On the History and Historiography of International Relations

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The historiography of international relations (IR), that is, both the scholarship on the history of the field and the methodological principles involved in that research and writing, is more advanced today than at any time in the past. During the last ten years, a wealth of new literature has appeared that greatly challenges much of the conventional wisdom regarding the development of IR. In light of the new and sophisticated research on the historiography of IR, it is even possible to suggest that progress is being made in understanding the complex and multifaceted story of the emergence and maturation of IR as an academic field of study. Scholars have also discovered that researching the history of the field can lead to new insights that have critical purchase in the present. Today, disciplinary history has achieved a level of recognition and legitimacy that it formerly lacked. This is a dramatic improvement on the previously existing attitudes that many expressed about disciplinary history. Despite the growing pluralization of the field and the ever-expanding range of topics being investigated, an element of suspicion was cast on the task of examining its history. One possible explanation for the reluctance to grant legitimacy to this research task is the common notion that we already know the history. Another possibility is that those in the mainstream are satisfied with the dominant story that is told about the development of the field. In any event, there is no shortage of brief synoptic accounts of this history in introductory textbooks, state-of-the-field articles, and International Studies Association presidential addresses.

These renditions frequently retell a conventional story of how the field has progressed through a series of phases: idealist, realist, behavioralist, post-behavioralist, pluralist, neorealist, rationalist, post-positivist, and constructivist. The image of the first three phases has been so deeply ingrained in the minds of students and scholars that there almost seems to be no alternative way of understanding the early history of the field.

Hedley Bull, for example, claimed that it is "possible to recognize three successive waves of theoretical activity": the "idealist" or "progressivist" doctrines that were dominant in the 1920s and early 1930s, the "realist" or conservative theories that developed in the late 1930s and 1940s, and lastly the "social scientific" theories that arose in the late 1950s and 1960s "whose origin lay in dissatisfaction with the methodologies on which both earlier kinds of theory were based" (Bull, 1972: 33). This story of the field's evolution is, in turn, often buttressed by the closely related account of the field evolving through a series of "great debates," beginning with the discipline-defining "great debate" between "idealists" and "realists" and extending perhaps to the latest debate today between "rationalists" and "reflectivists" (Banks, 1986; Katzenstein et al., 1999; Keohane, 1988; Lijphart, 1974a; Maghroori, 1982; Mitchell, 1980). This particular construction of the field's history tends to have the effect of making the present debate a matter that all serious students of IR must focus on while relegating previous debates to obscurity.

Finally, the field's history is commonly chronicled by reference to the external events that have taken place in the realm that has been conventionally designated as international politics. There is a strong conviction that significant developments in international politics such as wars or abrupt changes in American foreign policy have, more fundamentally than any other set of factors, shaped the development of IR. The birth of the field, for example, often associated with the founding of the world's first chair for the study of international politics, in 1919 at the Department of International Politics at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, is characteristically viewed as a reaction to the horror of the First World War (Porter, 1972).

My main intention in this chapter is to problematize these prevalent interpretations of how the field has developed and to indicate that the history of the field is both more complicated and less well known than typically portrayed in the mainstream literature. While it is quite evident that we do not possess an adequate understanding of how the field has developed, there are a number of reasons why it is crucially important for contemporary students of IR to have an adequate familiarity with this history. First, numerous theoretical insights, of largely forgotten scholars, have been simply erased from memory. Yet, once recalled, these insights can have critical purchase in the present. Second, the field has created its own powerful myths regarding the evolution of the field that have obscured the actual history (Booth, 1996; Kahler, 1997; Wilson, 1998). Third, an adequate understanding of the history of the field is essential for explaining the character of many of our present assumptions and ideas about the study of international politics. While current intellectual practices and theoretical positions are often evoked as novel answers to the latest dilemmas confronting international politics, a more discriminating historical sense reminds us that contemporary approaches are often reincarnations of past discourses. Without a sufficient understanding of how the field has evolved, there is the constant danger of continually reinventing the wheel. There is, in fact, much evidence to support the proposition that much of what is taken to be new is actually deeply embedded in the discursive past of the field. Finally, a perspicacious history of the field offers a fruitful basis for critical reflection on the present. Knowledge of the actual, as opposed to the mythical, history may force us to reassess some of our dominant images of the field and result in opening up some much-needed space in which to think about international politics in the new millennium.

My purpose in this chapter is not to provide a comprehensive history of the broadly defined field or discipline of IR. Not only would such an endeavor be impossible in this context, but, as I will indicate below, there is sufficient ambiguity concerning the proper identity of the field, with respect to its origins, institutional home, and geographical boundaries, that simply writing a generic

history of IR without addressing these kinds of issues in detail would be counterproductive. Moreover, while much of the previous work on the history of the field has not exhibited sufficient theoretical and methodological sophistication in approaching the task of providing an adequate historical account, recent work in this area is forcing scholars to confront a number of historiographical issues. This latest wave of scholarship clearly recognizes the necessary link that exists between establishing the identity of the discipline and presenting an image of its history (Bell, 2009; Thies, 2002). Furthermore, the manner in which the history of IR is reconstructed has become almost as significant as the substantive account itself, and therefore it becomes crucially important to address the basic research question of how one should approach the task of writing a history of the field.

I will begin by briefly discussing a number of lingering and contentious issues concerning the extent to which there is a well-defined field of IR that has a distinct identity, as well as the equally controversial question of whether the history of the field should be written from a cosmopolitan frame of reference that does not pay significant attention to distinct national and institutional differences, or whether it is necessary to approach this task from within clearly demarcated national contexts. Although it should be evident that IR is a discrete academic field after more than fifty to a hundred years of evolution, depending on how one dates the genesis of the field, ambiguities have continually arisen regarding both the character of the subject matter and the institutional boundaries of the field. Adding to the confusion surrounding the identity of the field is the overwhelming and continuing dominance of the American IR scholarly community, which sometimes leads to the erroneous conclusion that the history of IR is synonymous with its development in the United States. While there is much merit in Stanley Hoffmann's (1977) assertion that IR is an American social science despite the influence of a great many

European-born scholars, it is also the case that notwithstanding the global impact of the American model, there are many indigenous scholarly communities that have their own unique disciplinary history. This is, for example, clearly the case with the English School, whose contributions have only recently begun to be properly documented and assessed (Dunne, 1998; Little, 2000). These communities have certainly been deeply impacted by theoretical and methodological developments in the United States, but there are nevertheless differences in how the subject is studied in different parts of the world (Jorgensen, 2000; Tickner and Waever, 2009; Waever, 1998). The interdisciplinary character of the field and differences in national settings sometimes lead to the conclusion that a distinct discipline or field of IR does not really exist, but despite ambiguities about disciplinary boundaries and an institutional home, IR, as an academic field of study, has a distinct professional identity and discourse.

I next focus on two historiographical issues: first, presentism, which involves the practice of writing a history of the field for the purpose of making a point about its present character; and second, contextualism, which assumes that exogenous events in the realm of international politics have fundamentally structured the historical development of IR as an academic field of study. I will illustrate these issues by reviewing the existing literature. The most recent literature has cast increasing doubt on the conventional images of the development of IR. My critical purpose in this chapter is to challenge the dominant understanding of how the field has progressed and to encourage more sophisticated work on the disciplinary history of IR.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AS AN ACADEMIC FIELD OF STUDY

The task of demarcating the disciplinary boundaries of the field is an important

prerequisite to establishing authority over its object of inquiry. Yet the question of whether a distinct field or discipline of IR exists has been a matter of consistent controversy (Gurian, 1946; Kaplan, 1961; Neal and Hamlett, 1969; Olson, 1972; Olson and Groom, 1991; Palmer, 1980; Thompson, 1952; Wright, 1955). While the controversy is, in some ways, related to the contentious issue of the origins and geographical boundaries of the field, it more fundamentally involves the question of the identity of IR as a second-order discourse and the status of its subject matter. Although it is apparent that this question has never been answered satisfactorily, disciplinary history does provide an insightful vantage point for viewing the manner in which the field has attempted to establish its own identity. Recent work has focused on the dynamics of "discipline formation" and uncovered a number of previously neglected factors that contributed to the emergence of IR (Bell, 2009; Guilhot, 2008; Long, 2006; Vitalis, 2005).

The period that precedes the point at which we can discern the identity of the field as a distinct academic practice can be termed its "prehistory"; when there was a gradual change "from discourse to discipline" (Farr, 1990). This period is important for identifying the themes and issues that would later constitute the field as it took form during the early decades of the twentieth century (Long and Schmidt, 2005; Schmidt, 1998b). The field's antecedents included international law, diplomatic history, the peace movement, moral philosophy, geography, and anthropology (Olson and Groom, 1991). In *The Study of International Relations* (1955), Quincy Wright identified eight "root disciplines" and six disciplines with a "world point of view" that had contributed to the development of IR. Wright, along with many others, argued that the task of synthesizing these largely autonomous fields of inquiry hampered the effort to create a unified coherent discipline of IR. Moreover, Kenneth Thompson observed that "there was nothing peculiar to the subject matter of international relations which did not fall under other separate fields" (Thompson, 1952: 433). The interdisciplinary character of the field and the fact that other disciplines studied various dimensions of its subject matter has sometimes led to the question of whether "international relations is a distinctive discipline" (Kaplan, 1961). This is an interesting and important question that has often been answered by pointing to the field's unique subject matter, typically defined in terms of politics in the absence of central authority as well as by adducing various epistemological and methodological grounds. Yet while the question of whether IR is a distinct discipline is intriguing, it is important not to let this become an obstacle to reconstructing the history of the study of international politics.

These issues do, however, highlight the importance of clearly identifying and focusing on the institutional context of the field. The variability in institutional context is, in part, responsible for the wide range of dates that have been used to mark the birth of the field. It makes a large difference, for example, whether IR was institutionalized as a separate discipline, as was largely the case after the First World War in the United Kingdom, where a number of independent chairs were created, or as a subfield of political science, as was the case in the United States, Germany, and France. Yet orthodox histories have been more inclined to emphasize the impact of significant political events on the development of the field than the character of the institutional setting of the field. In the case of the United States, for example, it is impossible to write the history of IR without locating it within the disciplinary matrix of American political science (Schmidt, 1998a, 1998b, 2008). In addition to these institutional variations, there are numerous differences with respect to intellectual climate, access to information, research support, links between government and academia, and the general structure and character of the university system (Simpson, 1998).

The significance of institutional context is closely related to the issue of the national

context of the field. Variations in institutional structure are intimately related to the national setting in which IR is situated. The issue of whether the boundaries of IR should be demarcated in terms of one particular country or whether it should be viewed as a more cosmopolitan endeavor without regard to national differences complicates the task of writing a history of the field. Although the creation of a truly global discipline may, perhaps, be an aspiration, studies continue to indicate that the academic study of international politics is marked by British, and especially American, parochialism (Crawford and Jarvis, 2001; Peterson, Tierney, and Maliniak, 2005; Waever, 1998). Ever since Stanley Hoffmann (1977) declared that IR was an "American Social Science," a lively discussion has ensued about the extent to which the American academic community dominates the "global discipline" of IR, and about the profound consequences that this dominance has for the discipline as a whole (Alker and Biersteker, 1984; Crawford and Jarvis, 2001; Goldmann, 1996; Holsti, 1985; Jorgensen, 2003; Kahler, 1993; Krippendorf, 1987; Smith, 1987, 2000; Waever, 1998).

Yet despite the alleged American hegemony, it is a fundamental mistake to associate the American study of international politics with the "global discipline of IR." While it is often the case that many national IR communities seem to be susceptible to embracing American theories, trends, and debates, IR, as Waever notes, "is quite different in different places" (1998: 723). Although limitations of space prevent me from commenting on the history of IR in every country in the world, and much of what follows focuses on developments in the United States and the United Kingdom, it is essential to acknowledge the burgeoning country-specific and comparative studies of the development of IR (Breitenbauch and Wivel, 2004; Chan, 1994; Friedrichs, 2001; Groom, 1994; Inoguchi and Bacon, 2001; Jorgensen, 2000; Jorgensen and Knudsen, 2006; Lebedeva, 2004, Makinda, 2000; Tickner and Waever, 2009). The case studies that have examined the

history of IR from within a specific country such as Denmark, Italy, Japan, and Russia have revealed that the history of the field is not synonymous with its development in the United States. The new comparative literature has clearly shown both the importance of, and variation in, the institutional context of IR. Political culture, which has generally been neglected in accounting for the history of IR in the United States, has been identified as an important factor in understanding how and why IR has developed differently in different countries (Breitenbauch and Wivel, 2004; Jorgensen and Knudsen, 2006).

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

One of the most significant problems in work on the history of IR is that these histories have failed to address adequately the question of how one should write a history of the field. The tendency has been to describe the history of IR as if a complete consensus existed on the essential dimensions of the field's evolution. In the absence of any significant controversy concerning how the field has developed, there has been little or no attention devoted to historiographical issues. Waever has remarked that the existing literature on the history of the field is "usually not based on systemic research or clear methods" and that it amounts to little more than "elegant restatements of 'common knowledge' of our past, implicitly assuming that any good practitioner can tell the history of the discipline" (Waever, 1998: 692). Yet as a number of related academic disciplines such as political science have begun to examine more closely their disciplinary history, several theoretical and methodological controversies have arisen over what in general constitutes proper historical analysis and, particularly, what is involved in disciplinary history (Bell, 2009; Bender and Schorske, 1998; Farr et al., 1990; Gunnell, 1991; Ross, 1991; Tully, 1988). The historiographical concerns that

this literature has raised have gradually begun to impact those who reflect on the history of IR. Duncan Bell has suggested that the latest work on the history of IR represents what he terms the "dawn of a historiographical turn." According to Bell, "the intellectual history of the discipline is now taken far more seriously, studied more carefully and explicitly, and plays a greater role in shaping the theoretical debate, than in the past" (Bell, 2001: 123). But while the lack of theoretical sophistication is definitely rooted in the assumption that practitioners already know the history of the field, additional factors are at work in reinforcing the tendency to simplify, and thus distort, that history.

Presentism

There is a general assumption that the history of the field can be explained by reference to a continuous tradition that reaches back to classical Athens and extends forward to the present (Schmidt, 1994). The IR literature contains numerous references to the idea that there are epic traditions of international thought that have given rise to coherent schools or paradigms such as realism and liberalism (Clark, 1989; Donnelly, 1995; Holsti, 1985; Kugler, 1993; Zacher and Matthew, 1995). Furthermore, and more importantly for the discussion at hand, there is a widespread conviction that these ancient traditions represent an integral part of the field's past and therefore are relevant for understanding the contemporary identity of the field. While it is certainly the case that the study of the theorists associated with the classic canon of Western political thought constitutes an element of the practice of IR, as evidenced, for example, by Kenneth Waltz's *Man, the State and War* (1959), it is nevertheless a fundamental misconception to presume that the work of classic political theorists such as Thucydides or Kant can be construed as constitutive antecedents of the literature of contemporary IR.

There is a certain irony in the widespread tendency of contemporary scholars to make

reference to the writings of classic political theorists in that one of the dominant assumptions for many years was that the canon of classic texts from Plato to Marx did not have very much to say about international politics. This was the view popularized in Martin Wight's polemical essay "Why is there no International Theory?" (1966), which he presented in 1959 at the inaugural meeting of the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics. Wight's argument contributed to the view that there was a rich and well-defined tradition of political thought but an impoverished and essentially contested tradition of international thought. This view, along with the scientific ambitions of the behavioralists who directly challenged the relevance of the canon, led the fields of political theory and IR to drift apart, producing a profound sense of estrangement that only recently has begun to change (Armitage, 2004; Boucher, 1998; Brown, 2000; Schmidt, 2000; Walker, 1993). David Boucher has argued that one of the reasons why IR does not have an established canon of classic texts stems from the mistake that IR theorists made when they "cut themselves adrift from the mainstream of political theory in order to develop their own theories and concepts" (1998: 10).

The strained and troubled relationship between political theory and international relations theory has not, however, prevented scholars from constructing numerous typologies and traditions for classifying the ideas of classic political theorists and linking them to the work of contemporary students of international relations (Boucher, 1998; Donelan, 1990; Doyle, 1997; Holsti, 1985; Wight, 1992). While, symbolically or metaphorically, contemporary practitioners may wish to describe themselves as descendants of Thucydides or Kant, a serious conceptual mistake is made when the history of the field is written in terms of the development of an epic tradition beginning with classical Greece or the Enlightenment and culminating in the work of contemporary scholars. This common practice, which can be found in a

multitude of synoptic accounts of the history of the field, commits the error of confusing an analytical with a historical tradition, resulting in significant obstacles to tracing the actual historical development of IR (Schmidt, 1994). Although discussions of a tradition of IR are widespread and, as Rob Walker (1993) has noted, far from monolithic, they tend to refer less to actual historical traditions, that is, self-constituted patterns of conventional practice through which ideas are conveyed within a recognizably established discursive framework, than to an analytical retrospective construction that largely is defined by present criteria and concerns. In the case of the disciplinary history of IR, such retrospectively constructed traditions as realism are presented as if they represented an actual or self-constituted tradition in the field, and serious problems in understanding and writing the history of IR result when the former is mistaken for, or presented as, the latter.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty is that such epic renditions of the past divert attention from the actual academic practices and individuals who have contributed to the development and current identity of the field. Instead of a history that traces the genealogy of academic scholars who self-consciously and institutionally participated in the professional discourse of IR, we are presented with an idealized version of the past in the form of a continuous tradition stretching from ancient times to the present. These epic accounts, which are the norm in many of the leading undergraduate texts, serve to reinforce the idea that we already know the history of the field. Attention usually is devoted to "founding fathers" such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Kant, while a host of individuals who contributed to the institutionalized academic study of international politics are routinely neglected. While academic scholars such as James Bryce, Frederick S. Dunn, Pitman Potter, and Paul S. Reinsch may not be as historically fascinating, they are much more relevant for tracing the actual development of the field.

The widespread tendency to write the history of the field in terms of its participation in an ancient or classic tradition of thought often serves to confer legitimacy on a contemporary research program. One of the primary purposes of the various histories of IR is to say something authoritative about the field's present character, and this often contributes to the tendency to distort the history of the field. In order either to advocate a new direction for the field and to criticize its current structure, or, conversely, to defend the status quo, scholars often feel compelled to justify their position by referring to and characterizing the general evolution of the field. For example, histories that seek to account for the rise and subsequent dominance of realist theory frequently feel obliged to demonstrate the timeless insights of the realist tradition, beginning with Thucydides or Machiavelli. And those who periodically criticize the pluralistic character of the field quite often make reference to an earlier period when there was supposedly a dominant paradigm or approach that united it. The crux of the matter is that many of the attempts to reflect on the history of IR are undertaken largely for "presentist" purposes rather than with the intention of carefully and accurately reconstructing the past.

"Whig" history, which Herbert Butterfield (1959: v) described as the tendency "to emphasize certain principles of progress in the past and to produce a story which is the ratification if not the glorification of the present," and the problem of presentism in general, has become a controversial issue among those who are engaged in writing the history of the social sciences (Collini et al., 1983; Dryzek and Leonard, 1988; Farr et al., 1990). The problem with presentism is not that historical analysis is utilized to make a point about the present, but that history is distorted as it is reconstructed to legitimate or criticize a position that the writer has set out in advance to support or to undermine. Whig history "consists in writing history backwards," whereby the "present theoretical consensus of the discipline … is in effect

taken as definitive, and the past is then reconstituted as a teleology leading up to and fully manifested in it" (Collini et al., 1983: 4).

Given the elusive but persistent goal of mainstream IR in the United States to achieve the status of a "true" science, it is understandable why so many of the existing accounts of the history of the field continue to be Whiggish in character. Histories of the field, and images of that history, are frequently advanced for the purpose of either illustrating theoretical progress and scientific advance or diagnosing an obstacle that is preventing the field from making scientific progress (Brecher, 1999). George Stocking provided an early and persuasive explanation for why the professional social scientist was likely to be Whiggish. According to Stocking, there is "a sort of implicit whiggish presentism virtually built into the history of science and by extension, into the history of the behavioral sciences" (Stocking, 1965: 213). The reigning logical positivist account of science that was offered by philosophers of science during the 1950s and 1960s, which is the medium through which most social scientists acquired their understanding of science, was one of incremental and cumulative progress whereby a greater understanding of the natural world was made possible by an increasing correspondence between theory and fact. Since logical positivists claimed that there was an essential unity and hierarchy of scientific method, the history of social science was bound sooner or later to replicate the same forward advance of knowledge.

Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970) challenged the logical positivist account of science and provided a basic impetus for post-positivist philosophers and historians of science. Not only did Kuhn attack logical positivism's central premise of the separation of theory and fact, as well as the correspondence theory of truth, but he sought to replace the orthodox textbook account of the history of science with the idea of a discontinuous history marked by scientific revolutions, that is, "those non-cumulative developmental episodes in which

an older paradigm is replaced in whole or part by an incompatible new one" (Kuhn, 1970: 92). Kuhn's theory of paradigms and scientific revolutions represented a significant challenge to the orthodox account of scientific development. The crucial point of Kuhn's revisionist account of the history of science was his argument that there was no transcendental vantage point from which to claim that the replacement of one paradigm by another constituted "progress," because the criteria for progress was paradigm-specific. While Kuhn made a significant impact on philosophers and historians of science, many of whom were displeased by the relativistic implications of the argument that resulted in the inability to vindicate scientific progress, his book had an equally dramatic impact on the field of IR, especially with respect to how many scholars have come to understand the history of the field. The fact that IR scholars increasingly have turned to Kuhn and other philosophers of science, particularly Imre Lakatos (1970), who, for many, appeared to reestablish evaluative criteria of progress, serves to illustrate the point that the task of writing the history of the field often has been subordinate to the more fundamental goal of demonstrating progress in the field.

There are two principal ways in which the work of Kuhn in particular, and the literature emanating from the philosophy and history of science in general, has had an impact on the historiography of IR. First, IR scholars quickly set out to establish their own paradigms. The situation was very much the same in political science, where political scientists began to use the word *paradigm* to denote specific schools of thought such as behavioralism (Almond, 1966). In IR, realism has been assumed by many to be the leading candidate for a paradigm, and scholars have repeatedly undertaken the task of defining and operationalizing the core assumptions of the realist paradigm (Guzzini, 1998; Keohane, 1983; Vasquez, 1983). The frequency with which references are made to the realist paradigm have led some to term it the "traditional

paradigm" which, according to Arend Lijphart, "revolves around the notions of state sovereignty and its logical corollary, international anarchy" (1974b: 43). Quite frequently references to the realist paradigm are used interchangeably with references to the "realist tradition" or the "realist school of thought."

Yet while realism is considered by many to be the leading paradigm in the field, it has certainly not been the only candidate for paradigmatic status. Scholars have made reference to a host of alternative paradigms which are almost always defined in opposition to the propositions of realism and whose origins are typically linked to developments in international politics. A classical example of this, even though it allegedly predates the realist paradigm, is the so-called idealist paradigm of the interwar period. John Vasquez claims "that the first stage of international relations inquiry was dominated by the idealist paradigm," which was "important in terms of institutionalizing the field and creating the emphasis on peace and war" (1998: 33–4). Some of the other rival paradigms to realism have included the "behavioralist paradigm" (Lijphart, 1974a), "world politics paradigm" (Keohane and Nye, 1972), global society and neo-Marxist paradigms (Holsti, 1985), a "new paradigm for global politics" (Mansbach and Vasquez, 1981), and pluralism (Little, 1996).

Kuhn's concept of a paradigm as well as other concepts borrowed from the philosophy and history of science, such as Lakatos's (1970) conception of a "scientific research programme," have not only been used to provide grounds for defining distinct "schools of thought," but also to evaluate the overall evolution of the field as well as specific approaches in the field (Elman and Elman, 2003; Ferguson and Mansbach, 1993; Guzzini, 1998; Keohane, 1983; Lijphart, 1974a, 1974b; Smith, 1987; Tellis, 1996; Vasquez, 1998). Arend Lijphart, for example, has argued that "the development of international relations since the Second World War fits Kuhn's description of scientific revolutions"

(1974a: 12). The underlying purpose of utilizing analytical frameworks borrowed from the philosophy and history of science largely has been to demonstrate that scientific advances are being made and that the field as a whole is progressing. In the quest for cognitive authority over the subject matter of international politics, IR has been drawn to philosophers of science in the belief that they can provide the grounds for empirical judgment and evaluation. Ferguson and Mansbach, for example, note that the attraction of the Kuhnian framework for describing the history of IR is that it allowed "international relations scholars to see progress in their field while surrounded by theoretical incoherence" (Ferguson and Mansbach, 1993: 22). Yet this is simply a misuse of Kuhn, since he argued that his account of the development of science was not applicable to the history of the social sciences, since they were "pre-paradigmatic." Moreover, analytical constructs such as idealism and realism do not meet the criteria of a paradigm as Kuhn described it. And while Kuhn's framework has been employed to demonstrate progress, his basic argument was that it was not possible to speak of progress from a second-order perspective.

Contextualism

The second, and equally pervasive, assumption is that the history of the field can be explained in terms of exogenous events in the realm of international politics. Many assume that it is self-evident that the field's history from its alleged birth after the First World War to the present has been events-driven; that significant changes in American foreign policy or international crises and wars are directly responsible for the rise and fall of different theories, methodologies, and foci in the field (Hoffmann, 1977; Kahler, 1997; Krippendorf, 1987; Olson and Groom, 1991; Smith, 1987). Hoffmann's claim that "the growth of the discipline cannot be separated from the American role in world affairs after

1945" went largely unchallenged, leading to the common view that the field's history has been shaped by how the United States responded to various international events (Hoffmann, 1977: 47). The popularity of external accounts can, in part, be attributed to the fact that they seem to be intuitively correct. While it certainly would be difficult, if not impossible, to understand the evolution of IR without being cognizant of the events that have shaped international history, there are, nevertheless, problems with accounts that suggest that a wider historical context can explain how and why IR developed in the manner that it did.

The first problem concerns the very manner by which one defines "context." If the intention of disciplinary history is to understand how and why the field developed in the manner that it did, then the focus should be on how academic practitioners perceived, and the extent to which they recognized and defined, "external" events. But very often in IR, it is just the reverse: context is defined retrospectively and in a broadly general manner and then assumed to be able to account for the basic nature of the conversation in the field at a particular point in time. Yet not only are the actual connections between the "outside" context and "inside" developments poorly clarified, but the empirical details of the putative explanatory context are not always carefully demonstrated. One person's account of external context often differs from another's, and the very task of conceptualizing context raises a host of historiographical issues. The important point to emphasize is that the subject matter of IR is always constructed conceptually by the members in the field, and thus the relevance of the "outside" is determined by how those in the academy conceive of and react to it.

This brings us to a second problem with some contextual accounts, namely, the manner in which external factors are held to account for internal, disciplinary developments. The fact that IR is conceived as an academic enterprise devoted to the study of international politics does not automatically imply that exogenous events that comprise the subject matter at any given point in time can explain what happens inside the field. There is no direct transmission belt between particular developments in the world and what is going on in a field with respect to schools of thought, methodological orientation, disciplinary debates, and even the substantive focus of analysis. Thus, the relationship between external events and the internal disciplinary response manifested in conceptual or theoretical change must be empirically demonstrated and not merely assumed. Despite claims to the contrary, many contextual accounts have a difficult time demonstrating such a connection.

Beginning in the late 1990s, the conventional events-driven wisdom regarding the evolution of IR was challenged by a new group of disciplinary historians (Dunne, 1998; Jorgensen, 2000; Schmidt, 1998b, 2002; Thies, 2002). Rather than focusing on external factors to explain the history of the field, proponents of an internal approach argued that the most relevant context is the immediate one of the conversation that the individuals who self-consciously viewed themselves as members of the field of IR were engaged in and the disciplinary and university setting (Schmidt, 1998b). In other words, those advocating an internal approach insist that the most appropriate context for investigating the history of IR is its academic setting and not the world at large. It has also been suggested that an internal as compared to an external focus can help to account for the distinct national differences in how the field has developed. The merits of an internal approach, however, have not escaped critical scrutiny (Bell, 2001; Holden, 2002, 2006; Kahler, 1997; Makinda, 2000). While applauding the recent attention that has been directed to the historiography of IR, Holden argues that those who have rejected a contextual approach and adopted an internal discursive approach have generally failed to understand the merits and potential of the former. This is especially the case for those like Holden and others who have associated a contextual approach to disciplinary history with the work of Quentin Skinner and John

Pocock on the history of ideas. The claim is that advocates of an internal approach do not understand their work very well and therefore inappropriately dismiss it (Holden, 2002; Quirk and Vigneswaran, 2005). The basic argument of Skinner and the Cambridge School of intellectual historians is that ideas have to be situated in their proper historical and linguistic context. An internal focus is deemed to be both erroneous and impossible, with critics contending that contextual factors are conspicuously present in the work done by those who claim to be utilizing an internal approach (Brown, 2000; Holden, 2002; Little, 1999). This charge, however, really misses the mark and makes it appear that an internal approach assumes that the history of IR can be written as if it were hermetically sealed from the world of international politics.

Perhaps one way to resolve the debate between internal and external accounts is simply to frame the issue in terms of what is the most appropriate and relevant context for understanding the history of IR. The debate should not be construed in terms of whether (external) context matters or not, but what is the most appropriate context. One does not need to be a constructivist to recognize that contexts are always constructed and do not have an objective and independent existence. Contexts, after all, are not logically comparable to the things being contextualized, but are constructions created and reimposed from the perspective of the present. And because of the fact that IR is widely perceived as a field that studies the activity of international politics "out there" does not at all imply that there is a singular external context that we all could point to as shaping the history of the academic conversation about something conventionally termed international relations.

THE GREAT DEBATES

Within the orthodox historiography of IR, it has been through the organizing device of the image of a series of "great debates" that the story of the field's development has been framed. The story of the great debates has served to demonstrate either coherence or incoherence but, most commonly, the idea that scientific progress is being made. The widespread belief that the field's history has been characterized by three successive great debates is so pervasive and dominant that, as Waever notes, "there is no other established means of telling the history of the discipline" (1998: 715). The story of the field's three great debates is, as Steve Smith (1995) and Kjell Goldmann (1996) have argued, one of the most dominant self-images of the field. While all academic disciplines experience their share of disciplinary controversy, IR may be unique in that most practitioners believe that the history of the field has been singularly marked by these defining debates. This view has been reinforced by explaining the debates in terms of exogenous influences such as the outbreak of the Second World War, the Vietnam debacle, and the end of the Cold War. Perhaps more than any other claim about the general history of the field, that which postulates three great debates must be critically examined. It is not entirely clear that all of the debates actually have taken place, and an examination of the discursive artifacts of the field leads one to ask if the field's history has been seriously distorted by viewing it within this framework. I do not deny that the field has experienced numerous controversies, but I question the appropriateness of understanding them in terms of the conventional story of the field's three great debates.

What were the debates about?

According to the conventional wisdom, the first great debate, which Miles Kahler (1997) has termed the "foundational myth of the field," was between the interwar "idealists" and the postwar "realists." Almost every historical account concedes that the realists won the first debate and, as a result, reoriented the field in a more practical and scientific direction (Fox, 1949; Guzzini, 1998; Thompson,

1960; Waldo, 1954). The alleged superiority of the realist view has made it appear unnecessary to consider carefully the nature of the claims made by those writing in the field prior to the Second World War or even the writings of many of those who are considered early realists. The interwar "idealists," who are greatly disparaged, are typically depicted as a group of utopian pacifists and legalists who focused their attention on reforming international politics rather than on analyzing the realities of politics among nations. The "debate," which allegedly took place as the League of Nations system broke down, is often described in Kuhnian terms. While the idealists supposedly envisioned ever-lasting peace, the Second World War is depicted as a glaring anomaly representing a severe crisis in the idealist paradigm, which eventually resulted in its replacement by the realist paradigm, which was superior in its ability to rationally explain the persistent and ubiquitous struggle for power among nations (Guzzini, 1998; Hollis and Smith, 1991; Vasquez, 1998). Sometimes the idealists are represented as alchemists who were concerned with "what ought to be" while the realists are portrayed as scientists focusing on "what is," which was a prerequisite for creating a science of politics (Carr, [1939] 1964). This story of the "debate" between "idealists" and "realists" continues to exert a strong influence on how the field understands its own history, and this accounts in part for the perpetual need to retell the tale of how IR was once rooted in idealism but was fortunate, after the Second World War, to have embraced realism.

The second great debate, as characteristically described in the literature, took place within the context of the behavioral revolution that was already deeply impacting the social sciences, especially political science, and which pitted "traditionalists" against "behavioralists" or "scientists." The debate is symbolized by the intellectual exchange between Hedley Bull (1966), who sought to defend what he termed the "classical approach," and Morton Kaplan (1966), who

was one of the early advocates of what came to be known as the "scientific approach." A growing sentiment among American scholars was that the field was losing ground in its quest to acquire the mantle of science. While realism, it was argued, served a number of paradigmatic functions, some scholars claimed that its tenets, such as the a priori foundational claim that the struggle for power stemmed from basic biological drives rooted in human nature, as well as its methodology, which relied heavily on historical examples, were preventing the field from achieving scientific status.

As in the case of political science, the debate became polarized between those who believed that the methods of the natural sciences, or at least those described by logical-positivist philosophers of science as the hypothetico-deductive model, could be emulated and adopted in the study of international politics, versus those who argued that the study of the social world was not amenable to the strict empirical methods of natural science (Knorr and Rosenau, 1969; Morgenthau, 1946; Nicholson, 1996; Reynolds, 1973; Rogowski, 1968). George Liska described the period in which the debate between traditionalists and behavioralists took place as the "heroic decade" and suggested that the key division was "between those who are primarily interested in international relations and those who are primarily committed to the elaboration of social science" (1966: 7). The debate over the merits and adequacy of a positivistic approach surely has not diminished, but there is, nevertheless, a common view that the debate helped to foster the scientific identity of the field through the widespread acceptance and utilization of scientific methods which aided in the task of developing a cumulative theory of international politics. Morton Kaplan's (1957) systems theory; Karl Deutsch's (1964) communications and cybernetics theory; Thomas Schelling's (1960) early game theory, Richard Snyder, H.W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin's (1954, 1962) development of decision-making theory; and J. David Singer

and Melvin Small's (1972) data collection in their correlates of war project at the University of Michigan are generally viewed as contributing to the scientific identity of the field.

Historical accounts of the third debate tend to be more ambiguous than that of the other two debates, but it is commonly described as an inter-paradigm debate that took place in the early 1980s among realists, pluralists, and structuralists (Banks, 1985; Maghroori, 1982; Olson and Groom, 1991; Waever, 1996). The typical explanation of the origins of the third debate holds that, during the 1970s, realism fell on some difficult times when events in the realm of international politics, particularly in the economic sphere but also regarding matters of peace and security, appeared to contradict some of the key realist assumptions about the nature of interstate politics (Smith, 1987). As a result of this apparent incongruity, it is generally believed that alternative approaches such as Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's ([1977] 1989) theory of "complex interdependence," Immanuel Wallerstein's (1974) "world systems theory," John Burton's "cobweb theory" (1972), and "dependency theory" (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979) were developed and directly challenged many of the central tenets of realism. Most fundamentally, critics of realism attacked the core claims of statecentrism, the notion that independence rather than interdependence characterized the condition of international politics, and that a clear distinction could be made between "high politics" (i.e., military and security issues) and "low politics" (i.e., economic, environmental, and human rights issues). It has been suggested that it was within this context of a growing focus on interdependence (Cooper, 1968; Rosecrance and Stein, 1973) that the distinct subfield of International Political Economy emerged (Katzenstein et al., 1999).

While it was argued that the publication of Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* (1979) gave a new lease of life to realism in the form of neorealism, most accounts of the third debate do not conclude that realism was the victor. Unlike the previous two "great debates," the "third debate" is, according to Waever, "seen as a debate not to be won, but a pluralism to live with" (Waever, 1996: 155). In other words, claims about the ascendancy of neorealism did not mean that adherents of a liberal (pluralist) or Marxist (globalist) approach stopped contributing to the discourse of IR, and some have even questioned whether the three "paradigms" were ever in competition with one another (Smith, 1995; Wight, 1996). Adding to the confusion of understanding this period of disciplinary history in terms of a "third debate" was the emergence, during the 1980s, of a number of post-positivist approaches that were sharply critical of all the mainstream approaches in the field (Der Derian and Shapiro, 1989; George and Campbell, 1990; Peterson, 1992). According to Yosef Lapid, the attack by feminists, Frankfurt School critical theorists, and post-structuralists on what they perceived to be the positivist epistemological foundations of the field signaled the dawn of a "third debate," which he claimed consisted of a "disciplinary effort to reassess theoretical options in a 'post-positivist' era" (1989: 237). That the literature can simultaneously make reference to two fundamentally different controversies under the same label of the "third debate" should be enough to indicate that there is something seriously wrong with this understanding of the history of the field.

What's wrong with the self-image of the great debates?

The newest cohort of disciplinary historians have both noted the peculiarity of the field's self-image being derived from the idea of a set of recurrent debates and pointed to some of the problems that are involved in viewing the history of the field in this manner (Bell, 2003; Goldmann, 1996; Kahler, 1997; Schmidt, 1998a, 1998b, 2012; Smith, 1995; Waever, 1998; Wilson, 1998). There are so many problems and difficulties involved in

understanding the history of the field within the framework of the three great debates that we might be better off simply to reject discussing this account of how the field has developed. In the first place, when attention is directed to the details of the field's history, it is not evident that all of the three debates actually took place. This is especially the case with respect to the first "great debate" (Ashworth, 2002; Kahler, 1997; Quirk and Vigneswaran, 2005; Schmidt, 2012; Thies, 2002; Wilson, 1998). Second, the stylized versions of the debates do not do justice to the nature of the controversies that were in fact taking place. Third, by focusing only on the three great debates, a number of additional and, extremely important, disciplinary controversies continue to be overlooked. Finally, the use of the analytical framework of a series of great debates to account for the field's history is a conservative move that gives the field a greater sense of coherence than the actual history of the field warrants.

One of the most significant findings to emerge from the recent scholarship on the history of the field is that, contrary to popular belief, the field was never dominated by a group of utopian scholars who adhered to something akin to what has been described as the idealist paradigm (Ashworth, 2006; Baldwin, 1995; Kahler, 1997; Little, 1996; Long, 1991; Long and Wilson, 1995; Osiander, 1998; Schmidt, 1998a, 1998b, 2002, 2012; Thies, 2002; Wilson, 1998). In most cases, it is difficult to find a scholar who was self-consciously and institutionally a member of the field of IR who adhered to the tenets that are frequently associated with a construct termed "idealism" or "utopianism." Many of those who have been dubbed "idealists" turn out, upon closer inspection, to subscribe to a position that is quite different from the manner in which it has been characterized in the secondary literature. On the basis of careful historical research, a variety of interwar discourses have been identified that together provide a very different account of this period of the field's history (Ashworth, 2006; Long and Schmidt, 2005; Osiander,

1998; Schmidt, 2002, 2012; Sylvest, 2004; Thies, 2002). While it is the case that many of the interwar scholars shared a practical mission to reform the practice of international politics, this objective, I argue, does not in and of itself qualify the enterprise as utopian. Apart from seriously distorting the formative years of the field's history, the idealist tag has inhibited understanding some of the deep discursive continuities that exist between the present and the past.

Perhaps the most important continuity is the concept of anarchy that has given the field of IR a distinct discursive identity. Although it might appear to those who are not familiar with the institutional history of IR that anarchy is some newly discovered research puzzle that lends itself to the latest tools of social scientific inquiry, anarchy – and the closely related concept of sovereignty – has served as the core constituent principle throughout the evolution of the field (Schmidt, 1998b). The interwar scholars were keenly aware of the fact that their subject matter, which included an analysis of the causes of war and peace, directly dealt with issues arising from the existence of sovereign states in a condition of anarchy (Dickinson, 1926). Many of those writing during the interwar period understood that sovereignty and anarchy were inextricably associated with, and mutually constitutive of, each other, and this explains why much of the interwar discourse focused on the concept of state sovereignty. The juristic theory of the state, which during the early 1900s was the most influential paradigm for the study of political science, depicted the international milieu as one where states led an independent and isolated existence (Willoughby, 1918). Proponents of juristic theory evoked the pre-contractual image of individuals living in a state of nature to describe the external condition of states and drew many of the same pessimistic conclusions that realists have made about politics conducted in the absence of a central authority.

Beginning in the 1920s, juristic theory was challenged by a new group of thinkers who collectively put forth the theory of

pluralism that fundamentally transformed the discourse of both political science and IR (Gunnell, 1993; Little, 1996; Schmidt, 1998b, 2002). Pluralists such as Harold Laski (1927) and Mary Parker Follett ([1918] 1934) argued that juristic theory was entirely inconsistent with the modern condition of interdependence, and this clearly indicated that the state was no longer omnipotent and immune from all other sources of authority. The interdependent quality of international politics, which pluralists took to be axiomatic, along with the existence of many international public unions (Reinsch, 1911), raised serious doubts about the validity of the claim that each nation-state was entirely sovereign in relation to all other actors. There are many similarities between the pluralist critique of juristic theory and the debate over interdependence that took place during the 1970s, and yet there is almost no recognition of this earlier discourse (Wilde, 1991). Richard Little argues that one of the main reasons why the intellectual heritage of pluralism has been obscured stems from the "willingness of the discipline to accept the attachment of the idealist tag to this seminal literature" (1996: 69). The "idealist tag" has also obscured the manner in which the interwar scholars approached the study of international security (Baldwin, 1995) and international organization. While the interwar scholarship is most often associated with the misfortunes of the League of Nations, not everyone writing during this period assumed that the introduction of this new international organization would by itself alter fundamentally the logic of international politics. The most pressing theoretical issue for those involved in the study of international organization concerned the manner in which various conceptions of state sovereignty could be reconciled with the operation of the League of Nations. This was certainly the case for Pitman Benjamin Potter, who was the person responsible for giving specific form to the study of international organization in the United States (Potter, 1925).

Refuting the notion that the interwar period was distinguished by idealism does not, however, rest on denying that the field experienced a change of emphasis after the Second World War. By the early 1940s, it was apparent that the field was undergoing a transition, which was best exemplified by the argument that the study of international politics should replace international organization as the central focus of the field (Fox, 1949; Kirk, 1947; Thompson, 1952). Those who began to enter the profession under the self-proclaimed "realist" identity were responsible for changing the emphasis in the field, but it is important not to exaggerate the discontinuities between the pre- and postwar discourse of IR. Like those writing before the Second World War, the aim of many of the "realists" was to speak truth to power. This was especially the case with the émigré scholars who deeply impacted the discourse of both political science and IR. A careful reading of the texts by E.H. Carr ([1939] 1964), Hans J. Morgenthau (1948), and Frederick L. Schuman (1933) reveals a number of continuities with the earlier discourse which have been entirely overlooked as a consequence of viewing their work in terms of the dubious dichotomy between idealism and realism. While it is the case that Morgenthau and the other "realists" helped to make international politics the nucleus of the field, it was not the case that those writing before the outbreak of the Second World War were unfamiliar with many of the core claims of the "new" power politics model (Bryce, 1922; Reinsch, 1900). The discursive artifacts of the field's history do not lend much support to the claim that a debate, in the sense of an intellectual exchange between opposing theoretical positions or paradigms, ever took place between the interwar and the post-Second World War scholars.

Yet the emerging revisionist consensus on the erroneous and mythical character of the first great debate has been called into question. Joel Quirk and Darshan Vigneswaran prefer to describe the debate as a "half-truth, or highly distorted and overly simplistic

caricature, rather than a complete fiction" (2005: 91). Quirk and Vigneswaran argue that a number of scholars in the 1940s and 1950s were instrumental in creating the idealist–realist divide, but that it was later scholars, particularly those involved in the third debate of the 1980s, who are most responsible for creating the myth of the first great debate. Despite what the revisionist historians have written, Emmanuel Navon (2001) argues that compared to the so-called third debate, the first and second debates were authentic and continue to be relevant because they involved issues that are central to IR theory. Still others argue that the great debates framework have helped to organize the discipline and thus are "actually a part of the structure of the discipline" (Waever, 2007: 291). Thus, even if the historical details are incorrect, Waever (2007) and Lapid (2002) continue to defend the great-debates framework for understanding the development of the field.

Compared with the recent research on the interwar period of the field's history, the details generally associated with the "second great debate" or the "traditionalism versus scientism debate" have not been carefully and systematically investigated. Consequently, this later period is not very well understood, and additional research is required. Within the existing literature on the second debate, which typically construes it as a debate about the scientific status of the field, two different accounts of the nature of the controversy have been put forth. Many of the early accounts of the controversy heralded it as a "great debate" that contributed to a major transformation in the field (Bull, 1972; Kaplan, 1966; Lijphart, 1974a, 1974b). Lijphart, for example, claimed that the "traditionalism-science debate of the 1960s" was more substantive and fundamental than the earlier debate between idealism and realism (1974a: 11). He argued that the behavioral revolution in IR resulted in a new paradigm – "the behavioral paradigm" – that was at great odds with the substantive claims of the traditional realist paradigm. According to this view, the traditionalists – those who

approached the study of international politics from a legal, philosophical, historical, or inductive point of view – lost out to what was perceived to be a scientific approach that sought to emulate the methods of the natural sciences. The result was that IR became more scientific, realism lost its dominant position, and the field was brought more in line with the other social sciences.

Beginning with John Vasquez's influential book *The Power of Power Politics* (1983), an alternative view of the "second debate" began to emerge that argued that the controversy was really only a pseudo debate which was largely confined to methodological issues and did not involve substantive aspects of the subject matter of international politics (Guzzini, 1998; Hollis and Smith, 1991; Holsti, 1985, 1998; Vasquez, 1998). Vasquez (1983) sought to demonstrate that the behavioralists largely worked within the realist paradigm and merely sought to advance the methodological credentials of the field. In this manner, the debate has been construed as a "methodological debate" which took place "within a single [realist] theoretical orientation," and that it was "about how to conduct inquiry within that approach" (Hollis and Smith, 1991: 31). One of the more significant implications of this revisionist interpretation is the view that the "field has been far more coherent, systematic, and even cumulative than all the talk about contending approaches and theories implies" (Vasquez, 1998: 42).

While I concede that there is some merit in each of these accounts, neither sufficiently captures the nature of the disputes that occurred during the 1950s and 1960s. A crucial issue that informed the behavioral debate was the problem of IR's cognitive authority as a second-order discourse. It increasingly became the case, especially within the American context, that science provided the model for achieving the authority of knowledge, and the quest during the 1950s and 1960s, as well as before and after this period, was to emulate what were believed to be the canons of inquiry in natural science

(see Wight, Chapter 2 in this volume). The commitment to achieving a body of knowledge about international politics that was scientifically credible and that could command practical authority has always been a defining goal of the field. What has changed over the course of time is the content of the idea of science.

One of the consequences of neglecting a careful study of the history of the field has been a failure to recognize adequately the work of the members of the Chicago School of political science. In the 1920s and 1930s, Harold Lasswell, Charles Merriam, and Quincy Wright believed that they were at the forefront of developing a universal science of politics (Fox, 1975). The Chicago School's idea of a science of international politics was one that viewed international relations as merely a single subdivision of a more inclusive approach that focused on the role of power across a broad range of associations from the local to the global level.

There are a number of explanations of why the idea of science that the behavioralists brought to the field largely centered on the concept of an international system (Kaplan, 1957; Rosenau, 1969). The idea of a system was central to the behavioral movement, but its application to IR took on a number of distinctive and problematic properties. Within political science, the systems approach (Easton, 1953) was meant to replace the study of the state, which the behavioralists deemed to be archaic and contributing to the backwardness of the discipline. Yet within IR, where the influence of the behavioral persuasion arrived late, the adoption of the concept of a system did not supersede the focus on the interaction of states, since it would have risked the very identity of the field (Little, 1978). The properties accorded to the "international system" were largely derived from a detailed, and increasingly quantitative, analysis of the units (states) (Buzan and Little, 2000). The systems approach gave rise to what has been termed the "level of analysis problem," which involves the question of the relative weight that should be attributed to the units as opposed to the system as a whole (Hollis and Smith, 1991; Singer, 1969; Wight, 2006). Waltz's (1979) attempt to construct a systems theory was based on the model of microeconomics, which sought to overcome the problem of reductionism that he attributed to the earlier generation of systems thinkers. It would appear that Buzan and Little (2000) are correct to argue that the concept of an international system is deeply contested, and I would suggest that carefully examining the period that has been construed in terms of the second debate might add clarity to the present conversation.

Whether or not we accept the idea that a "great debate" took place, it is important that we not deemphasize the consequences that the increasing attachment to scientism has had for the development of the field. First, it has resulted in IR surrendering its intellectual autonomy to a number of cognate fields that appeared, for whatever reason, to be more scientific. Second, the commitment to science contributed to a growing rift between the American scholarly community, which sought to emulate the positivist approach to knowledge, and much of the rest of the world that remained deeply suspicious of studying international politics in this manner. The members of the English School, Hedley Bull, Herbert Butterfield, John Vincent, Martin Wight, and others, were, for example, "skeptical of the possibility of a scientific study of International Relations" (Dunne, 1998: 7). They chose to focus on what they termed an "international society" that involved the study of history, culture, religion, and philosophy (Dunne, 1998; Epp, 1998; Little, 2000). Yet their work, as well as most of the scholarship from Britain, was, until recently, almost completely ignored by American scholars. A third consequence was a divorce between political theory and international relations theory (Boucher, 1998). Just as the history of political thought became a focal point of attack by behavioralists in political science, the idea that the study of international political theory could advance the scientific credentials of the field was rejected.

Fourth, the bifurcation of political theory and international theory had the effect of marginalizing normative concerns and contributed to what Steve Smith has termed the "forty-years detour" whereby it became "simply old-fashioned, and very unacademic, to introduce normative concerns into analysis unless they were themselves to be the objects of analysis" (1992: 489). The field has only recently begun to recover from this detour and has rediscovered normative international political theory.

The limitations of utilizing the "great debates" framework for understanding the history of the field is plainly apparent when we come to the 1980s and the so-called "third great debate." As the field has become increasingly pluralistic, perhaps owing, in part, to its institutional growth, there seems to be a plethora of debates. In addition to the two versions of the "third debate" mentioned earlier, the inter-paradigm and post-positivism debates, there is the debate between neorealism and neoliberalism (Baldwin, 1993; Kegley, 1995); between rationalists and reflectivists (Keohane, 1988; Walker, 1989); and between rationalists and constructivists (Katzenstein et al., 1999; Wendt, 1999; see Hurrell, Chapter 3 in this volume). Yet this listing only begins to scratch the surface, since there are also numerous debates within specific approaches such as constructivism, feminism, realism, and post-structuralism.

Although it is difficult to provide an adequate historical perspective on these more recent developments, it is simply impossible to lump all of these controversies under one grand master debate. No matter what general characteristics we assign to the debate, it would not help us to understand the most recent history of the field. Waever has suggested that one way to get beyond the confusion of viewing recent developments in terms of a singular third debate is by acknowledging that we have entered a "fourth debate" (1996). Here Waever, like several others in the field (Lapid, 1989; Smith, 2000; Vasquez, 1995), suggests that we make a sharp differentiation between, on the one hand, approaches such as critical theory, post-structuralism, postmodernism, and specific versions of constructivism and feminism that fall under the post-positivism label and, on the other hand, the mainstream, which he argues is wedded to a rationalist orthodoxy. The latter is seen as resulting from what Waever (1996) terms a "neo-neo synthesis" in which, during the 1980s, neoliberalism and neorealism essentially became indistinguishable on the basis of their shared commitment to a rationalist research program.

Post-positivism has sparked a considerable amount of meta-theoretical reflection on the current identity and composition of the field. The activity of reflecting on the nature of theory has come to comprise a significant component of the discourse in IR. As in other fields where the challenge to positivism has been mounted, post-positivists in IR view the traditional epistemological foundations of the field, often assumed to emanate from the Enlightenment, as no longer a philosophically defensible basis for making authoritative judgments about validity in political inquiry. In this manner, "post-positivism has placed the scientific study of world politics in a serious crisis" (Vasquez, 1995: 234). Many of these "alternative" or "dissident" approaches seek to deconstruct the traditional positivist foundations of the field and to embrace a radical anti-foundationalism that can enable multiple voices or perspectives to be heard. This is seen by some as leading to a major restructuring of IR, allowing for additional space in which to think about the issues that currently comprise the subject matter of the field (George and Campbell, 1990; Neufeld, 1995; Tickner, 1997). For others, post-positivism, and postmodernism in particular, has raised fears about relativism, as the loss of an epistemological foundation is believed to undermine the authority of scholars to provide transcontextual grounds for truth (Rosenau, 1990; Vasquez, 1995).

While there is little doubt that various post-positivist approaches have contributed

to the field's pluralistic character, generated an expansive body of interesting literature, and forced the field to confront a host of new meta-theoretical questions, how large an impact they have made on the mainstream core of the field is still not clear. Like previous "alternative" approaches, the main object of the post-positivist critique has been realism; yet realism, in one form or another, survives and continues to provide what many would argue to be the initial essential assumptions for explaining international politics as it has been traditionally defined by the field of IR (Walt, 2002). This can partly account for why, of all the alternative approaches that have entered the field since the early 1980s, Wendt's particular conception of constructivism, which accepts many of the assumptions of realism, is the approach being taken most seriously by the mainstream today. To the dismay of some of the critical scholars in the field, Wendt (1999) claims that his version of constructivism is able to entertain the role of ideas, norms, and the process of identity formation while at the same time subscribing to a realist world-view and a positivist epistemology.

CONCLUSION

Although there is a general sense that we already know the field's history, I have attempted to demonstrate that there are many problems with the conventional story about how the field has developed. The most recent work on the history of IR has shown that many of our orthodox understandings about the development of the field are simply incorrect. Research on the history of the field is not just an exercise in antiquarianism but an attempt to increase our capacity to examine critically the contemporary nature of the field by an understanding of the intellectual roots from which it has evolved. A perspicacious history of the field might even help to prevent the tendency for the field to proclaim something quite old as new.

For a field that appears to be perpetually consumed by identity crises, careful attention to some of the previous identities by which we were possessed would represent a fruitful research agenda. There is ample opportunity for the diverse approaches in the field to explore their own intellectual roots and, thereby, to recognize some of the continuities between the past and the present. By problematizing the conventional wisdom regarding the development of the field, new avenues of research are opened as are the possibilities of discovering previously neglected figures from the past. Notwithstanding Christina Sylvester's (2002) critique that disciplinary historians have failed to take note of women, gender, and feminism, disciplinary history can be a means of recovering marginalized and excluded voices, including those of women (see Tickner and Sjoberg, Chapter 7 in this volume) and African-Americans (Vitalis, 2000).

The research exercise of investigating the history of the field has, in recent years, acquired a much greater level of intellectual respect and academic legitimacy. One of the defining characteristics of the historiographical turn is that much more attention has been placed on the theoretical and methodological assumptions that are involved in researching the history of the field. Although the debate between "internalists" and "externalists" has contributed to more emphasis being placed on historiographical issues, it is important that this controversy not become another enduring disciplinary dichotomy. As Bell has noted, "the internal/external distinction occludes as much as it illuminates," adding that "these are not the only options available" (2009: 10). One aspect missing from the internal/external debate is the role of ideology in the development of IR (Little, 1999; Oren, 2003). The role of race is also missing, which Robert Vitalis (2005) has argued fundamentally shaped the early history of IR. There are now a variety of approaches that have been successfully utilized to explore various dimensions of the field's history, including a historical sociological approach (Guzzini, 1998); a sociology of science

approach (Waever, 1998; Tickner and Waever, 2009); a genealogical approach (Smith, 1995); and a cultural-institutional approach (Jorgensen and Knudsen, 2006). Each of these approaches has its own merits, and when successfully applied to the disciplinary history of IR, holds out the promise of confirming John Gunnell's (1991) point that truth is very often more convincing than fiction and carries as much critical force.

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