Lecture 6

When was international relations? – When was IR?

I spoke last week about spatial constraints on IR, using the distinction between agenda setting and case selection. The agenda had been set by men in the USA and Britain. It reflected their view of the world and their concerns. In Britain, where a vast maritime empire was only just beginning to be dismantled in the 1940s, it was their place in the world that led men like Hedley Bull and Adam Watson to devote close study to the norms and institutions governing European international society and the process by which they were spreading across the rest of the world. Very much aware of the catastrophe of general war in Europe in the twentieth century, in which many of them had participated, scholars in the belligerent countries viewed war as the paramount concern of IR and devoted themselves to understanding its causes and developing effective constraints which, if they could not entirely prevent it, might moderate its destructive effects. I tried to put this agenda in question by asking how the world has looked over the past two centuries from South America, where economic issues have loomed at least as large as war.

If the agenda was dominated by war and European expansion, so too was case selection, which was generally limited to greater Europe, understood to include states such as Australia or the United States governed by creole elites.[1] I suggested that a new positive science with pretensions to universal application might have done better to look beyond a single international system and illustrated this by sketching what scholars in the USA and Britain might learn by looking more closely at Latin America, where the mix of institutions of international society has given more prominence to law and organization than in Europe, while war, I would suggest, has had a different style and purpose.

Turning now from space to time, I want to draw a distinction between the extent to which international history may be considered relevant to those whose primary concern is with contemporary international relations and, second, to address the narrower and more antiquarian question of when academic study of international relations began. I concluded my last lecture by saying that fair answers to these two questions might be 'not in 1648' and 'not in 1918'. It is now time to provide positive answers to these questions.

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[1] . Creole is understood as of European descent, but born outside Europe.

It was in 1648 that the treaties of Osnabrück (15.v.1648) and Münster (24.x.1648) were signed, bringing an end to thirty years of warfare that had devastated large parts of Central Europe. Many have regarded this as the point at which a recognizably modern system of states came into being in Europe, and in doing so they have more or less explicitly laid down criteria for the definition of such a system.

The Westphalian system that came into being at the end of the Thirty Years' War supposedly comprised a multiplicity of sovereigns, each ruling over a *defined territory* (or realm), within which lived a discrete *population*, owing loyalty to the sovereign, who exerted *exclusive jurisdiction and ultimate temporal authority* over them and was able to adopt the personality of a *unified and rational state* in order to marshal national resources and deploy them strategically.

To pick this apart a little is to identify at least five discrete ideas, which together define the ideal member of a Westphalian states-system. The first two of these are bound up together in the claim to exercise exclusive territorial authority and jurisdiction. This has two

aspects. The first is non-territorial and runs very close to the original Roman sense of Latin 'imperium' or empire. It has as less to do with territory than with the kind of authority being exercised, which can be summed up as command, law, and largesse. The second aspect is territorial, associated with the rise of cartography and the clarification of vernacular languages. This is the idea of control over frontiers – the movement of goods, treasure, people and ideas – and of the territory as container.

Next comes concentration of power in a central authority, which is not quite the same thing as exclusive authority, since the latter may be exercised through devolved systems, like the English justices of the peace or the Russian boyars.

Third is the idea that such an authority, though generally vested in a monarch, was to be exercised through an administrative machine with some permanence, analytically distinguishable from the person who commands it and his household. It is in this sense, rather than by contrast with a theocracy, that the phrase 'secular state' is properly used.

Then there is the subject over which authority and jurisdiction are exercised: the people, the nation. Neither term is unproblematic because the genesis of a modern system requires something to come into being which is more than a mere population or congeries of populations. Finally, and deriving from the emergence of this new political subject, taken together with the ideas of command, centralisation and the secular state, comes the right to mobilize the nation and its resources directly, rather than through a complex arrangement of deputies and specific contracts, committing the collectivity to agreements with other states and, in the last resort, to war.

Empire, territory, centralization, the secular state, and the nation: these are the essential features of the ideal Westphalian state, and a Westphalian system must therefore consist in a multiplicity of such states, no one of which is able to act without taking heed of the others.

The supposed triumph of territorial sovereignty that became known by shorthand as 'Westphalia' in twentieth-century IR textbooks was challenged from the very beginning. Leibniz argued that the normative insistence of Hobbes on the unitary character of the

state was falsified by European reality, where compromises better described as federal or confederal were commonplace. France, as the most populous and powerful state in Europe at the time, was the hardest case for Leibniz, but he made a good show of it. The French king, he pointed out, did not have unrestricted powers. He had no absolute right to tax the clergy, who were a very large minority of the population, nor did he have a clear right to tax the outlying *pays des états* – Brittany, Narbonne, Provence or Burgundy.[2] Resources were obtained by negotiation, not by fiat.

Leibniz had a political agenda. He was writing to make possible the exercise of sovereignty by German princes in the manner of the Kings of France, England or Scotland, and sought to achieve this by fudging the distinction between these states and the Empire, though his essay may easily be misread today as prescient advocacy of a 'Europe of the regions'. To achieve his purpose he needed to persuade his readers of the possibility of dispersed sovereignty by playing down the autonomy and integrity of states outside the empire. In a rather different way, many were playing down United States power in the 1970s. Perceptions of increasing flows of capital, labour, goods and ideas across

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[2] . Patrick Riley (ed.) *Leibniz: Political Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 111-120.

borders, the very substantial power of multinational corporations and the limitations imposed on government by their treaty commitments, especially where these had set up international regimes, led many observers to suggest that the Westphalian system was in decline. In my introductory lecture I noted the statement of this view in influential books published in the USA during the 1970s by Robert Keohane and Joe Nye, developing the idea of complex interdependence.[3]

It is very possible that this response, evident among scholars in the USA, was a reaction to that country's relative economic decline and the perfection of a massive long-range missile system by the Soviet Union, which made the vulnerability of this formerly untouchable continental state much more apparent. Then, in the aftermath of the Cold War, as Yugoslavia fell apart and Tutsi/Hutu hatred re-ignited in central Africa on an unprecedented scale, with something in the region of 800,000 deaths in three months, ethnic and religious identities took on renewed salience, seemingly replacing ideology as the main divisions in world politics.[4] There was talk of a new medievalism in which jurisdictions and loyalties

[3] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston MA: Little, Brown, 1977).
[4] . Huntington

would once again overlap and conflict in complex ways. Some claimed that realism might have been an appropriate worldview so long as the Westphalian model was an accurate representation of the world, but was now invalidated by events.

It was in response to this line of argument that Stephen Krasner wrote 'Compromising Westphalia'. The main purpose of this essay was to mount a strategic defence of realism by making a prompt and orderly tactical withdrawal.[5] Westphalia, Krasner argued, had *never* been an accurate *description* of the international system. It was more like an ideal, though he preferred the terms 'model', 'reference point' or 'convention' (147). Recent IR scholars had over-estimated the importance of contemporary breaches of Westphalian principles because they had mistakenly taken a normative ideal for a historical description. Their unseemly panic ignored the fact 'that violations of the principles of territoriality and autonomy have been an enduring characteristic of the international system both before and after the Peace of Westphalia' (123).

There had always been breaches. Rights had been conceded to European creditors of defaulter states to collect customs revenue

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[5] . Stephen Krasner, 'Compromising Westphalia'

in Greece and China during the nineteenth century. After the 1815 Vienna Settlement, the Holy Alliance of Russia, Austria and Prussia bound themselves to intervene against revolution and liberalism wherever they might arise, in order to protect the general principles of legitimacy on which they believed their own authority to rest. Perhaps they had been reading Burke. Again, the Treaty of Versailles (28.vi.1919) breached the territorial integrity of states by championing the rival principle of national self-determination and entrenching minority rights where a coincidence of state, territory and nation could not be achieved. More recently the Catholic Church had exerted very considerable influence within states over decisions about abortion and birth control, while the IMF and World Bank had followed the example of the nineteenth-century bondholders, imposing tough conditions – including institutional reform and specific economic policies – as the price of assistance to weak and impoverished states. 'Every major peace treaty since 1648,' Krasner majestically concluded, '[had] violated the Westphalian model in one way or another' (page?).

The Great Powers consistently violated Westphalian principles. Meanwhile other institutions had survived into or arisen during the modern period which were, in themselves, breaches of the

Westphalian ideal. The most notable survivors from the past were the Roman Catholic Church and the Europe-wide system of kinship that sustained dynasticism and aristocracy, providing a basis for legitimacy and as well as a supranational system of affinity and loyalty. Early-modern banking families like the Fuggers of Augsburg, and the later chartered or regulated companies, of which the London-based East India Company was to become the best remembered, would belong in this catalogue had they survived. But their place was taken from the mid-nineteenth century by a different kind of corporation, formed under general incorporation statutes, generally on the principle of limited liability, and operating outside the country that financed and managed them, engaging initially in extractive operations and public utilities, and later in manufacturing. And to these modern corporations must be added movements, more or less organized, arising out of religious or secular conviction: abolitionism, positivism, anarchism, communism, liberalism, Islam, and a multiplicity of Christian churches, all commanding loyalties across frontiers.

It was not even as if the 1648 treaties perfectly embodied the Westphalian ideal. The principle of *cujus regio; eius religio* was supposedly one of the lynchpins of the Westphalian settlement.

The sovereign was able to impose his preferred form of religion. But the treaties did not in fact embody this principle in anything like a consistent manner. On the contrary, they included provisions for Catholics in Lutheran lands and Lutherans in Catholic lands to worship in private and educate their children in their own ways. Some cities in the Empire were even allowed to maintain equal rights for Catholics and Lutherans. In short, with regard to the confessional issues that had brought about a century of warfare in Europe, the Westphalian settlement did not give princes unrestricted rights in their territories.

The reason for this was that the treaties dealt substantially with what the Empire, that is to say the Holy Roman Empire, within which any prince exercised only a subordinate sovereignty under the supreme authority of Emperor and Pope. It follows that the closest approximations to Westphalian states during the seventeenth century lay outside the empire, and had been peripherally, if on occasion decisively, involved in the Thirty Years' War and the subsequent settlement. Whatever Leibniz might say, France, Spain, Denmark, Sweden and England were far more Westphalian than Bohemia, Saxony or Bavaria, and this is a point to which I shall return, since it bears on the question of when a

modern international system came into being, initially suggesting a date closer to the 1550 than 1648.

During the three-and-a-half centuries that have elapsed since 1648, the nearest approximations to the ideal Westphalian sovereign state has been the industrialized states of Western Europe and the more successful of their settler states: the Great and Middle Powers. But states that could only envy this level of integrity and organization from afar have had a very strong interest in pretending that the model was a more general reality and trying to make it so by calling the bluff of the Great Powers. Independent Latin American states, barely able to define and administer the whole of the territories they claimed, sitting uneasily atop ethnic division and ancient hatreds, heavily indebted to bankers based in the Great Powers, have had every incentive to play up the sanctity of sovereignty, the legal equality of states and the principle of non-intervention.[6] There has, in short, been a conspiracy of the powerful and the powerless to represent the international system as being more Westphalian than it has, in fact been, and that conspiracy is the implied target of Krasner's essay.

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[6] . Guillermo O'Donnell; Richard Devetak. Examples of scholars who, while unlikely to wish to be grouped with Krasner, have persuasively affirmed the always imperfect character of the modern state and drawn attention to ways in which the ideal of the Westphalian sovereign state could be deployed to boost the authority of weak states.

The Krasner line, then, has been a traditional realist one: the treaties of 1648 did mark a significant change, and there has been continuity since then, but the continuity has been that of a system less neat and glossy than we were given to suppose. Against this it is possible to retain the idea of continuity, but shift the crucial date, either back, toward 1500, or forward, toward the present. This means taking account of historians' debates about modernity: in what it consists, when it began, and – returning to spatial issues again – quite *where* it all began.

The strongest case for going back is probably the process of state-formation that took place in the mid-1500s *outside* the Holy Roman Empire. By this date the medieval practice of receiving periodical embassies for specific purposes, such as the arrangement of a royal marriage, had been substantially superseded by the formal exchange of permanent ambassadors: honest men sent, to paraphrase Sir Henry Wootton's famous formulation, to lie abroad for their countries. By the 1340s, the rulers of Mantua, the Gonzaga family, had permanent agents at the court of Louis, king of Bavaria and Holy Roman Emperor, and possibly at nearby

Ferrara.[7] During the century that followed, as the number of Italian states reduced while their rivalries persisted, the system of permanent representation became general. Beyond northern Italy, The first permanent embassy may have been that of Spain to England, in 1487 [check Mattingley], and by the end of the sixteenth century the system of permanent diplomatic missions had become more or less universal in Europe, with the notable exception of the Holy Roman Empire, which no longer participated because the Emperor was unable speak for the German princes.

A second major shift toward modernity was the formation of national churches. Here, the traditional story was that this process was strongly associated with Protestant reformation. It was following the break with Rome that Henry VIII of England established an Anglican Church, of which he declared himself the head, as Vicar of Christ in place of the Pope, by the 1534 Act of Supremacy, while retaining – as British monarchs have to this day – the title of defender of the faith that had been conferred on Henry in 1521 by Pope Leo X for his opposition to Luther.[8] It was the Act of Supremacy and other statutes drafted by Thomas Cromwell in

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[7] . Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955) 66.
[8] . 'Defender of the faith', intended personally but interpreted as a dynastic title, still appears on coins minted in the United Kingdom.

the 1530s that established the discrete character of the English realm and people.[9] Most trenchantly, the preamble to the 1533 Act in Restraint of Appeals, banning any recourse to courts of justice outside English territory, declared: 'This England is an empire, and so hath been accepted in the world, governed by one supreme head and King'. It wasn't, and it hadn't been, but the Tudors were masters of rhetorical invention; they had already had their history falsified in the best Italian manner by Polydore Vergil. But in forming a national church, Henry and Cromwell were also forming a nation, self-aware through their membership of this church and able to be addressed in an unprecedented manner from its pulpits, in their own language (unless they were Welsh or Cornish!) on matters political as well as spiritual.

What is less often realised is that the English model, to which there were many close analogues in Protestant northern Europe, was imitated by Catholic monarchs outside the Empire. Heinz Schilling is only the most celebrated of a group of scholars who have, since the 1970s, been revising the traditional Weberian view that sharply contrasted developments in Protestant and Catholic Europe, exposing this interpretation as implicated in the nineteenth-century

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[9] . Geoffrey Elton's strong emphasis on the role of Thomas Cromwell has been challenged. Joseph D. Ban, 'English Reformation: Product of King or Minister?' *Church History*, 41:2 (June 1972), 186-197.

bid of Prussia for hegemony in Germany. Setting aside doctrinal questions, Reformation and Counter-Reformation were not so much distinct, sequential and antagonistic movements as concurrent and functionally similar transformations by which conformity in religious belief served to define communities that could serve as proto-nations during a difficult period of transition, as emerging states strove to develop new ways of co-opting the loyalties of their newly constituted collective subjects.[10]

If Europe outside the Empire offers a 'Westphalian' world a century before Westphalia, it also shares with the Empire certain features which argue for a later, rather than an earlier, origin of the modern states-system in Europe.

Prime among these is dynasticism. Right through to the nineteenth century, when hundreds of thousands died in Spain's Carlist wars, the principle of heredity was central to the European society of states.[11] Peace treaties were often endorsed by a royal marriage. Think of Shakespeare's *Henry V* and the eponymous hero's wooing of his French princess. The same play illustrated the

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[10] . I have relied very heavily here on my *American Civilization* (2007) 15.
[11] . Book on Irish legion in Carlist wars.

central importance of dynastic legitimacy for Elizabethans in two related ways.

In the first scene Henry earnestly enjoins his counsellors to advise him on the relative legitimacy of his claim to the French throne and that of the ruling house. All depends on whether the Salic law, forbidding inheritance of title through the female line, applies in France. In a long scene, often played for laughs by bewildered directors in recent times, Shakespeare is referring obliquely to the doubts still surrounding the succession to an elderly and childless Elizabeth of England, soon to die. At the same time, by emphasising the young king's interest in legitimacy, Shakespeare is reminding his audience, as he would on the eve of Agincourt and again at the very end of the play, of the fragility of Henry's claim to the English throne, usurped by his father Henry Bolinbroke.[12]

Even setting aside the Spanish troubles of the early nineteenth century (though these were to result in the break-up of the Spanish empire and the emergence of more than a dozen successor states), two major wars were to be fought in Europe and North

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[12] . Shapiro, 1599, and chapter 5 of my *War Within Reason*.

America about dynastic succession between Shakespeare's day and the end of the eighteenth century: the War of the Spanish Succession between 1701 and 1714 and the War of the Austrian Succession between 1741 and 1748. In all the cases I have referred to, from the doubts surrounding the Elizabethan succession right up to the Carlist wars, Acts of Succession, or Pragmatic Sanctions as they were known in continental Europe, had unintended and often catastrophic effects. The death of a monarch at the wrong moment could result in unanticipated division or transfer of territories or a complete change of dynasty bringing about fresh alliances, based on kinship. So long as this remained true, the balance of power remained epiphenomenal, derivative of the more fundamental institution of hereditary authority. This was an anarchical society, but it was not yet Hedley Bull's anarchical society.

So would a date around 1800 be any better? At this point, the French Revolution of 1789 had swept away the monarchy, albeit temporarily, and with it those remnants of local autonomy remarked upon by Leibniz. In their place came a consistent system of local government and taxation covering the entire realm, the granting of citizenship to those who were formerly subjects, the

corresponding duty, incumbent on all able-bodied men, to serve as conscripts in the armed forces if required, starting with the so-called *levée en masse* of 1793, by which, to paraphrase the title of a rightly famous book, peasants were later to become Frenchmen.[13] Add to this the Napoleonic legal code and the revolution in organization and tactics of the professional armed forces that destroyed Prussian forces at Jena, and it was evident that other European states must emulate or surpass the French if they were to survive. Hence, regular censuses of population as a basis for planned public expenditure took place at ten-year intervals from 1801 in England and at five-year intervals from 1836 in France, profound military reforms in Prussia that would in due course twice bring France to disaster, the gradual spread of universal primary education and the progressive application of industrial technology to the business of war and government.

No more than nascent in the Napoleonic period, these changes, which may be subsumed under the problematic yet convenient word 'modernisation' coincided with the resolution of surviving medieval political institutions in Central Europe. Napoleon brought about the end of the Holy Roman Empire when he defeated

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[13] . Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (1976)

Francis II in 1806, though the unification of the now-sovereign and more consolidated German states would not take place until 1871. Further south, though the Venetian Republic had been dissolved in 1797 after more than a thousand years of independence, it was only in 1866 that its successor state, Venetia, finally joined Italy, which assumed something close to its present form in 1870 with the final restriction of the temporal power of the papacy to the Vatican City. This removal of the anomalies of Empire and papacy from the political order of Europe yielded a system of more or less equal national bureaucratic states and raised the curtain on a late burst of territorial expansion by Europe into Asia and Africa.

One last candidate for the starting date of the contemporary international system remains, and that is 1961, the year in which the Soviet Union tested its Tsar Bomba, a 50 megaton device far exceeding in explosive power all the weapons used in the Second World War. Coinciding with the crest of a wave of decolonisation, this event made clear the final shift from a eurocentric world of territorial empires, of which the United States and the Soviet Union were not the least, to one in which the framework of security was defined by weapons of mass destruction and long-range delivery systems, which may be said to have restricted the freedom with

which even the strongest states could safely deploy conventional

forces, in turn allowing a vast upsurge of public violence across

large parts of the world, most notably in the recently relinquished

dependencies of the European states but most recently in the

heartland of what is looking increasingly like the 'old' Atlantic

world: The 11 September attacks on East Coast United States

targets, the bombings at Madrid's Atocha railway station on 11

March 2004, and those on the London underground system on 7

July 2005.

This whistle-stop tour of possible subject matter for a science of

international relations has been deliberately euro-centric; the

question of how IR might regard other states-systems was aired

last week. Yet it is worth noting (no more) that the subject matter of

the two lectures – last week and this week – abut an academic

debate, most vigorous in sociology but also leaking into history,

about the source, dating and extent of a global society. This

debate originated in *The Modern World-System*, magnum opus of

United States sociologist, Immanuel Wallerstein, which began to

appear in 1974. Wallerstein discerned the origins of contemporary

global society in distinctive features of the Atlantic world in the

sixteenth century. But at this date other world-systems existed, not

least around the India Ocean and within and around the Chinese empire, and these were not to be incorporated into a single system before the nineteenth century. But during the past decade the view of modernization as westernisation has been challenged by sociologists and historians, arguing the case for a multitude of separate points of origin for modernity, and for the powerful syncretic transformation of Western influences by robust non-European cultures.[14] Thus, to take only one detail that might affect our narrow concerns, the development of a secular state has been claimed as a peculiarly Indian political innovation, antedating its emergence in Europe. Similarly, resistance to Western views on human rights issues has been based in a discourse about distinctive Asian values, while the concept of peaceful co-existence, developed within the Communist world during the early years of the Cold War has been grafted on to more or less plausible indigenous cultural traditions in China, India and the Islamic world.[15]

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[14] . S. N. Eisenstadt, 'Multiple Modernities' *Daedalus* 129:1 (Winter 2000) 1-29, and other contributions to this special issue. For a 'multiple modernities' account by an historian, see C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004). Also interesting is the treatment of modernity by Laurence Whitehead in Latin America: A New Interpretation (New York and Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). Both are discussed in Charles A. Jones, *American Civilization* (London: ISA, 2007) 51-57.
[15] . The Turkish public intellectual, Fethullah Gülen, is an interesting example.

To the array of possible starting dates for the inception of the modern European states-system must therefore be added dates for the commencement of rival systems and for their eventual fusion into a global system. To my mind, this last refinement pushes the balance point forward in time, at least to 1900, by which time few peoples of the world, be they modern or traditional, had not felt the impact of European and Creole expansion.

To sum up. The choice of Westphalia as a starting point is decidedly odd, because the Holy Roman Empire was already, by 1648, a constitutional outlier in Europe. A bid could be made for Northern Italy before the French invasion of 1494, but more plausible is the society of European states from mid-sixteenth century, or that society purged of civil and confessional dissension: that is to say after the British civil wars, French *frondes* and the Thirty Years' War; say from the last quarter of the seventeenth century. But at this point some ancient institutions remained important: kinship, the Empire, the papacy. Not for nothing do we speak of the *ancien regime*. Meanwhile some modern institutions were not yet significant (I think primarily of law and organization) while others, notably warfare, were not yet functioning in ways we would recognize. Institutions such as booty and parole are foreign

to modern inter-state warfare. So for an international system in Europe that is pretty much as we might recognize it, we have to wait till the 1870s though, having waited so long, there is much to be said for accepting Lenin's injunction to treat the period from 1870 to 1900 as a curtain-raiser, with true systemic transformation achieved only by the close of the century. And even this may not do, because it was a system in which major powers could, and did, engage in total warfare, something no longer possible once the short-lived United States monopoly of nuclear weapons ended. All in all, the range of choice is wide: circa 1350, circa 1550, 1648, 1871, 1900 or 1961.

Turning from international relations as object of study to International Relations as a systematic field of study, the attraction of the idea of a science of IR emerging concurrently with its object of study is strong.

We need waste little time on the earlier dates. Universities in Europe up to the nineteenth century had quite limited curricula. Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Theology, Medicine, Law and Moral Sciences more or less exhaust the list. New subjects such as History, Philology or Political Economy began to come in during

the nineteenth century, and Moral Sciences experienced

defections as Politics and Psychology sheared off, leaving the

stump that is modern philosophy. So when did academic study of

international relations begin? Second, when did something called

International Relations emerge, claiming the status of a discipline?

These are two separate questions.

Casper Sylvest and Duncan Bell are among those who have

examined systematic thought about international relations in the

universities and among public intellectuals before the founding of

departments named International Relations. Their work suggests

an upsurge of interest in relations between states from about 1870

in Europe, fired by events surrounding the Central European

unifications, the expansion of Europe, a growth in the number and

range of international organizations, improvements in long-range

communication and the growth in international trade.[16] Their work

is consistent with the thesis advanced by Francis Boyle, which

detaches international law from the idealist stereotype and dates

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[16] . Casper Sylvest, 'International Law in Nineteenth-century Britain' *British Yearbook of International Law 2004* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 263-283; Casper Sylvest 'The Foundations of Victorian International Law' in Duncan Bell (ed.) *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-century Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 47-66; Duncan Bell and Casper Sylvest, 'International Society and Victorian Political Thought: Herbert Spencer, T. H. Green and Henry Sidgwick' *Modern Intellectual History* 3:2 (2006) 207-38 (Check! Casper's and Duncan's c.v. references conflict.); Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Duncan Bell (ed.) *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-century Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

its rise to prominence in the United States to the 1890s, serving as the realist tool of a state as yet lacking substantial armed forces or economic leverage.[17]

Yet if the date can be set back in time by stressing academic study of the subject at the expense of the founding of departments, it can just as easily be brought forward by casting the few institutions established in the inter-war period as outliers and going for the mode of department or programme creation. While the 1918 story has some truth in it, it was not until after the Second World War that a massive IR movement started to gather pace. Morgenthau's textbook was not published until 1946; no more than 4,000 copies (check) of Carr's quasi-textbook were printed; it was the second, 1945 edition that sold in large numbers.[18] Moreover, those who advocate the later starting-date for IR are generally sceptical of the standard narratives of how, as well as when, the new discipline emerged. Miles Kahler, for example, attacks the way in which 'a stylised version of the history of international relations is typically framed by successive "great debates" that haunt countless undergraduate and graduate course descriptions.' Brian Schmidt

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[17] . Francis A. Boyle, *Foundations of World Order: the legalist approach to international relations, 1898-1922* (Durham NC and London: Duke University Press, 1999).
[18] . The full title of *The Twenty Years' Crisis* runs on 'An Introduction …'

has echoed Kahler's scepticism about the so-called first great debate, while Long and Wilson, Peter Cain, Casper Sylvest and others have recovered the thought of those formerly dismissed as idealists or utopians and found it more interesting and hard-headed than its realist detractors alleged.[19] The story that emerges from work by Kahler, Guilhot, Schmidt and myself, among others, is of a second great debate that consisted in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt by IR to avoid absorption by political science and has also exposed lost strands in the narrative, not least that of a secularisation of the field, a dropping of the pilots, as Niebuhr and Butterfield (neither an IR professor and more than was Carr) were ferried back to the shore and the unsinkable SS 'International Relations' at last found itself entirely at sea.[20]

You will by now see that the drift of my argument is that the contemporary world is short-lived, dating back at most to the 1960s, which is, by a happy chance, roughly when a self-styled discipline of International Relations really took root in United States and British universities. I might seem to have done myself out of a job. If my dates are correct then why should anyone care about

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[19] . David Long and Peter Wilson (eds.) *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis: Inter-War Idealism Reassessed* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
[20] . My piece in *International Relations*.

history or ideas beyond the past half-century. For effective action, it may be best to forget IR, as Bleiker urged, drawing on Nietszche.[21] To this question I offer three answers. The first is that the new discipline is incurably addicted to history and the history of thought, to which it looks for dignity and reassurance, though often without any real respect. This tendency needs policing, and it is the job of the international theorist to do this. The second answer is that the comparative study of states-systems is a perfectly legitimate pursuit for a historian; so too are international history and the intellectual history of Euro-American thought about international relations. The third answer is that a disciplined study of past events and thought for present purposes is possible, though it needs to be carefully distinguished from what historians generally claim to do: a task made harder by the susceptibility of historians to stray into contemporary prescription.

This last suggestion rests on a distinction between modern history and contemporary history drawn by Geoffrey Barraclough almost fifty years ago.[22] The former consists in a narrative that runs forward from the end of the medieval period in Europe,

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[21] . Roland Bleiker 'Forget IR Theolry' Alternatives 22 (1997) 57-85; Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History…*

[22] . Geoffrey Barraclough, *Introduction to Contemporary History* (1961?)

conventionally dated to the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire in 1453, providing a causal account of how things came to be as they are. Beginning in Europe, it finally encompasses the whole world. The latter – the *contemporary* history of Barraclough's title – starts from problems in the world today and works backwards to uncover their origins, which will very often include more or less well-founded beliefs of the protagonists about the past, be it the 1389 Battle of Kosovo or the first Thanksgiving in North America. This working backwards means that contemporary history ranges much further back and much wider geographically than modern history. It is altogether less coherent and in many ways more difficult, but at best may act as a corrective to the kinds of nationalist or doctrinal mythologizing that too often end in slaughter: a check on false memory.

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