

Between Anarchy and Community in International Relations

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IT IS A GREAT HONOUR to have been asked to deliver this British Academy lecture, although I know that we all regret that Stanley Hoffmann who was to have delivered it was prevented from doing so through ill health. In 1977, he published an article in *Daedalus* under the title 'An American Social Science: International Relations'.¹ It was a characteristic tour de force, written with his accustomed panache, verve, clarity and wit. In it, Hoffmann describes—not without regret, since his own sympathies did not lie with the realist mainstream—the rise of the subject as a by-product of America's own rise to world power after 1945 and its somewhat solipsistic identification of its own interests with those of the world as a whole. Outside America, he suggested, there were brilliant contributions but they remained un-connected and un-supported. As he put it 'A Hedley Bull in Australia (and England), a Pierre Hassner in France . . . do not make a discipline.' It was a savage indictment, but only partially, I believe justified. As he concedes, the subject had its origins in Britain, and while it is true that it bore fruit in the United States, it did not exactly wither on the vine here, as he implies. Despite strong and continuing influences from across the Atlantic, it developed along rather different lines, and it is these that I should like to explore in this lecture.

If, to parody Charles Tilly, states make war and war makes nations, it is in their aftermath that new world orders emerge. And it was in reaction

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¹ Stanley Hoffmann, 'An American Social Science', *Daedalus*, Summer 1977, vol. 1, pp. 41–61.

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to the carnage of the First World War that the modern academic study of international relations developed in this country. The industrial philanthropists—David Davies in Aberystwyth, Montague Burton in Oxford and at the LSE—who endowed the first chairs in the subject, shared the liberal hope that if internationalism replaced nationalism as the point of departure for the study of world affairs, it might be possible to move towards a more peaceful world. Liberal internationalists developed two visions of this brave new world, the first based on the creation of a collective security system, the second secured via a process of functional integration that David Mitrany was later to describe in *A Working Peace System*.²

These hopes were quickly dashed, but the field of enquiry that the endowments made possible continues to flourish. Nor—and in this respect I believe the difference with the United States can be exaggerated—has the subject shaken off its normative origins. The quest for most professional students of international relations, now as then, is to understand the underlying forces of world politics. Some hoped to uncover a rational alternative to the cycle of competitive power politics that has so often led to war; others believed that power politics needed to be tamed but that political and economic leadership would still have to provide the iron spine of a peaceful international order. Throughout the twentieth century a preoccupation with force lay at the centre of the subject, but even the most ardent realists who viewed the international condition as a state of war (in the Hobbesian sense of a permanent and unavoidable propensity in an anarchic world of sovereign states) accepted after 1945 that force was no longer a legitimate instrument of foreign policy, as it had been widely regarded before 1914. On the other hand, the community of mankind to which the internationalists aspired has not come about either. British International Relations has been relatively more concerned with exploring the middle ground between these two extremes than its American counterpart.

The academic field, which the new subject sought to colonise, was not unoccupied. Let me start therefore with a few preliminary observations. The emergence of the modern states-system is conventionally dated from the end of the European Wars of religion. The peace of Westphalia echoed the earlier Treaty of Augsburg in basing the post-war order on the principle of *cuius regio eius religio*, the ancestor clause of Articles 2.4 and

² David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Oxford University Press, 1943).

2.7 of the United Nations Charter. This document reflected the mid twentieth-century view that international politics had been—and should remain—de-sacralised. On both occasions, however, the essential intuition was the same, namely that international cooperation would only be possible if it was based on the principle of non-interference, with the ruler's choice of religion in the first case and with a much wider range of matters falling within the domestic jurisdiction of the state in the other.

The order that grew out of the Westphalian settlement fashioned the international landscape with which we are all familiar. In the background are the great powers, the predatory beasts wandering menacingly around the jungle in search of their prey; in the middle distance, the framework of international law, which paradoxically encloses the jungle and organises the behaviour of the inmates, even though the powers will not accept that it has ultimate authority over them; and in the foreground the chaotic jumble of yesterday's news. The interpretation of the foreground is impossible without an understanding of what lies behind it, while it is only possible to see the background, or even the middle distance, from where we stand now. Being over-obsessed with the present or immediate past is an occupational hazard of the profession, yet without a concern for current problems, the subject quickly loses its focus. Of the major figures in the history of twentieth-century International Relations, it was Raymond Aron who understood this tension most clearly. The author of *Peace and War*, a monumental study of the underlying structure of international relationships across time and space, continued for most of his life as a weekly columnist on *Le Figaro*.³

I am aware of the two most obvious weaknesses of this extended metaphor. The first is that it settles the contested relationship between law and power in an arbitrary fashion. Not all international lawyers would accept that the law derives its authority from sovereign powers that remain beyond its reach. And the concern of even the United States to clothe its imperial ambitions in legal principle suggests that even they have doubts on this score. The second weakness is that this is a vision from the top down. The view from Cairo, New Delhi or Port au Prince will necessarily be different from the view from Washington, Moscow, London or Berlin, let alone from the rural hinterland or urban underclass in rich and poor countries alike. Theirs are the silent voices, which critics accuse the academic mainstream of ignoring. Yet, if we are to believe the

³ Raymond Aron, *Peace and War, A Theory of International Relations* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966).

chaos theorists, random events in such places may have far more fateful and unimagined consequences for the world than the calculations of statesmen or the schematic accounts of the international order provided by academics.

Nonetheless, the image of an international landscape whose geological foundations were established long before its study laid claims to its present status as an academic discipline, endowed with professional associations, scholarly journals and the like, may be a useful corrective to the view of International Relations as a largely a-historical, a-philosophical made-in (and for) America social science, which Stanley Hoffmann ruefully described a quarter of a century ago.

Staking out the field

When it came to staking out the academic field that students of International Relations were to cultivate, it quickly became clear that, unlike the Americans who had opted for political science, the British faced a major problem of definition. Was International Relations to be considered as a holding company for an essentially interdisciplinary enterprise, or a subject in its own right. Those who had addressed international problems before 1914—and of course there were many who had—were mainly historians, lawyers and political philosophers. Presumably, it was in recognition of this mixed ancestry that the Montague Burton Chair at the LSE was originally designated as a Professorship in International Studies not Relations. More significantly, the design of the LSE degree, which had a major influence on how the subject developed not merely in Britain but throughout the English-speaking world outside the United States, was initially conceived as essentially interdisciplinary with international law, international history and economics, subjects that were to be taught by professionals from these disciplines, regarded not as options but as a mandatory part of the core curriculum.

We are a long way from this conception of the subject now and although there have been enormous gains in both the visibility and prestige of the subject in our universities, the intellectual gains are more ambiguous, and from some points of view might be counted as losses. Just as owners are said to resemble their dogs, and diplomats each other rather than their countrymen, so academics notoriously come to resemble their subject, or at least to view the world in terms of its central preoccupations. Students of International Relations know that good boundaries

make good neighbours. Unlike many other social scientists, whose work is framed by the legal and institutional framework of the state, which is already in place and can therefore be taken for granted, we know that borders are at the same time immensely important for international stability, but also ultimately contingent. Indeed, it is precisely for this reason that people have so often been required to die in their defence.

A holding company is a useful device but somewhat unglamorous. It is also largely invisible; a disadvantage for those who seek to cut an intellectual *bella figura*. By the early 1970s clearly identified groups of International Relations scholars had developed, sometimes exercising sovereignty in their own departments, sometimes operating as semi-autonomous regions within Government or Political Science Departments. As in America, it became fashionable to refer to the discipline. This might have invited more scepticism had not most of the other social sciences been riven by similar methodological and theoretical fault lines, indeed often the same ones. Since the subject matter that the subject sought to illuminate covered many of the most compelling problems of the day—the ideological confrontation between communism and capitalism, the rise of the superpowers, the withdrawal of European power from the rest of the world, European integration and above all the nuclear threat—it was no wonder that lingering doubts about its academic credentials were overcome. The steady expansion of the subject was demand driven.

The professionalisation of academic International Relations for a time ran ahead of its capacity to meet these demands from its own resources. Even a cursory review of university reading lists would reveal the extent to which the subject was dominated by US scholars until quite late in the cold-war. As Hoffmann had noted there were three reasons why the United States dominated the field. First, they had emerged quite suddenly—and at first reluctantly—as the world's leading power. Once the Americans accepted that they could not retreat into isolationism as they had after 1918, it quickly became clear that they were in need of a map by which to navigate. Secondly, amongst the many talented refugees who arrived in the United States from Nazi Germany were a group of scholars—including Hans Morgenthau and Arnold Wolfers—who knew from personal experience the dangers of neglecting power and were more than willing to tutor the United States Government, in its unaccustomed role as a modernised Renaissance Prince, and just as important its citizens. Thirdly, the scientific and technological pre-eminence of the United States led many to believe that methods that had proved so fruitful in delivering control over the natural world could be adopted to solve the problems of the social world as well.

For better or worse, very few British scholars were attracted to ‘scientific’ International Relations. Indeed in Cambridge, Harry Hinsley created the Centre of International Studies within the History Faculty, partly, as he explained to me at the time, to head off the American invasion at the pass. Nor was there an equivalent demand from Whitehall for academic advice or expertise. Rather, professionalisation was the result of demarcation disputes with Law and Economics on the one hand reinforced by student demand on the other.

The weakening of the links between International Relations on the one side and International Law and Economics on the other had different consequences. Law was one of the foundation disciplines on which the classical tradition in the study of international relations had been based, and within which many of the most prominent international theorists, including Hugo Grotius, had worked. The impact of mutual neglect has been almost entirely negative. To give just one example, international law is barely mentioned in the otherwise admirable *International Relations Theory Today*, edited by Ken Booth and Steve Smith in 1995 and reprinted several times since and certainly does not merit separate treatment on its own account.⁴ Yet, it is difficult to think of any important issue in world affairs where a political (or for that matter economic) analysis does not raise legal questions the answers to which must be factored in if it is to have any hope of improving our understanding. On the other side without the stimulus provided by intellectual proximity with international political theorists, lawyers often yield to hubris and are tempted to claim more authority for their subject than it can deliver. Since the end of the cold war the situation has improved as two issues in particular—human rights and humanitarian intervention—have become more salient, often requiring international lawyers and international relations specialists to work together.

The divorce between International Relations and Economics has been more difficult to repair. As always both sides are to blame. Economics had not been amongst the founding disciplines on which the first generation of International Relations scholars drew, although in the twentieth century it became the most influential of the social sciences in international policy making, not always with benign results. When, in the 1970s, Susan Strange established the first Master’s course in International Political Economy at the LSE, the economists would not allow her to use this

⁴ Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

name on the grounds that prospective students might mistake the new offering for the real thing—Adam Smith had after all been a Professor of Political Economy. They feared the devaluation of the economics profession as *the* prescriptive social science. On the other hand, those of us who believed that one could not produce a plausible account of international society or world order that ignored mutual influence of economics and politics faced an uphill task in persuading our colleagues.

Partly this was because security had never been privatised, whereas the economy had. Mercantilism mirrored political realism in that both mercantilists and realists believed that in any exchange there would be winners and losers, in other words that there was no essential difference between trade and plunder. After the First World War, however, the belief in economic liberalism was such that most students of the subject followed the lead of the League of Nations Covenant, which had remained virtually silent on the vital issue of the economic underpinnings of world order. In the United States, strenuous efforts were made to develop ‘scientific’ methods analogous to those employed by economists, but in the UK there was initially little interest in either the methods, or the subject matter of economic analysis.

The Atlantic divide between behaviourism and traditionalism led to a famous exchange between Morton Kaplan from the University of Chicago and Hedley Bull. Few British scholars attempted to transfer economic methodology to the study of international relations, but the language of systems theory began nonetheless to seep into the traditional literature. It can even be detected in Bull’s *Anarchical Society* (1977), probably the most influential text to be published in this country.⁵ In it, Bull distinguished between an international system, in which the scale of interactions is sufficient to ensure that the probable reactions of other states must be included in the calculus of foreign policy decision making, and an international society in which the members additionally share certain common values. Significantly, he did not include economic considerations in his account of international order.⁶

⁵ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (London: Macmillan, 1977).

⁶ He was aware of his vulnerability on this score, partly because by the time the book was published, most International Relations programmes included courses on the politics of international economic relations, covering both the economic factor in foreign policy and the framework of economic institutions that had been established following the second world war. Bull discussed the issue, shortly before the publication of *The Anarchical Society*, with Geoffrey Goodwin who had been responsible for introducing the first of these courses at the LSE. It was taught for twenty-five years by Michael Donelan and myself, and then by Spyros Economedes and Peter Wilson. See Spyros Economedes and Peter Wilson, *The Economic Factor in International Relations* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001).

These days International Political Economy is one of the most thriving sub-fields in the discipline, although it has tended to develop as an alternative approach to the field as a whole—the position that its most influential exponent, Susan Strange, came to favour—rather than being integrated into the subject at all levels as some of us who were involved in the original debates on the issue would have preferred.

So much for the scope of the field. Its boundaries have been constantly pushed outwards to accommodate new areas, some of which such as the global environment, are issue related, while others like feminism or post-modern and constructivist approaches to International Theory, reflect more general changes in the intellectual climate of the human sciences. What links these new and the more traditional subjects that together comprise the field is that sooner or later they must all confront the normative challenge hinted at in the title of this lecture. It is the two major responses to this challenge that I wish to explore in the second part of this lecture.

Liberals and Realists

The challenge itself is often represented as how to reconcile the requirements of order with those of justice. The argument runs roughly as follows. Since no supranational authority exists over and above the states, the only order that can exist will be one that is imposed by the powerful, or that emerges as the result of a standoff between their rival ambitions. Any such order will be at the expense of the weak, whenever their interests clash with those of the powerful. It will thus be inherently unjust. The trouble with this formulation is that it treats concepts that in W. Bryce Gallie's terms are 'essentially contested' as though they have fixed and unambiguous meanings.⁷ It may be wiser, therefore, to pose the challenge in terms of questions that do not prejudice the answer. As Hedley Bull put it in the Introduction to *The Anarchical Society* 'What is important in an academic enquiry into politics is not to exclude value-laden premises, but to subject these premises to investigation and criticism, to treat the raising of moral and political issues as part of the enquiry.'⁸ So, what strategies do states, and other international actors have available to them

⁷ W. B. Gallie, *Philosophy and The Historical Understanding* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), chap. 8. See also, Ernest Gellner, *Contemporary Thought and Politics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 95–112.

⁸ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, p. xv.

for dealing with the anarchy of international life? And is the idea of a world community a realisable goal, or is it merely a dangerous illusion?

In reflecting on the range of answers to be found in the literature of International Relations one's initial impression is of a babel of discordant voices and conflicting approaches. At the risk of irritating many of my colleagues, however, I suggest that they can all be accommodated along a spectrum bounded by realist approaches at one end and liberal ones at the other.

At first sight, it might seem that structuralists of whatever kind cannot easily be fitted into this scheme. Their basic argument, after all, is that appearances are deceptive and that what drives states in their foreign relations are subterranean forces, that once uncovered, will tell us how things stand regardless of normative preferences. On closer inspection, I am not so sure. If, at one end, one discounts nihilistic realists who share Macbeth's world view of 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing', and at the other, the most extreme libertarians for whom true freedom lies in an unstructured anarchy, then most structuralists (and indeed constructivists) have a clear normative agenda. Marx himself was very respectful of the realities of power politics in his pursuit of the Revolution; Susan Strange pleaded for an analysis based on the recognition of three sources of structural power—military, financial and knowledge—but finished up urging that IPE should return to its origins in moral philosophy;⁹ Alex Wendt, who insists that anarchy is what states make of it, clearly believes that we have the potential for inventing an improved version.¹⁰ For their part, most realists and liberals between these two extremes have no difficulty in accepting the Marxist dictum that mankind makes his own history but not in any way he chooses, although they might have differing views about the nature and severity of the constraints.

Realism is the default setting—the traditional point of return—for the study of international relations, so it is not surprising that over the past century it has both made most of the running and been the target of persistent, although varied critical attack. Events in the world rather than theoretical discoveries have provided the stimulus. Hegel famously remarked that the Owl of Minerva flies only at dusk, and it is certainly

⁹ Susan Strange, 'Political economy and International Relations', in Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), pp. 154–73.

¹⁰ Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is what states make of it', *International Organization*, vol. 46, no. 2 (1992), pp. 391–425; and *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

the case that it was in the wake of the two world wars and most recently the cold war that the most innovative ideas have been advanced for the reform of international relations. On each occasion the liberal gains have been short lived, swept aside by the reassertion of deeply rooted conflict patterns that had been substantially overlooked by the architects of the new order. This is of course what a realist approach would lead one to expect. Martin Wight once complained that liberals appeared to believe that because the balance of power was such an unsatisfactory guarantor of order, there must be a more satisfactory and legitimate dispensation of power waiting to be discovered. The reality, he suggested, was different: 'the alternatives are either universal anarchy or universal dominion. The balance of power is generally regarded as preferable to the first, and most people have not yet been persuaded that the second is so preferable to the balance of power that they will easily submit to it.'¹¹ It is an observation that should perhaps make us pause for thought at the present time.

As we have already seen the establishment of International Relations as a university subject drew its inspiration from the same source that led to the setting up of the League of Nations. The new order challenged diplomatic and political orthodoxy in three ways. Wilsonian liberals believed that the underlying cause of war was to be found in the illegitimate nature of many of the world's states. It followed that if the dynastic empires of Europe gave way to national democratic states there would be no need for governments to engage in secret diplomacy and the construction of alliances in the hope of outwitting and outflanking their rivals. To the novel idea that democracy and the principle of national self-determination was thus added the even more novel idea of collective security, a kind of alliance of the whole world against aggression anywhere.

This scheme was attacked as utopian, most famously by E. H. Carr in *The Twenty Years' Crisis*.¹² And indeed the proposition that peace is indivisible does unhappily seem implausible. Liberals tended to attribute the failure of collective security to the fact that it had never been tried, partly because old habits died hard amongst the political class in Europe, but mainly because the two countries already identified by de Tocqueville in the nineteenth century as the world leaders of the twentieth did not take part. Equally damaging were two other failures of analysis and under-

¹¹ Martin Wight, 'The Balance of Power', in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (eds.), *Diplomatic Investigations, Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), pp. 149–75.

¹² E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939* (1939). Numerous editions; most recently (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

standing. One was the failure to grasp the potential of nationalism to metamorphise from a liberal and emancipatory doctrine into an expansionist and exclusive one that would be subversive of any imaginable international order, leaving aside an international community based on shared values. The other, to which I have already alluded, was the failure of both practitioners and academics to take seriously—at least until it was too late—the need for an economic framework for international society.

The end of the Second World War provided liberals with their second window of opportunity. The United Nations Charter—the nearest thing we have to a constitutional map of international society—had four distinctive features. It was framed with sufficient respect for American interests and values to ensure that the United States would not be tempted to withdraw a second time. It modified the principle of collective security with important concessions to the realist position, most notably by giving the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and endowing the five permanent members with a veto. It legitimised the revolt against the West, by including the right of all peoples to self-determination amongst the list of inalienable human rights and effectively confining this right to European decolonisation. Finally, it recognised—again in sharp contrast to the situation after 1918—the need for economic welfare and development as essential supports for a cooperative international order.

This map of international society has provided students of International Relations with much of the subject matter for their research and writing. The terms on which new states were to be admitted and what they both could and should expect from membership—never the same thing—has proved a particularly fertile field of enquiry. Throughout the cold war there were surprisingly few attempts to challenge the conventional interpretation of self-determination as decolonisation. Nor until the 1980s was there much interest in the subject within the profession, which for the most part seemed to accept that the post 1945 territorial settlement was a closed issue.

On the other hand both practitioners and academics constantly tested the idea of whether multilateral institutions could be used to engineer a fairer distribution of resources worldwide. The UNCTAD, established in 1964, was the main vehicle for the attempt to establish a New International Economic Order, while at the World Bank in the 1970s, Robert McNamara shifted the focus of international aid to those most in need. His efforts found academic support in the writings of such authors as

Charles Beitz and Henry Shue in the United States and John Vincent in the UK.¹³ A more critical perspective of the impact of enlargement on the society of states was provided by Robert Jackson with his distinction between empirical and juridical sovereignty.¹⁴ For the first time, Jackson argued, the principle of self help on which international relations had previously rested had been breached by the creation of a new category of states, whose governments could seldom make their writ run throughout their territory and whose sovereignty depended solely on international recognition and support.

The cold war did not obliterate either practical attempts to create a liberal world order or the liberal critique of international relations, but it certainly ensured that realists would continue to dominate the high ground. As Jonathan Haslam has demonstrated in his recently published history of realist thought since Machiavelli, it was an overwhelmingly American enterprise. George Kennan framed the strategy of containment, and Morgenthau, Wolfers, Tucker, and many others provided the theoretical justification.¹⁵ A belief in maintaining control over the balance of power through military superiority was common to all these thinkers. It is true that Henry Kissinger, a scholar turned statesman, interpreted the balance of nuclear terror as necessitating a policy of detente or peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union, but he always insisted on an American interpretation of what this implied, as became clear from his accusation that Moscow had launched a second cold war in Africa after the Portuguese coup of 1974. For the Soviets detente meant a willingness to enter into arms control agreements; for Kissinger it meant leaving the balance of influence around the world undisturbed.

Realists may have caught the ear of the Prince more often than liberals during the cold war, but they did so in the name of a different morality not in defence of *machtpolitik* for its own sake. Indeed both Carr and Morgenthau, the two most influential modern realists always insisted that theirs was a moral argument. The sub-field that flourished most during the cold war was strategic theory. The doctrine of nuclear deterrence was notoriously problematic from an ethical point of view, since it depended

¹³ Charles Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Henry Shue, *Basic Rights, Subsistence, Affluence and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); R. J. Vincent, *Human Rights and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press in association with the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1986).

¹⁴ Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-states: international relations and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹⁵ Jonathan Haslam, *No Virtue Like Necessity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

on targeting whole populations—and at the limit all life on earth—to provide national security for east and west respectively. But, Aron's two scorpions were kept in the bottle by this unholy device.¹⁶ Even these days when we have a single super-power, whose government seems determined to abandon deterrence for strategic defence, (presumably on the grounds that it is more appropriate for dealing with asymmetric opponents) it is by no means clear that an ethically consistent policy at the level of the state is an improvement over the consequentialist ethics at the level of the system that gradually evolved between 1945 and 1989. The essential point, however, is that realists did not (and do not) seek a world that is opposed to all international cooperation. But they do mostly insist that, under conditions of anarchy a government's first responsibility is the welfare and security of its own people.

Current preoccupations, future directions

When we contemplate the confusion into which the western world—including the academic community—was thrown by the terrorist attacks of September 2001, one might be forgiven a twinge of nostalgia for the apparently clear-cut lines of the cold war. The temptation should be avoided: the lines were never as clear cut as the ideologues on both sides—and in between—had us believe, and if there is one lesson to be learned from history, it is surely to avoid preparing to fight the last war. Neither the liberal or realist approaches prepared us for what was coming or have a coherent view of how to deal with the new challenge. This is clearly a time when we need to regroup and consider where we should be heading. It can only be done, I believe, by a vigorous debate within the profession, but one directed at the world rather than us. There is a time and place for arguing over method, but it should follow, not precede or stand in for, debate over substantive issues.

In conclusion I should like to make three observations about the direction of this debate. The first is that we should not abandon the liberal agenda that was rekindled by the end of the cold war and the opportunities for international reform that it seemed to offer. The rise of constructivist theory in the United States at least had the merit of raising the profile of the English School's concentration on the evolution of international society and its institutions. If anarchy was malleable, then an

¹⁶ Raymond Aron, *Peace and War*, pp. 536–72.

approach that emphasised the evolution of diplomatic practice and the role of norms might offer a way out of the cul de sac of positivist social science and over-obsession with American power.

The central issue in the debate over international society is whether this evolution is constrained by the nature of sovereignty and therefore cannot develop beyond a law of coexistence and the purely voluntary cooperation that this entails. Alternatively, is a solidarist international community evolving, as Boutros Boutros-Ghali suggested in 1992, in which sovereignty is qualified, not simply by the willingness of the strong to impose their will on the weak, but by common commitments to uphold the rule of law, democratic government, and to respect fundamental human rights?¹⁷ It seems to me that throughout the 1990s we witnessed a characteristic liberal over-optimism about both the extent and future trajectory of progress. Nonetheless, the debate between pluralists and solidarists is an important one and has already yielded significant research on both sides of the argument. Robert Jackson's *Global Covenant* may well establish itself as the text against which future generations of scholars, no doubt impatient with its traditional conservatism, will have to test themselves, in much the same way that an earlier generation felt compelled to take on Hans Morgenthau's *Politics Amongst Nations*.¹⁸ But one suspects that future realists will also have to contend with Nick Wheeler's formidable defence of humanitarian intervention in *Saving Strangers*.¹⁹ The post cold-war liberal agenda has also led to equally important, if less spectacular work, on minority issues in the context of democratisation. It would be a major setback if this kind of work were to be abandoned as a result of our current preoccupations with global terrorism.

Second, we need to revisit the issue of global justice, not in the sense of advocating utopian measures for the redistribution of global wealth (desirable as some might believe that to be), but by examining the extent to which the allegedly universal norms of the society of states are supported outside the west and particularly by its poorer members. In an attempt to bridge the gap between the English School and American neo-

¹⁷ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Agenda for Peace* (New York: United Nations, 1992), paras. 17 and 18. For text see, A. Roberts and B. Kingsbury (eds.), *United Nations, Divided World: The UN's Role in International Relations*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), Appendix A, pp. 468–98.

¹⁸ See Robert H. Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and H. J. Morgenthau, *Politics Amongst Nations* (New York: Knopf, 1948).

¹⁹ Nicholas Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

realists, Barry Buzan has recently suggested that the global economy and its institutions provide more compelling evidence of solidarism than the evidence that is conventionally offered of the rise of a world-wide human rights culture.²⁰ But does it? We not only need to know the answers to some empirical questions, such as how deep will be the compliance of major countries like China with the rules and disciplines of the WTO and other multilateral treaties, we also need to examine the normative claim itself. How plausible is it that the losers from globalisation—and the one thing that seems certain is that there will be some losers—will support a conception of the international community that has no mechanism for addressing their problems?

Finally, the case for non-American voices to join the debate has never been stronger. One does not have to accept the bleak logic of structural realism, from which conscious motivation and indeed human beings have been largely eliminated, to recognise that the temptations to unilateralism in a world dominated by a single state of such awesome power would be very great, if not irresistible, regardless of which country occupied that position. It is fortunate that the United States itself contains a strong critical tradition, which is deeply suspicious of central power and which cuts across both major political parties. But in the absence of any credible state adversary it may not be enough. A quarter of a century ago, Stanley Hoffmann argued that apart from the particular problems associated with International Relations wherever it is studied, the peculiarly American quest for certainty—to which I would add absolute security—had exercised an unfortunate influence on the development of the subject in the United States and on American foreign policy.

At a time when the current US administration has declared a war to the finish on Terrorism, a faceless enemy if ever there was one, there is a clear need for cool heads, and dispassionate analysis of causes, consequences and possible options. There is also a need to work through and strengthen the United Nations, not because the organisation is in a position to resolve all international issues—it plainly is not—but because it represents one of the few available restraints on power in contemporary international society. I delivered this lecture before the United States and Britain concluded that there was no chance of obtaining a second Security Council Resolution and determined to take action outside the UN

²⁰ Barry Buzan, 'Special Book Reviews' (of Robert Jackson, *The Global Covenant* and James Mayall, *World Politics: Progress and its Limits*), *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2, (2002), pp. 363–71.

framework to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq. I argued then—and I continue to believe now—that despite the compromises it necessarily entails—working through the United Nations was important, not merely in the international interest, or to help the British Prime Minister over his domestic political problems, but in the interests of the United States itself.

It is not accurate to view the United Nations Organisation as synonymous with international society. The international is an even more elusive category than the national interest, and there may be times when those with a capacity to act, will be right to do so even in the absence of an international consensus. History can be a harsh judge; deliberately discarding the UN, an organisation that was originally designed to protect western values, seems an unnecessarily risky strategy. It is too early to predict with any conviction what the long-term implications for international order of the war with Iraq will be. It is also too early to know what the consequences will be for the British Government—which during the pre-war parliamentary debate had to weather the largest revolt from a ruling party's own supporters in modern political history. In the United States, the victory in Iraq was seen as a major victory for the neo-conservative wing of the Republican Party. But it is doubtful whether their neo-imperial project will be sustainable in the face of the reassertion of more traditional American foreign policy values.

Empires are run by control freaks, forever worried about the barbarians massing across the border. Even before the age of high-speed global communications, it was clear that direct imperial control was both inconsistent with modern ideas and too costly. In an era of globalisation any attempt by the United States to impose such a system seems doomed to fail. Indeed, in the aftermath of the Iraq war, there is already evidence that the pressures are building up for a return to multilateral cooperation and the traditional centre ground. Stanley Hoffmann's own conclusion on the state of the discipline was that, rather than pursue certainty or absolute security, 'International relations should be the science of uncertainty, of the limits of action, of the ways in which states try to manage but never quite succeed in eliminating their own insecurity.' It seems as relevant today as when it was written in 1977.