movement had just reached its peak. He embarked on a remarkable career within the ranks of the Saint-Simonian movement, emerging as editor of the group’s journal *Le Globe* and ‘Cardinal of the Church of the Industry.’ According to one disciple, ‘by way of the press’ Chevalier ‘was the centre of all the Saint-Simonians’ events’ (Fournel 1879, 7, as quoted in Murphy 2011, 109; see Duroselle 1956; Breton 1991; Steiner 1998; Drolet 2015).

In this position, Chevalier did much to forge a transnational network of Saint-Simonians, and so offers us a glimpse of the international activism of Saint-Simon’s

most devoted readers. Between 1830 and 1832 Chevalier got in touch with ‘educated men in Belgium, England, Spain, and Germany’. International links were essential to Saint-Simonian hopes for a unified Europe, and Chevalier forged strategic bonds in this regard, for example with Spanish exiles in France. One such ally was journalist José Fonteuverta, who upon his return to Spain in 1835 contributed to the journal *El Propagador de la Libertad* which then also published selections from the *Globe* by Chevalier, Enfantin, Saint-Simonian writer Gustave d’Eichthal, and German poet Heinrich Heine (Murphy 2011, 114-15; Sánchez Hormigo 2004, 217). In 1832 Chevalier published his perhaps most famous work, a collection of articles originally written for the *Globe*—the *Système de la Méditerranée* in which he proposed a network of canals and railroads spanning across Europe into the Mediterranean periphery, ultimately constituting the material basis for a ‘universal association’ of nations. Industry could so become the ‘peacemaker of the world’ through which ‘the whole world successively drawn will gravitate towards universal association through the pumps of industry, the brilliance of science and the pleasures of the arts’ (Chevalier, Duveyrier, Flachet and Fournel 1832, 26; Drolet 2015).

Declaring that ‘I am proud to say that I still am’ a Saint-Simonian (Chevalier 1838, 6, as quoted in Murphy 2011, 298), in 1837 Chevalier published a grand engineering plan for French infrastructure, *Des intérêts matériels en France*. The following year he was made *conseiller d’état* to the July Monarchy. He had this position renewed under Napoleon III, who in 1860 sent him off to negotiate the famous Anglo-French free trade agreement. Crowning his career, in 1875 he became president of the Channel Tunnel Company he had long envisioned in his own work. His *œuvre* primarily contained project proposals—reforesting French-occupied Mexico; canals in Egypt, Panama, and Nicaragua; an Anglo-French railway tunnel; a cross-Mediterranean railway and canal network—but also key works on political economy and even poetry (see Walch 1975; and notably Drolet 2008, 2015, 2018). Overall, Chevalier indeed stood out as an ‘archetypical proponent and activist of technocratic internationalism’ (Kaiser and Schot 2014, 31).

In sum, Saint-Simon not only provided a grand project proposal for an early vision of a European union—something disciples like Chevalier picked up on in both theory and practice. He also proffered guiding principles, methods, and types of actors needed to undergird an international order equipped for an industrial future. Saint-Simon stressed reform over revolution, but also intervention over the mere setting of examples. He also sought to identify a unified system of rendering politics and society scientific and ‘positive’.<sup>8</sup> His was a proto-positivism distinct from that of his secretary, disciple, and future near-nemesis Auguste Comte. It was voluntaristic: positive politics meant to get out into the world and change it. The blueprint for that change was European science and industry. Saint-Simon’s international thought, however, was not just Eurocentric, but

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<sup>8</sup> Bellet writes that ‘for Saint-Simon, utility is dependent on the hypothesis of perfectibility, which, for man, favours the development of useful faculties to the detriment of other faculties. Therefore utility is an historic and emergent principle of which the strict achievement is industry.’ Bellet 2009, 54-7.

explicitly universalist in its embrace of advancing civilisation worldwide, and in this respect it imposed a patronising and racist perspective on the non-European world. Yet his international vision was never explicitly imperialist. Saint-Simon was a pragmatic entrepreneur of sorts, which is why his vocabulary overlapped simultaneously with that of the early Bonapartists, that of republican liberals like Benjamin Constant, and that of radical philosophers like Jeremy Bentham.

Nineteenth-century ideas about international order were tightly interwoven with social and political thought about domestic organisation and the suppression of, or at the least orderly recovery from, national revolutions. The Malthusian fear of overpopulation, along with a specifically nineteenth-century concern of Europe's great powers with mass popular sovereignty, fed efforts to envision and organise empire and post-revolutionary order alike. The Social Question was omnipresent; international thought was no exception. This is the context in which Saint-Simon should be read. Revolution tempted war, he thought, whereas reform in the shape of organic spiritual unity combined with the rule of the wise could guarantee stability; a project inseparable from a corresponding vision of international order. This vision endorsed global activism based on technical intervention—'the French tradition of the *grand projet*' (Hazareesingh 2020, 7; see also Bonin 2010; Schot, Buiter and Anastasiadou 2011; Davies 2016; Todd 2015, 2021).

### III. Conclusion

This paper has introduced Saint-Simon as an international thinker influenced by the revolutionary upheaval of his times. Much of his work can be read as an attempt to come to terms with the meaning and potentials of post-Revolutionary politics. His aim was to establish order in the name of industrial reorganisation: industry as opposed to idleness; organisation as opposed to social strife. Saint-Simon offered a technocratic 'defence of reforms and the role of a Legislator', sharing the 'same ambition for order and knowledge' (Bellet 2009, 56). Ultimately he tried to undergird his ambitions for reform with an impartial viewpoint: whether physiologists, artisans, or engineers—the international should be ordered by impartial practitioners, not partisan politicians. Crucially, his idea of impartiality silently implied a number of assumptions about what he seemed to view as legitimate inequalities: wealth could entitle to government, France and England should lead European unity, and the world had to be both populated and transformed by 'the European race' which was 'superior to all other races of men.'

Theoretically, these political commitments underpinning a method of global governance, one that purports not to be political at all, tell us a great deal about the modern history of international thought and global governance. Saint-Simon worked to reconfigure the relationship between natural order and human agency; and he formulated early ideas of what in the second half of the nineteenth century emerged as technocratic internationalism. These ideas were unmistakably tied to normative projects. The normative content of technocratic internationalism, this paper suggests, historically

blended imperial thought, justifying the desire to export European civilisation, with social thought, extending principles of spiritual unity and rule by the wise to the international context. What emerges from this paper is a hitherto underappreciated history of the appropriate principles, methods, and actors of international order in the mind of an underrepresented French international thinker of the nineteenth century.

For IR, four points are of note here. First, this paper's foray into intellectual history has carved out the grounding of conceptions of agency and authority in international order in corresponding conceptions of the relationship between natural order and human agency. This in itself provides a context that is often lacking: agency largely depends on where we believe we stand in the world, and to what extent we believe intervention in that world to be justified. This paper, in that vein, is concerned after all with a kind of technocratic worldmaking: the idea of a world that can be seen through a view from nowhere, an objective point of view that legitimates merely technical solutions to the merely technical challenges of global governance (see Louis and Maertens 2021; Steffek 2021). Expert governance was its most visible essence from the mid-nineteenth century onwards; but before the terms 'expert' and 'expertise' entered common parlance, the technocratic international thought of someone like Saint-Simon constructed its basic condition of possibility: a world in which impartial reform was imaginable to begin with.

Second, this paper has also illustrated what it means to read the history of modern international thought at least partially through the prism of imperial thought, so dominant at the time. The embrace of empire entailed an extension of what counted as the natural order human agency was justified to intervene upon by technical means. This made particular practices conceivable and justified them. Specifically it meant that intervention in natural order by impartial practitioners could take the shape, as it did at Suez some decades later, of digging an interoceanic canal to facilitate commerce and, to the same end, expropriating land and employing forced labour in nations deemed further down the civilisational hierarchy. Here the politics of the technical point of view were wedded to the notion, increasingly believed to be obvious, that science had no homeland and so guaranteed impartiality. The scientific or technical grounding of a measure or project that was in fact political emerged as a mask that could present commitment under the veil of detachment. Saint-Simon's internationalism ultimately universalised a parochial French perspective, the result inspiring disciples to endorse a form of universal interventionism that placed a premium on French colonisation and informal empire. Saint-Simonians were involved in the colonisation of Algeria (Morsy 1989; Pilbeam 2014; Zouache 2015); the Suez canal enterprise in the early 1850s; campaigns for a Panama canal (Bonin 2010); and the 1861 French invasion of Mexico (Cunningham 2001). Napoleon III himself has been characterised as a 'Saint-Simon on horseback' given his

enthusiasm about the border-shattering power of industrial progress (Anceau 2008).<sup>9</sup> The emperor issued the official decree allowing the Saint-Simonian Pereire brothers to create their *crédit mobilier*, a financial institution that would become pivotal to transnational investment in the century's mega-projects. Under his rule, the Second Empire underwent industrial, infrastructural, and economic transformations in a 'Saint-Simonian spirit' (Anceau 2008, 352).

Third, Saint-Simon's international thought notably blended theory with practice. This might be one way of responding to Edward Keene's suggestion that 'it is in the relationship between international thought, international practices and international publics that the future of international intellectual history may lie' (Keene 2014, 2017; Vergerio 2019). The material analysed in this paper suggests an important insight for such an international intellectual history: theories of international order were not only supported with but also essentially imagined as normative designs or interventions upon it. In Saint-Simon, theory, hypothesis, and experiment did not succeed in linear fashion but responded to one another. Saint-Simon's main form of writing were letters to politicians and project proposals, complete with painstakingly detailed plans. His international thought was always part theory and part project.

Bringing Saint-Simon to bear on the history of modern global governance, and thus equipped to revisit central assumptions about standard practices in IR, prompts us to reflect on one of IR's 'big puzzles': international authority. Where does it originate? Who holds it, under what conditions? How is it legitimated, how contested? Saint-Simon's prolific output, as that of the Saint-Simonians, offers a wealth of material to study these questions from the angle of conceptions of modern global governance that emerged in thought, and were experimented with in practice throughout the nineteenth century. As one historian has put it, nearly every world-political project in France around the middle of the nineteenth century had been envisioned, promoted, or carried out by a Saint-Simonian (Gollwitzer 1972). To fully appreciate the consequences of this, we need to ground assumptions about the legitimacy, authority, and self-understanding of global governance in the history of Saint-Simon's technocratic internationalism. At a point at which the global governance literature is paying ever more attention to the politics and ideologies of international institutions and practices (Viola 2020; Voeten 2021; Louis and Maertens 2021), such a historical perspective promises to make for a fruitful extension to that undertaking.

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<sup>9</sup> The phrase 'Saint-Simon on horseback' is attributed to Victor Hugo's friend and writer Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve; see Guérard 1943. See also Milza 2006; Hazareesingh 2014.

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