THE HISTORY MANIFESTO

How should historians speak truth to power – and why does it matter? Why is five hundred years better than five months or five years as a planning horizon? And why is history – especially long-term history – so essential to understanding the multiple pasts which gave rise to our conflicted present? *The History Manifesto* is a call to arms to historians and everyone interested in the role of history in contemporary society.

Jo Guldi and David Armitage

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July 2014

Introduction
The bonfire of the humanities?

A spectre is haunting our time: the spectre of the short term.

We live in a moment of accelerating crisis that is characterised by the shortage of long-term thinking. Even as rising sea-levels threaten low-lying communities and coastal regions, the world's cities stockpile waste, and human actions poison the oceans, earth, and groundwater for future generations. We face rising economic inequality within nations even as inequalities between countries abate while international hierarchies revert to conditions not seen since the late eighteenth century, when China last dominated the global economy. Where, we might ask, is safety, where is freedom? What place will our children call home? There is no public office of the long term that you can call for answers about who, if anyone, is preparing to respond to these epochal changes. Instead, almost every aspect of human life is plotted and judged, packaged and paid for, on timescales of a few months or years. There are few opportunities to shake those projects loose from their short-term moorings. It can hardly seem worth while to raise questions of the long term at all.

In the age of the permanent campaign, politicians plan only as far as their next bid for election. They invoke children and grandchildren in public speeches, but electoral cycles of two to seven years determine which issues prevail. The result is less money for crumbling infrastructure and schools and more for any initiative that promises jobs right now. The same short horizons govern the way most corporate boards organise their futures. Quarterly cycles mean that executives have to show profit on a regular basis.[1] Long-term investments in human resources disappear from the balance sheet, and so they are cut. International institutions, humanitarian bodies, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) must follow the same logic and adapt their programmes to

annual or at most triennial constraints. No one, it seems, from bureaucrats to board members, or voters and recipients of international aid, can escape the ever-present threat of short-termism.

There are individuals who buck the trend, of course. In 1998, the Californian cyber-utopian Stewart Brand created the Long Now Foundation to promote consciousness of broader spans of time. 'Civilization is revving itself into a pathologically short attention span', he wrote: 'Some sort of balancing corrective to the short-sightedness is needed – some mechanism or myth that encourages the long view and the taking of long-term responsibility, where "the long term" is measured at least in centuries.' Brand's charismatic solution to the problem of short-termism is the Clock of the Long Now, a mechanism operating on a computational span of 10,000 years designed precisely to measure time in centuries, even millennia.[2]

But the lack of long-range perspective in our culture remains. The disease even has a name – 'short-termism'. Short-termism has many practitioners but few defenders. It is now so deeply ingrained in our institutions that it has become a habit – frequently followed but rarely justified, much complained about but not often diagnosed. It was only given a name, at least in English, in the 1980s, after which usage sky-rocketed significantly (see Figure 1).

The most ambitious diagnosis of short-termism to date came from the Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations. In October 2013, a blue-ribbon panel chaired by Pascal Lamy, former Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), issued its report, *Now for the Long Term*, 'focusing on the increasing short-termism of modern politics and our collective inability to break the gridlock

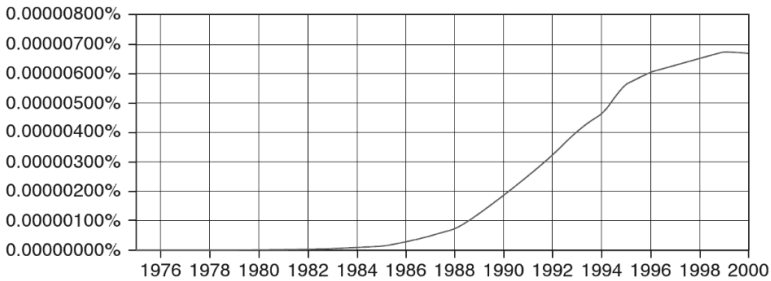

Figure 1 Usage of 'short-termism', *c.* 1975–2000
Source: Google Ngram viewer.

from our collective past? Centuries and epochs are often mysteries too deep and wide for journalists to concern themselves with. Only in rare conversations does anyone notice that there are continuities that are relevant and possible to see. Who is trained to wait steadily upon these vibrations of deeper time and then translate them for others?

Universities have a special claim as venues for thinking on longer time scales. Historically, universities have been among the most resilient, enduring, and long-lasting institutions humans have created. Nalanda University in Bihar, India, was founded over 1500 years ago as a Buddhist institution and is now being revived again as a seat of learning. The great European foundations of Bologna (1088), Paris (*c.* 1150), Oxford (1167), Cambridge (1209), Salamanca (1218), Toulouse (1229), and Heidelberg (1386), to name only a few, date back to the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, and there were universities in mid sixteenth-century Peru and Mexico decades before Harvard or Yale was chartered. By contrast, the average half-life of a twentieth-century business corporation has been calculated at seventy-five years: there may be only two companies in the world that can compare with most universities for longevity.[6]

Universities, along with religious institutions, are the carriers of traditions, the guardians of deep knowledge. They should be the centres of innovation where research takes place without regard to profit or immediate application.[7] Precisely that relative disinterestedness has given the university particular room to ponder long-term questions using long-term resources. As the vice-chancellor of the oldest university in Oceania, the University of Sydney (1850), has noted, universities remain 'the one player capable of making long-term, infrastructure-intensive research investments . . . Business generally seeks return on investment over a period of a few years. If universities take a similar approach, there will simply be no other entities globally capable of supporting research on 20-, 30-, or 50-year time horizons.'[8]

Yet the peculiar capacity of the university to foster disinterested inquiries into the long term may be as endangered as long-term thinking itself. For most of the history of universities, the responsibility for passing on tradition and subjecting it to critical examination has been borne by the humanities.[9] These subjects now include the study of languages, literature, art, music, philosophy, and history, but

in their original conception extended to all non-professional subjects, including logic and rhetoric, but excluding law, medicine, and theology. Their educational purpose was precisely not to be instrumental: to examine theories and instances, to pose questions and the means of their solution, but not to propose practical objectives or strategies. As the medieval university mutated into the modern research university, and as private foundations become subject to public control and funding, the goals of the humanities were increasingly tested and contested. For at least the last century, wherever the humanities have been taught or studied there has been debate about their 'relevance' and their 'value'. Crucial to the defence of the humanities has been their mission to transmit questions about value – and to question values – over hundreds, even thousands, of years. Any search for antidotes to short-termism must begin with them.

Yet everywhere we turn the humanities are said to be in 'crisis': more specifically, the former president of the American Historical Association, Lynn Hunt, has recently argued that the field of 'history is in crisis and not just one of university budgets'.[10] There is nothing new in this: the advantage of a historical perspective is knowing that the humanities have been in recurrent crisis for the last fifty years at least. The threats have varied from country to country and from decade to decade but some of the enemies are consistent. The humanities can appear 'soft' and indistinct in their findings compared to the so-called 'hard' sciences. They can seem to be a luxury, even an indulgence, in contrast to disciplines oriented towards professional careers, like economics or law. They rarely compete in the push to recruit high-profit relationships with software, engineering, and pharmaceutical clientele. And they can be vulnerable to new technologies that might render the humanities' distinctive methods, such as close reading of texts, an appreciation for abstract values, and the promotion of critical thinking over instrumental reasoning jejune. The humanities are incidental (not instrumental), obsolescent (not effervescent), increasingly vulnerable (not technologically adaptable) – or so their enemies and sceptics would have us believe.[11]

The crisis of the university has become acute for several reasons. The accumulation and dissemination of knowledge through teaching and publishing is undergoing changes more profound than at any point in the last five hundred years. In many parts of the world, but

especially in North America, parents and students have inherited a university retooled into a specialised engine of expertise, often dominated by the star disciplines of physics, economics, and neuroscience, designed to manufacture articles at record numbers, and often insensitive to other traditions of learning. The latest 'crisis of the humanities' has been much discussed and its causes broadly debated. Enrolments in humanities courses have apparently declined from historic highs. Massive open online courses (MOOCs) seemed to portend the extinction of small-group teaching and the intimate process of interaction between teachers and students. The shifting boundaries between humanistic and scientific disciplines can make this manner of engaging the humanities seem quaint or superfluous. Squeezes on public revenues and private endowments create pressures from outside universities to deliver value and from inside them to demonstrate viability. For teachers of the humanities, battling these challenges from within and from without can feel like a struggle against the many-headed Hydra: Herculean – and therefore heroic – but unremitting, because every victory brings with it a new adversary.

Administrators, academics, and students alike struggle to face all these challenges at once. They must strive to find a way forward that will preserve the distinctive virtues of the university – and of the humanities and historical social sciences within them. Importantly, they need experts who can look past the parochial concerns of disciplines too attached to client funding, the next business cycle, or the next election. Indeed, in a crisis of short-termism, our world needs somewhere to turn to for information about the relationship between past and future. Our argument is that History – the discipline and its subject-matter – can be just the arbiter we need at this critical time.

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Any broader public looking for solutions to short-termism in the History departments of most universities might have been quite disappointed, at least until very recently. As we document in later chapters, historians once told arching stories of scale but, nearly forty years ago, many if not most of them stopped doing so. For two generations, between about 1975 and 2005, they conducted most of their studies on biological time-spans of between five and fifty years, approximating the length of a mature human life. The compression

of time in historical work can be illustrated bluntly by the range covered in doctoral dissertations conducted in the United States, a country which adopted the German model of doctoral education early and then produced history doctorates on a world-beating scale. In 1900, the average number of years covered in doctoral dissertations in history in the United States was about seventy-five years; by 1975, it was closer to thirty. Command of archives; total control of a ballooning historiography; and an imperative to reconstruct and analyse in ever-finer detail: all these had become the hallmarks of historical professionalism. Later in the book, we will document why and how this concentration – some might say, contraction – of time took place. For the moment, it is enough to note that short-termism had become an academic pursuit as well as a public problem in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

It was during this period, we argue, that professional historians ceded the task of synthesising historical knowledge to unaccredited writers and simultaneously lost whatever influence they might once have had over policy to colleagues in the social sciences, most spectacularly to the economists. The gulf between academic and non-academic history widened. After 2000 years, the ancient goal for history to be the guide to public life had collapsed. With the 'telescoping of historical time ... the discipline of history, in a peculiar way, ceased to be historical'.[12] History departments lay increasingly exposed to new and unsettling challenges: the recurrent crises of the humanities marked by waning enrolments; ever more invasive demands from administrators and their political paymasters to demonstrate 'impact'; and internal crises of confidence about their relevance amid adjacent disciplines with swelling classrooms, greater visibility, and more obvious influence in shaping public opinion.

But there are now signs that the long term and the long range are returning. The scope of doctoral dissertations in history is already widening. Professional historians are again writing monographs covering periods of 200 to 2000 years or more. And there is now an expanding universe of historical horizons, from the 'deep history' of the human past, stretching over 40,000 years, to 'big history' going back to the Big Bang, 13.8 billion years ago. Across many fields of history, big is definitely back.[13] The return of the *longue durée* is how we describe the extension of historians' time-scales we both

diagnose and recommend in this book.[14] In the last decade, across the university, the rise of big data and problems such as long-term climate change, governance, and inequality are causing a return to questions about how the past develops over centuries and millennia, and what this can tell us about our survival and flourishing in the future. This has brought a new sense of responsibility, as well as urgency, to the work of historians who 'should recognize that how they tell the story of the past shapes how the present understands its potential, and is thus an intervention in the future of the world', as one practitioner of history's public future has noted.[15]

The form and epistemology of these studies is not new. The *longue durée* as a term of historical art was the invention of the great French historian Fernand Braudel just over fifty years ago, in 1958.[16] As a temporal horizon for research and writing the *longue durée* largely disappeared for a generation before coming back into view in recent years. As we hope to suggest, the reasons for its retreat were sociological as much as intellectual; the motivations for its return are both political and technological. Yet the revenant *longue durée* is not identical to its original incarnation: as the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu classically noted, 'returns to past styles are never "the same thing" since they are separated from what they return to by a negative reference to something which was itself the negation of it (or the negation of the negation)'.[17] The new *longue durée* has emerged within a very different ecosystem of intellectual alternatives. It possesses a dynamism and flexibility earlier versions did not have. It has a new relationship to the abounding sources of big data available in our time – data ecological, governmental, economic, and cultural in nature, much of it newly available to the lens of digital analysis. As a result of this increased reserve of evidence, the new *longue durée* also has greater critical potential, for historians, for other social scientists, for policy-makers, and for the public.

The origins of this new *longue durée* may lie in the past but it is now very much oriented towards the future. In this sense, it does mark a return to some of the foundations of historical thinking, in the West and in other parts of the world. Until history became professionalised as an academic discipline, with departments, journals, accrediting associations, and all the other formal trappings of a profession, its mission had been primarily educative, even

heritage of our hunter-gatherer ancestors and how their economic rationality determined our present and our future. In at least three spheres – discussions of climate, discussions of world government, and discussions of inequality – economists' universalising models came to dominate conversations about the future. At the end of Chapter 3, we set out the reasons that these views of human nature as static, not historical, are limiting. We outline an alternative approach to the future, and we recommend three modes of thinking about a future that we think good history does well: it looks at processes that take a long time to unfold; it engages false myths about the future and talks about where the data come from; and it looks to many different kinds and sources of data for multiple perspectives on how past and future were and may yet be experienced by a variety of different actors.

We partially explain what is replacing climate apocalypticism and economic predestination in Chapter 4, where we argue that short-term thinking is being challenged by the information technology of our time: the explosion of big data and the means now available to make sense of it all. Here we highlight the ways that scholars, businesses, activists, and historians are using new datasets to aggregate information about the history of inequality and the climate and to project new possible futures. We foreground the particular tools, many of them designed by historians, which are enhancing these datasets and drawing out qualitative models of changing thought over time. We show that this new data for thinking about the past and the future is rapidly outpacing the old analytics of economics, whose indicators were developed between the 1930s and the 1950s to measure the consumption and employment habits of people who lived very differently than we will in the twenty-first century. In coming decades, information scientists, environmentalists, and even financial analysts will increasingly need to think about when their data came from if they want to peer into the future. This change in the life of data may determine a major shift for the university of the future, where historical thinkers will have an increasingly important role to play as the arbiters of big data.

Our Conclusion ends where we started, with the problem of who in our society is responsible for constructing and interpreting the big picture. We are writing at a moment of the destabilisation of nations

and currencies, on the cusp of a chain of environmental events that will change our way of life, at a time when questions of inequality trouble political and economic systems around the globe. On the basis of when we write, we recommend to our readers and to our fellow-historians the cause of what we call *the public future*: we must, all of us, engage the big picture, and do so together, a task that we believe requires us to look backwards as well as ahead.

The sword of history has two edges, one that cuts open new possibilities in the future, and one that cuts through the noise, contradictions, and lies of the past. In the Conclusion, we will claim that history offers three further indispensable means for looking at the past, which have more to do with history's power to sort truth from falsehood when we speak about our past and present situation. This sorting out of truth is part of the legacy of micro-historical examination, but it pertains equally to problems of big data; in both cases, historians have become adept at examining the basis of claims. History's power to liberate, we argue, ultimately lies in explaining where things came from, tacking between big processes and small events to see the whole picture, and reducing a lot of information to a small and shareable version. We recommend these methods to a society plagued by false ideas about the past and how it limits our collective hopes for the future.

There is never a problem with short-term thinking until short-termism predominates in a crisis. By implication, never before now has it been so vital that we all become experts on the long-term view, that we return to the *longue durée*. Renewing the connection between past and future, and using the past to think critically about what is to come, are the tools that we need now. Historians are those best able to supply them.

CHAPTER I

Going forward by looking back: the rise of the longue durée

The discipline of history holds particular promise for looking both backwards and forwards. After all, historians are masters of change over time. Over at least the last five hundred years, historians have among other things spoken truth to power, they have been reformers and leaders of the state, and they have revealed the worst abuses of corrupt institutions to public examination.[1] 'The longer you can look back the further you can look forward', said a mid twentieth-century master of political power who was also a prolific historian, Winston Churchill.[2]

Historians' expertise in long-term change gives them powers of contextualising events and processes that strike others as perhaps too ancient to be subject to question, too vast for curiosity to query. For historians, however, the shape of manners and the habits of institutions appear otherwise. Preferences and habits alike change from generation to generation; they are reformed entirely over the course of centuries.[3] Historians focus on the question of how: Who did the changing, and how can we be sure they were the agents? These analytics of causality, action, and consequence make them specialists in noticing the change around us.

Historians have special powers at destabilising received knowledge, questioning, for instance, whether the very concepts they use to understand the past are of themselves outdated.[4] Historians learn how to argue about these changes by means of narrative, how to join explanation with understanding, how to combine the study of the particular, the specific, and the unique with the desire to find patterns, structures, and regularities: that is, how to join what the German philosopher of the social sciences Wilhelm Windelband called the 'idiographic' and the 'nomothetic', the particularising

and the generalising tendencies in the creation of knowledge that Windelband associated with the humanities and the sciences, respectively.[5] No historian would now seek laws in the records of the past but we do hope to attain some level of generality in our attempts to place events and individuals within broader patterns of culture. By combining the procedures and aspirations of both the humanities and the social sciences, history has a special (if not unique) claim to be a *critical human science*: not just as a collection of narratives or a source of affirmation for the present, but a tool of reform and a means of shaping alternative futures.

In the last generation, historians have thought a great deal about another element of their studies: space, and how to extend their work across ever greater expanses of it, beyond the nation-state that has been the default container of historical study since the nineteenth century and outward to continents, oceans, inter-regional connections, and ultimately to encompass the whole planet as part of 'world' or 'global' history. The attempt to transcend national history is now almost a cliché, as most historians question the territorial boundaries of traditional historical writing. Much more novel, and potentially even more subversive, is the move to transcend conventional periodisations, as more and more historians begin to question the arbitrary temporal constraints on their studies. *Transnational* history is all the rage. *Transtemporal* history has yet to come into vogue.[6]

Time, in all its dimensions, is the special province of the historian. 'In truth, the historian can never get away from the question of time in history: time sticks to his thinking like soil to a gardener's spade', wrote Fernand Braudel in the 1958 article in the historical journal *Annales* where he launched the term '*longue durée*'.[7] Braudel was a profound thinker about the many kinds of time – the multiple temporalities, as some might say – human beings inhabit. His aphorism captures something indispensable about the work of historians that is less central to the work of their fellow humanists and social scientists. Historians can never shake off the element of time. It clogs and drags our studies, but it also defines them. It is the soil through which we dig, the element from which history itself springs.[8]

The term *longue durée* came out of crisis, a 'general crisis of the human sciences', as Fernand Braudel put it. The nature of the crisis was in some ways familiar in light of twenty-first-century debates on

the future of the humanities and social sciences: an explosion of knowledge, including a proliferation of data; a general anxiety about disciplinary boundaries; a perceived failure of cooperation between researchers in adjacent fields; and complaints about the stifling grip of an 'insidious and retrograde humanism' (*un humanisme rétrograde, insidieux*) might all have contemporary parallels. Braudel lamented that the other human sciences had overlooked the distinctive contribution of history to solving the crisis, a solution that went to the heart of the social reality that he believed was the focus of all humane inquiry: 'the opposition between the instant of time and that time which flows only slowly' (*cette opposition . . . entre l'instant et le temps lent à s'écouler*). Between these two poles lay the conventional time-scales used in narrative history and by social and economic historians: spans of ten, twenty, fifty years at most. However, he argued, histories of crises and cycles along these lines obscured the deeper regularities and continuities underlying the processes of change. It was essential to move to a different temporal horizon, to a history measured in centuries or millennia: 'the history of long, even of very long duration' (*l'histoire de longue, même de très longue durée*).[9]

The ambition of Braudel and many of the historians of the *Annales* group who followed him in his quest was to find the relationship between agency and environment over the *longue durée*. This built upon a tendency visible within histories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – and, indeed, long before – to presume that the work of the historian was to cover hundreds of years, or at least a few decades. In the quest to make those earlier endeavours even more rigorous, indeed falsifiable, through the acquisition of quantitative fact and the measured assessment of change, conceptions of the *longue durée* were not unchanging. For Braudel, the *longue durée* was one among a hierarchy of intersecting but not exclusive temporalities that structured all human history. He had classically described these time-scales in the Preface to his masterwork, *La Méditerranée et le Monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (1949), as the three histories told successively in that work: an almost unmoving one (*une histoire quasi-immobile*) of humans in their physical environment; a gently paced (*lentement rythmée*) story of states, societies, and civilisations; and a more traditional history of events (*l'histoire événementielle*), those 'brief, rapid, nervous oscillations'.[10] Appropriately, many

modern history was being reforged to tell the world what would come after the nation disappeared.

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This historical orientation towards practical action and the future is hardly a recent feature of historical writing. Indeed, it has been characteristic of large swathes of the western historical tradition since classical times. The idea that history is 'philosophy teaching by examples' is ancient; the aim for history to provide pragmatic counsel to its readers is equally enduring. The Greek historian Thucydides, for example, began his history of the Peloponnesian War between the Athenians and the Spartans with the notion that his history should be useful, and that it would be useful because human nature itself was unchanging: the evidence of the past could therefore be certain to prove helpful to the future. The Roman historians may have been less convinced of the durability of human nature in a corrupted world, but their works were often political in at least two senses: that they sought to offer moral instruction to those who held official responsibility and that they were often composed by men of politics reflecting on their own action or their countrymen's in retirement or retreat from political or military office.

History in this sense was what the orator and philosopher Cicero termed *magistra vitae*: a guide to life.[17] It retained that aspiration and that authority until at least the early nineteenth century – a 2000-year period in which the past was deemed an invaluable guide to the future. And it did so not least because the Romans told long-term histories of their commonwealth (often couched in terms of moral decline) and they were followed by church historians such as Eusebius and St Augustine who told the story of the unfolding continuity of a community of faith, in Augustine's case as the story of a city paralleling Rome, the *City of God* (*Civitas Dei*) – the invisible church of all Christian believers – on its pilgrimage through a corrupting world. In the European Middle Ages, the histories of specific communities – religious, like abbeys, or secular, like towns – could be told over long stretches of time as the micro-history of a relatively small place or population extended over decades or more often centuries along the timeline of cumulative annals.[18]

What we think of as modern western historical writing began with the desire to shape the present and the future derived from classical

models. The civil histories of the Renaissance and the mirrors for princes written by counsellor–historians such as Niccolò Machiavelli drew on examples from the past – often the Roman past, as in Machiavelli's *Discourses Concerning Livy* – as guides to political action in both princely and republican regimes, written either for the ruler (as Machiavelli's *Prince* was) or for citizens to digest (as Machiavelli's *Discourses* were). Many of these histories told the stories of the founding and the fortunes of particular cities and then grew to encompass early national communities and then histories of Europe, its empires, and ultimately, by the eighteenth century, the history of the whole world.

In the nineteenth century, especially in the aftermath of the French Revolution, history-writing became an increasingly important tool of political debate, with leading politicians in both France (for example, François Guizot, Adolphe Thiers, and Jean Jaurès) and Britain (Thomas Babington Macaulay and Lord John Russell, for instance) writing histories of their own revolutionary pasts to shape their national futures. It was also in this century that 'The old tradition of "pragmatic history" . . . could be refurbished to support the idea that history was useful in the education of statesmen and civil servants', even 'a school of statesmanship', in the words of Cambridge's late Victorian Regius Professor of History, J. R. Seeley.[19] Their visions of the past as advisor to future policy were accepted programmatically by the institutions of government, finance, and the military, such that history texts like Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (1890) could become the textbook on military strategy in naval colleges in the United States, Germany, and Japan, assigned in classrooms over decades to come.[20] Out of these matrices emerged other long-range inquiries into the past: for example, the broad sweeps of the *Annales* School, and the engaged historiography of reformers across much of the twentieth century. It is to these developments that we now turn, to illustrate the rise of the *longue durée* before we describe its retreat and return in subsequent chapters.

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Long-term visions of the past remained bound up with policy-making and public conversations about the future, and that was a motive to go long. Like Alfred Thayer Mahan before them,

historians of the 1960s and 1970s could depend upon policy-makers as an audience, and that was a rationale for staying general. Indeed, in at least one major subfield – military history – historians remain attached to the military schools and naval colleges that commission them to instruct future generals in strategy and international relations.[21] Military history remains for this reason one of the last outposts of long-term history in a short-term world.[22] Readers who care about the future may thrive on the particular detail of individual biography or battles, but generals and other strategists need the big picture on changes that take centuries to be fully expressed. It is little coincidence, then, that military writings were among the earliest sources of counterfactual thinking in the eighteenth century as strategic thinkers gamed out multiple possibilities, or that the earliest counterfactual novel in 1836 was about Napoleon and the 'conquest of the world'.[23]

Reformers and revolutionaries also need the big picture. Generation upon generation of political reformers capitalised upon history to revisit the past, some of them radicals for whom the alternatives and counterfactuals of the past gave reason for the revolutionary reconception of institutions of democracy, race, and property ownership. In a tradition that stretched back to Karl Marx, twentieth-century historians around the world continued writing about the changing nature of states, bureaucracies, and popular movements, making daring predictions about the long-term sweep of events. Economic inequality and the role of the state were the focus of one of the most ambitious attempts to look backwards and see forwards ever created. Marx's version of the history of class conflict is well known, but we have forgotten many of the historians who came after him, and who thought that the history of inequality clearly demonstrated the duty of reformers to amend government in economic systems that provided limited opportunity for the poor. For example, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, radical designers of state socialism in the late nineteenth century, turned themselves into historians in order to change the institutions around them. In eleven volumes of history on English government and its past, the husband–wife team reviewed the long history of institutions as a roadmap to future reform, demonstrating historical continuities of care of the poor and responsibility for roads from the Tudor past