INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Jarrod Wiener.
Brussels School of International Studies, University of Kent at Canterbury, UK

Robert A. Schrire
Department of Political Studies, University of Cape Town, South Africa

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Summary

International Relations emerged as a recognized discipline distinct from others in the Social Sciences in the aftermath of the First World War. The development of thinking about issues of war and peace continued apace as a fundamental area of concern for the discipline. However, the discipline expanded into investigations of a range of different issue areas as the scope and breadth of international social relations – among states, organizations, companies, and individuals – itself expanded. The increased interdependence of the global system, including the environment, sustainable development, gender issues, and global culture, also highlighted that the canvass for the discipline of International Relations truly is the widest possible, in the sense that it straddles the globe, and in many issues the conventional distinction between "domestic" and "international" issues has become blurred. This contribution therefore sketches the scope and breadth of this ever-expanding discipline, while locating its sub-fields within the wider fields of theory and methodology of the Social Sciences.

1. Introduction

International Relations emerged as a recognized discipline distinct from others in the Social Sciences when the first Chair of International Politics, the "Woodrow Wilson Chair," was established in 1919. (Here it should be noted that by convention

"International Relations" with capital letters refers to the academic study of international phenomena, while "international relations" in lower case refers to the events or issues that are being studied.) In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, it was charged with the task of determining the "causes of war, and the conditions for peace." While the early study of International Relations was of course informed by scholarship that had gone before, notably in diplomatic history and international law, it came increasingly to be informed by political science, sociology, political theory, and philosophy. However, the founding mission was to carve out a separate sphere of social scientific inquiry, with a well-defined goal: to prevent the horrors of modern Great Power warfare ever happening again.

That founding mission sparked scholarly work on a number of fronts, which in the early days coalesced around the central question of what maintains *order* in the international system, and by extension what leads to co-operation or causes co-operation to degenerate into war. That mission required an empirical study, a historical synthesis, and the development of theoretical constructs which would enable scholars to isolate those features of international relations that are "important" to understand. Much of the empirical body of work about international relations before this guiding mission had been articulated was within the realm of diplomatic history. However, the majority of diplomatic history was ideographic: events, such as wars and diplomatic conferences, and especially the personalities that were peculiar to a given situation. Yet, what was "important" to these early scholars was to discover those features of international relations that were general across time as opposed to particular, so that a broad understanding could be gained of the recurrent, and therefore "generalizable," mechanisms of international relations.

This process of theory building and synthesizing had caused considerable and fundamental debate in the discipline in its early years. As the scope of the discipline – the range of issues that came to be understood as central to it – increased, so too did the theoretical debates. It is because of this fundamental disagreement on the nature of the international system that the first section in this Theme begins with an examination of the "Theories and concepts of International Relations". The emphasis is oriented towards international *systems* and the historical antecedents of the modern international system. In this section, Professor Torbjorn Knutsen provides a historical overview of both the development of the modern international system, and the thinking about international relations that preceded the establishment of the discipline in the academy. This is followed by a contribution by Professor Kalevi Holsti on "Historical issues in the development of International Relations" in which he investigates in detail the characteristics of international systems in world history. Professor Geoff Berridge and Professor Simon Dalby then explore key issues of "Diplomacy" and "Geopolitics" respectively. Professors Michael Graham Fry and Andrew Williams who examine "Diplomatic, international, and global world history" cap this historical introduction. The emphasis of this section then shifts from what is essentially a *European* dimension – since it was in Europe that the key features of the modern international system developed – to a discussion of "American and European foreign relations" by Professor Charles Cogan. As the discussion concentrates on international *systems*, we have chosen to include in this section contributions of three important and influential system theories. Professor Martin Shaw writes on "Sociological approaches to International

Relations*;*" Professor George Modelski outlines his theory of "Long cycles in global politics;" and, from a methodological perspective, Robert Cutler explains "Complexity Science and Knowledge-Creation in International Relations." Clearly, these are not the only systemic theories in International Relations, and clearly not all theories of International Relations are systemic theories, though most theories incorporate explanations of the international system or implicit understandings of it.

The development of thinking about issues of war and peace continued apace as a fundamental area of concern for the discipline, and the breadth of work in the analysis of international conflict is treated in detail in a separate theme in EOLSS on-line, introduced and edited by our colleague Professor Gustaaf Geeraerts. Among the major developments in International Relations, one has been the attempt to explain international co-operation, and the mechanisms that have evolved to assist it, namely international organizations. Given the rapid development of interdependence among states that requires cooperation, particularly – though not exclusively – in the international economy, the second major section of the present theme is concerned with issues of international political economy. Professor Michael Veseth provides the conceptual overview of that section. His discussion is supplemented by a contribution by Professor Lars Magnusson who writes on "Mercantilism," and by Professor Timothy McKeown on "Hegemony and International Relations," with the latter examining an important debate about systems of governance in a liberal international political economy.

Clearly, the increased interdependence of the global system requires co-operation on a range of other issues of common concern. The final topic in this theme, overviewed by Professor Fulvio Attina, therefore turns to "International Relations and contemporary world issues." These include "International Relations and human rights," by Professor Peter Baehr, and "International environmental negotiations," by Professor Carlo Carraro. Indeed, the highly interdependent social, political, and environmental systems which characterize the contemporary landscape require a new conceptualization of complex mechanisms for global management, or "Global governance," as described in that section by Professor Thomas G. Weiss and Kevin Ozgercin. One of the most potentially transformative developments of the modern age is perhaps the way in which technological change impacts on international relations, and even perhaps on the very structure of modern systems of political and social organization. The final contribution, by Professor Richard Mansbach, therefore discusses "International Relations and information technology."

2. Theories and concepts of International Relations

2.1. The "first great debate"

The early discipline of International Relations was a philosophical project, and it was nothing short of revolutionary. "Liberal internationalists," so called because they shared at least two important intellectual features, had founded the discipline of International Relations. One of those features was Kantian cosmopolitanism, namely, a belief that all individuals are rational and peace-loving, and that human conflict is the result of dysfunctional social *systems*. These people believed that if the old aristocracies would

become republican and representative forms of government, if individuals could be made to feel secure in the determination of their own futures, and if public opinion would be the driving force behind foreign policy, then war would disappear as a conflict-resolving mechanism among states. The other intellectual facet was a great belief in human progress, reason, and a faith that the change they were proposing was possible.

The Continental "balance of power" – a system for the management of international relations explained in detail by Professors Knutsen and Holsti – was thought by these liberal internationalists to be dysfunctional and prone to war. There was some disagreement among the early scholars as to precisely why this should be the case. Some believed that this propensity to war was because war was the natural – and normal – conflict-resolving mechanism of a system that was predicated on conflict and managed essentially through deterrence. Others argued that the balance of power occasionally, and necessarily, broke down as the relative power of its constituent states changed from time to time, thus requiring a war to re-establish the balance. Notwithstanding the debate, liberal internationalists agreed that it was the balance of power system itself that caused war, and that if a new kind of international system could be established in which collective security – an alliance of all against none – could replace the balance of power, there could be a chance for a lasting peace. Thus, the attempt to prevent a repetition of the atrocities of the First World War also led to the establishment of an international organization – the League of Nations – that was supposed to facilitate the Kantian idea of a shared common interest. Collective security was expected to function as the mechanism to achieve this goal, and to replace the old alliance systems of the balance of power. This was to be social engineering on a massive scale to change the character of the international system.

The early discipline was therefore born of optimism, and understandably so because it was informed by the prevailing intellectual climate of the time. The great faith in the progress of human affairs towards ever more perfection was characteristic of the Enlightenment project: that the application of reason and science to the study of a social ill – in this case, the scourge of war – could result in identifiable problems that would be amenable to workable solutions. The intellectual climate was also one of great shock. Europe – believed to be the seat of high civilization, whence had emanated the great intellectual, artistic, and other creations of the modern age, the Europe that had set forth to civilize the rest of the world with a belief in its own superiority – had degenerated into horrible blood-letting over many years among its own member states. It was a profound intellectual shock indeed.

While the faith in reason and scientific study was shared by most, all certainly did not share the faith that the scourge of war could be "fixed," and a fundamental debate – the "first great debate" in the discipline – emerged between the liberal internationalists and a group of scholars who labeled themselves "Realist." Scholars like E. H. Carr (1939), Hans Morgenthau (1946, 1947), and John Herz (1957) derided the liberal internationalists as "Idealist" and "Utopian." They rejected the belief that new international configurations like the League of Nations could prevent war. Indeed, this was because they rejected the Kantian notion that lay at the core of the liberal internationalist project: that human nature is essentially peaceful and that left to their

own devices people would get along with one another. Quite the contrary; these Realists argued that the rational pursuit of individuals' self interest leads them into conflict. International Relations for these Realist scholars came to be described as the reflection of human nature, where states seek to dominate others and hence struggle for power.

Importantly, Realists did not discount the possibility that peace could be achieved. Rather, they argued for a realistic assessment of the history of human affairs to gain a recognition that war happens from time to time, to isolate the conditions that have proven most stable, and to try as a conscious foreign policy to recreate them. Indeed, the balance of power was capable of producing peace among the Great Powers, particularly when that system was carefully managed, and when the craft of diplomacy and a very conscious appreciation of geopolitics had informed foreign policy. What was required, for the Realist, was a careful assessment of the mechanisms of co-operation among states, and especially an appreciation of the limits of co-operation. Among those limits were recognition that states define their national interests differently, that states will pursue those interests rationally, and therefore that the mechanisms for international co-operation need to be founded on these "realities" (hence the self-description "Realist"). This stood in stark contradistinction to the liberal internationalists' faith in an essential harmony of interests. The Realist agenda, therefore, began not from the foundation of a common interest, but with an investigation of why the foreign policies of some states seek to maintain the status quo while others seek to revise it.

Nevertheless, the early discipline was characterized by a philosophical debate that essentially concerned the capacity for change at the international level, but, more fundamentally, it engendered a debate on human capacities for change. Both "Idealists" and the classical Realists had rooted their view on assumptions about human nature, a view which is essentially contested and one not prone to easy proof or falsification. The Realists, however, argued that theirs was a theory more evident from the historical record. Indeed, the history of international relations – like the history of the birth of the state itself – is a story of warfare.

2.2. The centrality of the state

Any understanding of our current reality, in terms of both the practice and theory of international relations, requires an interpretation of the past, as well as a conception of the future. This theme begins, therefore, with contributions on the history of international relations. In his introduction to that section, Professor Torbjorn Knutsen provides a thorough historical overview of the development of the international system and the key events that shaped it up to the end of the cold war. In the process, he – along with Professor Holsti – discusses some of the fundamental issues with which International Relations theory traditionally has been concerned. Possibly the most important of those questions are obvious ones, and these include the question of why the international system is composed of states, as opposed to some other grouping such as city-states or empires. How is it, therefore, that the modern international system, composed of sovereign states, arose?

The discipline of International Relations often takes for granted that the sovereign state exists as the dominant form of human social organization. Of course, everyone is a

member of a family, and of a community, and perhaps that community is in a town, village, or city. In a larger geographical context, everyone's community belongs to a particular region on a particular continent of the Earth, a central theme in Simon Dalby's contribution.

Some individuals may also belong to trans-national networks of like-minded people, such as trade or professional associations, trans-national non-governmental organizations, or "virtual communities" which through communications technology overcome the boundaries of distance. However, of those social groupings, only the state is recognized as being the dominant actor, because only the state can claim sovereignty, and the long historical processes that gave rise to the state and its defining ideas of sovereignty and territorial integrity are detailed by both Knutsen and Holsti.

What is evident from the discussion by Professor Knutsen is that the state managed to become the dominant actor because it was more efficient at performing the function that was required of it, under the circumstances prevailing at the time that it arose. In a word, this was to provide security. Out of the ashes of the disintegrated Holy Roman Empire, organized religion, cities, and smaller associations, as well as individuals, made competing claims for the loyalty of people, in an atmosphere where territorial conquest and invading forces made security the overriding concern. In the fluid atmosphere where allegiances changed often, the state became the most efficient social formation for providing security, because its more efficient bureaucracy could raise the capital needed to pay for trained armies, and its centralization of communication created the avenues through which to unify people across great distances.

However, we should recall here Professor Holsti's important point that although we correctly date the beginning of a state-based system to the Peace of Westphalia (1648), that system was made up of a wide range of actors including empires, free cities, and private religious organizations. A key factor, contributing at certain times to conflict and at others to peace, was the belief that territory was a possession of the rulers and not the ruled. Territory was thus frequently annexed, exchanged, and even bought and sold. And although it is fashionable in contemporary discussions of "globalization" to focus on the difficulties of exercising sovereignty today, the states of 1648 were very weak: governments struggled to extract sufficient revenues, local insurrections were frequent, and in Holsti's apt summary, "states were chronically insecure, facing perpetual threats and challenges from both domestic and external sources." Ironically then, the post-cold war world may represent in some ways a return to Westphalia: a wide range of actors, some based upon territory and others not, significant differences in the distribution of power, and in general a system of inter-relationships largely outside the control of any particular participant. Of course, one significant difference is that in the seventeenth century weak actors functioned within a system of limited and irregular interactions. In the world of today, states may be in relative decline but the system itself is characterized by increasing interactions and general rules and norms of growing importance.

Another unique characteristic of most states, and indeed their defining characteristic, is the ability of the state to generate loyalties from its citizens. Indeed, as Michel Huysseune stresses in his chapter, the state and nation are historically linked in their developmental dynamics. As a normative principle the nation-state rules supreme: even

where nation-states do not exist, as in many multi-ethnic states in Africa, Asia, and parts of eastern Europe, political movements there aspire to be part of a nation-state either by creating a nation out of disparate people or through secession from existing states. Despite the changes in the contemporary world – globalization, ecological challenges and other forces that erode effective sovereignty – the nation-state as the source of human identification and loyalty rules supreme. For those who struggle to become part of a nation-state such as Kurds, Palestinians, and many minorities throughout the world, the passion behind their struggles has been unaffected by restraints on the exercise of effective sovereignty. Indeed, the norm of sovereignty and of territorial integrity has become so embedded in perceptions of security that these groups seek "entry" into the club of states, a fundamental departure from the conflicts that plagued the early state.

A further element distinguished the state over its rivals: its remarkable ability to put technological innovations to use to suit its purposes. The mastery of the compass and of naval technology enabled the state to revolutionize its military to achieve a truly global reach. The mastery of communication technology enabled it to forge a common language and identity within the state and thus to lay the foundations for modern nationalism. A poignant question, addressed by Professor Richard Mansbach in a later contribution, is whether in the twenty-first century social forces other than the state – including individuals and civil society – have become more adept than the state at mastering technology. Indeed, it is an important question whether this democratization of technology has as its corollary the diminution of the central place of the state in human social affairs.

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Biographical Sketches

Dr. Jarrod Wiener (B.A. Political Science, UPEI; M.A. International Relations, Kent; LL.M. International European and Commercial Law, Kent; Ph.D. International Relations, Kent) is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Kent at Canterbury, and founding Director of the Brussels School of International Studies. He was from 1995–6 an elected member of the Executive Committee of the British International Studies Association, and he is currently a member of the International Studies Association and the Academic Council on the United Nations System. Dr Wiener's research interests include globalization, international political economy, and global governance. His publications include his monographs: *Globalization and the Harmonization of Law* (Pinter, 1999), and *Making Rules in the Uruguay Round of the GATT* (Ashgate, 1995). His journal articles include: "Globalisation and disciplinary neo-liberal governance," *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* (Vol. 8, No. 4, December 2001); "Money laundering: transnational criminals, globalisation, and the forces of 'redomestication'," *Journal of Money Laundering Control* (Vol.1, No.1, 1996). His contributions to edited volumes include a chapter on international legal harmonization in Stuart Nagel (ed.), *Multinational Policy Towards Peace, Prosperity, and Democracy* (Rowman Littlefield, forth-coming, 2002); and a contribution on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade to the World Encyclopedia of Peace, edited by former UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar.

Professor Robert Schrire holds the Chair of Political Studies and was for many years its head at the University of Cape Town where he is also the founder and Director of the Institute for the Study of Public Policy (ISPP).In this latter capacity, he has provided policy proposals for a wide range of political parties and organisations on strategy, labour, and economic policy.

He was educated in economics at the University of Cape Town before studying economics, politics and public management at the American University in Washington D.C. and Columbia University. He obtained his doctorate in political science at the University of California where he also taught.

As an academic professor Schrire has taught at the State University of New York, Johns Hopkins University, Sciences Po in Paris, the University of Western Australia, and Curtain Institute of Technology amongst others. He has also held visiting fellowships at Princeton and Berkeley. In addition to his academic activities, he has held consultancies at the Ford and Rockefeller foundations, the US Department of State, and has assisted the constitutional committee of the South African parliament on electoral reform.

He has written widely in leading journals and has published several books and monographs in the fields of South African political economy, international relations theory, globalization, and conflict regulation.

He travels widely in Africa, where he has served as the external examiner for the University of Zimbabwe, and has led several academic study tours Zambia, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. He is at present completing a collaborative study of transitions in South Africa and Chile with an emphasis on transitional justice and economic through policy.