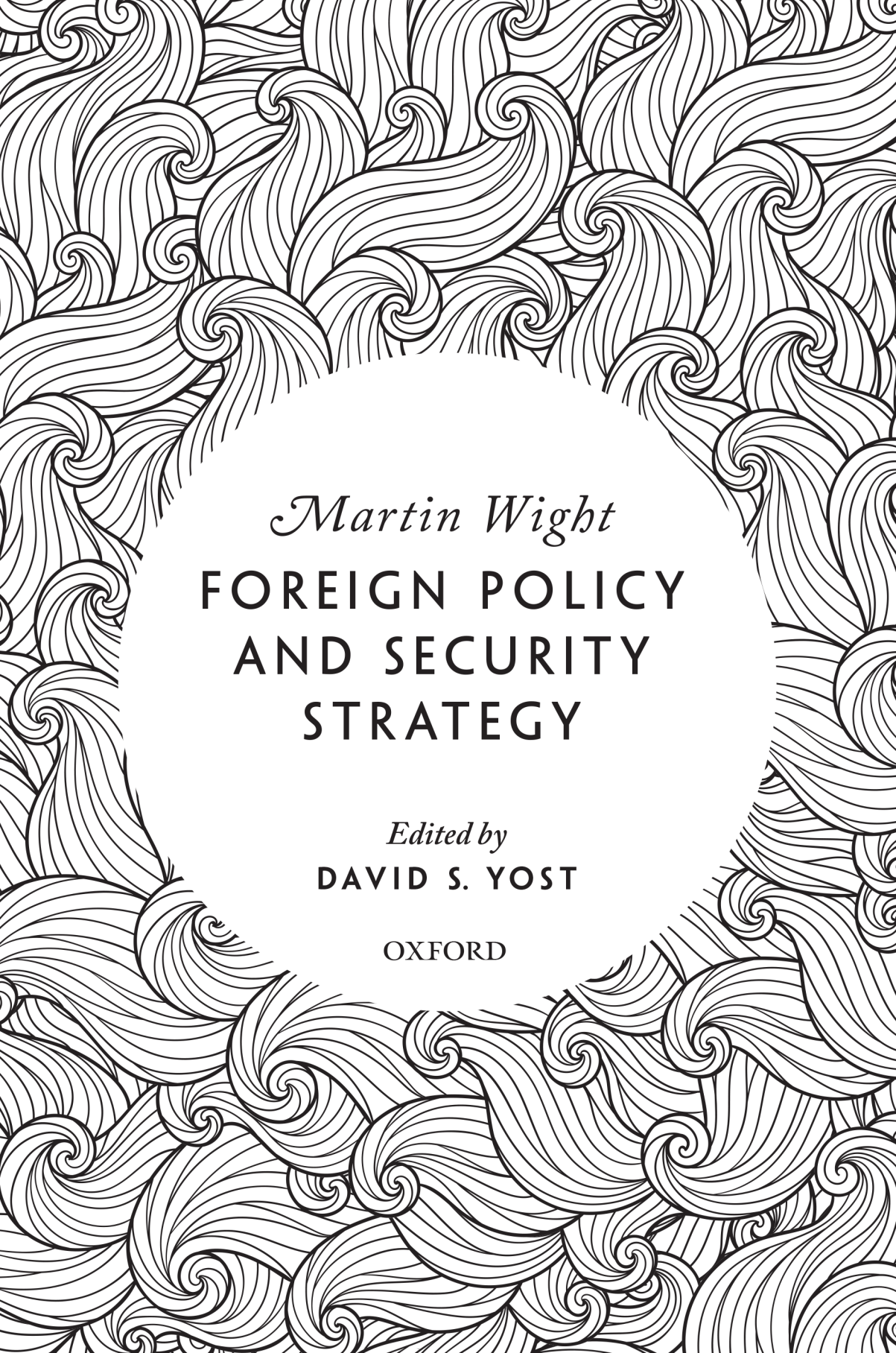

Martin Wight

FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY STRATEGY

Edited by

DAVID S. YOST

OXFORD

Foreign Policy and Security Strategy

Martin Wight was one of the most important twentieth century British scholars of International Relations. He taught at the London School of Economics (1949–61) and the University of Sussex (1961–72), where he served as the founding Dean of the School of European Studies. Wight is often associated with the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics and the so-called English School of International Relations.

Dr David S. Yost is a Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the US Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. His books have been published by Harvard University Press, the United States Institute of Peace, and the International Institute for Strategic Studies. He has held fellowships from Fulbright, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Council on Foreign Relations, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and the United States Institute of Peace, and he was a senior research fellow at the NATO Defense College in Rome in 2004–2007. He earned a Ph.D. in international relations from the University of Southern California.

Foreign Policy and Security Strategy

MARTIN WIGHT

Edited with an introduction by

DAVID S. YOST

Foreword by

PAUL SCHULTE

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This book is dedicated to my beloved wife Catherine, whose discernment, patience, constancy, and encouragement have made it possible.

Foreword

Paul Schulte

Honorary Professor, Institute for Conflict, Cooperation, and Security
University of Birmingham
and
Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Science and Security
Department of War Studies, Kings College, University of London
and
Former Director of Proliferation and Arms Control,
Former Chief Secretary of State Speechwriter, UK Ministry of Defence
British Commissioner on the UN Commissions for Iraqi Disarmament,
UNSCOM and UNMOVIC

This is an extraordinarily rich collection of articles by Martin Wight, a leading, now unjustly neglected, mid-twentieth century British thinker on international affairs, impeccably edited by a tireless, erudite, and well-qualified American disciple.

Professor David Yost has been an unusually active and talented scholar. He is well known in NATO circles as an expert on the Alliance and its institutions as well as its security policy dilemmas. He has produced an unstoppable stream of books and articles providing commentary on Alliance strategy and its constraints, and he has been a frequent and highly respected presence at conferences and workshops.

His interventions have all featured an intelligent fusion of theoretical insight and pragmatic policy concern, within a coherent ethical perspective on deterrence, confrontation, and conflict. This selection of Wight's writings makes it clear why Professor Yost quite correctly identified him as an important thinker of continuing relevance.

Martin Wight was a leading theorist of what has come to be called the English School of International Relations.[1] The English School has very broadly, sought a middle way in examining the role of ideas, as well as that of material capabilities, in shaping the conduct of the global "society of states."

Wight had an easy, unintimidating, and sometimes waspish style, which makes reading him a positive pleasure. Though no angry rebel, he was perfectly prepared

[1] Wight himself did not employ the "English School" term, which was introduced nine years after his death by Roy E. Jones, a critic of the approach. Roy E. Jones, "The English School of International Relations: A Case for Closure," *Review of International Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1 (January 1981), pp. 1–13.

to question the competence and good faith of key aspects of British and Allied diplomacy.

The essays presented here display the variety of themes that Wight thought through so lucidly before his untimely death in 1972. An uncanny, and perhaps depressing, number of structural problems which he identified remain with us today. I found it particularly fascinating to follow his clear-eyed reaction to the forging of the post-Second World War world, the creation and elaboration of the United Nations (and its similarities and differences with the League of Nations), the construction of NATO, the impact of new technologies (especially nuclear weapons) on the world, and the discouraging realities and charades of disarmament diplomacy.

To tempt the reader to savor the instructive pleasures of this book I can do no better than offer up the following extracts:

> *"But the suggestion that a unilateral renunciation of war by Great Britain might turn Russia's heart and contribute to a reign of law seems to repeat the pacifist illusion, familiar during Hitler's ascendancy, that you can have collective security without force, and non-violence without suffering."*[2]
>
> *"This is a useful essay, but an essay in political theory rather than political science. Everything that has happened since the first edition, particularly the history .... of the specialized agencies of the United Nations, suggests that the functional development of international organization cannot eradicate or by-pass conflicts of interests: it presupposes their absence.*[3]
>
> *"The history of Switzerland and the United States proves not that federation abolishes war, but that it substitutes civil war for international war. And the formation of federations short of a single world federation would not abolish international war but would only increase the size of the units which continued to live in a state of anarchy."*[4]
>
> *"How different is this cool analysis in language of studied restraint, from the cant and self-deception that accompanied the establishment of the United Nations, the disagreeable lack of candour of the Great Power statement at San Francisco, the lack of realism of the official British Commentary."*[5]

[2] Review of John Middleton Murry, *Trust or Perish* (Rickmansworth: Andrew Dakers, 1946), *International Affairs*, vol. 22, no. 4 (October 1946), p. 542, reproduced in the current volume.

[3] Review of David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System, An Argument for the Functional Development of International Organization*, fourth edn (London: National Peace Council, 1946), *International Affairs*, vol. 23, no. 3 (July 1947), p. 384, reproduced in the current volume.

[4] Review of C. E. M. Joad, *Conditions of Survival* (London: Federal Union, 1946), *International Affairs*, vol. 23, no. 1 (January 1947), p. 8, reproduced in the current volume.

[5] Review of J. L. Brierly, *The Covenant and the Charter*, The Henry Sidgwick Memorial Lecture at Newnham College, Cambridge, on November 30, 1946 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), International Affairs, vol. 23, no. 3 (July 1947), pp. 381–382, reproduced in the current volume.

"But, of course, disarmament was a misnomer. What was in question was an agreed reduction of armaments; and this raised the unsolved and perhaps insoluble question of a scale of measurement for different kinds of armaments. Sir Hartley Shawcross said here last month that the armaments discussions raised real hopes among the delegates of the minor powers. With every respect, and with far less authority, I cannot record the same impression. I do not know of anybody who did not regard them with scepticism. … The controversy settled down into a cleavage between the Western Powers, who look to an evolutionary international system with gradually widening scope, and the Soviet bloc which insists on the jealous retention of national sovereignty. The resolution finally arrived at was a portmanteau of everybody's points of view instead of a selection. For the Western Powers it seemed to have the germs of a system of international inspection; for the Soviet Bloc it retained the veto."[6]

"The root of this matter is that Russia will not entrust her vital interests to an international organisation in which she is in a minority position."[7]

"Have the Western Powers any interests in the Security Council, or use for it? It provides a centre for Anglo-American collaboration. The UN has played an immensely important part in clearing the U.S. of isolationism and educating Americans to take their position as a leading world power. They are learning a sense of responsibility. The American people really do believe in the UN, though they are now becoming disillusioned. The UN is an American institution. (It is difficult to understand why Russia agreed to the UN being set up in the US) Any organization set up in the US becomes American. By alphabetical accident the UK and the US sit side by side in the Assembly; this gives great opportunity for Anglo-American cooperation."[8]

"This clash and inter-penetration of two blocs in one world is of course an unpleasant picture, chiefly because it seems to deprive us to a great extent of our freedom of action. There seem to me to be two conclusions. The first is familiar enough, but it cannot be said too often. The West may have no diplomatic elbow-room in its relations with the Soviet bloc, but it has as much freedom as it ever had to settle its own internal affairs. And the more successful it is in doing this, according to its own principles, the less ideological warfare and penetration from the Soviet

[6] "The United Nations Assembly," Address at the Royal Institute of International Affairs on March 6, 1947, reproduced in the current volume.

[7] "The United Nations Assembly."

[8] "The Security Council," presentation as part of *The United Nations*, an Advanced Course on International Affairs arranged in conjunction with the Education Department, Admiralty, the Directorate of Army Education, War Office, and the Directorate of Educational Service, Air Ministry (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, September 29–October 1, 1949), pp. 4–8, reproduced in the current volume.

bloc will there be on the Western side of the fence. The second conclusion is less often realised."[9]

"The conclusion is that issues of peace and war are unlikely to be decided by the Security Council but, as always in the past, by the operation of the balance of power."[10]

"As the corollary of the doctrine that the veto is the weapon of the minority, Vyshinsky also formulated another doctrine, whose roots are deep in Marxist thought: that a majority in the United Nations is a minority in the world, and that 'an immense majority throughout the world stands behind the minority in the United Nations.' To this assumed audience, vast and unseen, Soviet diplomacy skilfully appealed. It was in the hope of seducing it that Stalin, during the second phase of the United Nations' history, developed the World Peace Movement, which was deliberately conceived as an alternative international organization to a United Nations dominated by America. And the greater part of the 'world majority' is provided by the have-not powers."[11]

"Eisenhower's frequently quoted saying, 'There is no alternative to peace,' to describe the new situation we are now in, conceals rather than reveals the changes that have occurred. In international affairs every country has always had, in principle, two alternatives to peace. One is submission; the other is war. Foreign policy has always swung uneasily within the triangle of these three ultimate points — peace, which is freedom at the price of vigilance; war, which is chosen in the hope of freedom (or aggrandisement) at the price of struggle; and submission, which presents itself to eyes wearied by vigilance or struggle as repose perhaps worth purchasing at the price of freedom. The differences made by the advent of nuclear weapons are two: (a) the choice of war now appears more like annihilation rather than freedom at the price of struggle; and (b) submission accordingly is made to seem a rather less disadvantageous alternative than it has traditionally been."[12]

"Since disarmament is part of the cant of popular politics, disarmament proposals are part of political warfare, Governments in putting forward disarmament proposals are concerned, first, to make a good impression on their own constituents, and secondly, to enhance their own influence and perhaps embarrass their opponents in international affairs."[13]

[9] "Two Blocs in One World," commentary for a BBC Home Service broadcast, October 21, 1947, reproduced in the current volume.

[10] "The Security Council.".

[11] "The Power Struggle within the United Nations," in Democracy on Trial, Proceedings of the Institute of World Affairs, 33rd session, December 9–12, 1956 (Los Angeles, California: University of Southern California, 1957), pp. 247–259, reproduced in the current volume.

[12] "Has Scientific Advance Changed the Nature of International Politics in Kind, Not Merely in Degree?" paper presented to the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, January 8–11, 1960, reproduced in the current volume.

[13] "Arms Races," undated notes found in Wight's papers in the Archives of the Library at the London School of Economics, reproduced in the current volume.

Anyone interested in the mechanisms of international affairs, and the development of ideas to understand them, will benefit from this book. Those not addicted to the barbaric quasi-scientific terminology of contemporary International Relations will also thoroughly enjoy its style and lucidity. We should therefore be doubly grateful to Professor Yost for rescuing and serving up these lasting insights, to add to the stock of sane commentary on the origins and prospects of our present dilemmas. We need that wisdom more than ever as the Alliance coordinates its reactions to Russia's latest war on Ukraine and as the wider world tries to understand the rules of the new historical period we have entered. This book reminds us that we are the poorer for no longer having Martin Wight with us to add his unillusioned, but never despairing, views directly to our era's transfixing debates.

Preface: Martin Wight's Scholarly Stature

by David S. Yost

Martin Wight (1913–72) was, as Sir Adam Roberts remarked, "perhaps the most profound thinker on international relations of his generation of British academics."*,[1]

Wight's professional career may be summed up in a few lines: graduation in 1935 from Hertford College, Oxford, with first-class honors in modern history; research staff at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1937–38; senior history master at Haileybury College, 1938–41; research staff at Nuffield College, Oxford, 1941–46; diplomatic and United Nations correspondent for *The Observer*, London, 1946–47; research staff at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1947–49; reader in international relations, London School of Economics, 1949–61; visiting professor, University of Chicago, 1956–1957; and professor of history and founding dean of the School of European Studies, University of Sussex (1961–72).[2]

A man of wide-ranging interests and great learning, with a command of Greek and Latin as well as modern European languages, Wight wrote about British colonial history, European studies, international institutions, the history and sociology of states-systems, the philosophy of history, religious faith and history, and the

* This preface borrows from David S. Yost, "Introduction: Martin Wight and Philosophers of War and Peace," in Martin Wight, *Four Seminal Thinkers in International Theory: Machiavelli, Grotius, Kant and Mazzini*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter, eds. (London: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[1] Adam Roberts, "Foreword," in Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, edited by Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter (Leicester and London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991), p. xxiv.

[2] The most valuable sources on Martin Wight's life and professional career include the two studies by Hedley Bull: "Introduction: Martin Wight and the Study of International Relations," in Martin Wight, *Systems of States* (London: Leicester University Press, 1977), pp. 1–20; and "Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations," *British Journal of International Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1976), pp. 101–116; the chapter entitled "Martin Wight (1913–1972): The Values of Western Civilization" in Kenneth W. Thompson, *Masters of International Thought: Major Twentieth-Century Theorists and the World Crisis* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), pp. 44–61; the chapter entitled "Martin Wight" in Tim Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, and London: Macmillan Press, 1998), pp. 47–70; the entry by Harry G. Pitt in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), may be found at http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38935; the book by Ian Hall, *The International Thought of Martin Wight* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); and the survey by Ian Hall, "Martin Wight: A Biographical Overview of his Life and Work," available at the website of the Martin Wight Memorial Trust, may be found at http://www.mwmt.co.uk/

theory and philosophy of international politics (notably with regard to ethics, ideology, the balance of power, and the causes of war), among other subjects. Much of his influence has stemmed from his lectures on the theory and philosophy of international politics at the London School of Economics in the 1950s.

Wight's continuing prominence has also derived from the attention accorded to the "English School" since the 1980s. He is widely regarded as an intellectual ancestor and path-breaker of the "English School" of international relations, even though he did not employ this term.[3] The term "English School" did not arise until nine years after Wight's death, when it was given currency by Roy Jones in a polemical article in 1981.[4] There seems to be no generally accepted definition of the English School, however. The term is usually construed as signifying an approach to the study of international politics more rooted in historical learning than in the social sciences. Wight's achievements are consistent with this broad definition.

Some observers trace the English School's origins to the work in the mid-1950s and beyond of the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, to which Wight made major contributions, along with Herbert Butterfield, Adam Watson, Hedley Bull, and others. In this regard, the subtitle of Brunello Vigezzi's comprehensive study is telling: *The British Committee on the Theory of International Politics (1954–1985): The Rediscovery of History*.[5] However, Tim Dunne's informative study of the English School devotes a chapter to E. H. Carr, who was not a member of this committee. As Dunne points out, Carr played a role in fostering the emergence of the English School by "broadening the discipline away from its legal institutionalist origins," confirming "recognition that International Relations could not be assimilated to the methods of the physical sciences," bringing "together history, philosophy and legal thinking (albeit in a critical way)," and provoking "writers like Martin Wight into seeking a *via media* between realism and

[3] See, among other sources, Andrew Linklater and Hidemi Suganami, *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Reassessment* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2006); William Bain, "Are There Any Lessons of History? The English School and the Activity of Being an Historian," *International Politics*, vol. 44 (2007), pp. 513–530; Cornelia Navari, *Theorising International Society: English School Methods* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); and Barry Buzan, *An Introduction to English School of International Relations: The Societal Approach* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2014).

[4] See Roy E. Jones, "The English School of International Relations: A Case for Closure," *Review of International Studies*, vol. 7 (January 1981).

[5] Brunello Vigezzi, *The British Committee on the Theory of International Politics (1954-1985): The Rediscovery of History* (Milano: Edizioni Unicopli, 2005).

utopianism."[6] Carr's most prominent contribution to international relations theory has remained his landmark work, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919–1939*.[7] Wight's critical review of Carr's book is widely cited, and it is included in this collection.[8]

Hedley Bull listed Wight among scholars pursuing a "classical approach" to theorizing about international politics,[9] but Wight himself appears to have refrained from categorizing his methodology. The closest he came to doing so, it seems, was in the preface that he and Herbert Butterfield composed for their co-edited volume, *Diplomatic Investigations*. In that preface Butterfield and Wight described the outlook of the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, compared with that of their American counterparts, as "probably … more concerned with the historical than the contemporary, with the normative than the scientific, with the philosophical than the methodological, with principles than policy." The participants in the British Committee, Butterfield, and Wight added,

> have tended to suppose that the continuities in international relations are more important than the innovations; that statecraft is an historical deposit of practical wisdom growing very slowly; that the political, diplomatic, legal, and military writers who might loosely be termed "classical" have not been superseded as a result of recent developments in sociology and psychology, and that it is a useful enterprise to explore the corpus of diplomatic and military experience in order to reformulate its lessons in relation to contemporary needs.[10]

This fell short of a rousing manifesto, but it made clear a preference for empirical history and normative philosophy over social science and immediate policy relevance. The collection of papers in *Diplomatic Investigations* remains a touchstone for admirers of traditional approaches to the study of international politics, regardless of whether they claim allegiance to the "English School."[11]

Wight was more interested in analyzing moral and philosophical questions raised by international politics than in debating immediate policy decisions or assessing current academic schools of thought. He had a talent for bringing

[6] See Tim Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 1998), p. 38.

[7] E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1939).

[8] Martin Wight, "The Realist's Utopia," *The Observer*, July 21, 1946.

[9] See Hedley Bull, "International Theory: The Case for a Classical Approach," in Klaus Knorr and James N. Rosenau, eds., *Contending Approaches to International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 20–21. Bull's famous article was first published in *World Politics*, vol. 18, no. 3 (April 1966).

[10] Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), preface by Butterfield and Wight, pp. 12–13.

[11] For a systematic and illuminating study, see Ian Hall and Tim Dunne, "Introduction to the New Edition," in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2019).

insights from history, philosophy, biography, and literature to bear upon political thinking and behavior.

During his lifetime, Wight's most extensive publications concerned the history of British colonialism,[12] and his other publications were limited to a pamphlet and some articles and book chapters.[13] Only one book chapter—his classic essay, "Western Values in International Relations"—outlined Wight's path-breaking organization of the history of Western thinking about international politics into three categories, or traditions (the Realist, or Machiavellian; the Revolutionist, or Kantian, and the Rationalist, or Grotian); and this essay focused on what Wight called the Rationalist, or Grotian, tradition.

Wight published relatively little in his lifetime, Hedley Bull observed, because he was "a perfectionist … one of those scholars—today, alas, so rare—who (to use a phrase of Albert Wohlstetter's) believe in a high ratio of thought to publication."[14]

Owing to Wight's perfectionism, he left many works unfinished when he died at the age of fifty-eight. His widow, Gabriele Wight, and his former colleagues and students have prepared four books for posthumous publication: *Systems of States* in 1977,[15] *Power Politics* in 1978,[16] *International Theory: The Three Traditions* in 1991,[17] and *Four Seminal Thinkers in International Theory: Machiavelli, Grotius, Kant and Mazzini* in 2005.[18]

Wight's lectures won the enduring admiration of his listeners. As Bull testified in 1976, "These lectures made a profound impression on me, as they did on all

[12] Martin Wight, *The Development of the Legislative Council, 1606-1945* (London: Faber and Faber, 1946); *The Gold Coast Legislative Council* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947); and *British Colonial Constitutions 1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952).

[13] See especially: Martin Wight, *Power Politics* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1946); "Germany," "Eastern Europe," and "The Balance of Power," in Arnold Toynbee and Frank T. Ashton-Gwatkin, eds., *The World in March 1939* (London: Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1952); "Western Values in International Relations," "The Balance of Power," and "Why Is There No International Theory?" in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966, and London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966); and "The Balance of Power and International Order," in Alan James, ed., *The Bases of International Order: Essays in Honour of C. A. W. Manning* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[14] Hedley Bull, "Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations," *British Journal of International Studies*, vol. 2 (July 1976), p. 101. This essay is reproduced at the beginning of *International Theory: The Three Traditions* in a slightly abridged form. The citations here refer to the complete original version.

[15] Martin Wight, *Systems of States*, Hedley Bull, ed. (London: Leicester University Press in association with the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1977). For background, see David S. Yost, "New Perspectives on Historical States-Systems," *World Politics*, vol. 32, no. 1, October 1979), pp. 151–168.

[16] Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978). This is a revised and expanded version of the 1946 pamphlet with the same title, which was unfinished at the time of Wight's death.

[17] Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter, eds. (Leicester and London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991). This book is based on Wight's notes for the widely discussed lectures given in the 1950s.

[18] Martin Wight, *Four Seminal Thinkers in International Theory: Machiavelli, Grotius, Kant and Mazzini*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter, eds. (London: Oxford University Press, 2005).

who heard them. Ever since that time I have felt in the shadow of Martin Wight's thought—humbled by it, a constant borrower from it, always hoping to transcend it but never able to escape from it."[19]

Similarly, recalling her studies at the London School of Economics in 1950–54, Coral Bell, a distinguished Australian scholar, wrote in 1989 that Martin Wight "still seems to me the finest mind and spirit I ever knew well, looking back over what is now almost a full lifetime of knowing many people of the highest intellectual caliber." In Bell's view, Wight's most valuable teaching concerned the history of ideas about international politics.

> He made his students see the history of thought in the subject from Thucydides to Henry Kissinger as a sort of great shimmering tapestry of many figures, a tapestry mostly woven from just three contrasting threads, which he called realist, rationalist, and revolutionist. What made him such a charismatic teacher, and those lectures so fascinating, was the elegance of his analysis, and the breadth and depth of his learning, literary as well as historical.[20]

Wight's work remains relevant today because he incisively analyzed perennial questions such as the causes and functions of war, international and regime legitimacy, and fortune and irony in politics. He identified an order in interrelated ideas that clarifies the assumptions, arguments and dilemmas associated with each of the main traditions of thinking about international politics in the West since Machiavelli. As Wight pointed out, such knowledge of the past provides an

> escape from the *Zeitgeist*, from the mean, narrow, provincial spirit which is constantly assuring us that we are at the peak of human achievement, that we stand on the edge of unprecedented prosperity or an unparalleled catastrophe. … It is a liberation of the spirit to acquire perspective, to recognize that every generation is confronted by problems of the utmost subjective urgency, but that an objective grading is probably impossible; to learn that the same moral predicaments and the same ideas have been explored before.[21]

An illustration of the continuing relevance of Wight's contribution is the steady and even increasing abundance of scholarship inspired by his works. This includes two recent books: Ian Hall's *The International Thought of Martin Wight* (2006) and Michele Chiaruzzi's *Martin Wight on Fortune and Irony in Politics* (2016).[22]

[19] Hedley Bull, "Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations," p. 101.

[20] Coral Bell, 'Journey with Alternative Maps,' in *Journeys through World Politics: Autobiographical Reflections of Thirty-four Academic Travelers*, Joseph Kruzel and James N. Rosenau, eds. (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books/D.C. Heath and Company, 1989), p. 342.

[21] Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, p. 6.

[22] Ian Hall, *The International Thought of Martin Wight* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) and Michele Chiaruzzi, *Martin Wight on Fortune and Irony in Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan,

Hall and Chiaruzzi have each published significant follow-on studies, including Hall's "Martin Wight, Western Values, and the Whig Tradition of International Thought," and Chiaruzzi's work on Wight's essay "Interests of States."[23] Noteworthy recent studies by prominent scholars include Robert Jackson, "From Colonialism to Theology: Encounters with Martin Wight's International Thought" (2008); Nicholas J. Wheeler, "Investigating Diplomatic Transformations" (2013); William Bain, "Rival Traditions of Natural Law: Martin Wight and the Theory of International Society" (2014); Bruno Mendelski, "The Historiography of International Relations: Martin Wight in Fresh Conversation with Duroselle and Morgenthau," (2018); and Nicholas Rengger, "Between Transcendence and Necessity: Eric Voegelin, Martin Wight and the Crisis of Modern International Relations" (2019).[24]

The original purpose of this Oxford University Press (OUP) project was to present to the public additional unpublished (or obscurely or anonymously published) works by Martin Wight that deserve a wide audience. For example, Wight's essay "East and West over Five Centuries" was published anonymously in *The Economist*.[25] Wight's paper "Has Scientific Advance Changed the Nature of International Politics in Kind, Not Merely in Degree?"—presented in 1960 to the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics—had never been published. Wight's review-essay "Does Peace Take Care of Itself?"—was published in 1963, but in a little-known periodical named *Views*. These three essays will appear in future volumes of this Oxford University Press collection of works by Martin Wight.

At the suggestion of external reviewers, the editor and publisher extended the project's scope beyond previously unavailable works by Martin Wight to include some of his "greatest hits" as book chapters that complement the formerly unknown or little-known works. These include his remarkable and path-breaking essays in *The World in March 1939*—"Germany," "Eastern Europe," and "The Balance of Power"—and his canonical essays in *Diplomatic Investigations*: "The

2016). See also Brian Porter's review-essay, "The International Political Thought of Martin Wight," *International Affairs*, vol. 83, no. 4 (July 2007), pp. 783–789.

[23] See, for example, Ian Hall, "Martin Wight, Western Values, and the Whig Tradition of International Thought," *The International History Review* 36.5 (2014): 961–981; and Michele Chiaruzzi, "Interests of States: *Un inedito di* Martin Wight," *Il Pensiero Politico* 51.3 (2018): 423–427.

[24] Robert Jackson, "From Colonialism to Theology: Encounters with Martin Wight's International Thought," *International Affairs* 84.2 (2008): 351–364; Nicholas J. Wheeler, "Investigating Diplomatic Transformations," *International Affairs*, vol. 89, no. 2 (March 2013), pp. 477–496; William Bain, "Rival Traditions of Natural Law: Martin Wight and the Theory of International Society," *The International History Review* 36.5 (2014): 943–960; Bruno Mendelski, "The Historiography of International Relations: Martin Wight in Fresh Conversation with Duroselle and Morgenthau," *Contexto Internacional* 40.2 (2018): 249–267; and Nicholas Rengger, "Between Transcendence and Necessity: Eric Voegelin, Martin Wight and the Crisis of Modern International Relations," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 22.2 (2019): 327–345.

[25] "East and West over Five Centuries," *The Economist*, May 30, 1953, pp. 580—581.

Balance of Power," "Western Values in International Relations," and "Why Is There No International Theory?"

As Coral Bell observed, "He was a great perfectionist when it came to his own writing, and so refused to publish (because he was not entirely satisfied with it) writing that every other academic I know (including myself) would have proudly sent off to the publishers."[26]

Diffidence and perfectionism discouraged Wight from publishing works even after he had brought them to what other scholars would have considered a high level of quality. He sometimes borrowed from drafts that he apparently regarded as works in progress, and not quite ready for final publication. He sometimes prepared multiple versions of the same paper, not always indicating the dates of specific drafts. Preparing these drafts for publication has required making comparisons and exercising judgment as to which versions (or sections) of specific papers are more fully developed than others and presumably reflected his most considered judgments. Inconsistencies suggesting the tentative or unfinished character of some drafts were similarly apparent in *International Theory: The Three Traditions*.[27]

The origin of each document in this collection—whether it was previously published and, if so, when and where, or whether it was simply a research note or a lecture or radio broadcast, and so on—is indicated in a note with each item. Some of Wight's notes in draft papers were minimal or telegraphic, and every effort has been made to clarify references while respecting the not-too-much-and-not-too-little principle as an aid to comprehension and scholarship.

The objective has been to collect the most valuable and enduring works concerning what Wight sometimes termed "international theory," the political philosophy of international relations; history and works by specific historians; foreign policy and security strategy, notably including his works on the UN and the impact of scientific change on world politics; and faith and the philosophy of history.

In his preface to his widely acclaimed book *The Anarchical Society*, Bull wrote of Wight, "I owe a profound debt to Martin Wight, who first demonstrated to me that International Relations could be made a subject. … His writings, still inadequately published and recognised, are a constant inspiration."[28] In his Martin Wight Memorial Lecture, Bull said,

> It has seemed to me a task of great importance to bring more of his work to the light of day. … For myself, what has weighed most is not the desire to add luster to Martin Wight's name, but my belief in the importance of the material itself

[26] Bell, "Journey with Alternative Maps," p. 342.

[27] See David S. Yost, "Political Philosophy and the Theory of International Relations," *International Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 2 (April 1994), pp. 272–273.

[28] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, third edn (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. xxx.

> and in the need to make it available to others, so that the lines of inquiry he opened up can be taken further. Especially, perhaps, there is a need to make Martin Wight's ideas more widely available in their original form, rather than through the second-hand accounts of others, such as myself, who have been influenced by him.[29]

This project has been inspired by a similar judgment as to the profound value of Wight's contributions and the imperative merit of bringing them to a wider audience.

[29] Hedley Bull, "Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations," p. 102.

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Contents

Introduction: Martin Wight on Foreign Policy and Security Strategy 1

1. The Balance of Power 26
2. The Balance of Power and International Order 52
3. Does Peace Take Care of Itself? 79
4. The Idea of Neutrality 86
5. Nationalism and World Order 91
6. Has Scientific Advance Changed the Nature of International Politics in Kind, Not Merely in Degree? 102
7. The Political Consequences of Nuclear Weapons 120
8. War and Peace: The Hobbesian Predicament 134
9. War and Peace: Nuclear Weapons and Change in International Politics 144
10. Arms Races 148
11. Interests of States 149
12. Interests, Honour, and Prestige 169
13. Is the Commonwealth a Non-Hobbesian Institution? 175
14. Suggestions for a Projected Study of International Security Organisation 191
15. From the League to the UN 194
16. The United Nations Assembly 198
17. The United Nations General Assembly 217
18. The Security Council 220
19. Two Blocs in One World 229
20. The Power Struggle within the United Nations 233

21. Review of Henrique de Pinheiro, The World State or the New Order of Common Sense (Rio de Janeiro: Grafica Olimpica, 1944) 246

22. Review of John Middleton Murry, *Trust or Perish* (Rickmansworth: Andrew Dakers, 1946) 247

23. Review of David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System, An Argument for the Functional Development of International Organization*, fourth edn with a new Introduction (London: National Peace Council, 1946) 248

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25. Review of C. E. M. Joad, *Conditions of Survival* (London: Federal Union, 1946) 250

26. Review of J. L. Brierly, *The Covenant and the Charter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947) 251

27. Review of W. W. Rostow, Harmsworth Professor of American History *The American Diplomatic Revolution: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered before the University of Oxford on November 12, 1946* (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1947) 253

28. Review of William C. Bullitt, *The Great Globe Itself: A Preface to World Affairs* (New York: Scribner, 1946; and London: Macmillan, 1947) 255

29. Review of Frances Perkins, US Secretary of Labor from 1933 to 1945, *The Roosevelt I Knew* (New York: Viking Press, 1947; and London: Hammond, Hammond & Co., 1947) 258

30. Review of Barbara Ward, *Policy for the West* (London: Penguin, 1951) 260

31. Review of John MacLaurin, *The United Nations and Power Politics* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952) 262

32. Review of Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Pattern of Communist Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1953) 263

33. Review of A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power* (London: Macmillan, 1959) 266

34. Review of John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959) 269

35. Review of Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation: The Rise to Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; and London, Oxford University Press, 1960) 271

36. Review of Hugh Seton-Watson, *Neither War nor Peace: The Struggle for Power in the Post-War World* (London, Methuen, 1960) 273

Bibliography 275
Index 285

Introduction: Martin Wight on Foreign Policy and Security Strategy

by David S. Yost

Martin Wight earned recognition mainly for his works about international history, particularly concerning political philosophy and the philosophy of history.

He did not define his professional focus as that of a strategist or adviser on contemporary foreign policy challenges. He concentrated on teaching and research about key elements of international relations in Europe and beyond since the sixteenth century, while often participating in discussions about current political preoccupations, including the Cold War and decolonization.

The only book of policy advocacy among Wight's writings is *Attitude to Africa* (1951), co-authored with W. Arthur Lewis, Michael Scott, and Colin Legum. "The object of this short book is to put before the electorate of the United Kingdom the main problems of British Africa, and to suggest the lines of policy that any British government should follow in the years ahead."[1] The chief problems addressed included what the authors termed "African Nationalism" and "European Nationalism and the Conflict of Nationalisms." Michael Scott drew an important contrast in this book between "methods of partnership" and "the methods of *apartheid*"[2] that may help to account for Wight's admiration for Scott's work.[3]

Aside from Wight's limited corpus of published policy recommendations, he sometimes professed a lack of interest in defining practical prescriptions to deal with immediate strategic and foreign policy issues, notably in his lecture "What Is International Relations?"[4]

Wight nevertheless articulated noteworthy policy prescriptions in book reviews and scholarly studies focused on general themes such as the balance of power; international order, including neutrality, nationalism, and community; nuclear

[1] W. Arthur Lewis, Michael Scott, Martin Wight, and Colin Legum, *Attitude to Africa* (London: Penguin Books, 1951), p. 7.

[2] Michael Scott, "Britain's Responsibilities in Southern Africa," in W. Arthur Lewis et al., *Attitude to Africa*, (London: Penguin Books), p. 117.

[3] Wight called Michael Scott "that indefatigable advocate of the oppressed." Martin Wight, "Reflections on International Legitimacy," in Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 217.

[4] Martin Wight, "What Is International Relations?" in Martin Wight, *History and International Relations*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

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weapons and international politics; interests, honor, and prestige in statecraft, including that of the British Empire and Commonwealth; disarmament and public opinion; and the United Nations (UN).

This "Introduction" offers an overview summing up his key policy relevant views in these domains. It does not cover Wight's comprehensive engagement in social action and international politics. As Ian Hall has rightly observed, Wight "was far from the disengaged, 'ivory tower,' even quietist academic" portrayed in some accounts.[5]

The Balance of Power

In 1960, in one of his most frequently cited essays, Wight praised "the manipulation of the balance of power" as the most admirable kind of diplomacy.

> It would be possible to argue that the highest form of statecraft, both in the end pursued and in the moral and intellectual qualities required, is the manipulation of the balance of power, as seen in Lorenzo the Magnificent or Queen Elizabeth, Richelieu or William III, Palmerston or Bismarck.[6]

The Balance of Power in *Diplomatic Investigations*

In his 1966 essay entitled "The Balance of Power,"[7] Wight analyzed nine meanings of the term in international politics: "an even distribution of power," "the principle that power ought to be evenly distributed," "the existing distribution of power," "the principle of equal aggrandizement of the Great Powers at the expense of the weak," the principle of keeping "a margin of strength," a "special role in maintaining an even distribution of power," a "special advantage in the existing distribution of power," "predominance," and an "inherent tendency of international politics to produce an even distribution of power." Three sources of confusion complicate assessments, Wight observed: "the mutability and inconstancy of the metaphor,"

[5] Ian Hall, "Martin Wight, Western Values, and the Whig Tradition of International Thought," *The International History Review*, vol. 36, no. 5, Special Issue: Traditions in British International Thought (October 2014), p. 966.

[6] Martin Wight, "Why Is There No International Theory?" *International Relations*, vol. II, no. 1 (April 1960), p. 48. This essay was republished in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966, and London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), pp. 17–34. This essay was also reproduced in Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 22–38.

[7] Martin Wight, "The Balance of Power," in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966, and London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), pp. 149–175. This essay is reproduced in the current volume, Martin Wight, *Foreign Policy and Security Strategy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

"the overlap between the normative and the descriptive," and the fact that pertinent judgments "cannot be detached" and are "necessarily subjective." In the two centuries after the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, "the balance of power was generally spoken of as if it were the constituent principle of international society, and legal writers described it as the indispensable condition of international law." Thinkers such as Kant and Cobden nonetheless found grounds to decry it. Oppenheim's international law text in 1905 and 1911 presented the balance of power principle as "indispensable" for international law, but in post-First World War editions it was replaced by the League of Nations and other new organizations. After the Second World War and the outbreak of the Cold War the balance of power became "once more a respectable and indeed indispensable part of the diplomatic vocabulary, and an object of almost metaphysical contemplation by the strategic analysts."

The Balance of Power and International Order in *The Bases of International Order*

In 1973, in an essay entitled "The Balance of Power and International Order,"[8] Wight placed his analysis in further historical perspective. Except for perhaps one speech by Demosthenes, Wight noted, classical antiquity offered the Renaissance "no more than the simple rule of balancing your enemies off against one another." Commynes in the fifteenth century provided "the first recognition that the rivalries within the states-system fall into a kind of chequer-board pattern, where contiguous states tend to be hostile to one another, and their mutual hostility can be a restraint upon both." The coalition against Philip II provided "the beginnings of the grand alliance, the master-institution of the balance of power." During the two centuries from the treaty of Utrecht at the end of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1713 to the beginning of the First World War in 1914, "the balance of power was generally accepted among diplomatists and statesmen as the constituent principle of European international society." Many publicists and statesmen respected propositions associated with the balance of power, including the aim of "reconciling international order with the independence of the several members of the community of states." The champions of collective security in the League of Nations sought to give "the system of the balance of power a legal framework, to make it more rational, more reliable, and therefore more effectively preventive. … The failure of the League of Nations was the most decisive occurrence in international history since the Peace of Westphalia." Yet "since 1945 a decline in theoretical concern for international order has paradoxically coincided with a balance of power that has defied pessimists by its durability."

[8] Martin Wight, "The Balance of Power and International Order," in Alan James, ed., *The Bases of International Order: Essays in Honour of C. A. W. Manning* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 85–115. This essay is reproduced in the current volume, Martin Wight, *Foreign Policy and Security Strategy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

Analyzing the "Balance of Power" Prescription

Wight's chief prescription—take care of the balance of power—is so general that it raises questions and prompts qualifications. The recommended principles—above all, maintaining the balance or gaining and holding superiority—are formulated at such a high level of abstraction that they offer little guidance to the commander or statesman. The volatile nature of the cases at hand may hinder effective application of the advice.

The requirements of the balance of power are "constantly changing," Wight noted. "Being a Great Power is not a matter of coming up to a given standard of manpower, territories and economic resources. The standard is not fixed, it is constantly changing. A Great Power is judged such only in relation to the other Powers in the field."[9]

The prescription has the virtue of brevity—"the only principle of order is to try to maintain, at the price of perpetual vigilance, an even distribution of power"[10]—but what it means in practical terms in specific contingencies is not self-evident. As Wight noted, an effort to achieve "an even distribution of power" might become more ambitious: a "special advantage in the existing distribution of power" or "predominance."[11]

Governments obviously must consider priorities and budgets, types and quantities of military capabilities, strategies of deterrence and action in various circumstances, and relations with foreign powers (allies as well as adversaries).

Wight made clear his support for the general Western policy of containment during the Cold War, notably in his reviews of books by Barbara Ward,[12] Hugh Seton-Watson,[13] William Bullitt,[14] and Ely Culbertson.[15]

[9] Martin Wight, "Two Blocs in One World," BBC Home Service broadcast, October 21, 1947.

[10] Martin Wight, "The Balance of Power," in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966, and London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), p. 174.

[11] Martin Wight, "The Balance of Power," in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966, and London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), p. 151.

[12] Martin Wight, review of Barbara Ward, *Policy for the West* (London: Penguin, 1951), published under the title "The Policy of Containment" in *The Observer*, February 18, 1951.

[13] Martin Wight, Review of Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Pattern of Communist Revolution.* (London: Methuen, 1953). (American Edition: *From Lenin to Malenkov: The History of World Communism* (New York: Praeger, 1953).). Wight published this review in *The International Review of Missions*, vol. 44, no. 173 (January 1955), pp. 107–110. See also Martin Wight, Review of Hugh Seton-Watson, *Neither War nor Peace: The Struggle for Power in the Post-War World* (London, Methuen, 1960). Wight published this review in *International Affairs*, vol. 36, no. 4 (October 1960), pp. 495–496.

[14] Martin Wight, *Review of The Great Globe Itself: A Preface to World Affairs*, by William C. Bullitt, Ambassador to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 1933–36, Ambassador to France 1936–40 (New York: Scribner, 1946, and London: Macmillan, 1947), published by Martin Wight in *International Affairs*, vol. 23, no. 4 (October 1947), pp. 611–612.

[15] Martin Wight, Review of Ely Culbertson, *Must We Fight Russia?* (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1946), published in *International Affairs*, vol. 22, no. 4 (October 1946), p. 543.

Wight called, moreover, for looking beyond the balance of power conceived in terms of military capabilities.

> There is a kind of crisis of international society more fundamental than threats to the balance of power; it is when the principle of international obligation itself deliquesces. … The difficulty of maintaining the rule of law and civilized international intercourse in a world of dissolving standards is perhaps the deepest theme of Eden's Memoirs.[16]

Wight acknowledged the disadvantages as well as the merits of striving for a satisfactory balance of power. In May 1963 he wrote, in a previously unpublished paper, that the "Hobbesian predicament" refers to "the insoluble problem when each person or state is so afraid for his or its own security that he or it cannot achieve minimum cooperation with others."

> Of course, the balance of power is unstable. Powers desert their allies, change sides, and the balance of power topples over into war; but on the whole the balance of power mitigates international anarchy and on the whole it has averted more wars than it has brought about.
>
> There was, indeed, a marked tendency in international history to transform the balance of power system into something more coherent—into a kind of confederation, even a federal system. This was pursued, in the present century, under a double stimulus—a fear and a moral inspiration.
>
> The fear was a fear of the logic of the Hobbesian predicament, which was seen to point to a solution of the international anarchy by a knock-out tournament. This is the way in which, in almost all historical situations of which we have record, the Hobbesian situation of war of all against all has worked itself out.
>
> So for the first time in human experience an attempt was made to get hold of this run-away situation and transform or divert it—to achieve unity by consent in order to forestall unity through force. The inspiration was that of the anti-Hobbesian philosophy of politics, a philosophy which started from the premise that men are fundamentally cooperative animals, not fundamentally fearful and competitive.[17]

By an anti-Hobbesian philosophy of politics, Wight meant the "Grotian" or "Rationalist" tradition of thinking about international affairs.[18]

[16] Martin Wight, "Brutus in Foreign Policy: The Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden," *International Affairs*, vol. 36, no. 3 (July 1960), pp. 307–308.

[17] Martin Wight, "War and Peace: The Hobbesian Predicament," a previously unpublished paper, dated May 1963, included in the current volume, Martin Wight, *Foreign Policy and Security Strategy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

[18] For background on this tradition, see Martin Wight, "Western Values in International Relations," in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966, and London: George Allen and

International Order: Community and Neutrality

Wight composed three papers on the general theme of international order: "Does Peace Take Care of Itself?," "The Idea of Neutrality," and "Nationalism and World Order."

"Does Peace Take Care of Itself?"

In 1963, in an obscurely published review-essay entitled "Does Peace Take Care of Itself?" Wight presented a critical analysis of F. H. Hinsley's 1963 book, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in the History of Relations between States*. Wight noted that peace could in principle be established through imperial dominance or agreements providing for a federation or confederation. The failures of these efforts—and recurrent wars—could ultimately lead to one power imposing "a durable hegemony" or even "a universal state." In contrast, Hinsley embraced the Kantian argument that "peace will take care of itself," thanks to "a fundamental historical trend … towards the containment and obsolescence of war." In Hinsley's view, the enhanced power of public opinion will promote peace in conjunction with "the increased administrative control of increasingly cautious and responsive state-machines over the means of violence." Moreover, "growing cultural approximation … will make political unification unnecessary," at least in the short term. In the end, Wight observed, Hinsley proffered "only a short-term forecast" that disregarded "how every known system of states hitherto has ended in political unification through an ascending series of wars." Wight concluded that Hinsley's work would not undermine the belief that "foreign policy should have some concern with bringing war under political control and strengthening the rudiments of international government."[19]

In short, Wight concluded that peace does not take care of itself thanks to a revolutionist trend toward to elimination of war. From a Realist or Rationalist perspective, active intervention will be required to construct and maintain a durable balance of power, a reliable and effective national and coalition posture for deterrence and defense; and it will nonetheless remain subject to failure in some circumstances.

A Community of Power?

In search of a less fallible solution than efforts to assemble an enduring equilibrium of strength, in 1917 Woodrow Wilson set out an argument for "a community of power" instead of "a balance of power."

Unwin, 1966). This essay was also reproduced in Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 49–87.

[19] Martin Wight, "Does Peace Take Care of Itself?" *Views*, no. 2, (Summer 1963), pp. 93–95.

> The question upon which the whole future peace and policy of the world depends is this: Is the present war a struggle for a just and secure peace, or only for a new balance of power? If it be only a struggle for a new balance of power, who will guarantee, who can guarantee, the stable equilibrium of the new arrangement? Only a tranquil Europe can be a stable Europe. *There must be, not a balance of power, but a community of power*: not organized rivalries, but an organized common peace.[20]

Wight questioned the cogency of Wilson's argument. Wight did not dispute Wilson's logic in manipulating abstractions but pointed out that Wilson's key assumptions lacked foundations in empirical evidence.

> The alternative to the balance of power is not the community of power: unless this means federation, it is a chimera. International politics have never revealed, nor do they today, a habitual recognition among states of a community of interest overriding their separate interest, comparable to that which normally binds individuals within the state. And where conflicts of interest between organized groups are insurmountable, the only principle of order is to try to maintain, at the price of perpetual vigilance, an even distribution of power. The alternatives are either universal anarchy, or universal dominion. The balance of power is generally regarded as preferable to the first, and most people have not yet been persuaded that the second is so preferable to the balance of power that they will easily submit to it.[21]

Wight accordingly deplored what he regarded as failures to hold the balance. For example, he condemned British policy in the 1930s, "the years of appeasement, when a Conservative government forgot the principle of the balance of power and sacrificed one position to Hitler after another in order to stave off a war which they made inevitable."[22]

[20] Woodrow Wilson, "An Address to the Senate," January 22, 1917, in Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 40 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 535–536; emphasis added.

[21] Martin Wight, "The Balance of Power," in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966, and London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), pp. 174–175. Eugene V. Rostow, a prominent scholar and former high-level US official, quoted *in extenso* this passage in Wight's essay in his book *A Breakfast for Bonaparte: U.S. National Security Interests from the Heights of Abraham to the Nuclear Age* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1993), pp. 409–410, 436. Wight's 1966 essay is reproduced in the current volume, Martin Wight, *Foreign Policy and Security Strategy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

[22] Martin Wight, "British Policy in the Middle East," in Martin Wight, *History and International Relations*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

"The Idea of Neutrality"

Wight argued as follows. In contrast with the policy of coordinating the maintenance of a robust balance of power or a "community of power" stands the hypothetical option of pursuing neutrality while upholding international law, if the internal and external conditions are propitious.

When international law was in its initial formation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the doctrine of just war constrained the right of neutrality. Grotius, for example, held that a state seeking neutrality must not obstruct the belligerent with a righteous cause nor aid a belligerent with an unjust case for war. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, the just war doctrine lost support, and states agreed that neutrals would be impartial and that states at war would respect the rights of neutrals. In contrast, since the 1907 Hague Conference and the two World Wars, the scope for neutrality has been widely seen as limited by a type of just war doctrine. That is, neutrality is seen by many as morally incompatible with the commitment to collective responsibility for international order expressed in the League Covenant, the Kellogg–Briand Pact, and the UN Charter. The pursuit of neutrality by small powers since the seventeenth century has often been disregarded by great powers that have justified their actions on grounds of military necessity. The term "neutralism" is sometimes employed to describe a dynamic policy of engagement, non-alignment, and mediation such as that pursued by India to complement its domestic priorities of social welfare and economic growth. As Wight observed,

> There are states whose foreign policy has been traditionally connected with the defence of the rule of law in international politics, with the maintenance of the balance of power and the defeat of aggression; and such states deserve respect. But the end of every great war has posed the question: '*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes*'—who shall police the policeman? It is a question to which international society, by its very nature, can provide no satisfactory answer, but a provisional answer has not infrequently been found in the critical conscience of the neutrals.[23]

"Nationalism and World Order"

Wight observed that "the word 'nation' is almost interchangeable with 'power' or 'state' and equal to a member of international society; and the sense is illustrated by the phrase 'the law of nations,' and survives in the adjective 'international' for which we have no synonym at all."[24]

[23] Martin Wight, "The Idea of Neutrality," *London Calling*, October 11, 1956, p. 4.

[24] Martin Wight, "Nationalism and World Order," paper presented at the Ministry of Education History Course entitled "United Nations or disunited nations?" on August 2, 1962.

Owing to "the principle of national self-determination," applied within and outside Europe since 1919, new nations are "being admitted to the UN at an average rate of one a year." Proponents of the

> majority view … assume that it will sort itself out, that the new nationalism will run its course and reach an equilibrium … We argue that there is a world-wide international society with demonstrable institutions in the UN, that the material and technological unification of the world is bound to speed its cultural unification, and that in the long run we may look forward to the evolution and acceptance of common (perhaps mainly Western) institutions, ideas, and standards. The minority view, on the other hand, holds that it is possible that the process of decolonization, the rise of new nations in Asia and Africa, is analogous to the barbarian invasions, the self-assertion of peoples outside our own civilization. In this case, we may see the world-wide international society as entirely superficial and concentrate our attention on the winding-up of European hegemony and the contraction of Western society within its proper frontiers as within a besieged castle.

Nuclear Weapons and International Politics

Wight composed several papers in 1960–63 about the impact of "scientific advance"—nuclear weapons in particular—on international politics. Wight presented one of these papers—"Has Scientific Advance Changed the Nature of International Politics in Kind, Not Merely in Degree?"—to the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, on January 8–11, 1960. Wight also published a review of John H. Herz's book, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).[25] Wight's previously unpublished papers concerning nuclear weapons and international politics are included in the present volume.

"Has Scientific Advance Changed the Nature of International Politics in Kind, Not Merely in Degree?"

In this paper Wight investigated the consequences of scientific advance, especially the development of nuclear-armed ballistic missiles, for international politics. A Great Power must, Wight held, be able "to fight a great war, to establish and maintain men and supplies on enemy soil, to endure a prolonged battle of attrition. And

[25] This review was published in *American Political Science Review*, vol. 54, no. 4 (December 1960), p. 1057.

this implies not only the decisive weapon and industrial power, but today perhaps more than ever in the past, geographical extent, size of population, and morale." In modern Europe, Wight observed, there have been few examples of *depugnatio*, violent fighting to extinction.

> Hitler in 1945 wanted to annihilate the German people and destroy the foundations of their existence, but [Albert] Speer and others refused to carry out his orders. (Is this a precedent for conditions of nuclear war?) It seems that, in Western international politics, resistance has seldom if ever been carried beyond a point at which it was still possible to change policies and make a formal capitulation instead.

The examples of *depugnatio* in antiquity of Melos, Carthage, and Jerusalem led Wight to conclude

> that in so far as it is thought possible that governments might in certain circumstances choose nuclear war rather than the alternative, a new situation has come into international politics; or, that certain precedents for political behaviour that have had no importance since before the Christian era may now again have acquired some relevance.

Governments, including that of the United Kingdom, nonetheless continue to express preparedness for nuclear war rather than submit to defeat by foreign powers.

"The Political Consequences of Nuclear Weapons"

In this previously unpublished paper, dated May 1960, Wight pointed out that nuclear weapons have not ended war as an instrument of policy. Most members of international society at any time have been Small Powers. Their neutrality has been violated in peace and war by great powers. Their deepest conception of war has not been to impose their wills on others, but to have sufficient resistance to prevent the great powers from imposing their wills on them. The argument that nuclear weapons have made a decisive change in international politics would be greatly strengthened if it were possible to show that governments and peoples now fear war more than they fear one another. Were this the case, international relations would indeed be revolutionized. But all evidence seems against it. The assumption of every foreign policy and the great mass of every electorate still seems to be that the potential enemy is more to be feared than nuclear war. War is still generally believed to be in certain circumstances the lesser evil, and to that extent still presents itself as a possible "rational" alternative. There has been a change in degree, not in kind, in the role of nuclear weapons. The logic of armed

resistance has been carried to a new step, to the point where death may be reasonably regarded as preferable to submission—even collective, national death. But this does not enter a new moral climate. It is a manifestation of the heroism that we are accustomed to admire. Thermopylae, the Alamo, and Khartoum were not "irrational."

Review of John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959)

In this review, published in December 1960, Wight observed that

> Herz's estimate of the contemporary strategic revolution follows from his picture of the classical state-system. Ideological conflict and nuclear weapons have, in principle, replaced territorial impermeability by mutual pervasion, "so that the power of everyone is present everywhere simultaneously," and in the two Great Powers the extreme of military strength coincides with the extreme of vulnerability. But here, once again, it might be permissible to reduce the emphasis on discontinuity with the past. In every age the majority of Powers have been Small Powers, and for them territorial impermeability, like legal sovereignty, has been largely a fiction. Effective impermeability has been a mark of Great Power status (witness Soviet anger over the U2). Similarly, the Clausewitzian doctrine of war as imposing your will on the enemy may need reformulation. It might be truer if transposed into the negative, saying that most Powers in most ages have seen war as the means to prevent the enemy (usually a neighbouring Great Power) from imposing his will on them, by maintaining forces to discourage any but the most determined attack. This is what we now call deterrence. On such a view, the chief political consequence of the strategic revolution has been to reduce the Great Powers to the Small Powers' condition of permeability, and to adopting a deterrent instead of an acquisitive conception of war.

"War and Peace: The Hobbesian Predicament"

In this previously unpublished paper, dated May 1963, Wight defined the "Hobbesian predicament" as

> the insoluble problem when each person or state is so afraid for his or its own security that he or it cannot achieve minimum cooperation with others. … The assumption of every foreign policy and of the great mass of every electorate still seems to be that the potential enemy is more to be feared than war … even when war means nuclear war." In contrast, Wight reasoned, with an implicit reference to the Grotian or Rationalist tradition, "a non-Hobbesian or anti-Hobbesian philosophy of politics … denies that the fundamental primeval human condition is

> one of mutual fear and war but asserts that it is one of potential sociability and readiness to cooperate.[26]

After the Second World War, the

> Hobbesian predicament seemed inescapable, as if it were the only fundamental of the situation. At this point, by an irony of history, a second fundamental appeared in the shape of nuclear power applied to war. … Traditional mechanisms were still at work and produced the deadlocked stability of the balance of power in the form of the balance of terror. … The hope is that America and Russia may recognise their common interest in preserving or recovering their monopoly of nuclear weapons. … Three fundamentals are the Hobbesian predicament, the meta-Hobbesian situation of nuclear deadlock, and moral protest. A fourth fundamental is that you cannot coerce history. You can only clarify your conscience and do what you believe is right and for the rest, trust in Providence.

"War and Peace: Nuclear Weapons and Change in International Politics"

In this paper dated May 1963, also previously unpublished, Wight again raised the question "Have international politics fundamentally changed by reason of the application of nuclear power to war since 1945?" According to John Herz, Wight observed, in "the twentieth century … the hard shell of the territorial state … dissolved, owing to economic blockade, ideological penetration, air warfare, and finally atomic warfare." Wight pointed out, however, that

> territorial impermeability in politics and strategy, like sovranty in the sphere of law,[27] was never more than an imperfectly attained ideal for most states in international society. We easily forget that most states in international society, at most times, are small and weak, and that Great Powers are few, elite, and in a sort of aristocracy. … It might be argued that territorial impermeability has been the

[26] Wight discussed three traditions of thinking about international relations in Western societies since the sixteenth century (Realist, Rationalist, and Revolutionist) in his *Chef d'oeuvre, International Theory: The Three Traditions*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991). For a brief overview, see Wight's lecture "An Anatomy of International Thought," which is available in Martin Wight, *Four Seminal Thinkers in International Theory: Machiavelli, Grotius, Kant and Mazzini*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter, eds. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 141–156; and Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 39–48.

[27] [Ed.] In some of his unpublished draft papers, Wight used the word "sovran" as a synonym for "sovereign", and "sovranty" for "sovereignty". According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, this usage dates to Milton in 1649, and has become "chiefly poetic". See David S. Yost, "Introduction: Martin Wight and the Political Philosophy of International Relations," in Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 2.

> mark not of any state but only of Great Powers. … The change that has taken place in international politics, then, is not so much that the state has ceased to be the ultimate protector of our lives and interests, since for the most part it has never been that, except notionally; but that Great Powers have ceased to be exceptions to this rule and have been downgraded and assimilated to minor Powers. … In international affairs every country has always had, in principle, two alternatives to peace. One is submission. The other is war.

"Arms Races"

In this undated and previously unpublished paper, Wight discussed arms competitions and disarmament.[28] In Wight's words,

> Since disarmament is part of the cant of popular politics, disarmament proposals are part of political warfare. Governments in putting forward disarmament proposals are concerned, first, to make a good impression on their own constituents, and secondly, to enhance their own influence and perhaps embarrass their opponents in international affairs. The arms race described by Montesquieu, with some ironical exaggeration, took the form of augmentation of troops by rival monarchs. But the arms race was given a sinister propulsion by a triple development that became apparent during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. The first was the mechanization of war, which produced an independent momentum of technical innovation in armaments. The second was the growth in Western countries of a public opinion about foreign policy. This has chiefly taken a nationalist and militarist form, concerned that the defenses of the country for which it spoke were being outstripped by rival Powers. But we may remember that there has also been a steady current of pacifist and internationalist opinion, giving rise to an international peace movement of lofty aims and negligible influence. The contemporary use of the word technology to mean not the theory of the practical arts, but the totality of applied science in itself, or the combination of scientific expertise and industrial production, seems to reflect the sense of the arms race as autonomous, a sorcerer's apprentice over which the civilization that introduced it has no control.

Interests, Honor, and Prestige in Statecraft

Wight composed two papers related to interests, honor, and prestige in international politics that have not previously been published. The first, entitled "Interests of States," was presented to the British Committee on the Theory of International

[28] This undated, previously unpublished paper may be found in the Archives of the London School of Economics.

Politics in September 1970. Wight gave no date or venue for the second. Both may have been drafts for *Power Politics*, the remarkable book prepared posthumously on the basis of Wight's drafts and notes by Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad.

"Interests of States"

In this paper Wight distinguished between state interests, vital interests, moral and ideological interests, and choices among interests in crises. In the seventeenth century, Puffendorf divided state interests into categories such as permanent and temporary. In the nineteenth century Metternich was perhaps the first to use the phrase "vital interests." Wight suggested that "vital interests" are those that "a state deems essential to its security and independence, and for which it will if necessary go to war." Such interests were originally formulated in legal terms: "interests which Powers wished to exclude from the scope of treaties of arbitration." The Monroe Doctrine offers a classic example of an articulated vital interest protecting a sphere of influence. "The determining of vital interests is subjective" in that their effective content depends on the state's ability to define, assert, and defend them. Moral and ideological interests include non-material and intangible factors such as appeals to "honor" and standards of righteous behavior.

Religious and revolutionary doctrinal interests may in practice "become subordinated to considerations of raison d'état." In crises "the mountain range of vital interests stands out momentarily clear above the haze or mist of routine policy." Outcomes may vary fundamentally, depending on circumstances: "An indubitable vital interest may in fact not be defended … A vital interest may be defended by the wrong means, or at the wrong time." In practice, Wight concluded, "There is no sharp distinction between vital interests and non-vital."

"Interests, Honor, and Prestige"

As Wight observed,

> the idea of vital interests tended, in the course of the nineteenth century, to oust the idea of national honour. In the dynastic age it was more likely that a sovereign would speak of the dignity, honour, and interests of his crown. The notion of a state, a Power, having dignity and honour was appropriate when the state was legally indistinguishable from the monarch, and foreign affairs were his personal relations with his fellow-sovereigns. In these circumstances it was true to say that if Louis XIV had made a treaty with James II, his honor was involved in its fulfillment. … But the notion of national honor has had a hard battle against the idea of raison d'état, that monarchs as representatives of their peoples cannot

> be expected to observe the same rules of morality that they would as private persons. … With the transition to the democratic or mass state, the sense of honor has tended to become diffused and lost among the anonymous electorate. … Moreover, honor in itself is an ambiguous word. It can mean allegiance to traditional and lofty standards of conduct. In this sense, the idea was given a new currency by Mr Churchill, and it is interesting to note that it furnished the ultimate grounds for his condemnation of the Munich Agreement, in one of the most searching passages of his War Memoirs.[29]

British Empire and Commonwealth

The political and strategic significance of the British Empire and Commonwealth is a neglected topic, at least in the United States. Martin Wight raised the intriguing question, "Is the Commonwealth a Non-Hobbesian Institution?"[30] According to Christopher Dawson, Wight noted, "the British Commonwealth has disproved the Hobbesian doctrine that if political power is not concentrated, society returns to the jungle."

Wight observed, however, that Commonwealth theory "has failed adequately to explain what has been, essentially, the progressive disintegration of the British Empire, and the steady assimilation of its internal relationships to the condition of international politics." The Indo-Pakistani frontier is so mutually "suspicious" that

> no international frontier could give a more vivid illustration of that "posture of gladiators" which Hobbes described as the natural condition of sovereigns. … There are intra-Commonwealth disputes which threaten the peace of the world. … The United States … has been the unacknowledged major premise of all Commonwealth theory, since but for the United States the Commonwealth might not have survived the First World War and certainly would not have survived the Second. … At the … Unofficial British Commonwealth Relations Conference at Lahore [in 1954] … three hypothetical situations were adumbrated which it was suggested would be incompatible with Commonwealth membership (and what was implied was some kind of expulsion since secession is always open to the individual member). (i) If one member went to war with another member. (ii) If a member joined a hostile bloc—if India had joined China and Russia in the Korean War, for example. (iii) If a member abandoned democratic government, which in the case of Communism would approximate to (ii).

[29] Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. I, *The Gathering Storm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), pp. 298–321, 324–328.

[30] Martin Wight, "Is the Commonwealth a Non-Hobbesian Institution?" lecture in 1958 at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London, published in *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, vol. XVI, no. 2 (July 1978), pp. 119–135.

Wight also raised the Commonwealth issue in his review of A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power.*[31]

Wight wrote that "British imperialism has produced one of the great debates in the history of political thinking—a debate largely between absolute and conditioned morality. No man is good enough to be another's master. True; but if masters are inevitable, some are better than others. We may have no right to be there, indeed; but if enterprise and accident have put us there the question quickly becomes, have we a right to leave? Good government can be a duty overriding the grant of self-government, as the young Churchill argued in the South African debate in 1906. … The book's chief weakness is that while it describes from the inside the nationalism of the older Dominions (so distressing to imperialists), Indian and Egyptian nationalism are seen from the outside, as the imperialists saw them, and remain a mysterious and unanalysed force. But it is reassuring to see how little the anti-imperialist case has rested on any belief that if only British despotism is dismantled, democracy will spring up in its place." ""British liberalism," Thornton argued, "is the story of a privileged class working to abolish or extend its privileges." "But no group of men that has yet governed Britain has come to the decision that political and international power are also privileges which may be given away on grounds of conscience or humane principle." Wight concluded, "The book leaves you debating with yourself … whether this statement is true, and if it be true whether it is right."

Disarmament and Public Opinion

Wight highlighted two sources of Western thinking about disarmament: the crusade and the Enlightenment. "The predecessor of disarmament as a supreme goal of international politics, something demanded by public opinion and subscribed to, with varying degrees of cynicism, by rulers, was the crusade: the dream of laying aside quarrels and pooling arms with the common purpose of expelling the Mohammedans from Europe."[32] As for the Enlightenment, "as an indirect result of the French Revolution, disarmament became part of the cant of democracy as the crusade had been the cant of princes."[33]

[31] Martin Wight, Review of A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power* (London: Macmillan, 1959). Martin Wight published this review under the title "Other Men's Masters" in *The Observer*, February 8, 1959.

[32] Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), pp. 265–266.

[33] Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), p. 267.

The American and French Revolutions promoted democracy and national self-determination as new foundations of legitimacy—replacing dynastic right—that "were expected to transform the states-system." As Wight put it, "Instead of an equilibrium of power, regulated by governments, there would be a fraternal harmony of peoples" open to disarmament and opposed to "the traditional states-system compounded of the balance of power, secret diplomacy, *raison d'état*, and militarism."[34] Wight drew a distinction based on the Realist and Revolutionist traditions, the latter committed to the abolition of war and the former highly skeptical of such aims.

> Latter-day Realists tend to be less outspoken and robust in their statements about human nature than their predecessors (except for the Fascist writers who have little standing where academic consideration is concerned), and the reason may be found in the changing cultural and sociological conditioning of international theory. Whereas sixteenth- and seventeenth-century theorists wrote for an élite, princes and aristocrats, who alone understood and controlled foreign policy, modern international theorists write for the common man, and for democracy, which it has been a dogma since 1789 to regard as inherently good and perfectible. Modern theories of human badness are wrapped up in psychological guise, which makes them acceptable; modern Realists have to pretend to be, if they are not actually, infected with Revolutionism."[35]

Wight judged that a Realist, a Machiavellian, would reason as follows: "the masses follow illusions and will-o'-the-wisps like nuclear disarmament, but the statesman must be a 'realist.'"[36]

These references to Realism and Revolutionism illustrate how Wight's analyses of political philosophy informed his assessments of the international security environment.

Wight identified potentially damaging developments in public opinion in Western democratic societies.

> Two developments within the democratic states might gravely weaken them *vis-à-vis* a ruthless and controlled despotism. One was a partial loss of faith in representative government and economic free enterprise, because of the inefficiencies and injustices inherent in all political life, but open in this system to view and to debate (and to correction). The other was a rise in the political moral

[34] Martin Wight, "The Balance of Power and International Order," in Alan James, ed., *The Bases of International Order: Essays in Honour of C. A. W. Manning* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 109.

[35] Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991), pp. 26–27.

[36] Martin Wight, *Four Seminal Thinkers in International Theory: Machiavelli, Grotius, Kant and Mazzini*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter, eds. (London: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 5.

> standards of the democratic states that contradicted and censured the unchanging violence and ruthlessness of power politics. … And this was due to the increasing influence of that stream of opinion, pacifist and internationalist. … Before 1914 its influence on governments was negligible. Between the World Wars, Western governments had to take more account of it for electoral purposes, and it made its contribution to the imbecility of British and American policy in the face of the Axis Powers. After 1945 it became a useful weapon in the hands of the Soviet government, which organized the World Peace Movement of 1948–52, culminating in the Stockholm Peace Appeal of 1950.[37]

In Wight's view, "The notion that diplomacy can eradicate the causes of war arose from the popular mood after 1919, and the concessions statesmen have had to make to the illusions of their electorates."[38] "The Kellogg Pact of 1928, midway between the First and Second World Wars, by which war was renounced as an instrument of national policy, is perhaps the most extraordinary example in history of the contrast between the way Powers talk under the pressure of enlightened public opinion and the way they act under the pressure of conflicting interests."[39]

The so-called Pact of Paris, organized by French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand and US Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg, invited nations to reject war as a means of statecraft. Pledges and proposals to renounce war have often accompanied disarmament proposals, owing in part to the belief that arms competitions help to generate wars.[40]

In Wight's view,

> Since disarmament is part of the cant of popular politics, disarmament proposals are part of political warfare. Governments in putting forward disarmament proposals are concerned, first, to make a good impression on their own constituents, and secondly, to enhance their own influence and perhaps embarrass their opponents in international affairs.[41]

[37] Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), p. 250.

[38] Martin Wight, "Gain, Fear and Glory: Reflections on the Nature of International Politics," in Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 160.

[39] Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), pp. 100–101.

[40] In this regard see Martin Wight, "On the Abolition of War: Observations on a Memorandum by Walter Millis," in Martin Wight, ed., *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 178n.

[41] Martin Wight, "Arms Races," published in the current volume, Martin Wight, *Foreign Policy and Security Strategy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

Wight described "banning the bomb" as "a political nostrum, like world federalism."[42] In his judgment, "Disarmament can only be the object of policy if you recognise that it is a subsidiary object. The main object is what makes possible the inspection and control of armaments — i.e., an international authority, a world order."[43]

What would in turn make possible the establishment of "an international authority, a world order"? That path forward is encumbered, if not completely blocked, by competition under conditions of international anarchy. In Wight's words,

> The most conspicuous theme in international history is not the growth of internationalism. It is the series of efforts, by one Power after another, to gain mastery of the states-system—efforts that have been defeated only by a coalition of the majority of the other Powers at the cost of an exhausting general war.[44]

Despite the historical record, Wight noted, "Various red herrings and opiates for the people were advanced—the United Nations and disarmament: a catchword freely used by politicians because it appeals to the simple-minded and utopians."[45]

The United Nations

Wight served as the diplomatic and UN correspondent for *The Observer* in 1946–47, and this work overlapped with his research at Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs. His judgments regarding the UN Charter, the General Assembly, and the Security Council show a startling currency.

In 1946 Wight criticized a book for showing "traces of the illusion that the Charter is an improvement on the Covenant."[46] This judgment was consistent with his several papers in the mid-1940s and beyond expressing reservations about the UN.

[42] Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991), p. 102.

[43] Wight, "War and Peace: The Hobbesian Predicament."

[44] *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), p. 30. See also Martin Wight, "Triangles and duels," in Martin Wight, *Systems of States*, Hedley Bull, ed. (London: Leicester University Press, in association with the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1977).

[45] Wight, "War and Peace: The Hobbesian Predicament."

[46] Martin Wight, review of Leland M. Goodrich and Edvard Hambro, *Charter of the United Nations, Commentary and Documents* (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1946). Wight published this review in *International Affairs*, vol. 23, no. 1 (January 1947), p. 80.

"Suggestions for a Projected Study of International Security Organisation"[47]

The goal of this projected study of international security organizations was to compare the newborn UN with the League of Nations. Wight asked,

> Why did the League fail and how far does the United Nations Charter avoid the causes of that failure? … What defects of the Covenant is the United Nations Charter designed to circumvent, and were these really the defects that brought about the failure of the League? … It is suggested that the central question of the study should be the relation between the ambiguities or defects of the Covenant and the failure of the League in practice.

The latter derives from the political choices of specific states. In Wight's view,

> It would be necessary to try to assess the relative importance of the following factors … 1. The balance of power. … 2 The differences in interest, and consequently in Genevan theory, between the League Great Powers. … 3. The differences in aim and interpretation within the bosom of the democratic League Powers. … 4. The growth or perversion in practice of the original design of the League. … But the controversy over the security provisions of the Charter shows differences between the Great Powers not less deep than those between the Great Powers of the League. … The Charter, like the Covenant, must be analysed in relation to the balance of power from which it springs.

"From the League to the UN"[48]

If Britain and France had opposed Germany on the principles of the Covenant of the League of Nations, Wight argued, they would have put resistance to Hitler upon "a higher footing."

> It is insufficiently recognized that the resistance to Hitler was morally and legally identical with the resistance to the previous attempts to dominate Europe, from imperial Germany back to Counter-Reformation Spain. … None of Hitler's opponents went to war with him for a moral or juridical principle; all of them acted in desperation and self-defence; Britain and France when they saw that their betrayal of Czechoslovakia had failed of its purpose, and all the other Powers when they were individually attacked. … Nevertheless the League idea … kept on

[47] Wight prepared this paper for the meeting on December 19, 1945, of the Publications Committee of the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

[48] This previously unpublished essay appears to have been completed in September 1946.

> creeping back. National self-defence against aggression was not enough. The idea persisted that the Allied Powers were a collective body with standards and aims that distinguished them from the Axis. The Charter dressed up the naked rule of the Big Three in rags torn from the dead body of the League, but 15 months after the San Francisco Conference scarcely the most starry-eyed internationalist believes any longer that the rags add up to a suit of clothes. Under the UN … the Small Powers have fewer rights than they had under the League; the Great Powers on the other hand accept fewer restraints than they did under the League and retain an unqualified right to go to war whenever they please. … Our retrogression has been so rapid and has gone so far that it is still difficult to take the measure of it. There are still those who do not want to face it and who talk of the UN being an advance upon the League.

"The United Nations Assembly"[49]

In this paper Wight discussed

> three conflicts of interest which are mirrored in the United Nations. The first is the conflict between the Western Imperial Powers and the new ex-colonial nations, chiefly of Eastern Asia. The second conflict is the conflict between Great Powers and Small Powers. Thirdly, there is the conflict between the Soviet Bloc and the West. These all interpenetrate and influence one another, but each of them would exist without the others. The first two are at present governed by the third—the Soviet-Western clash; but they are quite independent of it in origin and may surpass it in potential importance.

India and the Philippines have been exceptionally successful in championing the interests of the ex-colonial nations against the Western Imperial Powers. The discord between Small and Great Powers has been most visible concerning the veto held by the permanent members of the Security Council. The split between the Soviet Bloc and the West has conditioned the deliberations about "the most conspicuous topics on the agenda," including "the reduction of armaments," and "lurked behind the discussions of practically everything else."

"The United Nations General Assembly"[50]

Wight argued as follows. September 1947 the US proposed revisions in the veto power of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. The Soviet

[49] Martin Wight gave this address at the Royal Institute of International Affairs on March 6, 1947.
[50] Martin Wight published this article in *The World Today*, vol. III, no. 10 (October 1947), pp. 419–421.

Union rejected these suggested revisions. Washington also proposed that the General Assembly establish an Interim Committee on Peace and Security. (The General Assembly founded such a committee on a temporary basis in November 1947 and then on an indefinite basis in 1949, but it has not met since March 1951.) There is a single crevice in the mausoleum of the Charter through which the UN might grow towards light and sanity. That is Article 51 of the Charter, which allows collective security in anticipation of action by the United States Security Council (UNSC). But the veto is not the only question. It is arguable that the UN would be more dangerous if it worked than it is impotent. It is a quinquevirate which, given unanimity, possesses despotic and irresponsible powers. If the five can agree about the exercise of the "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security," there are no legal limits to their power, and the rest of the United Nations are compelled to carry out their directions. The UN has in no case consented to a definition of its own jurisdiction; it has tended to encroach upon domestic jurisdiction and to override treaties. The September 1947 US proposals try to rectify the veto, but they do not touch the decision of Dumbarton Oaks, where the Western Powers agreed to an organization built on a quasi-totalitarian principle.

"The Security Council"[51]

"The Security Council," Wight wrote,

> is essentially an ambiguous institution bound up with everyone's hopes for peace. … Contrast the optimism about the UN in 1945 with the disillusionment and lack of interest now prevailing. … The General Assembly, the general body at which all members sit, does not have equal powers with the Security Council—it can only discuss and recommend. All powers are vested in the Security Council, with no legal limitations. It is not bound like the League Council to preserve the political integrity of all states. … The Security Council can change the existing order as it pleases, directed by the Great Powers. … Russia has a negative interest in the Council; by use of the veto, she can prevent the UN being turned into an alliance ganging up against the Soviet Union. … The UN has played an immensely important part in clearing the U.S. of isolationism and educating Americans to take their position as a leading world Power.

[51] Martin Wight gave this presentation as part of *The United Nations*, an Advanced Course on International Affairs arranged in conjunction with the Education Department, Admiralty, the Directorate of Army Education, War Office, and the Directorate of Educational Service, Air Ministry (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, September 29–1 October, 1949).

"The Power Struggle within the United Nations"[52]

Wight saw the three-cornered power struggle in the UN as dominated by the Communist powers led by the Soviet Union; the Status Quo Powers such as Britain, France, and the US, bound together by "neither constitutional government nor democratic values, but a common interest in the existing international distribution of power and wealth;" and the "Have-not Powers," often termed "the Afro-Asian bloc or the Bandung powers." In Wight's words, "Perhaps the essence of the have-not powers is to be found in a state of mind, a motive, in which resentment, a sense of inferiority, and self-pity are prime ingredients." As Wight observed,

> It was not contemplated at San Francisco that the United Nations should be an organization for collective intervention in the domestic affairs of its members. Yet … the United Nations is tending to become an instrument of the have-not and Communist Powers for promoting revolutionary movements. … The United Nations is useful as a clearing-house for minor disputes. It cannot settle big issues; these are settled, if at all, as they have always been, in direct negotiation between the Powers directly concerned; thus the Korean armistice was reached, and thus the Indo-China crisis was handled at Geneva in 1954. No government or army chiefs regard membership in the United Nations as adding anything to the security of their country, except in so far as the rulers of weak states calculate its publicity advantages.

The UN's Secondary Functions

Wight compared the UN and the Council of Europe in that each "has remained nothing more than a talking shop on the fringe of great events, playing only such a role as the Great Powers do not want to play themselves."[53]

The UN therefore has a "secondary function" for the Great Powers. In 1947, Wight noted, "It is in the conferences of the Big Three and in the Council of Foreign Ministers that the Soviet Union bargains for her strategic lines, her provinces ceded, her economic advantages. The United Nations has the secondary function of propaganda, moulding opinion, trial balloons, defamation of opponents, and, above all, preaching of the gospel."[54]

[52] Wight published this paper in *Democracy on Trial, Proceedings of the Institute of World Affairs*, 33rd session, December 9–12, 1956 (Los Angeles, California: University of Southern California, 1957), pp. 247–259.

[53] Martin Wight, "United Europe: The Historical Background," in Martin Wight, *History and International Relations*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

[54] Martin Wight, "The United Nations Assembly."

Two years later, in 1949, Wight reached a similar conclusion.

> The UN, with the Security Council as its central organ, is a useful diplomatic organization for limited purposes. There must be an organization to transact business which is not transacted by means of war. The conclusion is that issues of peace and war are unlikely to be decided by the Security Council but, as always in the past, by the operation of the balance of power.[55]

Wight endorsed J. L. Brierly's conclusions on the UN Charter's irrelevance in the most demanding circumstances. According to Brierly,

> We must realize that what we have done is to exchange a scheme [in the League of Nations] which might or might not have worked for one which cannot work, and that instead of limiting the sovereignty of States we have actually extended the sovereignty of the Great Powers, the only States whose sovereignty is still a formidable reality in the modern world.[56]

Wight shared Brierly's judgment that the San Francisco Declaration of June 7, 1945 was "disingenuous." In this declaration the permanent members of the UN Security Council presented the veto they had gained under the Charter as less exigent than "the rule of complete unanimity of the League Council."[57]

Conclusion

Wight repeatedly and sometimes categorically expressed grave reservations about the operations of the balance of power; the prospects for international order; the Hobbesian predicament, especially concerning nuclear weapons; interests, honor, and prestige in statecraft; disarmament and public opinion; and the UN. Wight nonetheless expressed hope for US-Soviet cooperation in nuclear arms reductions and nuclear nonproliferation. In his words,

> The issue of world order was lost sight of until it was recovered by John Strachey as the spokesman of a group which, it is whispered, includes Kennedy and

[55] Martin Wight gave this presentation as part of *The United Nations*, an Advanced Course on International Affairs arranged in conjunction with the Education Department, Admiralty, the Directorate of Army Education, War Office, and the Directorate of Educational Service, Air Ministry (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, September 29–1 October, 1949).

[56] J. L. Brierly, *The Covenant and the Charter* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1947), p. 23.

[57] J. L. Brierly, *The Covenant and the Charter*, The Henry Sidgwick Memorial Lecture at Newnham College, Cambridge, on 30 November 1946. The San Francisco Declaration is reproduced in Bruno Simma, ed., *The Charter of the United Nations: A Commentary*, second edn, vol. I (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 521–523.

> Khrushchev.[58] The hope is that America and Russia may recognise their common interest in preserving or recovering their monopoly of nuclear weapons and agree on a nuclear test ban and on preventing the diffusion of nuclear weapons among lesser powers. This might be the nucleus of a world order.[59]

Such an ambition might be inspired most clearly by thinkers in what Wight called the Revolutionist (or Kantian) tradition of policies designed to eliminate war. The Revolutionists act at odds with the Realists (or Machiavellians), who are convinced that the abolition of war is impossible and that pursuing such a goal is dangerous. Wight's support for what he termed "anti-Hobbesian" or "meta-Hobbesian" policies evidently means above all the pursuit of what he called Grotian or Rationalist principles. As Wight pointed out, the three traditions all have a certain power in deepening one's understanding of the continuing competitions in international politics and in defining instruments for assessment and objectives for positive agendas.[60]

[58] John Strachey (1901–63), a Labour MP from 1950 until his death, served as Secretary of State for War in 1950–51. Wight quoted Strachey twice in his essay "Western Values in International Relations," in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics.* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966, and London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), pp. 91n, 111n. Wight cited Strachey's view as an example of "a *via media*" or "*juste milieu* between definable extremes." According to Strachey,

> It would … be a disastrous error to suppose that there is nothing between leaving things as they are and the creation of a fully developed world authority. It will be suggested below that what may yet be possible is the gradual emergence of an elementary sense of common purpose, in a strictly limited field, between the Russian and American Governments.
>
> Strachey, *On the Prevention of War* (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 195.

[59] Martin Wight, "War and Peace: The Hobbesian Predicament," unpublished paper, dated May 1963, published in the current volume, Martin Wight, *Foreign Policy and Security Strategy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

[60] For background, including qualifications about the limitations of reliance on the three traditions, see Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991); and Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).

1
The Balance of Power

The theoretical analysis of international politics seems to move from a shallower to a deeper level, discovering at either level a "law" or rule of political life.* At the shallower level, it is the rule that neighboring states are usually enemies, that common frontiers are usually disputed, and that your natural ally is the Power in the rear of your neighbor. Let us call this, for want of a better term, the conception of the pattern of power. It is developed with great elaboration in the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, who did not however rise to the theory of the balance of power.[1] The famous chapter in Commynes' *Memoirs*, which is usually credited with being the earliest account in modern European literature of the balance of power,[2] is more truly a vivid description of the pattern of power, arguing that the universal hostility between neighboring Powers must have been ordained by God to restrain "*la bestialité de plusieurs princes et … le mauvastié d'autres*."[3] Namier cogently restated "the system of odd and even numbers" in international alignments, for the benefit of a generation that had chosen to forget it, and called it the "sandwich system of international politics."[4]

The idea of the *pattern* of power enables us to generalize about international politics in relation to their geographical framework. The idea of the *balance* of power involves a higher degree of abstraction. It means thinking of the Powers less as pieces on a chessboard than as weights in a pair of scales; we mentally pluck them out of their geographical setting and arrange them according to their alliances and affinities, with the underlying notion of matching their moral weight and material strength. The pattern of power leads to considerations of strategy; the balance

* Wight published this chapter in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds. *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966; and London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), pp. 149–175.

[1] [Ed.] Kautilya, also known as Chanakya and Vishnugupta, was a philosopher and royal advisor in India circa the third and fourth centuries B.C. For a recent scholarly study, see Patrick Olivelle, *King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India: Kautilya's Arthasastra* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[2] [Ed.] Philippe de Commynes (1447–1511), a diplomat in the courts of France and Burgundy, completed his memoirs in 1498.

[3] [Ed.: "the beastliness of several princes and … the vileness of others."] Commynes, *Mémoires*, Book V, ch. Xviii, Joseph Calmette, ed., Vol. ii (Paris: Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1925), p. 211.

[4] L. B. Namier, *Conflicts* (London: Macmillan, 1942), p. 14; cf. Sir Lewis Namier, *Vanished Supremacies* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1958), p. 170.

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of power leads to considerations of military potential, diplomatic initiative and economic strength.

Compared with the pattern of power, the notion of the balance of power is notoriously full of confusions, so that it is impossible to make any statement about the "law" or principle of the balance of power that will command general acceptance. The sources of these confusions are at least three.

The first is the equivocalness and plasticity of the metaphor of "balance" itself. In the notion of the balance of international power it may seem that the idea of equipoise is logically prior to the idea of preponderance. This is not borne out by the early history of the figurative meanings of "balance" in the *N.E.D.*[5] The meaning passed from the standard of justice or reason, through the wavering of fortune or chance, subjective uncertainty (hesitation), objective uncertainty (risk), to "power to decide or determine: authoritative control," in a quotation from Gower as early as 1393. This was probably a hundred years earlier than the use of the metaphor in any European language to describe international politics, two hundred years earlier than the first recorded usage applied to international politics in English—and *that* happens to illustrate the sense of "authoritative control."[6] If it has always been the supreme task of international statesmanship to preserve the balance of power, the difficulty of the task is prefigured in the mutability and inconstancy of the metaphor itself. If we put it in an over simplified way, we may say that the essential meaning of the verb "to balance" is "to compare weights." But weights may be compared, either in order to find them equivalent; or in order to find and measure the difference; or (when they are human and social weights) in order to minister to the sense of authority of the balancer. All these meanings coexist in the phrase "the balance of power."

The second source of confusion is the overlap between the normative and the descriptive. Most sentences containing the phrase "the balance of power" combine a normative with a descriptive sense. They are statements not only about what foreign policy ought to be pursued, but also about the tendency, law, or principle that governs international alignments. For the balance of power means two things. It is, first, a system of foreign policy: a system which the agents in international politics uphold, neglect, or repudiate in favour of some other supposed system. It is, secondly, a historical law or theoretical principle of analysis which spectators of international politics (publicists, journalists, students) derive from or apply to their reflection on international politics. But agents and spectators are not distinct classes. All agents are partly spectators (of the other agents) and all policy presupposes some theory. And all spectators (above all in politically

[5] [Ed.] The *New English Dictionary* (*N.E.D.*), the original title of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

[6] [Ed.] Wight here referred in a note to Fenton's dedication to Queen Elizabeth of his translation of Guicciardini in 1579, quoted at a later point in this essay.

free societies) are frustrated agents. The third source of confusion is that weighing in the balance implies an estimate, which requires judicial detachment. And the international agent who estimates the balance of power is involved in what he estimates and cannot be detached. His judgment of the balance is expressed as objective but is necessarily subjective. This obliquity of vision is inherent in social life, but it is most pronounced where the issue may be national survival or destruction.

This paper will try to show that "the balance of power" has had the following distinct meanings in international politics:[7]

1. An even distribution of power.
2. The principle that power ought to be evenly distributed.
3. The existing distribution of power. Hence, any possible distribution of power.
4. The principle of equal aggrandizement of the Great Powers at the expense of the weak.
5. The principle that our side ought to have a margin of strength in order to avert the danger of power becoming unevenly distributed.
6. (When governed by the verb "to hold":) a special role in maintaining an even distribution of power.
7. (Ditto:) a special advantage in the existing distribution of power.
8. Predominance.
9. An inherent tendency of international politics to produce an even distribution of power.

It is the fascination of the subject that these senses are difficult to disentangle, and almost any sentence about the balance of power, as this paper will perhaps illustrate involuntarily more than deliberately, is likely to imply two or more meanings at the same time.

The original application of the metaphor of the balance to international politics is in the sense of *an even distribution of power*, a state of affairs in which no Power is so preponderant that it can endanger the others. Let us call this sense 1. This is the primary meaning of "the balance of power," to which there is always a tendency to return. If there are three or more weights that are thus considered as balanced (as with the five major Powers of Italy between 1454 and 1494, or the five Great Powers that formed the Concert of Europe in the nineteenth century)

[7] We are not concerned with the idea of the balance of power in the internal politics of a state, which has had a distinct and parallel history from Aristotle and Polybius to Harrington, Montesquieu and the pluralists.

it may be called a multiple balance.[8] If there are only two weights in consideration (as with the Habsburgs and France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Britain and France in the eighteenth, the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente before 1914, or America and Russia since 1945) it may be called a simple balance. The conception of the simple balance involves a higher degree of abstraction than that of the multiple balance. It means a selective concentration upon the greatest Powers. There has never yet, in the history of Western international society, actually been a simple balance. When there have been rival predominant Powers, they have always had lesser Powers around or between them, capable of being considered as contributing to a multiple balance. Even the confrontation of two world empires, as in the case of Rome and Persia, has been varied and enlivened by unreliable vassals and intractable buffers, an Armenia or an Osroene or a Palmyra; and the great contest between Heraclius and Chosroes was influenced, perhaps decisively, by the independent action of the Avars, Bulgars, Slavs, Gepids, and Chazars.

But the distinction between multiple and simple balance is immaterial to the conception of the balance of power as an even distribution. In both the multiple and the simple balance there is the idea of equipoise. When Machiavelli wrote that, before the French invasion of 1494, '*L'Italia in un certo modo bilanciata*,'[9] when Guicciardini wrote that Lorenzo de' Medici '*procurava con ogni studio che le cose d'Italia in modo bilanciate si mantenessino che piu in una che in un' altra parte non pendessino*,'[10] they were trying to describe such an even distribution of power. Thus Sir Thomas Overbury's description of the states-system a hundred years later, in 1609, when the Spanish attempt at predominance had been defeated:

> It is first to be considered that this part of Christendom is balanced betwixt the three Kings of Spain, France, and England; as the other part is betwixt the Russian, the Kings of Poland, Sweden, and Denmark. For as for Germany, which if it were entirely subject to one Monarchy, would be terrible to all the rest; so being divided betwixt so many Princes and those of so equal power, it serves only to

[8] [Ed.] The five major Powers in Italy in the late fifteenth century were Venice, Florence, Milan, Naples, and the Papal States. The five Great Powers constituting the Concert of Europe in the nineteenth century were Austria, France, Prussia, Russia, and the United Kingdom. For an exceptionally rich analysis of the latter multiple balance, see Carsten Holbraad, *The Concert of Europe: A Study in German and British International Theory 1815–1914* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971).

[9] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, L. Arthur Burd, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891), ch. xx, p. 329. [Ed.: "a kind of balance of powers prevailed in Italy," in Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Robert M. Adams trans. and ed., second edn (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1992), p. 58.]

[10] Francesco Guicciardini, *La Storia d'Italia*, Book I, ch. i. [Ed.: Lorenzo de' Medici "carefully saw to it that the Italian situation should be maintained in a state of balance, not leaning more toward one side than the other." Francesco Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, ed., trans., with notes and an introduction by Sidney Alexander. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1969), pp. 4, 7.]

> balance itself, and entertain easy war with the Turk; while the Persian withholds him in a greater.[11]

By a similar use of the metaphor, Churchill described the European situation brought about by the Locarno Treaties: "Thus there was a balance created in which Britain, whose major interest was the cessation of the quarrel between Germany and France, was to a large extent umpire and arbiter";[12] and Eden wrote, "The fighting in Korea achieved a balance of power, recognized and respected as such."[13] The same notion of even distribution appears in Lester Pearson's dictum that "The balance of terror has replaced the balance of power."[14] In this usage the word "balance" retains its meaning of "equilibrium," and it is perhaps most likely to appear as the object of such verbs as maintain and preserve, upset and overturn, or redress and restore.

Almost insensibly, the phrase passes from a descriptive to a normative use. It comes to mean (2) *the principle that power ought to be evenly distributed.* When during the American Revolutionary War George III was seeking the assistance of Catherine the Great, she replied: "Her ideas perfectly correspond with his, as to the balance of power; and she never can see with indifference any essential aggrandizement or essential diminution, of any European state take place."[15] The *Manchester Guardian* wrote in 1954: "If there is to be coexistence there must be a balance of power, for if power is un-balanced the temptation to communism to resume its crusade will be irresistible."[16] In each of these quotations sense 2 can be seen emerging out of sense 1. In 1713 the phrase was written into the Treaty of Utrecht to justify the perpetual separation of the crowns of France and Spain: "for the end that all care and suspicions may be removed from the minds of men and that the Peace and Tranquillity of the Christian World may be ordered and stabilized in a just balance of power (which is the best and most solid foundation of mutual friendship and a lasting general concord)."[17] Thenceforward, for 200 years, the balance of power was generally spoken of as if it were the constituent principle of international society, and legal writers described it as the

[11] Sir Thomas Overbury, "Observations in his Travels," in *Stuart Tracts 1603– 1693*, C. H. Firth, ed. (London: Constable, 1903), p. 227.

[12] Winston S. Churchill, "The Second World War," Vol. I, *The Gathering Storm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), p. 30.

[13] Anthony Eden, "The Memoirs of Anthony Eden," Vol. III, *Full Circle.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), p. 31.

[14] Speech at San Francisco, June 24, 1955 *Commemoration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Signing of the United Nations Charter* (U.N.P. Sales No.: 1955. 1.26), p. 215. Cf. John Strachey, *On the Prevention of War* (Macmillan, 1962), p. 25.

[15] *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, the First Earl of Malmesbury*, second edn, Vol. 1 (London: Richard Bentley, 1845), p. 344.

[16] Leading article, August 21, 1954.

[17] As translated in Sir Geoffrey Butler and Simon Maccoby, *The Development of International Law* (London: Longmans, 1928), p. 65.

indispensable condition of international law."[18] It was even ironically apostrophized as the condition of private prosperity.

> The *balance of pow'r?* ah! till that is restor'd,
> What solid delight can retirement afford?

sang Isaac Hawkins Browne during the War of the Polish Succession.[19] "The balance of power had ever been assumed as the known common law of Europe," wrote Burke in the *Regicide Peace*, "the question had only been (as it must happen) the more or less inclination of that balance."[20] "The balance of power in Europe," said Lord John Russell sixty-five years later, "means in effect the independence of its several states. The preponderance of any one Power threatens and destroys this independence."[21] The Concert of Europe was in origin and essence a common agreement on the principle of the balance of power.

But it is the trouble about international politics that the distribution of power does not long remain constant, and the Powers are usually in disagreement on its

[18] A distinction must be made between legal writers:

(i) Who, resting mainly on the declaration in the Treaty of Utrecht, regard the balance of power as being itself a fundamental legal principle. For example,
Sir Travers Twiss, *The Law of Nations considered as Independent Political Communities*, new edn (Clarendon Press, 1884), pp. 187–188;
Robert Redslob, *Histoire des Grands Principes du Droit des Gens* (Paris: Rousseau, 1923), pp. 160–162, 251–253.

(ii) Who describe the balance of power as, not a legal principle, but the political condition of international law. For example,
L. Oppenheim, *International Law*, first edn (Longmans, 1905), Vol. i, pp. 73–74;
A. Pearce Higgins, *Studies in International Law and Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), pp. 138–142;
Charles de Visscher, *Theory and Reality in Public International Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 157.

(iii) Who describe the maintenance of the balance of power as a legal right in international law deriving from the right of self-preservation. For example, Vattel, *Le Droit des Gens*, Book III, ch. iii, sections 47–48, (Amsterdam: E. Van Harrevelt, 1775);
G. F. von Martens, *A Compendium of the Law of Nations*, William Cobbett, trans. (London: Cobbett and Morgan, 1802), p. 127;
Henry Wheaton, *History of the Law of Nations in Europe and America* (New York: Gould, Banks, 1845), pp. 20, 80–82;
John Westlake, *Collected Papers on Public International Law.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), pp. 121–123;
T. J. Lawrence, *The Principles of International Law* (Macmillan, 1925), pp. 128–131.
W. E. Hall, *A Treatise on International Law*, eighth edn (Clarendon Press, 1924), austerely avoids the phrase balance of power, but substantially describes it as the point at which the right of self-preservation of several states may override the right to self-development of a menacing state (p. 51).

[19] "The Fire Side: A Pastoral Soliloquy on the Earl of Godolphin's taking the Seals," 1735, in the Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 300.

[20] "Letters on a Regicide Peace," no. 3 in *Works*, H. Rogers, ed., Vol. ii (London: Holdsworth, 1842), p. 333.

[21] H. Temperley and L. M. Penson, *Foundations of British Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), p. 205.

being an even distribution. Most arrangements of power favour some countries, which therefore seek to preserve the status quo, and justify it as being a true balance in the sense of an equilibrium; and are irksome to other countries whose policy is accordingly revisionist. Just as such phrases as "the hereditary system" or "property" ceased to have a sacrosanct ring in domestic politics when they were uttered by men of the self-made or unpropertied classes, so "the balance of power" loses its connotation of being grounded on morality and law when it is uttered by representatives of Powers that believe themselves at a disadvantage. This linguistic process can be seen at work in a discussion between Cripps and Stalin in Moscow in July 1940.[22] Cripps had been sent to Moscow as British ambassador with the task of persuading Stalin that Germany's conquest of Western Europe endangered Russia as well as Britain. "Therefore both countries," he argued, "ought to agree on a common policy of self-protection against Germany and on the re-establishment of the European balance of power." Stalin replied that he did not see any danger of Europe being engulfed by Germany. "The so-called European balance of power," he said, "had hitherto oppressed not only Germany but also the Soviet Union. Therefore the Soviet Union would take all measures to prevent the re-establishment of the old balance of power in Europe."[23] Similarly Hitler to Ciano in 1936: "Any future modifications of the Mediterranean balance of power must be in Italy's favour."[24] Here the phrase has lost any sense of an even distribution of power and has come to mean simply (3) *the existing distribution of power.* The usage is not con fined to revisionist Powers. When the Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty told the House of Commons in 1951 that "the balance of sea power has tilted away from us very dramatically during the last ten years,"[25] he was using the phrase neutrally and unemotionally. And by a natural extension it comes to mean *any possible distribution of power,* future as well as present or past. Thus Churchill wrote to Eden in 1942: "No one can forsee how the balance of power will lie or where the winning armies will stand at the end of the war."[26] This is possibly the most frequent usage—to describe the relationship of power prevailing at a given time. The word "balance" has entirely lost its meaning of "equilibrium." There is less notion of stability, more of perpetual change about it than in sense 1; and it will frequently be found as the subject of a sentence (it will be said "to have changed" or a new one will be said "to be appearing") as though it lies largely beyond human control.

[22] [Ed.] Sir Stafford Cripps (1889–1952), a Labour Party politician, served in several high-level posts in United Kingdom governments.

[23] *Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939–1941: Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office* (Washington DC: Department of State, 1948), p. 167.

[24] *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers* (London: Odhams Press, 1948), p. 57.

[25] L. J. Callaghan. March 12, 1951 (485 H. C. Deb. *5s.* col. 1093).

[26] Prime Minister to Foreign Secretary, January 8, 1942, in Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. III, *The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), p. 696.

So far we have been considering "the balance of power" roughly as a description of a state of affairs; it is now necessary to consider it as a policy; though it will be clear that the two conceptions are inseparable. The principle that power ought to be evenly distributed, raises the question, By whom? There seem to be three possible answers.

(a) It may be said that the even distribution of power will take place through the combined skill and effort of all the Powers concerned, or, in the case of a simple balance, of *both* the Powers or coalitions concerned.
(b) It may be said that the even distribution of power will be the responsibility of a particular Power, which is said "to hold the balance." This answer presupposes a multiple balance. Where there is a truly simple balance, a holder of the balance is excluded. The holder of the balance is, *ex-hypothesi*, a third force; he may be *tertius gaudens*.[27]
(c) It may be said, again, that the even distribution of power will come about, over the widest field and in the long run, through a fundamental law or tendency of political forces to fall into equilibrium. Let us consider these answers in turn.

First, the argument that the maintenance of an even distribution of power can take place through the combined skill of all the Powers. If the broad test of an even distribution of power is the absence of a grand alliance against a Power aiming at universal monarchy, then there was such an even distribution from the defeat of Louis XIV to the French Revolution and from the defeat of Napoleon to the First World War. (Suitable qualifications must be made for the anti-British coalition in the American Revolutionary War, and the partial alliance against Russia in the Crimean. And by such a broad test, conflicts on the scale of the Polish Succession, Austrian Succession, and Seven Years Wars have to be rated as incidents in preserving an even distribution of power—a generous proviso.) The maintenance of a multiple balance of power during these periods must in some degree be attributed to the skill of the Powers concerned; but allowance must be made for external circumstances, especially the opportunity for expansion outside Europe. And it cannot be overlooked that these periods of multiple balance came to center upon questions of partition—of Poland and Turkey at the end of the eighteenth century, of Turkey, Africa, and China at the end of the nineteenth. The balance of power, in effect, came to mean (4) *the principle of equal aggrandizement of the Great Powers at the expense of the weak.*

[27] [Ed.] The term *tertius gaudens* is often translated as "a rejoicing third," a third party that benefits from a dispute between two other parties.

> *L'équilibre veut qu'il y ait balance entre les forces; la pesée implique un partage: il faut des contrepoids, ce sont les faibles et les vaincus qui les fournissent, et l'opération tourne inévitablement au profit des forts, des ambitieux et des habiles. L'avènement de la Prusse a été le résultat logique de ce système; elle a servi de contre-poids, jusqu'au jour où elle s'est senti assez de ressort pour entraîner à son tour le plateau et faire trébucher la balance.*[28]

Nothing in European history has done more to discredit the idea of the balance of power than the belief that it led naturally to such a crime as the Partition of Poland. The inventors of this evil project, in the whole course of their enterprise invoked the principles of the balancing system as their guide and polar star, and actually followed them, so far as circumstances would permit, in their division of the spoil, and whilst they inflicted the most fatal wounds upon the spirit and very existence of this system, borrowed its external forms, and even its technical language. *Corruptio optimi pessima*:[29] to behold this noble system, which the wisdom of the European community had devised for its security and welfare, thus perverted, was an odious spectacle

The battle of the concessions in China in 1897–98 was similarly an exercise in adjusting the balance. For the British, the sole object of their acquisition of Weihai-wei was "to maintain balance of power in Gulf of Pechili, menaced by Russian occupation of Port Arthur."[30]

The multiple balance lasts as long as no conflict of interests has arisen to make a decisive schism between the Great Powers. Sooner or later this occurs, and the Powers divide into opposite camps. The multiple balance now resolves itself into a simple balance: it is no longer a merry-go-round but a seesaw. The multiple balance of the eighteenth century dissolved directly into a state of war, near-general war in 1778–79, general war in 1792–93. The nineteenth century Concert of Europe was more skilful in prolonging the peace; the transformation of the multiple into a simple balance began with the Franco-Russian alliance in 1892, or rather, with the lapse of the Reinsurance Treaty in 1890, and peace was maintained by a simple balance for another twenty years. The corresponding transformation from multiple to simple balance between the two world wars occurred in 1936 with the formation of the Rome-Berlin Axis against the League Powers.

[28] Albert Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, Vol. I, (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit et cie, 1885), p. 34. [Ed.:

> Equilibrium demands balance between the forces; the weight implies a division: counterweights are required, and the weak and the defeated supply them, and the operation turns inevitably to the benefit of the strong, the ambitious and the skillful. The rise of Prussia was the logical result of this system; it served as a counterweight until the day when she felt enough strength to pull the top along and upset the balance.]

[29] [Ed.] This Latin maxim is usually translated as "the corruption of the best is the worst of all."

[30] Gooch and Temperley, eds. *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, Vol. I, no. 47 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1926).

In the circumstances of a simple balance, when each of two Powers or coalitions is trying to maintain an even distribution of power between them by a competition in armaments or a diplomatic struggle for alliances, the idea of the balance of power as equality of aggrandizement tends to be eclipsed (though it may still have a place) by another idea of the balance of power (which may also appear in the circumstances of a multiple balance). This is (5) *the principle that my side ought to have a margin of strength, in order to avert the danger of power becoming unevenly distributed.* Here the word balance acquires the sense it has in the phrases "balance of trade" or "bank balance," i.e., not an equality of assets and debits but a surplus of one over the other. And here the contradiction between the subjective and objective estimates of the balance of power, between a political position as seen from the inside and as seen from the outside, becomes acute. When Dean Acheson first formulated the policy of "negotiating from a position of strength," he apparently meant a leveling up of America's strength to an equality with Russia's, the restoration of an equipoise; but the phrase was equivocal from the start, and quickly acquired the sense of possessing a margin of strength.[31] It was sharply illustrated by headlines in *The Times* newspaper in 1963: "Mr. McNamara says West now has Superiority: US Forces nearing proper Balance for Peace."[32]

The logic of this development of the idea of "balance" is illustrated by a story which Norman Angell somewhere tells. Angell as a young man heard Churchill as a young Cabinet Minister making a speech in Oxford in 1913. "There is just one way in which you can make your country secure and have peace," Churchill said, "and that is to be so much stronger than any prospective enemy that he dare not attack you—and this is, I submit to you, gentlemen, a self-evident proposition." Angell got up and asked him if the advice he had just given was the advice he would give to Germany.[33] But it is not simple patriotism or nationalism which has given this interpretation of the balance its greatest potency, but a system where "my side" is a coalition identified with international virtue and legality. Collective security under the League of Nations, as we shall note next, was built upon the assumption that the law-abiding Powers would have a constant preponderance over any possible aggressor.

[31] Coral Bell, *Negotiation from Strength* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1962), ch. i.

[32] *The Times*, November 19, 1963. The Washington correspondent wrote:

> In a policy speech today [18 Nov.] Mr Robert McNamara, the United States Secretary of Defence, said that the west enjoyed a military superiority over the Soviet bloc in conventional forces as well as strategic and tactical nuclear weapons. The significance of this position of strength was manifold. … He rejected the idea that the Soviet bloc could ever achieve superiority and thus initiate another arms race, although new technological developments might require important expenditures in future. He saw the American forces rapidly approaching the proper balance required to maintain peace.

[33] The incident is recorded in C. E. M. Joad, *Why War?* (London: Penguin, 1939), pp. 71–72. Cf. Norman Angell, *Preface to Peace* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1935), p. 122.

The fullest transformation of the idea of the balance of power seems to arise out of the notion of "holding the balance." The Power that "holds the balance" is the Power that is in a position to contribute decisive strength to one side or the other.

The figure is seen at its simplest in Camden's famous description of Queen Elizabeth:

> There sat she as an heroicaI princess and umpire betwixt the Spaniards, the French, and the Estates; so as she might well have used that saying of her father, *Cui adhaereo, praeest*, that is, "the party to which I adhere getteth the upper hand." And true it was which one hath written, that France and Spain are as it were the scales in the balance of Europe, and England the tongue or the holder of the balance.[34]

There is a little confusion in the metaphor, since the tongue of a balance is an index to show which way the scales incline, not a stabilizer. The idea appears in an equally pure form in a letter from Palmerston to William IV in 1832. He was explaining the quarrels between France on the one side and Austria, Prussia, and Russia on the other, about the treaty establishing Belgian independence.

> Upon the occasion of all these pretensions the British Government brought the three Powers to bear upon France, and France was upon all compelled to yield; latterly the three Powers have in their turn been unreasonable and deficient in good faith, and have endeavoured, under false pretences, to defeat the treaty they had ratified and to mar the arrangement they had guaranteed. The British Government then brought France to bear upon the three Powers, and it is to be hoped with ultimate success. Rivals in military strength, as France and the three Powers are, Your Majesty may be said practically to hold the scales of the balance of Europe. France will not venture to attack the three Powers, if she is also to be opposed by England: and the three Powers will pause long before they attack France, if they think that France could in that case reckon upon the support of England. Thus, then, it appears … that Your Majesty has peculiarly the power of preserving the general peace and that by throwing the moral influence of Great Britain into one scale or the other, according as the opposite side may manifest a spirit of encroachment or injustice, Your Majesty may … become on many occasions the arbiter of events in Europe.[35]

This is the traditional conception, expressed in the simple terms suited to its recipient. Here, to hold the balance of power means, (6) *possessing a special role in maintaining an even distribution of power.*

[34] William Camden, *History of Elizabeth*, translated third edn (1675), p. 223.
[35] C. K. Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston*, Vol. ii (London: G. Bell, 1951), pp. 801–802.

It became part of the traditional British doctrine on the matter that a holder of the balance was essential to the very idea of the balance of power. Swift explicated the metaphor with characteristic clarity:

> It will be an eternal Rule in Politicks, among every free People, that there is a Ballance of Power to be carefully held by every State within it self, as well as among several States with each other.
>
> The true Meaning of a Ballance of Power, either without, or within a State, is best conceived by considering what the Nature of a Ballance is. It supposes three things. First, the part which is held, together with the Hand that holds it; and then the two Scales, with whatever is weighed therein. Now consider several States in a Neighbourhood: In order to preserve Peace between these States, it is necessary they should be formed into a Ballance, whereof one, or more are to be Directors, who are to divide the rest into equal Scales. and upon Occasions remove from one into the other, or else fall with their own Weight into the lightest: So in a State within it self, the Ballance must be held by a third Hand, who is to deal the remaining Power with the utmost Exactness into each Scale. Now it is not necessary, that the Power should be equally divided between these three; for the Ballance may be held by the Weakest, who by his Address and Conduct, removing from either Scale, and adding of his own, may keep the Scales duly poised.[36]

One of Swift's editors dogmatically contradicted his author on this point: "Swift forgot that a balance ceases to be true, as soon as its adjustment is entrusted to anyone. It must either be maintained by its own equilibrium, or it becomes a pretence sustained only by the application of arbitrary force."[37] This comment illustrates the growing repudiation of the policy of the balance of power by a strand of British opinion in the nineteenth century, but it also indicates the ambiguities in the idea of holding the balance. They become apparent if we ask two questions: *Who* holds the balance in any given situation? and if the function of holding the balance be defined as an ability to contribute decisive strength to one side or the other, what is implied in the notion of *decisive strength?*

Who holds the balance? There are good grounds for the traditional British belief that it has been peculiarly Britain's role to hold the balance of Europe. From 1727 down to 1868 (with one or two lapses) the annual Mutiny Act described the function of the British army as "the preservation of the balance of power in Europe." To hold the balance has been a policy suited to an insular Power enjoying a certain detachment from Continental rivalries. But there have been other Powers with a

[36] *A Discourse of the Contests and Dissentions in Athens and Rome* (1701), *A Tale of a Tub and other Early Works*, Herbert Davis, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), ch. I, p. 197.

[37] Henry Craik, *Selections from Swift*, Vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), p. 367.

degree of geographical detachment, particularly Russia.[38] At the end of the War of the Austrian Succession the Tsaritsa Elizabeth controlled the balance of Europe. In the American Revolutionary War Catherine the Great held the balance between Britain and the anti-British coalition of France, Spain and Holland. In the War of the Bavarian Succession she was in a similar position, courted by both Austria and Prussia, and assuming the role of the protectress of the German constitution, hitherto played by France. Likewise, between March and September I939 Stalin held the balance between the Western Powers and the Axis. In other words, a Power holds the balance only so long as it does not commit itself; and when it has committed itself, there is a new situation in which the balance will probably be held by another Power.

Indeed, holding the balance of power has its *n*th Power problem. It is not only the Great Powers that can aspire to the role. Sometimes a Small Power, through the accident of strategic position or the energy of its ruler, can contribute useful if not decisive strength to one side or the other, as Savoy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries used to hold the balance on the Alps, or as Yugoslavia today holds a balance in south-eastern Europe between the Communist and Western Blocs.[39] The belief that they can hold the balance of power may soothe the pride of Great Powers in decline. Immediately after the War de Gaulle stated his aim of grouping together the states which touch the Rhine, Alps, and Pyrenees, and making of this organization the arbiter between the Anglo-Saxon and Soviet camps.[40] "France, in equipping herself with a nuclear weapon," he said in 1959, "will render a service to world equilibrium."[41] (The equilibrium between the Western and Communist blocs, or the equilibrium within NATO?) Many Japanese and some Germans have had the same idea for their own country. Acton argued that it was the Papacy itself which invented the system of the balance of power at the time of the Reformation to replace the Papal ascendancy of the Middle Ages.

> The Popes undertook to maintain their spiritual freedom through their territorial independence by the opposite plan to that of the *respublicana Christiana* under

[38] "It is a fundamental law that the outer regions in the west and east function, directly or indirectly, as counterweights to a concentration at the centre." L. Dehio, *The Precarious Balance* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963), p. 102.

[39] [Ed.] When Wight wrote this essay in 1961, the country's official name was the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1963 it was renamed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Since 1991, the SFRY has broken into seven successor states: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia. (While the United States and several European Union members have recognized Kosovo as a sovereign state, Kosovo is not a member of the United Nations.)

[40] [Ed.] De Gaulle set out this objective in his *Mémoires de Guerre*, Vol. III, *Le Salut 1944–1946* (Paris: Plon, 1959), pp. 179–180.

[41] Statement on November 10, 1959 (*Guardian*, November 11, 1959). [Ed. "*En vérité, la France, en se dotant d'un armement nucléaire, rend service à l'équilibre du monde*." Charles de Gaulle, Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, Novembre 10, 1959, *Discours et Messages*, Vol. III, *Avec le Renouveau May 1958–Juillet 1962* (Paris: Plon, 1970), p. 134.]

> pope and emperor, by *preventing* predominance of any one power, not by courting it. So they created the system of balance of power as the security of their temporal power, as of old the imperial supremacy had been the implement and safeguard of their spiritual predominance.[42]

Others have attributed the beginnings of this policy to Venice. The Italian states aimed to hold the balance between the kings of Spain and France as early as did Henry VIII. In 1553 Mary, Regent of the Netherlands, wrote to the imperial ambassador in England about the dangers which the Franco-Turkish alliance was bringing upon Italy, and added that if the Italian states knew their own interests they would confederate against the French king. "*Mais vous scavez les craintes qu'ilz ont de la grandeur de l'ung ou l'autre de ces deux princes* [Charles V and Henry II] *et soing de balancer leur pouvoir*."[43]

Sometimes a balance has been held by barbarians outside the pale of international society: the Iroquois held the balance in the first half of the eighteenth century between the English and French in North America. Whenever a Power is courted by both sides, it holds in some degree the balance of power. Turkish policy in the Second World War held a delicate balance both between the two belligerent blocs and between the Western Powers and Russia. Many a Small Power likes to think that it holds a balance, if only between its allies. The balance of power (in sense 2) is incompatible with the doctrines professed by the Afro-Asian states, and Nehru argued that the neutralist states cannot be a third force to maintain the balance of power, because they lack military strength to throw into the scales—they can only be a third area, united on moral not military grounds, through which efforts at conciliation could be channeled. But this implies a devaluation of the moral element in politics which seems inconsistent with much of Afro-Asian doctrine. Indian mediation over the repatriating of prisoners taken in the Korean War, the role of Krishna Menon at the Geneva Conference in 1954, Indian chairmanship of the three international commissions for supervizing the Indo-Chinese armistice, seemed to show to many Afro-Asians and others that India could act as an arbiter. The *Manchester Guardian* early in 1953 described the Indian attitude in these words: "Their view about their duties in Asia is like that of European statesmen of the eighteenth century, who, in a situation which was constantly changing, planned the combinations of the Powers by which a certain stability might be achieved."[44] There comes a point at which it is difficult to draw any clear distinction between "maintaining" the balance of power (a function connected with sense

[42] F. N. Gasquet, *Lord Acton and his Circle* (Allen, 1906), p. 250. Cf. Ranke, *History of the Popes*, Book I, Vol. i, ch. Iii (London: Bohn Library, Bell, 1913), p. 67.

[43] Letter of October 8, 1553, *Papiers d'Etat du Cardinal de Granvelle*, Vol. iv (Paris: lmprimerie Royale, 1843), p. 121.

[44] Leading article, February 18, 1953.

2) and "holding" it. For any Power may find, in some circumstances, that it possesses a special role in preserving an even distribution of power. And we encounter here the confusion between the objective and the subjective estimates. There are many international situations in which an involved Power, and a Power relatively detached, will each interpret its policy by a responsibility for holding the balance. The notion of holding the balance shades easily into the hope of contributing some strength, whether decisive or not, which is almost equivalent to possessing some degree of freedom of action.

This brings us to the second question. What are the implications and consequences of holding the balance? If he who holds the scales is weaker than either of the Powers or coalitions which make the scales, his function will only be that of conciliator; but if he is as strong as either of them, or stronger, he will tend to become an arbiter. The answer lurks in Churchill's description of Locarno and in the last sentence of the passage from Palmerston, both quoted above: "Your Majesty may become the arbiter of events in Europe". And a Power in this role may not always play it in a way that other Powers regard as just. It may be concerned less to maintain an even distribution of power than to improve its own position. "The great danger of inviting, and accustoming Russia, on every emergency. to be the Mediatrix of Europe," wrote the *Observer* in 1803, "is that she will at length consider herself the Mistress of it also."[45] The activity of holding the balance easily slides from possessing a special role (which implies a sense of duty) to possessing a special advantage: as easily as the notion of the balance of power slides from *an even* distribution to *any* distribution. There is an equivocality about most of the English claims to hold the balance of power from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. It is illustrated by the earliest recorded use of the phrase in English, in Fenton's dedication to Queen Elizabeth of his translation of Guicciardini:

> And lastly [God] hath erected your seate upon a high hill or sanctuarie and put into your hands the ballance of power and justice, to peaze and counterpease [appease and counterpoise] at your will the actions and counsels of all the Christian Kingdomes of your time.[46]

"Balance" here means "control." Compare Waller's *Panegyric to My Lord Protector* in 1655:

> Heaven, (that has placed this island to give law,
> To balance Europe, and her states to awe)

[45] *Observer*, July 17, 1803, quoted in the issue of July 19, 1953.

[46] Geffray Fenton, "The Historie of Guicciardin ... reduced into English (1579)," in Epistle *dedicatorie to the Queen*, p. iv.

In this conjunction does on Britain smile:
The greatest leader, and the greatest isle![47]

When an English politician in 1704 rejoiced that the battle of Blenheim "has given the balance of Europe into the Queen's hands," he meant that it had made England the strongest Power on the continent, with a freedom of action greater than that of other Powers.[48] Canning's doctrine that Britain should hold the balance between the conflicting ideologies on the Continent was similar. As he wrote to his friend Bagot, the British ambassador at St Petersburg, soon after the enunciation of the Monroe Doctrine, "The effect of the ultra-liberalism of our Yankee co-operators, on the ultra-despotism of our Aix la Chapelle allies, gives me just the balance that I wanted."[49] But this was Canning's private comment on what he afterwards publicly described as calling "the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old,"[50] and it contains perhaps a flavour of sense 5, that my side ought to have a margin of strength. Continental Powers have always noted that while Britain traditionally claimed to hold the balance of Europe with her right hand, with her left hand she was establishing an oceanic hegemony which refused for two centuries to admit any principle of equilibrium. Thus, from possessing a special role in maintaining an even distribution of power, holding the balance imperceptibly slides into (7) *possessing a special advantage in the existing distribution of power.* When Coral Bell writes: "A consistent and in some ways a justified criticism of the policies of the western Powers in the period of the Cold War has been that they have tended to deliver the balance of power into the hands of Germany and Japan, both potential revisionist states"[51] it is the second rather than the first of these meanings of the phrase that is conveyed.

It will be seen that the idea of the balance of power as a description of a state of affairs tends to slip away from the meaning of an even distribution to that of any possible distribution of power; and that the idea of the balance of power as a policy tends to slip away from the meaning of a duty or responsibility for preserving an even distribution, to that of enjoying a margin of strength or some special advantage. By these routes the balance of power comes to mean possessing a decisive advantage, or (8) possessing predominance. In this sense Chester Bowles wrote in 1956 that "the two-thirds of the world who live in the undeveloped continents … will ultimately constitute the world balance of power."[52] In this sense, Bonaparte

[47] [Ed.: Edmund Waller's panegyric may be found at https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/A_Panegyric_to_my_Lord_Protector]

[48] G. M. Trevelyan, *Blenheim* (London: Longmans, 1930), p. 419.

[49] Letter of January 22, 1824 *(George Canning and his Friends*, J. Bagot, ed., Vol. ii (London: Murray, 1909), pp. 217–218).

[50] Canning speech in the House of Commons, December 12, 1826, in Susan Ratcliffe, ed. *Oxford Essential Quotations*, fifth edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), may be found at https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191843730.001.0001/q-oro-ed5–00002561

[51] Coral Bell, *Survey of International Affairs 1954* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 10.

[52] "Why I will vote Democratic," in *Christianity and Crisis*, (October 15, 1956), p. 137.

wrote to the Directory in 1797: "Nous tenons la balance de l'Europe; nous la ferons pencher comme nous voudrons."[53] And more dramatically, the Kaiser, visiting England for Queen Victoria's funeral in 1901, told Lord Lansdowne that the traditional English policy of upholding the balance of power was exploded: "Die balance of power in Europa sei ich."[54] Here at last the word balance has come to mean the opposite of its primary diplomatic sense: equilibrium has become preponderance, balance bas become overbalance. Or, if you prefer, the word has returned to its still earlier pre-diplomatic sense of authoritative control. And the verbs that govern the phrase pass from possession to identification: from holding, through inclining, to "constituting" or "being."

There remains to be considered the third answer to the question; by whom is power to be evenly distributed? "The balance of power" sometimes implies an assertion that the groupings of Powers fall into ever-changing but ever reliable conditions of equilibrium. Thus it means (9) *an inherent tendency of international politics to produce an even distribution of power.* This asserts a "law" of international politics that underlies and reinforces the "principle" of the balance of power in sense 2; so that even if Powers neglect or repudiate the principle, the law will be seen at work overruling them. Rousseau saw it in this light when he wrote:

> *Ne pensons pas que cet équilibre si vanté ait été établi par personne, et que personne ait rien fait à dessein de le conserver: on trouve qu'il existe; et ceux qui ne sentent pas en eux-mêmes assez de poids pour le rompre, couvrent leurs vues particulières du prétexte de le soutenir. Mais qu'on y songe ou non, cet équilibre subsiste, et n'a besoin que de lui-même pour se conserver, sans que personne s'en mêle; et quand il se romproit un moment d'un côté, il se rétabliroit bientôt d'un autre: de sorte que si les princes qu'on accusoit d'aspirer à la monarchie universelle y ont réellement aspiré, ils montroient en cela plus d'ambition que de génie.*[55]

[53] Albert Sorel, L'Europe et la Révolution Française, Vol. v, (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit et cie, 1885), p. 185. [Ed.: "We hold the balance of Europe; we will make it tilt as we wish."]

[54] Die Grosse Politik, Vol. xvii, p. 28. [Ed.: "I am the balance of power in Europe."] "It was not the British fleet but the twenty-two German Army Corps that were the Balance of Power," H. von Eckardstein, *Ten Years at the Court of St James's* (Butterworth, 1921), p. 194. "Lord Salisbury is antiquated. He is obsessed by the idea that there is a balance of power in Europe. There is no balance of power in Europe except *me*—me and my twenty-five corps," H. H. Asquith, *Genesis of the War* (Cassell, 1923), pp. 19–20.

[55] [Ed.: Let us not imagine that this boasted balance of power has been achieved by anyone, or that anyone has done aught with intent to maintain it; it certainly exists, and those who do not feel themselves strong enough to break it down conceal their private ends under the pretext of supporting it. But whether one is conscious of it or not, this balance exists, and can well maintain itself without outside interference. If it should be broken for a moment on one side it would soon re-establish itself on another; so that, if the princes who were accused of aspiring to universal monarchy did really aspire to it, they showed therein more ambition than wit.] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Projet de Paix Perpetuelle*, Edith M. Nuttall, trans. (London: Richard Cobden-Sanderson, 1927), pp. 26–29.

Between 1848 and 1914, says A. J. P. Taylor, the balance of power "seemed to be the political equivalent of the laws of economics, both self-operating. If every man followed his own interest, all would be prosperous; and if every state followed its own interest, all would be peaceful and secure."[56] "The balance of power," says Toynbee, "is a system of political dynamics that comes into play whenever a society articulates itself into a number of mutually independent local states." It

> operates in a general way to keep the average calibre of states low in terms of every criterion for the measurement of political power ... a state which threatens to increase its calibre above the prevailing average becomes subject, almost automatically, to pressure from all the other states that are members of the same political constellation.[57]

It might even be said that in contemporary political writings the balance of power as this kind of sociological law has tended to replace the balance of power as moral and legal principle.

But even in this usage there is a tendency to slide away from the notion of even distribution of power—to express rather the endless shiftings and regroupings of power, the scales perpetually oscillating without coming to rest. When Rostovtzeff writes "The complicated political situation which constituted the balance of power among the Hellenistic States gave rise to almost uninterrupted warfare,"[58] the long perspective almost loses sight of the recurring equilibria of power, and the phrase becomes almost synonymous with the states-system itself.

The law of the balance of power has a certain fascination and credibility in relation to Western international history since the beginning of the sixteenth century. "The balance of power," said Stubbs in 1880, "however it be defined, i.e., whatever the powers were between which it was necessary to maintain such equilibrium, that the weaker should not be crushed by the union of the stronger, is the principle which gives unity to the political plot of modern European history."[59] (Here the usage seems nearer sense 9 than sense 2.) But it is necessary to take account of contrary indications. It has often been remarked that, while international society has widened from Western Europe to cover the whole world, there has been a steady reduction in the number of Great Powers, from the eight of the years before 1914 to the Big Two of today. Though the field of the balance of power expanded, the

[56] A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848–1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. xx.

[57] A. J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vol. iii (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 301–302.

[58] M. Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, Vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), p. 36; cf. p. 43. Cf. D. M. Bueno de Mesquita, *Giangaleazzo Visconti* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1941), p. 60: "The rivalries of these states formed the main content of Italian politics; the smaller cities and lesser rulers precariously survived by means of a rapid adjustment to the momentary balance or the five Powers."

[59] W. Stubbs, *Seventeen Lectures on the Study of Medieval and Modern History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887), p. 258.

number of decisive weights has decreased. The precedent of earlier states-systems, such as that of ancient China before the establishment of the Ts'in Empire, and of the Hellenistic world before the Roman Empire, have also been noted. Barraclough has argued, following Dehio, that the law of the balance of power has been good for Europe, but that "outside Europe, the principle of preponderant Powers is securely established."[60] This seems an over-simplification. On the one hand, within Europe (if it be considered by itself) the balance of power has worked itself out by 1945, with the partition of the continent between the two remaining Great Powers, both of them extra-European. On the other hand, outside Europe, the operation of the balance of power is evident enough. ln North America there was a kind of balance of power between Spanish, English, French, and Indians for 200 years before the infant United States became predominant. In India there was a balance of power between English, French, and various succession states of the Mogul Empire for a hundred years before Britain became predominant. In China there was a balance of power between all the Western Great Powers, except Austria-Hungary and Italy but including Japan, for a hundred years before it was overthrown by Japan. In the Middle East there was a balance of power—the Eastern Question was one of the most famous essays in the balance of power—for more than a hundred years before Britain acquired the lion's share of the Ottoman Empire in 1919. And in Africa, a balance was achieved between French and British power which continued until the emancipation of the African states in the past couple of years.[61] In all these regions, as well as in the world as a whole, the balance of power is discernible. But *equally* discernible is "the principle of preponderant Powers," so that it may be wondered whether the two are not complementary. It has been argued in this paper that the very idea and language of the balance of power has a mobility that tends, so to speak, to defeat its own original purpose, so that the phrase comes to mean predominance instead of equilibrium. And, if political "laws" are in question, it may be wondered whether there may not be another law of international politics besides the balance of power, slower in operation and ultimately overriding it: a law of the concentration or monopoly of power.

The idea of the balance of power has been repudiated from opposite sides. It is always rejected by Powers aspiring to predominance; and in the past two hundred years it has been rejected by a large body of radical opinion, both liberal and socialist. But both kinds of critic have in the end found themselves entangled in what they disbelieved.

[60] G. Barraclough, *History in a Changing World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), p. 176. Cf. L. Dehio, The Precarious Balance, p. 123.

[61] [Ed.] Wight first presented this paper to the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics in April 1961. Brunello Vigezzi, *The British Committee on the Theory of International Politics (1954–1985): The Rediscovery of History* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2005), p. 329.

Instead of the independence of nations based on and secured by a system of equilibrium, Powers aiming at predominance have asserted some ideal of solidarity and unification, from the Tridentine Catholicism of Philip II's Spain down to Hitler's New Order in Europe, and the United Soviet Republics of the World which seems to be the long-term aim, in so far as there is one, of the rulers of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).[62] "What Britain called the balance of power," said Hitler with some truth, "was nothing but the disintegration and disorganization of the Continent."[63]

"As for the balance of power," said Burke of the Jacobins,

> it was so far from being admitted by France ... that in the whole body of their authorized or encouraged reports and discussions on the theory of the *diplomatick* system, they constantly rejected the very idea of the balance of power and treated it as the true cause of all the wars and calamities that had afflicted Europe. ... Exploding, therefore, all sorts of balances, they avow their design to erect themselves into a new description of empire, which is not grounded on any balance, but forms a sort of impious hierarchy, of which France is to be the head and guardian.[64]

Nor was it simply idealism that made the United States in her earliest years repudiate the balance of power along with entangling alliances. From the moment of her independence, she was the predominant Power in the New World, as Hamilton clearly saw. "We may hope, ere long," he wrote in 1787,

> to become the arbiter of Europe in America, and to be able to incline the balance of European competitions in this part of the world as our interest may dictate. ... Our situation invites, and our interests prompt us to aim at an ascendant in the system of American affairs.[65]

Nevertheless, when facing defeat by a grand alliance, a predominant Power may hasten to seek the protection of the principle it has formerly neglected. George III, writing to Catherine the Great for her assistance in the American Revolutionary War, said that a mere naval demonstration by her "*pourra restituer et assurer le repos de l'Europe entière, en dissipant la ligue qui s'est formée contre moi, et en maintenant ce système d'équilibre que cette ligue cherche à détruire.*"[66] After the battle of

[62] Elliott R. Goodman, *The Soviet Design for a World State* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1960).

[63] Speech in the Berliner *Sportpalast*, January 30, 1941 (*The Times*, January 31, 1941).

[64] "Letters on a Regicide Peace," no. 3 in Works, Vol. ii, pp. 333–334).

[65] *The Federalist*, no. xi, Everyman edn, (London: Dent) pp. 50, 53.

[66] *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, the First Earl of Malmesbury*, second edn, Vol. 1 (London: Richard Bentley, 1845), p. 228. [Ed.: George III wrote that a Russian naval demonstration could "restore and ensure the peace of Europe as a whole by dissolving the league that had formed against me, and by maintaining the system of balance that this league is trying to destroy."]

Stalingrad, German propaganda began appealing to the principle of the balance of power against the over-mighty strength of Russia, just as Napoleon at St Helena sometimes argued that his own policy had been directed by the same principle against the same danger. Holland Rose could write thus of Britain's defeat in the American War:

> Thus, the trend of European politics in the East, in Germany, and in the Netherlands told heavily against England, and increased the natural reluctance of any Power to seek the friendship of a beaten nation. It is at such times that the artificiality of the idea of the Balance of Power is seen. No State took the slightest interest in restoring the islanders to their rightful position in the world.[67]

Here is a naïve expression of the belief that one's own nation, when deprived of its hegemony, has a right to appeal to the principle of the balance of power, coupled with the belief that the balance of power is pretty ineffective anyway.

On the other hand, there were those who thought that, though the balance of power might be desirable, the price to be paid might be too high.

> "Now *Europe's* balanc'd, neither Side prevails,
> For nothing's left in either of the Scales,"

wrote Pope towards the end of the Spanish Succession War,[68] with more wit than truth—showing that the politicians' appeal to the principle of the balance of power was beginning to yield diminishing returns in public conviction. Men who were told that taxation and wars were necessary to maintain the balance of power, naturally blamed the balance of power when they were tired of taxation and wars. In 1758 a book was published at Altona with the title *Die Chimaere des Gleichgewichts von Europa*, arguing against the balance of power as an excuse for endless mutual interference:

> If the equilibrium were ever realized nothing could be more terrible than the enslavement of every state with regard to its neighbours—it would be necessary to recognize in every state the right to intervene in the domestic affairs of the others—it would be better indeed to have a universal monarchy, for to be subject to several states at the same time would be much harder than to be dependent on the one.[69]

[67] J. Holland Rose, *William Pitt and National Revival* (London: Bell, 1911), pp. 300–301.

[68] In 1711, Alexander Pope, *Minor Poems*, Twickenham edn, N. Ault and J. Butt, eds., Vol. vi (London; Methuen, 1954), p. 82.

[69] Quoted in Butler and Maccoby, Development of International Law, p. 68. [Ed.: the author of Die Chimaere des Gleichgewichts von Europa—that is, "the Chimera of the Balance in Europe"—was Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi (1717–17), a prolific German scholar.]

The argument has been revived by critics of the United Nations (UN). Kant's treatment of the balance of power perhaps shows the intellectual rejection of the idea consolidating itself. In the *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte* (1784) he seems to see "*ein Gesetz des Gleichgewichts*," for the regulation of the wholesome antagonism of contiguous states as if springing up out of their freedom, as a half-way house to the international federation which he advocates.[70] In the *Verhaeltnis der Theorie zur Praxis im Voelkerrecht* (1793) he wrote:

> The maintenance of universal peace by means of the so-called Balance of Power in Europe is—like Swift's house, which a master-builder constructed in such perfect accord with all the laws of equilibrium, that when a sparrow alighted upon it, it immediately collapsed—a mere figment of the imagination.[71]

The doctrines of the American and French Revolutions seemed to offer an alternative principle for international society, fraternal, uncompetitive, above all simple. For all who were touched by these doctrines, the balance of power was condemned as an obsolete principle of the *Ancien Regime*, the diplomatic counterpart of hereditary absolute monarchy. The example of the United States, serenely aloof from the ordinary rules of foreign politics, had a powerful influence on English radicals in the nineteenth century. The policy of the balance of power was criticized by Cobden and Bright, mainly on practical grounds, as a source of constant wars and unnecessary entanglements, but with more lasting cogency on intellectual grounds, as a mischievous delusion that means so many different things that it means nothing at all. "So far as we can understand the subject," said Cobden, "the theory of a balance of power is a mere chimera—a creation of the politician's brain—a phantasm without definite form or tangible existence—a mere conjunction of syllables, forming words which convey sound without meaning." He combined ridicule with the most powerful reasoned attack in English political writing on the whole conception:

> The balance of power, then might, in the first place, be very well dismissed as *chimera*, because no state of things, such as the "disposition", "constitution", or "union", of European powers, referred to as the basis of their system, by Vattel, Gentz, and Brougham, ever did exist;—and, secondly, the theory could, on other grounds, be discarded as *fallacious*, since it gives no definition—whether by breadth of territory, number of inhabitants, or extent of wealth—according

[70] Kant, "Seventh principle," in Werke, Academy edn, Vol. viii, p. 26; William Hastie, *Kant's Principles of Politics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1891), pp. 19–20). [Ed. Hastie translated the title of this work as "Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitical Point of View." The phrase "*ein Gesetz des Gleichgewichts*" may be translated as "a law of balance."]

[71] Werke, Vol. viii, p. 312. [Ed. Hastie translated the title of this essay as "The Principle of Progress Considered in Connection with the Relation of Theory to Practice in International Law." See Hastie, Kant's Principles of Politics, pp. 63, 75.]

> to which, in balancing the respective powers, each state shall be estimated;—whilst, lastly, it would be altogether incomplete and inoperative, from neglecting or refusing to provide against, the silent and peaceful aggrandizements which spring from movements and labour. Upon these triple grounds, the question of the balance of power might be dismissed from further consideration.[72]

This sketches almost all the points of subsequent debate, from Cobden's day to our own.[73]

The English tradition of idealist internationalism and the American tradition of rejecting the balance of power converged in the First World War, to produce the League of Nations. In Wilson's view, "the great game, now forever discredited, of the balance of power" was abolished.[74] "There must be, not a balance of power, but a community of power; not organized rivalries, but an organized common peace."[75] And it became accepted doctrine that the balance of power was no longer the constituent principle of international society. Probably the most influential English textbook of international law is Oppenheim's. In its pre-War editions of 1905 and 1911 it described the balance of power as a political principle indispensable to the existence of international law.[76] In its post-war editions, and especially after Lauterpacht took over the editorship of it, this was replaced by a reference to the new international organizations. During the 1920s, that unique interlude in diplomatic history when no Great Power was left on the European

[72] *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden*, Vol. i (Ridgway, 1868), pp. 263, 269.

[73] [Ed.] Wight developed certain ideas in this regard in his lectures on the theory of international relations. He noted, for example, Denis Healey's "Cobdenite observation" about the Soviet launch of Sputnik:

> In the past it has only been possible to make a big change in the balance of power by gaining resources in territory outside one's own frontiers. The sputnik has demonstrated with spectacular effect that it is now possible to produce great changes in the balance of power by making better political and scientific use of the resources inside one's own territory, particularly when the resources are as ample as they are in Russia.
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> Denis Healey (April 1958) "The Sputnik and Western Defence," *International Affairs*, vol. 34, no.2 (April 1958), p. 154. See Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, Gabriele Wight and B. Porter, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991), p. 174.

[74] Address to Congress, February 11, 1918 (*The Messages and Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Vol. i (New York: Review of Reviews Corporation, 1924), p. 478).

[75] Address to the Senate, January 22, 1917 (ibid., p. 351).

[76] [Ed.] In the 1905 edition, for example, Oppenheim wrote,

> An equilibrium between the members of the Family of Nations is an indispensable condition of the very existence of International Law. If the States could not keep one another in check, all Law of Nations would soon disappear, as, naturally, an over-powerful State would tend to act according to discretion instead of according to law. Since the Westphalian Peace of 1648 the principle of balance of power has played a preponderant part in the history of Europe.
>
> Lassa Francis Lawrence Oppenheim, *International Law: A Treatise*, Vol. I, *Peace* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905), p. 185.

continent except an exhausted and pacific France, and the two Anglo-Saxon Great Powers had in their degrees retreated into self-sufficiency, the balance of power was banished from writings about contemporary international relations. Historians played their part. In a notable Chatham House address in 1923, Pollard sought with learning and acuteness to bury the idea;[77] and it became customary to refer to it as an obsolete principle, "that favourite objective of eighteenth-century statesmanship."[78]

But in the I930s it became increasingly difficult to suppress the obsolete principle of interpretation. By a coincidence, there were published in 1932 two books with titles that incorporated the phrase. *The Balance of the Continents* described a balance transformed through the sublimation of the element of power: "the continents are impelled to establish the equilibrium by economic interests and juridical ideals endangered by financial or political recklessness: it is the balance of cooperation, spiritualized social elements seeking a universal rhythm."[79] This may be taken as a late flower of the new orthodoxy: almost, in the circumstances, its *reductio ad absurdum.* The second book showed the older doctrine reasserting itself. *The New Balance of Power in Europe* was a straight political study of European developments: "Two political groups are racing to attain military supremacy. One of these groups seeks to maintain the political structure of Europe, the other strives to change it."[80]

Wilson had been able to repudiate the conception of the balance of power in 1918–19 with such immense authority only because the US under his leadership had been drawn into the system of the balance. The original idea of the League of Nations was to transform the temporary preponderance of power thus brought about into a permanent preponderance of law-abiding states against any breaker of the new Covenant. To the defeated Germans this resembled the balance of power in sense 8: *predominance-a Pax Anglo-Saxonica.* To the victors it resembled implicitly (for the phrase was seldom used) a transformation of the balance of power in sense 5; that the upholders of the collective system should have a margin of strength, as Smuts said, "which will give stability to that decentralization (brought about by the principle of national self-determination) and thereby guarantee the weak against the strong."[81] "It is obvious that the one indispensable condition of such a system of collective security is that the States who can be relied

[77] A. F. Pollard, "The Balance of Power," *Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs*, March 1923 Cf. his Wolsey (Longmans, 1929), pp. 119–120, and his letter to *The Times*, July 24, 1939, with the letter in reply from Sir John Orr, August 29, 1939.

[78] For example, A. Aspinall, *Reviewing Guedalla's* Palmerston in History, July 1929, N. S., Vol. xiv, p. 166.

[79] M. H. Cornejo, *The Balance of the Continents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 206.

[80] Valentine de Balla, *The New Balance of Power in Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932), "Preface."

[81] *The League of Nations—Practical Suggestions*, December 16, 1918. Extracts from this pamphlet are printed in *The History of the Peace Conference*, H. W. V. Temperley, ed., Vol. iii (Oxford: Frowde, 1920), pp. 52–54. On the balance of power and the founding of the League see further, History of the

upon to be loyal to it shall be superior in strength to those who may assail it."[82] Thus, at the center of all the surrounding controversy about the relations between Great Powers and small, the supposed injustice of the peace settlement, and the inadequate provisions for peaceful change, the League's supporters came to understand the League not as replacing but as perfecting the Concert of the Powers, and the principle of collective security not as a substitute for the balance of power but as improving, regulating, and institutionalizing it. It was "only a more scientific development of the doctrine of the balance of power as laid down by Pitt, Castlereagh and Palmerston."[83] The decisive breakdown of the League was in the end over a disputed interpretation of the balance of power—whether it was more important to check actual but local Italian aggrandizement in Africa, or to preserve the Stresa Front against potential but general German aggrandizement in Europe.[84]

The First World War had transformed the United States into the holder of the balance of power; the Second World War completed her involvement by making her into one of the weights of a simple balance. But at the same time the Charter of the United Nations proposed an institution further removed from the balance of power than the League had been. The voting procedure of the Security Council was the negation of the principle of balance: giving every Great Power the right to jam the movement of the scales at will, it offered the alternatives of community of power or anarchy. Its undesigned blessing was that it was incapable of working, and the idea of the community of power had a shorter life after 1945 than it had had after 1919. It can be found in Bevin's speeches until the Communist seizure of Czechoslovakia.[85] After that the balance of power becomes once more

Peace Conference, Vol. vi (Oxford: Frowde, 1924), pp. 575–577, and A. J. Toynbee, The World after the Peace Conference (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925), pp. 47–51.

[82] A. Salter, *Security* (London: Macmillan, 1939), p. 108. Cf. his Recovery (London: Bell, 1932), p. 278: "The definite addition of America's influence" to "the forces in the world supporting the 'collective' system of Covenant and [Kellogg] Pact" "would turn the balance decisively in their favour." Cf. J. L. Brierly, writing in 1942: "What is essential is a preponderance of force in the hands of those who are determined to maintain the peace" *The Basis of Obligation in International Law* (Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 272.

[83] C. K. Webster, *The Art and Practice of Diplomacy* (Chatto and Windus, 1961), p. 29.

[84] [Ed.] The Stresa Front was an accord concluded at Stresa by Britain, France, and Italy in April 1935 to oppose any further German violations of the Treaty of Versailles. It began to break down in June 1935 when Britain and Germany reached a naval agreement without consulting France and Italy. Italy's aggression against Ethiopia damaged Mussolini's relations with Britain and France and effectively ended the Stresa Front. Regarding the consequences of the Anglo-German naval agreement, see *The Memoirs of Anthony Eden, Earl of Avon*, Vol. 1, *Facing the Dictators* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), pp. 257–259. For the effects of the Italian aggression, see George W. Baer, *The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).

[85] [Ed.] The Communist coup d'état in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 led Ernest Bevin, then Britain's Foreign Secretary, to fear similar interventions in other countries, notably when coalition governments might include Communists in key posts controlling the police and information agencies. Bevin's determination to prevent further Communist interventions on the model of the Prague *coup* contributed to West European defense cooperation and the formation of NATO. Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945–1951*, Vol. III, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin* (London: Heinemann, 1983), pp. 486, 525–531, 546–547, 815.

a respectable and indeed indispensable part of the diplomatic vocabulary, and an object of almost metaphysical contemplation by the strategic analysts.

ls then the balance of power the guarantee of the independence of nations? Or is it the occasion of war? The only answer is that it is both. So long as the absence of international government means that Powers are primarily preoccupied with their survival, so long will they seek to maintain some kind of balance between them. It is easy to point to instances in which the final move in the rectification of the balance has been war. It is less easy, either to remember, or to establish, how often the balance of power has averted war. For the balance of power is not the "cause" of war; the cause of war, however one chooses to identify it, lies in the political conditions which the balance of power in some degree regulates and reduces to order. The alternative to the balance of power is not the community of power: unless this means federation, it is a chimera. International politics have never revealed, nor do they today, a habitual recognition among states of a community of interest overriding their separate interest, comparable to that which normally binds individuals within the state. And where conflicts of interest between organized groups are insurmountable, the only principle of order is to try to maintain, at the price of perpetual vigilance, an even distribution of power. The alternatives are either universal anarchy, or universal dominion. The balance of power is generally regarded as preferable to the first, and most people have not yet been persuaded that the second is so preferable to the balance of power that they will easily submit to it.

2

The Balance of Power and International Order

The symbol or metaphor of the balance was originally used in civilized discourse to represent, not international order, but moral order.* The weighing of souls is a common scene in the religious papyri of Ancient Egypt, with Anubis the god of death manipulating the scales. It became a theme of European art. Anubis gave place to the Eros figure on the Boston Throne,[1] and then to the Archangel Michael of innumerable Last Judgements. The notion of the balance of the Lord was not arbitrary: it was the test of a man's individual worth, which was of his own making. If a bad ruler, like Belshazzar, was laid in the balances and found wanting, a good man could say, with Job, "Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity."[2]

The first appearance of the balance of power in European international relations comes towards the climax of the episode of the Trojan War recorded by Homer. When Achilles was chasing Hector round the walls of Troy, and they had come for the fourth time to the springs of the Scamander, Zeus the father of gods and men "lifted on high his golden scales, and putting sentence of death in either pan, on the one side for Achilles, on the other for horse-taming Hector, he raised the balance by the middle of the beam. The beam came down on Hector's side, spelling his doom. He was a dead man."[3] Here was a new use of the balance, to show not what the individual had made of himself, but what fate had decided. It has become a symbol of tragic destiny, of unavailing heroism, of untimely death. The idea of the balance of power has traveled far since then. It has ceased to be a pair of scales held by a divine figure; it has ceased, on the whole, to be the metaphor for decision at the climax of conflict. But when Cobden attacked it as a chimera or phantasm,[4]

* Wight's essay. "The Balance of Power and International Order," was published posthumously in Alan James, ed., *The Bases of International Order: Essays in Honour of C. A. W. Manning* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 85–115

[1] [Ed.] The Boston Throne, a first century B.C. Roman sculpture at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, depicts the weighing of souls by Eros.

[2] Daniel 5:27; Job 31:6.

[3] *Iliad*, xxii, 209–213.

[4] [Ed.] Wight cited key passages from Cobden in his chapter entitled "The Balance of Power" in *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966, and London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966). This chapter is reproduced in the current volume, *Foreign Policy and Security Strategy*.

Foreign Policy and Security Strategy. Martin Wight, Oxford University Press. © Martin Wight (2023).
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and Bright as a foul idol to which the lives of hundreds of thousands have been sacrificed,[5] and when their successors have argued that the balance of power is the cause of wars, they have been repudiating the implication of tragic fatality which the Greeks gave to it, in the way that secular and liberal thinkers have repudiated the doctrine of original sin as an affront to human dignity and an obstacle to man's self-fulfillment.

It must be noted, too, that Homer's use of the figure of the balance has no connection with international order. It is the symbol, not of stable peace, but of the culminating point of struggle. This sense on the whole it retained in classical antiquity. The idea of the balance flits intermittently through the pages of the Greek historians, and has tempted some writers since David Hume to discover a system and doctrine of the balance of power in the Hellenic states-system.[6] But it is perhaps only in one speech of Demosthenes, *For the Megalopolitans*,[7] that one finds an awareness of the international relations of Greece as a pattern of equilibria, a system containing many members each of which had an interest in the relative power of all the others. For the rest, the idea of balance is no more than the simple rule of balancing your enemies off against one another. This is the only conception in international theory that the first modern students of diplomatic relations at the time of the Renaissance derived from antiquity; and they were finding in it, of course, a confirmation of their own experience.

The system of the balance of power provides a striking example of the priority of practice to theory in politics. Statesmen were operating it before they and their diplomatists had formulated the rules, and still longer before thinkers had formulated the concepts for analyzing and describing the rules. The prerequisites were sovereign states that could effectively and continuously organize their human and territorial resources; a diplomatic system that provided them with a regular flow of information; and a sufficient sense of common interest among them. Ancient Greece had had the first, but not the second or third. They first appeared together in fourteenth-century Italy, the deserted battle-ground of Empire and Papacy, where the political units were small. In this little world the balance of power matured with extraordinary rapidity. The wars at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when first Visconti Milan, then Ladislas of Naples, and then Visconti Milan a second time tried to establish a Pan-Italian monarchy, resembled those of the fourth-century Greek states-system. There were a Power aiming at hegemony, a disorganized opposition, other Great Powers hoping to prolong the conflicts of their neighbors and themselves to remain neutral.

[5] [Ed.] Bright's condemnation of the balance of power as a "foul idol—fouler than any heathen tribe ever worshipped"—may be found in George Barnett Smith, *The Life and Speeches of the Right Honourable John Bright, M.P.*, Vol. IV. (London: Thomas C. Jack, 1886), p. 479.

[6] [Ed.] David Hume, "Of the Balance of Power," in *Political Discourses*, second edn (Edinburgh: Printed by R. Fleming for A. Kincaid and A. Donaldson, 1752), pp. 101–114.

[7] [Ed.] For background on this speech, see Christos Karvounis, "Political Career," in *The Oxford Handbook of Demosthenes* Gunther Martin, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 324–329.

But now the two historical experiences diverged. Florence proved to have more civic unity and a firmer political purpose than fourth-century Athens, although she had no Demosthenes. She built an alliance of free states, and then stood audaciously alone, against the colossal preponderance of Milan. Hans Baron has compared the threat of universal tyranny by Giangaleazzo Visconti to that offered later by Napoleon and Hitler. "This is the only perspective from which one can adequately reconstruct the crisis of the summer of 1402 and grasp its material and psychological significance for the political history of the Renaissance, and in particular for the growth of the Florentine civic spirit."[8] It is an example of how each generation reinterprets history in the light of its own experience. A generation later Cosimo de Medici boldly broke with tradition, and allied Florence to a weakened Milan against a new threat from Venice. A generation later again, when Lorenzo the Magnificent presided over Italy, there was a complex mutable equilibrium, based on the general acceptance of a status quo. Lorenzo maintained the alliance between the Medici and the Sforzas of Milan; he added the King of Naples whose interests were also against change; the three formed a counterpoise to Venice, the aggressive and potentially unifying Power, and to the restless Sixtus IV; later Lorenzo brought in the vacillating Innocent VIII; he discouraged political upheaval in the smaller states. Unstable and transitory though this balance was, it was a new state of affairs in human experience. The ancient world had not had a counterpart to Lorenzo, and had seen no such tour de force of diplomacy.

What was its purpose? Was the balance of power seen as the basis of international order? Not yet. Historically the demand for freedom came first. It combined external freedom, or independence, with internal freedom, the antithesis of despotism. The aim of Florentine policy was *libertas Italiae:* to preserve the republics for the sake of civic freedom, and so to preserve the general independence of states. Next came a general desire for peace. The term balance entered the vocabulary of international politics in the time of Lorenzo, when the Concert of Italy was perhaps already over-ripe.[9] The conception of an international order developed last of all.

There is no contemporary theorist of the Concert of Italy. Machiavelli is the analyst of how a balance of power collapses and shows little understanding of how it is maintained.[10] Guicciardini was a boy of eleven at the time when the French

[8] Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*, second edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 40.

[9] The term was first used by Bernardo Rucellai in his history of the French invasion, written between 1495 and 1509 (*De Bello Italico Commentarius*, first printed in London, 1724). See E. W. Nelson, "The Origins of Modern Balance-of-Power Politics," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 1943, vol. i, pp. 124–142, which summarizes the historiography of the notion before Baron's book appeared; and Felix Gilbert, "Bernardo Rucellai and the Ortio Oricellari: a Study on the Origin of Modern Political Thought," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 1949, vol. xii, pp. 103–131. See also Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini* (Princeton University Press, 1965) especially chapter 6, section iii.

[10] See Herbert Butterfield, "The Balance of Power," in *Diplomatic Investigations*,Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds. (London, Allen & Unwin, 1966), pp. 134–136.

invasion destroyed the Italian Concert, and his famous account of the golden age was written half a century later. Though the chief purpose of the entente between Naples, Milan, and Florence was to contain the power of Venice, he wrote, the allies were not bound to one another in a sincere friendship; they were full of mutual jealousies, watching each other's movements assiduously, and upsetting each other's projects for extending territory or gaining prestige. Yet this did not make peace less settled. On the contrary, it stimulated all the Powers to a greater readiness and urgency in extinguishing the sparks that might cause a new conflagration. Thus the foundations of Italian peace were so well laid, and the structure was so counterbalanced that nobody either feared present disturbance to it nor could imagine what accidents of diplomacy or armaments might overthrow it in the future.[11] Guicciardini's description of the fifteenth-century Concert of Italy describes also much of the nineteenth-century Concert of Europe. His language is curiously similar to Churchill's descriptions of the European balance of power at the beginning of *The World Crisis*—for almost certainly Churchill had not read Guicciardini.[12] Nevertheless, Guicciardini was a historian; he described but did not analyze, and contributed little to the theory of the balance of power.

II

Though an effective balance of power first appeared in Italy, it was in the different conditions north of the Alps that the principles of the balance began to be formulated. It has sometimes been said that the earliest exposition in European literature of the theory of the balance of power is the digression in Commynes's *Memoirs*, in which he explores the theme that every created being in this world, individuals, and institutions alike, has been provided by God with some other thing in opposition to it, "to keep it within just bounds of fear and humility." Thus the rebellious city of Ghent is a thorn in the side of the dukes of Burgundy; France has England as a check, England Scotland, Spain Portugal; in Italy the principalities are curbed and kept in check by the republics, like Venice, Florence, Genoa, and Siena, and they check one another; in Germany, Austria is against Bavaria, and also has the Swiss for her enemy, Cleves is against Guelders, Guelders against Juliers, the Hanseatic League against Denmark. Commynes adds that his lack of knowledge does not permit him to extend the survey to Asia and Africa, but one hears that these have wars and factions like us, "*et encores plus mecaniquement*."[13] But

[11] *Storia d'Italia* (written 1538–40, first published 1562) Book i, chapters 1–2. See the first translation into modern English: Guicciardini, *History of Italy and History of Florence*, J. R. Hale ed. Cecil Grayson, trans. (New York: Washington Square Press, 1964), pp. 86–89.

[12] Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis 1911–1918*, abridged and revised edn (London: Macmillan, 1931), pp. 43, 107.

[13] [Ed.: "and even more mechanically."] Philippe de Commynes, *Memoirs*, Book v, ch. xviii (written 1488–1501, first published 1524); J. Calmette, ed., Vol. ii (Paris: Champion, 1925), pp. 207–211.

when one examines this remarkable passage, it seems that what he is describing is not (despite the surprisingly early comparison of the political world to mechanism) the operation of the balance of power, but a distinct and simpler principle of international politics. It is the first recognition that the rivalries within the states-system fall into a kind of chequer-board pattern, where contiguous states tend to be hostile to one another, and their mutual hostility can be a restraint upon both. His observation or experience does not allow him yet to draw the corollaries with which the states-system will become familiar: that as your neighbor is your natural enemy, so the Power in your enemy's rear is your natural ally ("We are their second front, and they are ours," as Nehru said of the Indian and Soviet common interest in respect of China); and that allies are preferable, other things being equal, in proportion to their distance ("*Gallum amicum sed non vicinum*," as John de Witt said of the French).[14] These are rules of international alignment which Namier described as "the system of odd-and-even numbers."[15] It is the most rudimentary stage of the balance of power, because it sees the policies of states as decided primarily by geopolitical position and common frontiers; and these, though always weighty matters, can in a more advanced system be modified by other considerations.

The passage in Commynes's *Memoirs* surveys the European states-system as a whole, Italy and the Transalpine states together. And two years after Commynes died, the odds-and-evens system that he had discerned was seen for the first time flickering connectedly across the breadth of Europe from Valladolid and Naples to Edinburgh. The Holy League was formed in 1511 between the Pope, Venice, the Swiss, Spain, and the Emperor, to drive the French out of Italy. The war widened. It became the Holy League versus France versus England versus Scotland; and because Julius II had resolved to expel from Italy the French ally whom he himself had previously invited in; the flower of Scottish chivalry died on Flodden's fatal field.[16]

Europe was a society looser in texture than its Italian sub-system, and retained longer the hierarchical traditions of the past. Instead of the five Italian Great Powers of comparable caliber,[17] there was the *respublica Christiana*, with the Pope as its moral authority and arbiter, a figure like the Secretary-General of the UN, and the Emperor as its honorary president, a figure with resemblances to the

[14] [Ed.] "Have the Frenchman as a friend but not as a neighbor." John de Witt (1625–1672) was a Dutch politician and statesman.

[15] L. B. Namier, *Conflicts* (London: Macmillan, 1942), p. 14; *Vanished Supremacies* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1958), p. 170.

[16] [Ed.] The phrase "Flodden's fatal field" derives from Sir Walter Scott's poem "Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field" (1808). The English forces defeated those of Scotland in the Battle of Flodden, fought in 1513; and the Scottish dead included King James IV.

[17] [Ed.] The "five Italian Great Powers of comparable calibre" were Florence, Milan, Naples, the Papal States, and Venice.

Queen, Head of the Commonwealth.[18] To these two was added a third authority more potent than either, the King of France, eldest son of the Church, senior monarch of Christendom, successor of Charlemagne, leader of the Crusades, *rex Christianissimus*. Under Charles VIII and Louis XII France resumed the hegemonial position she had held under St Louis and Philip the Fair. But when there was elected as Emperor a Duke of Burgundy who was also king of a united Spain that had become the center of a world-dominion, France was over-matched, and a decisive duality was set up. Habsburg and Valois renewed and widened the ancient conflict of Hohenstaufen and Angevin. It was from this bipolarity that the system of the balance of power was born, as to a similar bipolarity it has returned. The balance was invented by the states—the Papacy, Venice, England—that found their security in playing off France and Spain, "by balancing these two Emperiall greatnesses one with another."[19]

The historical links between the European balance of power and the precursory Italian balance are thin. Guicciardini's book was quoted by the generation that resisted Philip II, but there is little evidence that Florentine precedents affected the policies of Transalpine rulers. The European balance would probably have come into being, out of its own conditions, without the Italian example. But one principle of statecraft from which the policy evolved can be traced back to Italy. This is the maxim *Divide et impera*, which, like the chequer-board pattern of international relations, was formulated by Philippe de Commynes. He says that his master Louis XI was a greater expert in the science of separating his enemies than any other ruler he knew, and that Louis' first essay in it was prompted by the advice of his admired ally Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan.[20]

Machiavelli describes a policy of divide and rule, though not under that name, as one of the arts of peace whereby a faction-ridden state may be brought voluntarily to submit.[21] He also mentions it as a means of breaking up a hostile coalition.[22] He discusses the related issue of the problem of a neutral's policy in a neighbor's war, and gives equivocal advice: usually it is better to side *against* the stronger Power, but in times of necessity to side *with* him may pay off.[23] He assumes that states are normally on the offensive. The same unprincipled self-assertion is seen in the naïve device Henry VIII sported (if indeed he did) at the Field of Cloth of Gold,[24]

[18] Italy was the Emperor's East of Suez. Maximilian's pretensions to influence the course of events during Charles VIII's invasion resembled Harold Wilson's to influence the Israeli-Arab War of 1967.

[19] Fulke Greville, *Life of Sir Philip Sidney* (written 1612–16, first published 1652; Nowell Smith, ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 58.

[20] *Memoirs*, Calmette, ed., i., 57, 89, 96.

[21] *Discourses*, ii.25.2, contrast *The Prince*, ch. xx.13.

[22] *Discourses*, ii.14.3.

[23] *The Prince*, ch. xxi.

[24] [Ed.] The Field of the Cloth of Gold was a meeting in 1520 of Francis I, King of France, and Henry VIII, King of England.

cui adhaereo praeest.[25] How did he settle which side to adhere to? Leo X showed more craft in the saying reported by the Venet ian Ambassador, that when a man has committed himself to one side, he must take care to reinsure by negotiating with the other.[26]

From these *jejune* precepts there slowly developed the principles of the balance of power.[27] The assumption underlying the maxim "divide and rule" changed from aggressive to defensive; its application was recognized as siding *against* the dominant Power. Divide and rule was reinterpreted as di vide to survive; and then, while Spain soared higher above her French rival, as unite to survive. The transition of ideas can be seen in the *Appeal to the Princes of the Christian World* which Marnix de Ste. Aldegonde published in the Dutch cause in 183. He asserts the general duty in foreign policy of anticipating the expansion of an aggressive Power, as an inundation by the sea is controlled "through some strong wall speedily erected and by the diligence of all the neighbors and borderers, each helping other in so great peril." To illustrate the policy successfully followed, he cites how Rome "never suffered any prince or commonwealth whatsoever to rise into too great power," and Venice's policy of divide and rule, "that thus restraining the forces of the Italian princes and commonwealth in equal balance, they might keep them from all hope of subduing them [i.e., the Venetians] by force of arms," as well as the inevitable Lorenzo de Medici. But Rome, and Venice in her prime, were themselves great expansionist Powers, not cooperative balancers. And to illustrate the unhappy consequences of neglecting the policy of balance, he cites self-contradict orily the peoples subjugated by Rome, the Italians and Gauls, as well as the Near East conquered by Saracens and Ottomans. The modern notion of an international alliance against an overmighty Power is here struggling to free itself from the dominating memories of imperial antiquity.[28]

The struggle between France and Spain from the League of Venice in 1495 to the Treaty of Cambrai in 1529 had been pursued amid the arbitrary, transient, and futile combinations of the Minor Powers with the protagonists. The subsequent association of France with the Turk on the one hand and with the German princes on the other did not embody a conception of international order, and was aggressive in intention. It expressed no common interest except the desire of the

[25] [Ed.] The Latin maxim is usually translated as "he whom I support will prevail." Henry VIII of England was seen as holding the balance between France and the Habsburg Empire.

[26] See Ranke, *History of the Popes*, Vol. i (London: Bell, Bohn's Popular Library, 1913), p. 67.

[27] The only attempt to survey the literature is Ernst Kaeber, *Die Idee des europaïschen Gleichgewichts in der publizistischen Literatur vom* 16.*bis zur Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Duncker, 1907). See also Gaston Zeller, Aspects *de la Politique Française sous l' Ancien Régime* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), ch. ix, "*Le principe d'équilibre dans la politique internationale avant 1789.*"

[28] Philippe de Marnix de Sainte Aldegonde, *Oeuvres: Correspondance et Mélanges* (Brussels: Van Meenen, 1860), p. 369; English translation, *A pithie, and Most Earnest Exhortation, Concerning the Estate of Christiandome, Together with the Means to Preserve and Defend the Same; Dedicated to all Christian Kings, Princes and Potentates, with all Other the Estates of Christiandome* (Antwerp, 1583), pp. 4–11.

dynamic Powers to change the status quo, like the Anti-Comintern Pact of 1937, but without the veneer of doctrinal agreement. It is in the struggle against Philip II that we find the beginnings of the grand alliance, the master-institution of the balance of power. Two potential Great Powers, the United Provinces and England, formed a common front with France against a Spain that was now aiming at universal monarchy. They described what united them as "the common cause." Though it was originally the Protestant cause, it was not impaired when Henry IV declared himself a Catholic.

The developing system of the balance, when the war was over, may be traced in two different documents. 1. There is an account of international society in 1609 by a British diplomatist, ascribed to Sir Thomas Overbury, that represents Christendom as forming a double balance: Spain, France, and England in the West, and Russia, Poland, Sweden, and Denmark in the East, with Germany balancing itself in the middle.[29] This is conceptually an advance on Commynes's picture, and shows the evolution of the chequer-board pattern into a true system of the balance of power. 2. The Grand Design, which Sully attributed to Henry IV, was the first general European plan to make the balance of power the basis of international order. Repeatedly declaring the aim of international order, it describes a "*confédération … nommée l'Association très-chrestienne*."[30] And though it does not employ the phrase "balance of power," it goes further: it is a scheme of collective security. Europe is to be reorganized along rational lines, foreshadowing the Vienna Settlement, into fifteen Powers of approximately equal extent and strength: "*à rendre d'esgale estenduë de païs, puissance et force, les dominateurs hereditaires de la chrestienté, et poser entre tous des limites si certaines, que nul des quinze ne puisse entreprendre d'autrepasser celles sans s'attirer l'attaquement des autres quatorze sur les bras*."[31]

[29] Sir Thomas Overbury, *Observations on the State of France, 1609 under Henry IV*, in *Stuart Tracts 1603–1693*, C. H. Firth, ed. (London: Constable, 1903), p. 227. See G. N. Clark, *The Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), p. 154.

[30] [Ed.: The Grand Design envisaged a "confederation … named the Very Christian Association."] *Mémoires des sages et royales economies d'Estat de Henry le Grand*, in J. F. Michaud et J. J. F. Poujoulat, *Nouvelle Collection des Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France*, second series, Vol. iii (Paris: Guyot, 1850), p. 154b; cf. p. 370a.

[31] [Ed.: "To make equal the size of the countries, their power and force, the hereditary leading powers of Christianity, and to establish among them all such certain limits that none of the fifteen can undertake to go beyond them without attracting on itself an attack by the other fourteen."] *Mémoires*, p. 154b; cf. p. 423a. The Memoirs were first published in 1638 and 1664; the best edition occupies Volumes ii and iii of the second series of Michaud et Poujoulat. In 1745 Pierre-Mathurin de l'Ecluse des Loges published a free adaptation, which collected the scattered references to the Grand Design into a final book. This was translated into English, and also into the language of the balance, in 1759 by Mrs Charlotte Lennox (whom Dr Johnson considered superior to Hannah More and Fanny Burney). "*Il ne doit être question que de les faire subsister toutes, avec quelque égalité*" (London: de l'Ecluse, new edn, 1747, Vol. iii, p. 363), becomes "The whole, therefore, of what seems proper and necessary to be done, is to support them all in a kind of equilibrium" (Lennox, *Bohn's French Memoirs*, 1846, Vol. iv, p. 224). On the Grand Design see G. Butler, *Studies in Statecraft* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), ch. iv; C. J. Burckhardt, *Vier Historische Betrachtungen* (Zürich: Manesse, 1953), ch. ii;

But it took a century for the system of the European balance of power to grow out of the two dualities in which it was involved. One was the struggle for mastery between France and Burgundy-Spain, which in a manner of speaking was the European balance in embryo. The other was the doctrinal conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism, which in the short run brought the two dominant Powers together against heresy, but in the long run gave a Protestant flavor to the grand alliance against the greater of them. It is a paradox that "the common cause" in the Thirty Years War meant the Protestant cause more definitely than it did in the War of the Armada; and that although Richelieu made a more decisive contribution to the defeat of the Habsburgs in the second war than Henry of Navarre had done in the first, his constructive diplomacy, his rudimentary sense of international order, was inferior. His own theory of the balance remained on the primitive level of divide and rule: "*Il semble que la providence de Dieu, qui veut tenir les choses en balance, a voulu que la situation de la France séparât les Etats d'Espagne pour les affaiblir en les divisant.*"[32]

In the year in which Sully, long retired from office, published the first instalment of his elaborate and perplexing memoirs, the Due de Rohan brought out his little pioneer study of national interests in international relations. It was dedicated to Richelieu and probably reflects Richelieu's ideas. It contains the earliest statement of the bipolar metaphor:

> One ought to lay for a ground, that there be two Powers in Christendom, which are as the two Poles, from whence descend the influences of peace and war upon other states, to wit, the Houses of France and Spain. This of Spain finding itself augmented all at once, hath not been able to conceal the design she had to make herself mistress, and cause the sun of a new Monarchy to rise in the West. That of France is forthwith carried to make a counterpoise. The other Princes are annexed to the one or the other, according to their interest.[33]

But how thin and incomplete is Rohan's survey of international affairs. Not only did he fail to see the incipient collapse of Spain; he did not distinguish the independent interests and policies of Vienna from those of Madrid; and most astonishing, perhaps, he altogether ignored the role of Sweden, which had lately

André Puharré, *Les projets d'organisation européenne d'après le Grand Dessein de Henri IV et de Sully* (Paris: Union Federaliste Inter-Universitaire, 1954).

[32] [Ed.: "It seems that the providence of God, who wishes to keep things in balance, wanted France's situation to separate the States of Spain in order to weaken them by dividing them."] *Testament Politique*, L. André, ed. (Paris: Laffont, 1947), p. 408.

[33] Henri, due de Rohan, *A Treatise of the Interest of the Princes and States of Christendome* (Paris, 1638; English trans., London, 1641), preface, pp. xiii–xiv. On Rohan see F. Meinecke, *Machiavellism* (London: Routledge, 1957), pp. 162–195. The bipolar figure was quoted with approval by the first of the anti-French publicists in the next generation, Franz Paul von Lisola, *The Buckler of State and Justice,* Frankfurt-am-Main and English trans. (London, 1667), article vi, pp. 277–278.

given the law to France,[34] and still upset any dualist interpretation of European politics. Yet we may note that the Latin translation of Rohan's book, published at Leyden in 1645, was re-entitled with a word that was to ring through the next century of diplomatic literature: *Trutina Statuum Europae*, the balance of the states of Europe.

The earliest stable balance that Europe knew was not between Great Powers but between the religious confessions. It was reached, after twenty-five years of conflict, when the principle of parity between Catholics and Lutherans in the Empire was accepted at the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. In 1589, at the climax of the great war in western Europe, Botero could write, "Germany has also long been tranquil because it is divided into two leagues, whose powers being equally balanced none would dare move against another for fear of arousing the whole league."[35] And he compared this with Lorenzo's policy in Italy. But the balance he described had already been undermined, as a stable balance often is. It excluded the dynamic third confession, Calvinism, which had already established its territorial headquarters in Geneva in 1541. Scotland went Calvinist in 1560, the Palatinate in 1564, and Calvinism obtained legal recognition in France in 1598. Therefore Sully's Grand Design based a new international order on recognizing the three confessions, provided that recognition was coupled with a non-proliferation treaty:

> *Chacune de ces trois religions se trouvant aujourd'hui établie en Europe, de manière qu'il n'y a aucune apparence qu'on pût venir à bout d'y en détruire aucune des trois, et que l'espérience a suffisament montré*
>
> *l'inutilité et les dangers de cette entreprise; il n'y a rien de mieux à faire, que de les y laisser subsister toutes trois, et même de les fortifier: de manière cependant que cette indulgence ne puisse dans la suite ouvrir la porte à tout ce que le caprice pourroit faire imaginer de faux dogmes, qu'on doit avoir un soin particulier d'étouffer dans leur naissance.*[36]

This recognition came about at the Peace of Westphalia, and the proliferation of Christian sects soon afterwards lost international importance.

[34] See Michael Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, Vol. ii (London: Longman, 1958), pp. 466–469, 585–587.

[35] G. Botero, *The Reason of State*, Waley, trans., Book vi (London: Routledge, 1956), p. 125.

[36] [Ed.:

> Given that each of these three religions is today established in Europe in such a way that it appears impossible that one could destroy any of the three, and that experience has shown sufficiently the uselessness and the dangers of such an effort, there is nothing better to do than to allow all three of them to live on, and even to strengthen them, in a way nonetheless that this indulgence cannot as a consequence open the door to everything that caprice might imagine with false dogmas, which one must be particularly careful to suffocate at their birth.]. The crisp formulation is due to the Abbé de l'Ecluse des Loges: *Memoires de Sully,* new edn, Vol. iii, (London: 1747), p. 373.
>
> Cf. Michaud et Poujoulat, *Mémoires*, Vol. iii, pp. 349–350, 429–430.

The notion of the international balance of power, as we have argued, did not derive from antiquity. But there *was* a political theory that had come down in almost unbroken continuity from Plato's *Laws*, Aristotle, and Polybius, the theory of the mixed constitution.[37] In the seventeenth century this theory almost pre-empted the metaphor of balance for the internal ordering of the state. How it converged with or enriched the theory of a balance between states has been little investigated. The theory of the mixed constitution found expression not only in Machiavelli and Harrington, but also in the constitutionalism of the Conciliarists, the federalism of Althusius, and the ideas of a composite state developed by his successors. We must notice that the countries which were to do most to develop the practice and theory of the balance of power were the Netherlands, Germany, and England, where the prevalent doctrines of bureaucratic absolutism were most tempered by other and older traditions. The Dutch were the European pioneers of constitutional liberties and federalism.[38] The Germans, after the peace of Westphalia, sought to reinterpret the constitution of the Empire in confederal terms, derived from theories of the composite state.[39] English writers, Halifax, Swift, and Davenant expounded the joint doctrines of the balance of internal and external power, and were joined by Fénelon.[40] The secularizing of European politics after Westphalia did not only enhance the power of the state; it bred a concern for ecumenical understanding, toleration, and constitutional government, shown in different ways by Pufendorf, Leibniz, and Locke; and this was the climate in which the doctrine of the international balance came into flower.

> These secular purposes, however, had this much of religion left in them that they were not ethically neutral. In the wars which were not called wars of religion, great principles were at stake. Englishmen and Dutchmen fought for the liberties of Europe, against Frenchmen who fought for their country and for their kings.[41]

Thus, if the struggle against Philip II had brought a balance of power into systematic operation, it was the struggle against Louis XIV that raised it to the

[37] See Kurt von Fritz, *The Theory of the Mixed Constitution in Antiquity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954).

[38] See J. N. Figgis, *Studies of Political Thought from Gerson to Grotius,* second edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916), ch. vii; E. H. Kossmann, "The Development of Dutch Political Theory in the Seventeenth Century," in *Britain and the Netherlands*, J. S. Bromley and E. H. Kossmann, eds. (London: Chatto, 1960), ch. 5.

[39] See Otto von Gierke, *Natural Law and the Theory of Society*, Ernest Barker, trans., Vol. i, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), pp. 154–159, 196–197; and *The Development of Political Theory*, B. Freyd, trans. (New York: Norton, 1939), part ii, chapter v; cf. Leonard Krieger, *The Politics of Discretion: Pufendorf and the Acceptance of Natural Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 153–169, 192–200.

[40] Halifax, *The Character of a Trimmer* (1685); Swift, *A Discourse of the Contests and Dissentions in Athens and Rome* (1701), ch. i; Davenant, *Essays upon the Balance of Power, etc.* (1701); Fénelon, *Examen de conscience sur les devoirs de la royauté* (circa 1702).

[41] Sir George Clark, *War and Society in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 57.

level of theory. The balance of power now became a major theme of European political culture. But it owed most to the least articulate and theoretical of great statesmen, William III. He devoted his life to the most single-minded practical demonstration of the policy of the balance of power in European history. Nor was it for him, as it was for the opponents of Philip II, only the instrument of successful war against a universal tyrant. "For William III, Europe was a reality: 'the well-being of the whole of Europe' was both an aim which he pursued and an expression which frequently in one form or another, occurs in his correspondence."[42] In the long negotiations over the Spanish succession, and in the Grand Alliance of 1701, which is the only grand alliance in European history that has been concluded in advance of a general war and with the partial aim of averting the war, he was seeking a balance of power that would be the basis of international order. His purpose was that afterwards enshrined in the treaty of Utrecht, "that the peace and tranquility of the Christian world may be ordered and stabilized in a just balance of power, which is the best and most solid foundation of mutual friendship and a lasting general concord."[43]

Henceforward, for two hundred years, the balance of power was generally accepted among diplomatists and statesmen as the constituent principle of European international society. It became the orthodoxy of British foreign policy, though an orthodoxy always vigorously debated.[44] English historians projected it backwards, as Bacon had done, to enhance the national tradition. Rymer, in the dedication to Queen Anne of the fourteenth volume of his *Foedera* in 1712, said that Henry VIII "held the balance of power in his hand, and the scale turned according to his direction."[45] In 1727 the phrase "the preservation of the balance of power in Europe" was introduced into the preamble of the annual Mutiny Act, to describe the purposes of the British army, and it remained there (with a few lapses) until 1867. The balance of power was even recognized as the condition of private prosperity. When the second Earl of Godolphin came out of retirement in 1735 to take the seals of office, Isaac Hawkins Browne sang, perhaps ironically,

> *The balance of pow'r?* ah! till that is restor'd,
> What solid delight can retirement afford?[46]

[42] E. H. Kossmann, *In Praise of the Dutch Republic*, inaugural lecture (London: H. K. Lewis, 1963), p. 16.

[43] [Ed.] This passage from the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 derives from the translation in Sir Geoffrey Butler and Simon Maccoby, *The Development of International Law* (Longmans, 1928), p. 65, cited in Wight, "The Balance of Power," in *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966, and London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), p. 153. This chapter is reproduced in the current volume, *Foreign Policy and Security Strategy*.

[44] Cf. Richard Pares, *The Historian's Business* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), pp. 131–139.

[45] [Ed.] Thomas Rymer, England's Historiographer Royal in 1692–1713, is best known for his *Foedera*, a compilation of all the agreements that England concluded since 1101 with foreign Powers.

[46] "The Fire Side: A Pastoral Soliloquy," 1735, in the Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse, p. 300.

It was the political counterpart of Newtonian physics. The sovereign states followed their ordered paths in a harmony of mutual attraction and repulsion like the gravitational law that swings the planets in their orbits. Perhaps no statesmanship was needed. As Grotius had said that natural law would be binding even if God did not exist, so Rousseau said that the balance of power was self-regulating whether or not anybody troubled to maintain it.[47]

The crisis of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars lifted the literature of the balance of power to its highest flights. Burke's writings against the Revolution, the historical works of Heeren and the Göttingen School, Brougham in the *Edinburgh Review* and his *Colonial Policy*, Gentz's *Fragments*, surpass the writings of a century earlier in richness of thought and understanding of the states-system, and have not themselves been since surpassed. This was the classic age of the doctrine of the balance. In the Treaty of Chaumont of 1814, which was the foundation of the Congress system and the Concert of Europe, the victorious Great Powers declared that their alliance had "for its object the maintenance of the balance of Europe, to secure the repose and independence of the Powers, and to prevent the invasions which for so many years have devastated the world."[48] The Vienna Settlement was founded on the principle of the balance in a more considered and comprehensive way than the Utrecht Settlement had been. The Concert of Europe in the nineteenth century was the highest expression of the system of balance that history had recorded, a system operating with comparative silence and smoothness while the intellectual criticism grew sharper and alternative theories of international relations grew stronger.

III

This is the point, then, at which we may stop and ask, What *was* the balance of power in its heyday? What were the principles of the system? Many of the criticisms that were afterwards made of it showed misunderstanding or ignorance of what had been written by its exponents. If we abstract from the historical development which it underwent, we might reduce the system to the following fifteen propositions. These differ from Morton Kaplan's "essential rules" of the balance of power system in that they describe the system rather than prescribe the actions and assign the functions of its members, and are presented as the consensus of many statesmen and publicists.[49] The quotations that illustrate them could be multiplied from a wider range.

[47] Grotius, *De Jure Belli ac Pacis*, prolegomena, para. 11; Rousseau, "*Extrait du Projet de Paix Perpetuelle*" in Political Writings, C. E. Vaughan, ed., Vol. i., (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 370.

[48] Article xvi. See W. A. Phillips, *The Confederation of Europe*, second edn (London: Longman 1920), pp. 74–75.

[49] See Morton Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: Wiley, Science Editions, 1964), p. 23. [Ed. See Wight's critical analysis of Kaplan's book in Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 119–120. Wight's work is grounded in historical evidence of the actual behavior and thought of politicians and diplomats who

1. Power should be distributed throughout the community of states, in such a way that no single state should ever become strong enough to dominate all the rest. There should be no crippling superiorities of power among the members of the states-system. "If that system is not merely to exist, but to be maintained without constant perils and violent concussions, each member which infringes it must be in a condition to be coerced, not only by the collective strength of the other members, but by any majority of them, if not by one individual."[50] The balance "can hardly be said to exist when one party is permanently secure from attacks by the other."[51]

2. It did not follow, however, as Sully had imagined in his Grand Design, that the balance of power required an unattainable equality among the members of the states-system. The balance of power presupposed all their historical diversity. "The original inequality of the parties in such a union as is here described is not an accidental circumstance, much less a casual evil," said Gentz;

> but it is in a certain degree to be considered as the previous condition and foundation of the whole system. Had the surface of the globe been divided into equal parts, no such union would ever have taken place; and an eternal war of each against the whole is probably the only event we should have heard of. It is not how much power one or other possess, but whether he possess it in such a manner that he cannot with impunity encroach upon that of the rest.[52]

3. Such a distribution of power was the condition of international freedom. As it had been the guarantee of the *libertas Italiae* in the fifteenth century, so it became the guarantee of "the liberties of Europe," the phrase traditional since William III's time. "*Empêcher le voisin d'être trop puissant, ce n'est point faire un mal; c'est se garantir de la servitude et en garantir ses autres voisins; en un mot, c'est travailler à la liberté, à la tranquillité, au salut public.*"[53] "Why, sir, call it what you like—'balance of power,' or any other expression," said Palmerston in 1854 in reply to an onslaught by Bright, It is one which has been familiar to the minds of all mankind from the earliest ages in all parts of the globe. "Balance of power" means only this—that a number of weaker states may unite to prevent a stronger one from acquiring

upheld balance of power arrangements, while Kaplan offers deductions and prescriptions derived from abstract theoretical models of his own design.]

[50] Friedrich von Gentz, *Fragments upon the Balance of Power in Europe* (London: Peltier, 1806, a translation of *Fragmente aus der neusten Geschichte des politischen Gleichgewichts in Europa*, (St. Petersburg, 1806), pp. 61–62.

[51] Richard Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies 1739–1763* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 567.

[52] Gentz, *Fragments*, p. 63 and n. 2. (By a misprint the English translation reads "original equality" for *die urspruengliche Ungleichheit* at the beginning of the passage quoted.) Cf. Kenneth N. Waltz (1967) "International Structure, National Forces and the Balance of World Power," *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. xxi, no. 2 (1967), pp. 228–229.

[53] [Ed.: "To prevent the neighbor from becoming too powerful is not at all to do evil; it is to protect oneself from servitude and to protect its other neighbors from it; in a word, it is to work for liberty, tranquility, and public safety."] Fénelon, *Examen de conscience*, p. 307.

a power which should be dangerous to them, and which should overthrow their independence, their liberty, and their freedom of action. It is the doctrine of self-preservation.'[54]

4. Such a distribution of power was also the condition of international order. The desire for the liberty of the parts precedes the desire for the order of the whole in the evolution of the balance of power; when the conception of international order appears, we may say that the system is becoming fully developed. The balance of power was the only means of reconciling international order with the independence of the several members of the community of states. The alternatives to a stable and ordered balance were, on the one hand, a condition of unbalance and disorder, with general insecurity and danger, and on the other hand, a universal empire, with general loss of freedom. The phrase "international order" does not come into general use until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But it is what eighteenth-century writers meant by describing Europe itself as a kind of republic, or commonwealth.

> L'attention continuelle des Souverains à tout ce qui se passe [said Vattel], les Ministres toujours résidens, les Négociations perpetuelles font de l'Europe moderne une espèce de République, dont les Membres indépendans, mais liés par l'intérêt commun, se réünissent pour y maintenir l'ordre et la Liberté. C'est ce qui a donné naissance à cette fameuse idée de la Balance Politique, ou de l'Equilibre de Pouvoir.[55]

Pitt described how international order depended upon the balance of power when he desired a peace settlement that should re-establish a general and comprehensive system of Public Law in Europe, and provide, as far as possible, for repressing future attempts to disturb the general tranquility, and above all, for restraining any projects of Aggrandizement and Ambition similar to those which have produced all the calamities inflicted on Europe since the disastrous aera of the French Revolution.[56]

[54] House of Commons, March 31, 1854 (Parliamentary Debates, third series, Vol. cxxxii, col. 279).

[55] [Ed.:

> The continuous attention of Sovereigns to everything that happens [said Vattel], the Ministers always in residence, [and] the perpetual negotiations make of modern Europe a kind of Republic whose members are independent, but linked by the common interest, meet together to keep order and Liberty. This is what gave birth to the famous idea of a Political Balance or of an Equilibrium of Power.].
>
> Vattel, *Le Droit des Gens* (Amsterdam: E. Van Harrefelt, 1758), Book iii, ch. iii, section 47. Cf. Voltaire, *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* (Berlin: Francheville, 1751), ch. ii, ad init.; Burke, *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, no. 1 (1796) E. J. Payne, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1878), pp. 79–80).

[56] Memorandum on the Deliverance and Security of Europe, January 19, 1805: H. Temperley and L. M. Penson, *Foundations of British Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), p. 18.

5. From liberties, through order, the balance of power aspired towards the condition of law. It became the first article of the unwritten constitution of the states-system. After the Treaty of Utrecht, jurists recognized it as indispensable to the existence of international law, if not itself in some sense a legal principle. Reviewing the peace treaties of Europe since Nymwegen in 1678, Burke wrote:

> The parties understanding one another, so much was given away without considering from whose budget it came, not as the value of the objects, but as the value of peace to the parties might require . . . In all those treaties, and in all the preceding, as well as in the others which intervened, the question never had been that of barter. The balance of power had been ever assumed as the known common law of Europe, at all times, and by all powers: the question had only been (as it must happen) on the more or less inclination of that balance.[57]

Thus the principle of the balance of power circumscribed the two great successive principles of international legitimacy, dynastic succession, and nationality.[58] Fénelon argued that even if Philip II's dynastic claim to the English throne had been incontestable instead of dubious, Europe would have justly resisted his establishing himself in England, because of the overwhelming preponderance it would have given him. "*Alors, summum jus, summa injuria. Un droit particulier de succession ou de donation devoit céder à la loi naturelle de la sûreté de tant de nations.*"[59] Fénelon was making a polite comment on Louis XIV's support of James II's claim to the British crowns; and Utrecht, by recognizing the Protestant succession in the United Kingdom, as well as by restricting the succession to the French and Spanish kingdoms in order to preclude a personal union, finally settled the principle that the balance of power overrode dynastic right.[60] Likewise, the main concern of the Concert of Europe in the nineteenth century was to ensure that the balance of power was not overthrown by the claims of nationality. The union of the Austrians with the Germans in 19l9 was prohibited for the same reasons (though it was no longer formulated in that way) as the union of the French and Spanish crowns in 1713. And by the same logic, European stability since 1945 has rested on the partition of Germany.

6. While the system of the balance of power was the foundation of international order in general, a particular balance of power would produce a particular order,

[57] *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, no. 3 (1797; ed. cit., pp. 186–187).

[58] [Ed.] Wight's principal works in this regard are "International Legitimacy," "Reflections on International Legitimacy," "Dynastic Legitimacy," and "Popular Legitimacy," all available in Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).

[59] [Ed.: "So, *the strictest law, the greatest harm.* An individual's right to succession or gift should yield to the natural law that provides security for many nations."] "*Supplément à l'Examen de Conscience sur les Devoirs de la Royauté*," *Oeuvres de Fénelon* (Paris: Lebel, 1824), Vol. xxii, p. 309.

[60] The consequences are reflected upon in Friedrich Schlegel, *The Philosophy of History,* seventh edn (lectures at Vienna 1828, J. B. Robertson, trans., London: Bohn's Standard Library, 1871), pp. 439–442.

usually embodied in a general peace settlement. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries such a particular order was often called a "system," as "the system of Westphalia;" later this term was replaced by the phrase status quo. To revise the status quo usually required a war, which was called "upsetting the balance." The wars which modified only the particular order, the *status quo* (such as the wars between 1713 and 1792, and between 1815 and 1914), were distinguished from the wars which endangered international order at large, by threatening to destroy the balance altogether (such as the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars). Although international law, before the League Covenant, recognized the absolute right of every state to go to war at its own discretion, the moral presumption was normally in favour of the status quo, because it was normally in the interests of the international community as a whole and of the majority of its individual members. The general advantages of maintaining it outweighed the ambitions or dissatisfactions of particular states. Thus Grey pointed out that British policy after 1886 tended to support the Triple Alliance, from a belief that it made for stability and peace in Europe, while France and Russia, though militarily weaker, were the restless Powers.[61] Dynamism of policy endangered the balance as much as a quantitative preponderance of power did.

7. The even distribution of power, however, could never, in the nature of political life, be more than approximate.

The scales of the balance of power will never be exactly poized, nor is the precise point of equality either discernible or necessary to be discerned [said Bolingbroke]. It is sufficient in this, as in other human affairs, that the deviation be not too great. Some there will always be.

> A constant attention to these deviations is therefore necessary. When they are little, their increase may be easily prevented by early care and the precautions that good policy suggests. But when they become great for want of this care and these precautions, or by the force of unforeseen events, more vigour is to be exerted, and greater efforts to be made.[62]

8. As the distribution of power was never exactly even, so it was never rigid or static. If to be stable is to be motionless, the balance of power was never stable. It was constantly subject to the effects of social change. Commerce, population, industrial development, new political doctrines conduced to redistributing power. National claims tended to redraw territorial boundaries, to weaken or destroy old states and create new ones. The system of the balance of power did not preclude

[61] Viscount Grey of Falloden, *Twenty-Five Years 1892–1916*, Vol. i (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1925), pp. 7–8.

[62] Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, Vol. ii (Millar, 1752), p. 47.

peaceful change; it sought to control it. Thus Canning supported Greek independence, coercing Turkey at the same time as he protected her against Russia. Thus Palmerston declared Austria's existence to be essential to the balance of power in the same speech in which he deplored her suppression of Hungarian nationalism, and he and Russell combined an awareness of the dangers to the balance of powers with their support of Italian unification.[63] Thus, Salisbury wrote of the Eastern Question: "It is a fallacy to assume that within our lifetime any stable arrangement can be arrived at in the East. The utmost we can do is to provide halting-places where the process of change may rest awhile."[64] The balance of power, said Gentz, "perhaps would have been with more propriety called a system of counterpoise, for perhaps the highest of its results is not so much a perfect *equipoise* as a constant alternate *vacillation* [*Schwankung*, oscillation] in the scales of the balance, which, from the application of *counterweights,* is prevented from ever passing certain limits."[65] To judge these limits, between the agitations of the balance and its overthrow, was the highest art of the statesman.

9. To maintain the balance of power required flexibility of alliances. Every member of the states-system should be prepared to cooperate with any other member of the states—system, as circumstances demanded, towards this great political end. There should be no political alignments or exclusions that overrode it When Sir William Temple, English ambassador at the Hague, pointed out to the young William III that there might soon be as much to fear from the successes of his Habsburg allies as there was to fear at present from the aggression of his French enemy, William replied that there was no fear until the Habsburgs went beyond the terms of the Treaty of the Pyrenees; in that case, "he should be as much a Frenchman as he was now a Spaniard, but not before."[66] The Concert of Europe afforded examples. Thus Russia left her associates of the Holy Alliance to cooperate with Britain and France in establishing Greek independence; thus Britain left her Entente with France to cooperate with Russia in restraining Mehemet Ali; thus Austria astonished Europe by her ingratitude to Russia in associating with the Western Powers in the Crimean War. "The balance of power," wrote Acton, "is a system of alliances; and the alliances may very easily vary, be mixed up like a pack of cards, provided a certain equality is the result. The object is peace, not any high ethical purpose."[67] (The last sentence shows the limitations of the Catholic puritan. The principal object of the balance of power system was not peace, but liberty combined with order; and for the representatives of the system, this was a high enough ethical

[63] H. Temperley and L. M. Penson, Foundations of British Policy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), pp. 172–177, 219–220.

[64] Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert Marquess of Salisbury*, Vol. ii (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1921), p. 377 (letter to Dufferin, February 4, 1880).

[65] *Fragments*, p. 63n.

[66] T. P. Courtenay, *Memoirs of the Life, Works and Correspondence of Sir William Temple, Bart* (London: Longman, 1836), Vol. i, p. 455.

[67] F. N. Gasquet, *Lord Acton and his Circle* (London: Allen, 1906), p. 250.

purpose to be going on with.) Every one of the grand alliances which have successively restored the balance of power has cut across doctrinal divisions, uniting Catholics and Protestants, constitutionalist states and despots, capitalist states and communist.

> We shall proceed upon the principle [said Canning in 1808], that any nation of Europe that starts up with a determination to oppose a power which, whether professing insidious peace or declaring open war, is the common enemy of all nations, whatever may be the existing political relations of that nation with Great Britain, becomes instantly our essential ally[68]

It was what Burghley had said in 1589, and Churchill was to say in 1941.[69]

10. The members of the international community had a duty, as well as a common interest, to cooperate in averting dangers to the international order. "*L'humanité met donc un devoir mutuel de défense du salut commun, entre les nations voisines, contre un État voisin qui devient trop puissant; comme il y a des devoirs mutuels entre les concitoyens pour la liberté de la patrie.*"[70] The price of maintaining the balance was eternal vigilance. When Palmerston described the balance of power as the doctrine of self-preservation, he went on to say: "It is the doctrine of self-defence, with the simple qualification that it is combined with sagacity and with forethought, and an endeavour to prevent imminent danger before it comes thundering at your doors."[71] Brougham put it in a wider and more international view.

> The grand and distinguishing feature of the balancing theory [he said] is the systematic form to which it reduces those plain and obvious principles of national conduct; the perpetual attention to foreign affairs which it inculcates; the constant watchfulness over every motion in all parts of the system, which it prescribes; the subjection in which it places all national passions and antipathies to the fine and delicate view of remote expediency; the unceasing care which it dictates of nations most remotely situated, and apparently unconnected with ourselves; the general union which it has effected, of all the European Powers in one connected system—obeying certain laws, and actuated in general by a common principle; in fine, as a consequence of the whole, the right of mutual inspection,

[68] House of Commons, June 15, 1808 (Parliamentary Debates, Vol. xi. coll. 890–891), of Spain.

[69] Burghley, letter to Shrewsbury, May 27, 1589 (E. Lodge, *Illustrations of British History, Biography, and Manners*, Vol. ii (London: G. Nicol, 1791), p. 400), of France and Scotland; Churchill, broadcast of June 22, 1941, of the Soviet Union.

[70] [Ed.: "Humanity therefore establishes a mutual obligation to defend the common safety among neighboring nations against a neighbor state that is becoming too powerful, as there are mutual obligations among fellow citizens for the freedom of the country."] Fénelon, *Examen de conscience*, p. 310.

[71] House of Commons, March 31, 1854 (loc. cit.).

> now universally recognised among civilised states, in the rights of public envoys and residents.[72]

In so far as states rose to this duty, they transcended mere self-interest, and enlarged their policies by considering the liberties of others and the stability of the whole. The balance of power thus promoted "a system of politics of a higher order than that arising from individual gratification.[73]

11. It was after the doctrine of the supporters of collective security under the League of Nations, that the prospect of overwhelming force which all the rest could bring against an aggressor would itself prevent an aggressor from breaking the peace. The system of the balance of power had already supposed that readiness to take action was likely to prevent the need for action from arising, that the implicit threat of war in defense of the balance was likely to avert attempts to overthrow the balance. Gentz laid it down as a maxim of the system, that "the *fear* of awakening common opposition, or of drawing down common vengeance, must of itself be sufficient to keep everyone within the bounds of moderation."[74] Queen Victoria paid a reluctant tribute to Palmerston on the same grounds at the beginning of the Crimean War:

> Lord Palmerston's mode of proceeding always had that advantage, that it threatened steps which it was hoped would not become necessary, whilst those hitherto taken started on the principle of not needlessly offending Russia by threats, obliging us at the same time to take the very steps which we refused to threaten.[75]

Gladstone said, of the cognate issue of collective intervention in Turkey to prevent atrocities and impose reforms: "The coercion we recommended was coercion by the united authority of Europe, and we always contended that in the case where the united authority of Europe was brought into action there was no fear of having to proceed to actual coercion."[76]

12. If a state threatened the balance of power, the members of the international community had a right, collectively and severally, of intervention, that is, of interference in the domestic affairs of that state. It was generally agreed by international lawyers that the maintenance of the balance of power conferred a right of intervention. "The only safe principle," wrote Castlereagh in a confidential memorandum

[72] Henry Brougham, *An Inquiry into the Colonial Policy of the European Powers*, Vol. ii (London: Constable, 1803), pp. 210–211.

[73] A. H. L. Heeren, *A Manual of the History of the Political System of Europe and its Colonies* (London: Bohn, 1846), p. 9. Cf. Quincy Wright, *A Study of War,* Vol. ii (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), 749.

[74] *Fragments*, p. 62.

[75] *Letters of Queen Victoria*, first series, Vol. ii, p. 470 (undated letter to Clarendon).

[76] Speech at Edinburgh, November 25, 1879 *Political Speeches in Scotland*, Vol. i (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1880), p. 53).

to his Cabinet colleagues, "is that of the Law of Nations—That no State has a right to endanger its neighbours by its internal proceedings, and that if it does, provided they exercise a sound discretion, Their right of Interference is clear."[77]

13. If prior cooperation should have failed to avert a mortal danger to the balance of power, if the limits between the oscillation of the balance and its overthrow should have been traversed, the members of the international community had a duty to band together to restrain and reduce the delinquent state. "Such a state," said Gentz, "should be treated as a common enemy."[78] The fullest expression of such cooperative action was the grand alliance, which was the final instrument against a Power aiming at universal empire. In these circumstances it became necessary to wage war to restore peace, to establish a new equilibrium.

> In such cases [said Bolingbroke], he who has considered, in the histories of former ages, the strange revolutions that time produces, and the perpetual flux and reflux of public as well as private fortunes, of kingdoms and states as well as of those who govern or are governed in them, will incline to think, that if the scales can be brought back by a war, nearly, though not exactly, to the point they were at before this great deviation from it, the rest may be left to accidents, and to the use that good policy is able to make of them.[79]

14. As the balance of power was never rigid, so it was never uniform and unvaried. It was a general balance throughout the whole states-system; but the states-system was itself diversified by geography and the difference in caliber between its members, and there were consequently local and regional distributions of power, distinct from but comprehended in the general distribution. At the beginning of the seventeenth century Overbury had noted how Christendom fell into a western and an eastern balance, with a balanced Germany between. In the eighteenth century the notion of a composite balance became accepted. Burke said, in language emphasizing the balance of power as an assessment rather than an objective relationship of forces, "This general balance was regarded in four principal points of view: the great middle balance, which comprehended Great Britain, France and Spain; the balance of the north; the balance, external and internal of Germany; and the balance of Italy." Continental statesmen had sometimes added the balance of America, and in the nineteenth century the Near East and the Far East became additional regions of balance.[80]

15. As the states-system expanded outwards from its original West European core, and new regional balances came into being, the field over which a general

[77] Memorandum of October 19, 1818 (Temperley and Penson, *Foundations of British Policy*, p. 44).
[78] *Fragments*, p. 62.
[79] *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, Vol. ii, p, 48.
[80] *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, no. 3, ed. cit., p. 197.

balance of power was to be maintained; correspondingly increased. The balance of power, said Canning in his most famous speech, is

> A standard perpetually varying, as civilisation advances, and as new nations spring up, and take their place among established political communities. ... Thus, while the balance of power continued in principle the same, the means of adjusting it became more varied and enlarged. They became enlarged, in proportion to the increased number of considerable states—in proportion, I may say, to the number of weights which might be shifted into the one or the other scale.[81]

IV

Such was the system of the balance of power as it appeared to those who upheld it. It is not my purpose here to make a critical estimate of their description. The working of the system, with its success and weaknesses, composes the international history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nor is it necessary to describe at length the way in which the system came to be repudiated. The American and French Revolutions offered a new doctrine of international legitimacy. Prescription and dynastic right were replaced by democracy and national self-determination. These were expected to transform the states-system. Instead of an equilibrium of power, regulated by governments, there would be a fraternal harmony of peoples.

In the time of William III and Louis XIV, it had seemed that constitutional states, states acknowledging a principle of balance in their internal affairs, were predisposed towards the balance of power in foreign policy, while absolute monarchs tended to pursue their own glory or even universal empire. But the doctrines of democracy, growing up in the generation of Kant and Tom Paine, condemned impartially all the ancient regimes, along with the traditional states-system compounded of the balance of power, secret diplomacy, *raison d'état*, and militarism. The balance of power now seemed to have produced its final fruits in the Partitions of Poland. It is interesting to see this kind of discredit confirmed a hundred and fifty years later by the Secret Treaty of London, 1915, which was generally condemned because it violated the declared war-aims of the Entente, but was also the last international treaty to appeal to the principle of the balance of power.[82]

The nineteenth century was a period of fruitful tension between the principles of the balance and the new doctrines. They disagreed over nothing more than the nature of international order. The balance of power had been a system of

[81] House of Commons, December 12, 1826 (R. Therry, *Speeches of George Canning*, Vol. vi (London: James Ridgeway, 1826) pp. 109–110).

[82] Recognizing Italy's interest in the balance of power in the Mediterranean, it promised her "a just share" in the partition of Turkey (Miscellaneous No. 7 (1920), Cmd. 671, article 9).

keeping international order. Kant and Cobden, Mazzini and the Peace Societies, assumed in their different ways that the enforcement of international order was unnecessary. The conflicting tendencies ripened simultaneously in the Versailles Settlement. On the one hand, the system of the balance of power, as formulated by its more reflective exponents, foreshadowed the collective security advocated by a majority (having all the member countries in view) of the adherents of the League of Nations. Collective security meant giving the system of the balance of power a legal framework, to make it more rational, more reliable, and therefore more effectively preventive. On the other hand, collective security failed largely because of those who believed that international order was not dependent so much upon maintaining the balance of power as upon satisfying claims to national justice.

In 1787, Hamilton had argued with marvellous force and insight that collective security was inherently impracticable, and that the American states had no choice between advancing to federation or relapsing into anarchic disunion.[83] The League Covenant brought the European international community to the point of a choice which, though logically prior, was similar. Either the balance of power system that had operated for two centuries would now be transformed into collective security (and this might itself lead towards eventual federation), or it would relapse into the more primitive stage of rivalry between two dominant Powers out of which it had originally grown.[84] The event confirmed Hamilton's reasoning about collective security. Yet in the Abyssinian War of 1935–36 collective security, though theoretically impossible, came in historical fact very close to fulfilment.[85] The failure of the League of Nations was the most decisive occurrence in international history since the Peace of Westphalia. It ended the long period in which a degree of international order had been maintained by the rational, intricate, and precarious system of the multiple balance of power; and by not carrying the system to a higher level, by failing to transform the quantity of order into con-federal quality, it introduced a new chapter in which the ordering of international relations has been less under human direction and control.

From Chamberlain's guarantee to Poland in April 1939, and the Anglo-American exchange of destroyers and bases in September 1940, the principles of the balance of power were at first blindly resorted to again by the West, and then increasingly acknowledged. But their relevance was lessening. The Second World War raised America and Russia to joint and rival predominance, and reduced the balance of power once more, after three centuries, from multiple to simple. The superstition that attaches to technological progress has tended to attribute the

[83] *The Federalist*, no. xvi (Everyman edn, 1911, pp. 74–8).

[84] This was foreseen by Arnold Toynbee. See the *Survey of International Affairs 1935*, Vol. ii. pp. 481–482.

[85] Cf. John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 87–88, 92–93; and Mussolini's admission during the Munich Conference that sanctions had nearly succeeded (Paul Schmidt, *Hitler's Interpreter*, R. H. C. Steed, ed. (London: Heinemann, 1951), pp. 60, 112).

consequences of this change to the invention of nuclear weapons. But nuclear weapons only confirmed a redistribution of power that would have come about if they had never existed.

From our present point of retrospect, it is possible to see the multiple balance of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, like the liberal constitutionalism of which it was the international counterpart, as the product of unique and unrecapturable circumstances. The multiple balance was introduced by the rivalry of a pair of dominant Powers; the states-system may be imagined as now reversing its political development, through a second period of bipolarity, on a geographically extended stage. Two historical scenarios for the Cold War, which many Americans have pondered from General Marshall downwards, are Athens versus Sparta and Rome versus Carthage. It might be worth considering another scenario, in which the United States is cast for the Empire of Charles V, the Soviet Union for France, China plays the role of the Ottoman Empire, and the non-aligned states of Africa and Asia reproduce the petty states of Germany and Italy. A scenario, as Herman Kahn has said, is only an aid to the imagination, but historical analogy sometimes sheds an indirect light.

The Great Power veto written into the new international constitution in 1944-45 divorced the notion of the balance of power from the notion of international order. And since 1945 a decline in theoretical concern for international order has paradoxically coincided with a balance of power that has defied pessimists by its durability. The period since 1945 has been the longest period of peace between the Great Powers in the twentieth century, the third longest in the history of the states-system, exceeded only by the thirty-nine years between Waterloo and the Crimean War and the thirty-three years between the Franco-Prussian and Russo-Japanese Wars.[86] The bipolar balance has been durable, mainly because the dynamic and revisionist dominant Power has in practice recognized its relative backwardness, and been ready to subordinate short-term successes to long-term aims, while the conservative dominant Power has on the whole defended the status quo with diplomatic skill and moderation. Moreover, each has been able to absorb its productive energies in internal development and space discovery, and their towering military ascendancy has made them increasingly independent, militarily if not politically, of unreliable allies.

The grand alliance of which America and Russia were the strongest members lacked even the degree of cultural unity and common political purpose that the grand alliance of 1914–19 did possess but found insufficient for collective security. Because of the rivalry between the Western Powers and Russia, the Second World War ended without an agreed peace settlement between the victorious Allies and the two leading enemy Powers.[87] This conclusion to a general war was

[86] [Ed.] It should be recalled that this essay was written in 1972, twenty-seven years after 1945.

[87] [Ed.] The Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany, also known as the Two Plus Four Agreement, was signed on September 12, 1990 in Moscow and entered into force on March 15,

unprecedented since the Peace of Utrecht; and it opened a period in which the status quo has had less legal basis, and a more uncertain moral authority, than at any time in the history of the states-system. The *status quo* between the dominant Powers, in Germany and Korea, rests on an equilibrium of force. The Geneva Conference of 1954, which closed the first phase of the Vietnam War, seemed like a return to legality, but it too ended without a treaty: instead there was the anomaly of a final declaration that was not signed by any of the states taking part in the conference.[88] In the Afro-Asian world, on the other hand, a new legal order has appeared, embodying the principle of the self-determination of peoples. The moral presumption that had turned against the old status quo, as Portugal found when robbed with impunity of Goa, has been transferred for the time being to the new status quo, as the Nagas, Katanga, and Biafra found in different ways when they appealed in vain against it. But the *status quo* rests on nothing but an equilibrium of force between India and Pakistan in Kashmir, between India and China, and between Israel and the Arab states. Nationalism and revolution have enfeebled the very conception of international order. In Communist theory, every international order, every particular balance of power, is a moment in the dialectical process. "All rest, all equilibrium, is only relative, and only has meaning in relation to one or other definite form of motion."[89] Khrushchev explained to Mr Lippmann that the

1991, "the date of deposit of the last instrument of ratification, in accordance with article 9" of the Treaty. The Two were the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), which were united on October 3, 1990. The united Germany deposited its instrument of ratification of the Treaty on the Final Settlement on October 13, 1990. The Four were the Second World War victors with rights regarding the ultimate disposition of the German question: Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States. In the Treaty on the Final Settlement these Four Powers renounced their former rights in Germany, including Berlin. The united Germany (the expanded Federal Republic of Germany) agreed that its territory would be limited to that of Berlin, East Germany, and West Germany. The united Germany concluded a separate treaty with Poland on November 14, 1990 confirming the German-Polish border. These accords constitute major elements of—to use Wight's words—"an agreed peace settlement between the victorious Allies" and Germany, one of "the two leading enemy Powers" in the Second World War. Steps toward a peace settlement regarding Japan, the other main enemy Power in the Second World War, have been more piecemeal and episodic. Of the 51 countries represented at the September 1951 San Francisco conference, three chose not to sign the September 8. 1951 peace treaty with Japan: Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the Soviet Union. In a Joint Declaration on October 19, 1956, Japan and the Soviet Union terminated their formal state of war and restored diplomatic relations. Russo-Japanese efforts to conclude a post-1945 peace treaty have remained unsuccessful, however, owing in part to the disagreement between Moscow and Tokyo over legal possession of the four southernmost Kuril Islands, which are under Russian administration. Neither the Republic of China (ROC) nor the People's Republic of China (PRC) was invited to the September 1951 San Francisco conference. Japan and the ROC concluded a peace treaty called the Treaty of Taipei on April 28, 1952; and Japan and the PRC signed a peace treaty on August 12, 1978. Neither the Republic of Korea (ROK, also known as South Korea) nor the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, also known as North Korea) was invited to the September 1951 San Francisco conference. Japan's relations with these countries differ. On June 22, 1965, Japan and the ROK signed a treaty establishing diplomatic relations; but disagreements persist, notably about the interpretation of an associated 1965 agreement on property, claims, and economic cooperation, and about the joint declaration of October 8, 1998. Japan's relations with North Korea have remained troubled, despite the resolve expressed in the September 17, 2002 Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, owing mainly to discord over economic, nuclear, and missile issues as well as abductions of Japanese citizens by the DPRK.

[88] See G. F. Hudson, *The Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference on Indo-China*, 1954, St. Antony's Papers, no. 20 (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

[89] F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, ch. v.

phrase "the status quo" meant for him, not the situation as it exists at the moment, but the world—wide process of social revolution bearing mankind towards a Communist future.[90] Thus the idea of the balance of power is turned inside out. A threat to the balance of power comes to be redefined, not as an attempt to upset a stable equilibrium of forces, but as an attempt to obstruct the movement of history.

The failure first of the League of Nations, and then of the permanent members of the Security Council to achieve unanimity, disabused men of the idea of international order as a work of political construction. The British argument to justify the veto, that no enforcement action could be taken against a Great Power without a major war, and that in such circumstances the UN "will have failed in its purpose and all members will have to act as seems best in the circumstances," marked a retrogression from the standards of the Covenant, a recognition that the rule of law is unobtainable in international relations.[91] The belief that the nuclear deterrent has abolished war revived the Kantian illusion of a guarantee of perpetual peace beyond the responsibility of man; the *deus ex machina* now being not commercial interdependence but weapons development. The belief that the dismantling of empires would increase world stability, since the emergent states, their political grievances satisfied by the withdrawal of their colonial rulers, would become absorbed in economic development and in giving a moral lead to the Great Powers, revived the Mazzinian dream of a harmony of nations. There has been a desire to repudiate the intractable difficulties of international order. Perhaps the master-questions of each generation are as much what that generation selects for attention as what history places upon an objective agenda. The inter-war generation concentrated its intellectual effort on the central complex of international order: security, disarmament, and peaceful change. The post-War generation has chosen decolonization, economic development, race relations, and population control, in the belief that these matters contain the causes of future international disorder, and that international order for the time being is given.

International order, however, is given only by the balance between the two dominant Powers. Sometimes the vestiges of a multiple balance are seen. The surprising conjunction of the United States and Russia to stop the Suez War superficially resembled the free working of the multiple balance within the Concert of Europe. India before the Chinese invasion seemed to be developing a shadowy and inexpert policy of balance under the guise of non-alignment.[92] Under de Gaulle

[90] Walter Lippmann, *The Communist World and Ours* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1959), p. 13.

[91] *A Commentary on the Charter of the United Nations*, Miscellaneous No. 9 (1945), Cmd. 6666, para. 87. Cf. Hobbes, Leviathan, ch. 29, ad fin:

> Lastly, when in a war (foreign or intestine) the enemies get a final victory; so as (the forces of the Commonwealth keeping the field no longer) there is no farther protection of subjects in their loyalty; then is the Commonwealth *dissolved,* and every man at liberty to protect himself by such courses as his own discretion shall suggest unto him.
>
> See J. L. Brierly, *The Basis of Obligation in International Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), pp. 321–324.

[92] See A. P. Rana, "The Nature of India's Foreign Policy," *India Quarterly*, vol. xxii (1966), especially pp. 107 n. 18, 131 n. 62.

France consciously reverted to a primitive policy of balance in pursuit of prestige. A triangular relationship may yet develop between China, the Soviet Union, and the United States. In any event, China's avenging ambitions and enormous population have made her the only potential external danger that might threaten the dominant Powers apart from one another. The United States herself has wanted allies, more for psychological than material or strategic reasons as time goes on; and NATO and the whole policy of containment, from Greece and Berlin to Korea and Vietnam, have often been represented as continuing the traditional regulation of the balance in which Britain once took the lead.

But the United States has a superiority of military power and resources over her allies different in kind from anything that Britain ever dreamed of. To take a simple yardstick, the planned defense expenditure of the United States in 1971 was almost twice that of the rest of the world put together, excluding the Soviet Union and China. It was half as much again as that of the Soviet Union and three times that of Britain, Europe of the Six, Canada, Japan, and India combined.[93]

The Soviet Union's superiority over her associates is of a similar order. These two Powers stand to their respective allies, not as Castlereagh's England stood to the other Powers of the grand alliance against Napoleon, but as the Roman Republic stood to the Hellenistic monarchies from the mid-second century B.C. No American statesman has thought more intelligently in terms of the balance of power than Kennedy. But when at Vienna he tried to persuade Khrushchev to respect the world balance, it was a bipolar balance that was at issue; and when over Cuba he believed it his duty to restore the balance, he acted independently, and not as the leader of a coalition.[94]

All that history authorizes us to be sure of is that the balance of power lasts only so long as someone is ready to take risks to maintain it, and that international order will in the end be brought about only by those who are prepared to make sacrifices to construct and enforce it.

[93] See *The Military Balance 1971–1972* (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1971), pp. 60–61, Table 3. Comparative tables of the military strength and production of the Great Powers in the nineteenth century may conveniently be found in A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848–1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), "Introduction."

[94] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., A *Thousand Days* (London: Deutsch, 1965), pp. 330–331; Kennedy's comment in the *Washington Post*, December, 18, 1962, quoted in Albert and Roberta Wohlstetter, *Controlling the Risks in Cuba* (Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Papers, no. 17, April 1965), p. 12. [Ed. The Wohlstetters quoted President Kennedy's *Washington Post* statement:

> President Kennedy was acutely conscious of the political effects of even the *appearance* of a vast Soviet increase in military power. "The Cuban effort," he commented after the crisis, with Russian deception in mind, "has made it more difficult for us to carry out any successful negotiations, because this was an effort to materially change the balance of power … not that [the Soviets] were intending to fire [the missiles] … But it would have politically changed the balance of power. It would have appeared to, and appearances contribute to reality."]

3
Does Peace Take Care of Itself?

Books about international relations commonly proceed from one of two assumptions, and move towards one of two broad conclusions.* Either they argue that peace differs only in degree from other political concerns, and that human contrivance can establish it between states as it has already done within the state. Or they argue that international affairs differ in kind from domestic affairs, since international society is a society not of individuals but of states, which are neither legally subject nor practically amenable to regular external direction; and that peace therefore cannot be made the object of political organisation.

Each argument has its subdivisions. Peace might be established in two different ways. One is the imperial way, when a single Power imposes order on all the others. The classic illustrations are the Roman Empire in the Hellenistic world and the British Empire in India. In the early days of the Cold War it was widely held that Stalin had cast Russia, with the aid of international Communism, in a similar role for the contemporary world. Mr. Hinsley roundly denies it, and minimises the ideological element in present Soviet policy; though there is evidence that Mr. Khrushchev has believed that the "many roads to socialism" will all lead to the consolidation of a single world economic system, under a shadowy central authority.[1]

The other way is by agreement: confederation or federation. One of the reasons advanced by advocates of this kind of arrangement is that if we do not establish peace by agreement we shall have it imposed upon us by coercion, which the majority of peoples naturally would not welcome. But federations of independent states have never been created except on a restricted scale in special circumstances, such as Switzerland and the United States; and confederations have never been successful at all. As Mr. Hinsley says, a confederation is less difficult to bring into being than a federation, but "if any political system is more difficult than a federation to operate and maintain, it is a confederal system."[2]

* Martin Wight published this review-essay about F. H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in the History of Relations between States*, in *Views*, no. 2, (Summer 1963).

[1] [Ed.] Wight cited Elliot R. Goodman, *The Soviet Design for a World State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960) in his lecture, "An Anatomy of International Thought," in Martin Wight, *Four Seminal Thinkers in International Theory: Machiavelli, Grotius, Kant and Mazzini*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter, eds. (London: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 156.

[2] F. H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in the History of Relations between States* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 314.

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It is the premise of the second main argument that there is no analogy between domestic and international society, and that war is intrinsically incapable of being brought under institutional control. From this, again, two different conclusions may be drawn. Either peace cannot be preserved for more than short periods, and wars will inevitably recur at intervals. It is probable moreover that they will lead to one Power defeating all the rest and imposing a durable hegemony. Here, this line of thought converges with the fear or advocacy of a universal state, though it sees it coming about less through any Power planning it than by the logic of the situation. (Nuclear war has not altered this prospect. Either it will destroy all civilised life, in which case the survivors will have other concerns than these to occupy them; or it will leave communities retaining a continuity of policy with existing states, and the strongest will master and organise the rest.)

Alternatively, peace will take care of itself. On this view, there is a fundamental historical trend, in the development of modern society and of collective psychology, towards the containment and obsolescence of war. Diplomacy may promote or retard the trend; attempts at international confederation will only bring relapses into war. Kant is the greatest proponent of this fourth argument, and Mr. Hinsley is his disciple. Kant "was as convinced that the development of the rule of law between states would eventually produce international peace as he was convinced that it was the only means of producing it and that it would take a long time to develop."[3]

This is the main theme of Mr. Hinsley's capacious book, and he believes that the time is now at hand. In the first part of his book he examines the various projects for international organisation from Dubois and Dante in the fourteenth century down to the founders of the League of Nations. His sympathy is with the eighteenth century writers who argued, like Vattel, that the theory of the social contract did not apply to the "state of nature" between nations, since "it is clear that there is by no means the same necessity for a civil society among nations as among individuals." His chapters on Rousseau are particularly penetrating and valuable.

The second part describes the development of the modern state-system. Perhaps the best thing in the book is the wise and just account of the Concert of Europe in the nineteenth century; of Palmerston (who has figured too long in our national legend as an irresponsible swashbuckler) as the political heir of Castlereagh rather than Canning; of the Crimean War as "a struggle about the extension of the public law of Europe between Powers which all subscribed to its general validity."[4] This is an expansion of Mr. Hinsley's admirable introduction to the eleventh volume

[3] Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 79.
[4] Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 227.

of the *New Cambridge Modern History*.[5] The third part of the book, which is the weakest, discusses international relations in the twentieth century.

There is a great deal in the book that the student of International Relations will be grateful for and will make him consult it again. Unfortunately, there is much also to dispraise. The tone is a little overbearing, as if everybody has been wrong until Mr. Hinsley wrote. He announces at the outset the aim of being no longer deterred by the sheer mass of facts from attempting to raise the study of international relations to the level of general theory and seems loftily to ignore that a number of distinguished writers, on both sides of the Atlantic, have been engaged on the task for the past thirty years. The reader is led to expect a tranquil synthesis; what he gets is an idiosyncratic essay based on patchy scholarship. It is a book written from secondary and sometimes from tertiary authorities. The chapter on the peace movement in the nineteenth century is quarried from Mr. Beales's *History of Peace*;[6] the chapters on the Concert, from Webster's posthumous essays,[7] and Mr. Taylor's *Struggle for Mastery*.[8] Among the omissions the most singular is any recognition that Webster wrote a major work on Palmerston.[9] In the later parts of the book the bibliographical poverty increases. The chapter on the League of Nations rests on Quincy Wright's *Study of War* and Brierly's *Law of Nations*,[10] that on international relations since 1945 on Mr. Woodhouse's *British Foreign Policy*,[11] none of them authorities on the matter in hand; the chapter on the origins of the Second World War is a reprinted review of Mr. Taylor,[12] without any discussion of the sources. Indeed, the book raises sharply the question of the nature and use of evidence appropriate for historians who try to write "general theory."

It is central to Mr. Hinsley's reading of the Kantian theme to differentiate the pursuit of peace from the pursuit of order. He distinguishes between the international theorists whose aim was to organise the multi-national Christendom that followed the breakdown of the Empire and Papacy, and those whose aim was the maintaining of peace. "Empire, justice or order are not—like peace—incompatible

[5] [Ed.] F. H. Hinsley, "Introduction," *The New Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. XI, in F. H. Hinsley, ed., *Material Progress and World-Wide Problems, 1870– 1898* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp. 1–48.

[6] [Ed.] A. C. F. Beales, *The History of Peace: A Short Account of the Organised Movements for International Peace* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1931).

[7] [Ed.] Sir Charles Webster, *The Art and Practice of Diplomacy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961).

[8] [Ed.] A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954).

[9] [Ed.] Sir Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, 1830–1841: Britain, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Question* (London: G. Bell, 1951).

[10] [Ed.] Quincy Wright, *A Study of War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942); and J. L. Brierly, *The Law of Nations: An Introduction to the International Law of Peace*, second edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936).

[11] [Ed.] Christopher M. Woodhouse, *British Foreign Policy since the Second World War* (London: Hutchinson, 1961).

[12] [Ed.] Hinsley's review of A. J. P. Taylor's *The Origins of the Second World War* (London: Hamilton, 1961) was first published in *The Historical Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1961.

with the use of force."[13] Here peace seems conceived as a mere absence of fighting, rather than an accepted order within which the pursuit of justice becomes possible.

Mankind has not yet had the experience of a peaceful political condition (unless there be one or two marginal exceptions in primitive society) which has not been established by force in the first place, sustained by force while it is stable, restored by force when it is broken. Force stands to peace in the relation of efficient cause; and surely what is significant is the change force undergoes in these circumstances, when it is suffused with moral values and the limits to its use are recognised, so that it becomes transformed into authority. This has happened inside the state. Mr. Hinsley's description of the Concert as a coalition of states founded on public law for the defence of that law,[14] with a consensus about the nature of European society and a habit of diplomatic restraint, show it not less clearly at work in the international community. *Pax omnium rerum tranquillitas ordinis*.[15]

It may indeed be a contradiction of his own case when he argues later that "civil wars have been as frequent in international history as international wars."[16] Whether this is in fact true may be checked by anyone who cares to reckon up the civil wars and foreign wars engaged in by the major Powers since, say, 1500. If it were true, it would undermine all political science, which presupposes that the state establishes an order within which the incidence of violence, while it cannot be wholly prevented, is less than it would otherwise have been.

It is curious that Mr. Hinsley does not see the League of Nations in relation to the Concert. The first part of the book treats the League as the product of the peace movement of the nineteenth century; the second part fails to supply the other aspect of the League, as an attempt to regularise the procedures of the Concert and the balance of power. The League, he says, was bound to fail; its basic conception was impracticable at any time; it could not have worked.[17]

It is doubtful whether negative determinism is any better a posture for the historian than positive. It is part of his business to convey on occasion a sense of the openness of events, of the place of contingency, of how some wars and some political enterprises were—as Wellington said (almost) of the battle of Waterloo—a damned near run thing. As Professor Herz has recently observed, the more one studies the Ethiopian war in detail, the more doubtful the alleged inevitability of failure becomes.[18] The historian of international relations is not concerned to show

[13] Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 37.
[14] Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 196.
[15] [Ed.] "The peace of all things is the tranquility of order." Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, Marcus Dods, trans. (New York: The Modern Library, 1993), Book XIX, chapter 13, p. 690.
[16] Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 290. Cf. p. 318.
[17] Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 309, 321, 335.
[18] [Ed.] In his review of John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), Wight wrote,

> With deep historical insight, he sees the collective security system of the League of Nations as the culmination of the traditional system of the balance of power and argues that the

why states pursue parochial interests, declares Mr. Hinsley, "still less to wish that they did not. His task is to show why they do it in different ways at different times—how and why interests themselves change."[19] But the widening of the conception of national interest between the Concert and the Covenant, which enabled fifty states to agree to impose sanctions on Italy at considerable national discomfort in 1935, was not greater than that which had separated the collaboration of the Great Powers in the Concert itself from the unregulated balance of power of the *ancien régime*.

The same boldness marks Mr. Hinsley's treatment of international affairs since 1945. He argues that the wars between 1904 and 1945 were due to the disturbance of the balance of power and the dwarfing of Europe by the new world Powers; that stability was recovered in 1945 with the joint ascendancy of Russia and the United States; and that this renewed equilibrium would have ruled out general war for the foreseeable future even if nuclear weapons had not been invented.[20] The argument is helped by denying that China is a Great Power, and even that she was a major participant in the Korean War.[21] (Who drove the Eighth Army from the Yalu to the banks of the Han?)

What nuclear weapons have done, he says, is to rule out war by accident; but anyway, "no modern war has in fact taken place by accident."[22] The notion of war by accident has been much discussed lately by the strategic theorists whose existence Mr. Hinsley overlooks. An accident surely means simply an unforeseen event that upsets political plans. This is less likely to take the form today of a defence system fault, like a shower of meteors being mistaken for approaching ICBMs, than of circumstances arising suddenly beyond the control of either of the Great Powers, affecting what each considers to be its vital interest, and involving each in a policy of compelling the other to back down. There might be a rising in a disputed region, or the assassination of a key political figure, a Castro or an Abdul Rahman.[23] A little earlier in the book, in an interesting discussion of the origins of the First World War, Mr. Hinsley has himself described the Sarajevo assassination as "one of those moments in history when events passed beyond men's control."[24] What more is a war-producing accident?

League's action against Italy in 1935–6, so far from being doomed to inevitable failure, is remarkable for having nearly succeeded.

Wight's review was published in the *American Political Science Review*, vol. 54, no. 4 (December 1960), p. 1057.

[19] Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 197.
[20] Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 349.
[21] Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 347.
[22] Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 348.
[23] [Ed.] Fidel Castro had been Prime Minister of Cuba since 1959 and First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba since 1961 when Wight prepared this review-essay. Tunku Abdul Rahman became the first Prime Minister of independent Malaya in 1957, and he remained Prime Minister with the formation of Malaysia in 1963 until his resignation in 1970.
[24] Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 296.

Mr. Hinsley describes affairs since 1945 as a return to the principles of the Concert, now on a world-wide scale, with an enhanced diplomatic and military restraint, and fading motives of territorial aggrandisement or ideological conflict. It is an illuminating and, needless to add, encouraging interpretation of events. It is its strength that it does not rest on the vulgar belief that the nuclear weapon itself has abolished war, but rather on the total development of modern society. The twin Kantian demiurges engaged in creating peace are the increased power of public opinion, and the increased administrative control of increasingly cautious and responsive state machines over the means of violence.[25]

But there is an assumption underlying the picture, that a stable balance between rival states is the final term of politics. Instead of a political law tending towards a monopoly of power and the unification of any balanced system of states, we are to infer a law of growing cultural approximation which will make political unification unnecessary. Thus, there is an increasing convergence between the societies of Russia and the West.[26] (It might be recalled that Orwell made the same assumption when he imagined a petrified balance of power between assimilated totalitarian states as the political framework for *1984*.) "It may be confidently predicted," says Mr. Hinsley, "that their distrust of each other will … be sufficient to prevent the conclusion of agreements on such matters as disarmament and nuclear tests. … But it may be predicted equally confidently that they will begin to collaborate in other ways."[27] In a word, the development of the Kantian rule of law is separable from, and indeed antagonistic to, the development of even that germ of international government which John Strachey hoped for in a test ban agreement.[28]

The weakness of the argument is that it is, in the end, only a short-term forecast. It is a tribute to Mr. Hinsley's conscience as a historical prophet that he does not try to make it more. The relations between the Great Powers "are likely to be at least as stable as they were" in the nineteenth century.[29] What is likely to happen then is beyond the range of his confident prediction. It is not Kant's eternal peace after all, but only an empirical historian's peace in our time.

The reader is left to reflect on how the nineteenth-century system ended, and further, how every known system of states hitherto has ended in political

[25] [Ed.] Wight discussed Kant extensively in *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991), and *Four Seminal Thinkers in International Theory: Machiavelli, Grotius, Kant and Mazzini*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter, eds. (London: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[26] Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 361–362.

[27] Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 355.

[28] [Ed.] Wight referred to John Strachey's book, *On the Prevention of War* (London: Macmillan, 1962), as representative of the Grotian (or Rationalist) tradition in his essay, "Western Values in International Relations," in *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966, and London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), pp. 91n, 111n.

[29] Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, p. 367.

unification through an ascending series of wars.[30] If he believes that foreign policy should have some concern with bringing war under political control and strengthening the rudiments of international government, though his mind will have been much enlarged by Mr. Hinsley's book, his belief will not have been rationally undermined.

[30] [Ed.] See Wight's essay "Triangles and Duels," in Martin Wight, *Systems of States*, Hedley Bull ed. (London: Leicester University Press, in association with the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1977).

4
The Idea of Neutrality

International politics have always been a dangerous struggle or a precarious balance of power; neutrality is the attempt to keep out of them.* A wise man avoids other people's quarrels—this is the argument, at its simplest, of the neutral. You cannot be neutral between right and wrong—this is the argument, at its simplest, of the critic of neutrality. The history of neutrality, as a legal and political institution, has swung between the two arguments.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when international law was in its earliest development, and the very word "neutrality" was a new coinage, the right of neutrality was limited by the doctrine of the just war. Thus Grotius laid down that a state which wishes to be impartial in a conflict must not hinder the belligerent whose cause is just nor help the belligerent whose cause is unjust.[1]

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the rights of neutrality reached their theoretical zenith. This period seems in retrospect (perhaps deceptively) like a classical age in international relations, when politics were free from fanaticism and the balance of power was regulated, on the whole, without violent convulsions. The conception of the just war now grew faint, and it became agreed that neutrals had the duty to remain impartial between belligerents, who themselves had the corresponding duty to respect the territory and property of neutrals.

Doctrine of Collective Responsibility

In the nineteenth century, the prestige of neutrality was enhanced by the growing influence of the United States; the permanent neutrality of Switzerland, Belgium, and Luxembourg was written into the public law of Europe; and the international law of neutrality was clarified and advanced by the Declaration of Paris in 1856 and

* Martin Wight's radio broadcast for the BBC's General Overseas Service was published in *London Calling*, October 11, 1956.

[1] [Ed.] "On the other hand it is the duty of those who keep out of a war to do nothing whereby he who supports a wicked cause may be rendered more powerful, or whereby the movements of him who wages a just war may be hampered." Hugo Grotius, *De Jure Belli ac Pacis Libri Tres*, Vol. II, *The Translation*, Francis W. Kelsey, trans. (Buffalo, New York: William S. Hein and Company, 1995), p. 786 (Book III, chapter XVII, section III). It should be noted that this 1995 edition is a reprint of the 1925 edition (quoted frequently by Wight) published in Oxford by the Clarendon Press. The 1925 edition was given this title because Volume I, published by the Carnegie Institution of Washington in 1913, consists of a reproduction of the Latin edition published in Amsterdam in 1646.

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the second Hague Conference in 1907. But in the twentieth century the pendulum has swung back. The conception of neutrality has once more become complicated and limited by the doctrine of the just war in its new version of collective responsibility for restraining aggression.

One might almost say that the swing began with the second Hague Conference itself. For not only did the conference produce a series of conventions elaborating what we might call the classical rules of neutrality: it also declared that in a dispute neutral powers have a right to offer good offices or mediation and that this is not an unfriendly act. This meant that a dispute was no longer the affair exclusively of the disputants but was a matter of legitimate concern for the whole community of states. The two World Wars encouraged this trend. They seemed to involve such tremendous causes, transcending mere issues of national interest, that among the belligerents (who in each case were the majority of the members of international society) the view became prevalent that neutrality was no longer morally justifiable.

The three great international constitutional instruments of the twentieth century—the League Covenant, the Kellogg–Briand Treaty for the Renunciation of War, and the United Nations Charter—have not abolished the institution of neutrality but they have transformed it back into something resembling the status outlined by Grotius—they have transformed it back from a duty of absolute impartiality into a neutrality that must not be indifferent to the moral issues involved.

Broad Lesson of International History

But it might seem that these fluctuations in the theory of neutrality have never had much effect on the practice of neutrality; neither on the desire for neutrality of some states nor on the respect for neutrality by others. It is the broad lesson of international history that if a state lacks strength to defend its neutrality that neutrality will be violated whenever a belligerent can use the argument of military necessity. When Gustavus Adolphus invaded Germany in 1630 his brother-in-law, the Elector of Brandenburg, pleaded a right to neutrality. "What kind of a thing is that?" said Gustavus in his blunt way. "Neutrality?—I don't understand it. It is nothing to me." And he appeared outside Berlin with his artillery and compelled the unhappy Elector to sign an alliance with him.[2]

[2] [Ed.] Gustavus Adolphus rejected neutrality in this case not only with "the argument of military necessity" highlighted by Wight, but also with an appeal to moral righteousness: "I tell you frankly, I will not listen to talk about neutrality. His Excellency [i.e., the Elector of Brandenburg] must be either friend or foe. … If his Excellency wishes to hold with God, good; he is on my side. If, however, he wishes to hold with the Devil, then in truth he must fight against me. There cannot be a third way that is certain." Gustavus Adolphus quoted in J. Paul, *Gustaf Adolf*, Vol. II (1930), pp. 180–181, cited in

Nor was it different in the period when the rights of neutrality were being fully formulated. In the eighteenth century Frederick the Great began the Seven Years' War by overrunning Saxony without a declaration of war and refusing an offer of Saxon neutrality guaranteed by hostages and surrender of fortresses. It was in the nineteenth century, perhaps, that the rights of neutrals were most generally respected, but in the world wars they were once more generally overridden by military necessity. Not only were there famous and flagrant violations of neutrality by Germany: the Allies violated Greek neutrality in the first war, and Britain and Russia violated Persian neutrality in both wars. If there was a moral distinction it was that the violations of neutrality by the Allies were plainly not intended to lead to a permanent deprivation of independence, though this was small consolation to Greeks and Persians at the time.

If neutrality is so hard to maintain, what are the motives that lead countries to adopt it? We might distinguish between those countries which seek neutrality purely from considerations of external policy, and those which adopt it as the corollary of a concentration upon domestic policy. The distinction is not exact, and in any particular case both motives are likely to be at work.

Neutrality of the first kind is seen in states which avoid international alignments because they are preoccupied with a special, even a private, problem of external relations. Thus Irish neutrality flows logically from the continued inability of Irish opinion to accept the partition of the island; and the neutrality of the Arab countries is a qualified neutrality—a neutrality between the Western and Communist blocs—in order to concentrate upon the more immediate problems of Israel and eradicating colonialism. But neutrality for reasons of foreign policy is more generally conceived simply as the best way in the circumstances of seeking security.

Neutrality was the most reasonable foreign policy for Turkey or Argentina during the Second World War; General Franco pursued such a policy with an adroitness that has conferred ample benefits on Spain. Of this kind also is neutrality as a mode of political retirement, inspired by the desire for repose after having tasted the anxieties of military and imperial glory. Such a motive may be seen in the advocates of neutrality both in France and in Germany since the last war. It is perhaps the deepest motive of all neutrals which have formerly been Great Powers: of Austria today, of Holland in the nineteenth century, of Sweden, and of Switzerland, which we sometimes forget was once a military power.

Switzerland and Sweden are Europe's senior neutrals: their neutrality has been maintained unbroken now for 146 years.[3] They illustrate how neutrality as a

E. A. Beller, "The Thirty Years War," in J. P. Cooper, ed., *The New Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. IV, *The Decline of Spain and the Thirty Years War* (London and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 330. See also Michael Roberts, "The Political Objectives of Gustavus Adolphus in Germany, 1630–1632," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, Vol. 7 (1957), p. 25.

[3] [Ed.] It should be recalled that this essay was first published in 1956.

security policy, if it is to be successful, requires both military strength and geographical invulnerability.

The other kind of neutrality derives, I suggested, from a preoccupation with domestic affairs. The principle of the primacy of foreign policy was formulated by the great German historian Ranke, and an American scholar has described it as underlying all modern political philosophy.[4] Yet there are still countries which have the courage to repudiate it, and regard neutrality not as a kind of security policy but as an alternative to one.

India's Attitude to Power Politics

Mr Nehru has repeatedly described India's neutrality policy in this way: that India is so busy with her task of internal development that she cannot allow herself to become entangled in the web of power politics. In this he speaks for all those Asian countries which regard economic failure at home as a graver danger than military assault from without. It is not a new position. American isolationism up to 1941, and British non-intervention in the nineteenth century, were based on the same principle of absorption in internal welfare and economic expansion.

Yet these precedents suggest the limits of possible neutrality. America began by repudiating the balance of power; then found herself, in two world wars, compelled to rectify the balance; and at last, about 1947, recognized with consternation that she had become one of the scales in the balance. In other words, if the neutrality policy of a Small Power may come to an end with the neutrality being violated by stronger powers, the neutrality of a Great Power usually ends because the Great Power finds that its vital interests would be endangered if it continued to stand aloof. Mr Nehru's neutrality has always been an active neutrality, a neutrality which mediates between the Western and Communist powers, and which is therefore committed in some sense to holding the balance of the world. The policy of Yugoslavia since her break with the Cominform in 1948 has tended in the same direction.

"Neutralism," a word implying something more dynamic and realistic than neutrality, is sometimes used to describe such a policy as India's. The mediatory role of Mr Krishna Menon in the Geneva Conference on the Indo-China question in 1954 illustrates a more positive contribution to international relations than mere neutrality.

Seldom in international affairs has neutrality proved a successful policy in the long run; but then in the long run alternative ways of avoiding war have seldom

[4] [Ed.] "The primacy of foreign policy is taught not only by Hobbes but in all specifically modern political philosophy, whether implicitly or explicitly."Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*, Elsa M. Sinclair, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 163.

been successful either. Success is not the exclusive criterion of political judgment, and the pursuit of neutrality may have encouraged other social arts besides those of national defence. There are states whose foreign policy has been traditionally connected with the defence of the rule of law in international politics, with the maintenance of the balance of power and the defeat of aggression; and such states deserve respect. But the end of every great war has posed the question: "*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes*?"—who shall police the policeman?[5] It is a question to which international society, by its very nature, can provide no satisfactory answer, but a provisional answer has not infrequently been found in the critical conscience of the neutrals.

[5] [Ed.] This formulation of an ancient question derives from Juvenal's *Satire VI*.

5
Nationalism and World Order

I mean to talk very little about the U.N. Organisation.* What I want to discuss is the role of nations in the international community and particularly the role of the new nations. The theme is nationalism and world order.

Such a theme is fraught with controversy, ambiguity, and semantic confusion. We have two terms to play with: (a) nation and (b) international society (or community); and each of them is fluid and imprecise. Corresponding to historical or political facts, these are phenomena which seem obvious to observation, but which become elusive the more we try to pin them down.

What Is a Nation?

We might consider the word "nation" to start with. It is not necessary to say to an audience of historians at the end of a 9-day course on "Nationalism" that "nation" is a slippery word.

If I allude to it now, it is only to clear the ground for my own line of thought. In seeking the oldest sense of the word "nation" I omit the medieval use of the word, what it meant at the Council of Constance [in 1414–18], because at that time international society was not recognizable.

The oldest sense of a nation was that of a people supposed to have a common descent, "*natio*," and organized under a common government.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was possible to speak of the Republic of Venice or the Kingdom of Prussia as nations, and this usage lasted in historical writers down to 1914:

> Carlyle wrote of "the Prussian nation,"
> Fortescue of "the Russian and Austrian nations," and
> E. Armstrong (1896) of disputes between Milan and Florence in the eighteenth century as "national."

In this way, the word "nation" is almost interchangeable with "power" or "state" and equal to a member of international society; and the sense is illustrated by the

* Martin Wight presented this paper on August 2, 1962 at the Ministry of Education History Course entitled "United Nations or disunited nations?"

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phrase "the law of nations," and survives in the adjective "international" for which we have no synonym at all.

After the French Revolution, the word "nation" came to mean a "nationality," a people with consciousness of an historic identity expressed in a distinct language. In this sense, Italy, Germany, and Poland were nations, though each was divided among many states, and the Habsburg and Russian monarchies became seen as "multi-national" Powers.

The principle of national self-determination asserts the right of every nationality to form a state, become a Power, and become a member of international society.

The Peace settlement of 1919 attempted to reorganize Europe in accordance with this principle.

But outside Europe, since 1919 the word "nation" has come to mean a political unit asserting its right of independent statehood against European domination.

These political units vary vastly in character: some are ancient civilisations comparable to Europe as a whole, like India and China; some are historic kingdoms, like Ethiopia and Persia, Morocco and Burma; some are fragments of a wider linguistic group, like the Arab states; and probably most have been created by European diplomatists and colonial administrators, like Indonesia and Nigeria.

In terms of nationality equaling "consciousness of historic identity expressed in a distinct language," most of these new nations resemble the Habsburg Empire rather than Ireland or Denmark.

They are multi-national nations (which shows the contradictions to which our inadequate political terminology can lead).

They combine the passions of the second phase of the "nation"—that which originated with the French Revolution—with the social diversity of the first phase, that which preceded the French Revolution.

The Number of the New Nations

The first obvious characteristic of the new nations as a class is their "numerousness."

They are coming into existence and being admitted to the U.N. at an average rate of one a year.

In 1945, at San Francisco, there were 51 members of the U.N. Today there are 102—the number doubled.[1]

[1] [Ed.] It should be recalled that Wight was writing in 1962. The number of UN members increased to 193 in 2011.

In so far as this is a process of the creation of new states, there is a precedent in the emancipation of the Balkan states in the nineteenth century.

The sickness which made the Ottoman Empire the Sick Man of Europe has become a world epidemic, successively striking down the Dutch Empire, the French Empire, the British Empire, the Belgian Empire, and the Portuguese Empire.

But this sickness proved to be only the first phase, the onset, of a longer ailment to which that particular nineteenth-century historical experience gave the name of Balkanisation, which means:

1. a *Kleinstaaterei* of weak states,
2. fiercely divided among themselves by nationalist feuds,
3. governed by unstable popular autocracies,
4. as unaccustomed to international law and diplomatic practice as they are to parliamentary government, and
5. a battleground for surrounding Great Powers.

The Character of the New Nations

The new nations are characterized by uncertain regimes and uncertain frontiers.

By "uncertain regimes" we do not mean that their rulers are uncertain where to go. They are singularly clear and united in their aims:

(a) Their first goal is economic development—a "desire for modernization" in terms of steel mills, aircraft, universities, and sports stadiums, whether from a passionately humanitarian desire to end age-long poverty or from a sophisticated desire of the political elite to manipulate the exciting machinery of a modern state.
(b) Their second goal is political neutrality—keeping out of the Cold War.

In so much as it means that international society has a preponderance of weak states and Small Powers (India, Nigeria, and Congo are large states but Small Powers), it is a reversion to the state of affairs before 1789 when the majority of the membership of the society of nations was formed by the miniscule states of Italy and Germany.

The history of international society has shown marked contraction in membership followed by re-expansion.

The contraction was due to the organisation of Europe on lines of nationality, "sorting out the tribes" (Bismarck), and especially of course to the amalgamation of the Italian and German states into two.

The membership of international society was reduced to 16 between 1871, when the centripetal process in Italy and Germany was completed, and 1878, when the centrifugal process in the Balkans received international approval at the Congress of Berlin (Serbia, Rumania, and Bulgaria).

This was the lowest point it has ever reached since the sixteenth century.

But their regimes are uncertain through the very fact of economic development.

They are all in a state of rapid social revolution.

They have not only emerged out of colonial tutelage into political independence, but out of agrarian (or even pastoral) backwardness (as in Somalia) and stability (or stagnation?) into the technological revolution.

They are having to cope simultaneously with political self-government, the disruption of tribal society, a money economy, urbanization, industrialism, social mobilization, and mass politics.

This means that they are all in various degrees in a state of permanent upheaval and terrifying instability.

It is accentuated by the Cold War between the Great Powers, and this in turn accentuates the Cold War since in most parts of the world a well-organised Communist Party is waiting as History's official receiver for politically bankrupt regimes.

And they have uncertain frontiers. Many of them, especially in Africa, are unnatural products of alien rule and historical accident seeking paradoxically to arouse national loyalty about a territorial shape they owe to their colonial oppressors.

But this is only the starting point. As it becomes apparent that frontiers arbitrarily divide tribes and resources, each state regards its inherited frontiers as a base for expansion.

I do not think it is possible to name a single new state of Asia or Africa which does not have a frontier dispute with a neighbour, which has not designated some territory beyond its frontiers as *terra irredenta* from colonialism, like India's claim to Goa and Indonesia's to West Irian and Saudi Arabia's to the Aden Protectorate and the Philippines' claim to North Borneo, or has not disputed the right to exist of some neighbour newer than itself, such as Egypt did the Sudan's and Morocco does Mauretania's and Iraq does Kuwait's, or has not had a simple "classic" territorial dispute with a neighbour, as India has with Pakistan, and Ethiopia with Somalia and Persia with Bahrein, or a territorial dispute involving a partitioned people who make a minority on one side of a frontier or another, as Pakistan has with Afghanistan, and Siam with Laos, and Ghana with Togoland, or does not make claims for racial union with other states, which implies the unseating of *their* regimes, as has been Egypt's posture towards the Arab states, especially the Hashemite kingdoms, and may be President Nkrumah's posture towards other West African states.

Of all the conflicts which divide the uncommitted world, the most stubborn is that between the Arab states and Israel.

History is always trying out new possibilities and new combinations, and history since 1945 has shown two phenomena for which I think there is no precedent:

(1) A general war without a general peace settlement with the major enemy: there has still been no Allied peace settlement with Germany.[2] For the first time there has been a great war without a Versailles Settlement, a Congress of Vienna, a Treaty of Utrecht, or a Treaty of Westphalia. This is because we passed straight from the Second World War, a triangular struggle between Democracy, Communism, and Fascism, to the Cold War, a bilateral struggle between Democracy and Communism.
(2) The Arab-Israeli War has followed this example set by the betters of Egypt and Israel. The Arab states, led by Egypt, were soundly defeated by Israel in 1948, but Egypt has refused to make peace and continues to proclaim that Israel must be annihilated. This is unprecedented in international law, so far as I know—this refusal to transform a state of war into a state of peace.[3]

The only parallel I can think of is Poland's seizure of Vilna from Lithuania in 1920 as a result of which Lithuania, in a kind of sulks, refused to establish diplomatic relations with Poland, and their common frontier remained in a state of blockade for 18 years.

It ended, you may remember, in March 1938, when Jósef Beck, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, sent an ultimatum to Lithuania demanding the establishment of normal diplomatic relations; and this was a consequence of Hitler's seizure of Austria the week before, which had made Colonel Beck think first of a military occupation of Lithuania as compensation for Germany's aggrandizement. *Absit omen!*[4]

The International Policy of the New Nations

This picture of Balkanisation shows the relations of the new nations inter se [among themselves]. It needs to be supplemented by another, showing their relations with the wider world.

The Afro-Asian states are a pressure group as the Balkan states before 1914 could never be.

[2] [Ed.] Wight was writing in 1962. The Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany, also known as the Two Plus Four Agreement, was concluded in 1990 by the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, and the four Powers that had occupied Germany at the end of the Second World War: France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

[3] [Ed.] Egypt and Israel concluded a peace treaty in 1979. Thanks to the treaty Egypt became the first Arab state to accord official recognition to Israel.

[4] [Ed.] The literal meaning of this Latin exclamation is "may this [evil] omen be absent."

In a strange way, they reproduce some of the attitudes of the Axis Powers before 1939. Like the Axis Powers, they are the Have-Nots, the revisionists of international society.

They are united in resentment of Western civilisation. Italy and Germany were the newest and the most politically retarded of the European Great Powers. In their Fascist phase, they resented Western civilisation from within as its most backward and unfairly treated children. Their Axis colleague, Japan, resented Western civilisation from without as its most precocious apprentice.

They were driven by resentment of the territorial empires and deep-rooted stable cultures of France, Britain and America, though by a familiar psychological mechanism their resentment was combined with a passionate desire to imitate.

Th Afro-Asian nations have a corresponding resentment of Western civilisation seen in their ineradicable prejudice and antipathy against all colonial Powers.[5]

Among the more sophisticated of their *élites*, this is resentment against the privileged minority of the world dwelling in Western Europe and North America, who form one sixth of the world's population and possess two-thirds of its wealth. And it takes the form of self-conscious *proletarianism*.

There is a slightly heterodox latter day Marxist doctrine that in the age of imperialism class war has been partially transformed into international warfare between bourgeois capitalist nations and oppressed proletarian nations to whose cause the workers' fatherland has rallied.

This doctrine was hinted at but not embraced by Lenin. It was in fact espoused and patented by the ex-socialist journalist Mussolini. It became standard Fascist doctrine.

"The League of Nations," said Mussolini in 1919, "is a racket in the interests of the rich nations against the proletarian nations."

"The war which we have begun," he said in December 1935, "is the war of the poor, of the disinherited, of the proletariat." It requires an effort of concentration to realise that he is speaking of Italians, not Abyssinians. "Against us is ranged the front of conservatism, of selfishness, of hypocrisy."

There were many echoes of this at the Bandung Conference in 1955. "For many generations," said President Sukarno in his opening speech, "our people were the voiceless ones in the world, disregarded and living in poverty and humiliation."

Proletarian self-consciousness has a natural expression in revolutionary activity.

Arab nationalism's methods have been assassination and arms-running, intrigue and insurrection against established governments, confiscation of foreign property, repudiation of agreements, dissolution of moral ties, and inflammatory propaganda by wireless.

[5] [Ed.] Here Wight wrote in the margin: "Nasser's imprecation against England."

These were also the international methods of Fascism. But this revolutionary activity has also gone on within the U.N. and this marks probably the most important contrast between the U.N. and the League of Nations.

The three-cornered power struggle between the World Wars—the struggle between the status quo Powers, the have-not Powers (the revisionists), and the Communist Power, was never held within the framework of the League of Nations.

The League never included more than two points of the triangle.

In the 1920s, before revisionism grew strong, the League included the status quo Powers and the have-nots, and excluded Bolshevik Russia.

In the 1930s, the revisionist Powers walked out—Japan, Germany, and Italy—and Russia came in, under the name of collective security, herself to be expelled in 1939, leaving Britain and France alone as the rump of the League of Nations.

The UN, on the other hand, is an organization within which a tripartite struggle between status quo Powers, Communist Powers, and have-not Powers can go on. This might almost be said to define the nature of the UN.

And it is linked to another contrast between the U.N. and the League, the most prominent and the most neglected. The aggressor Powers, the Powers bent on disorder, one after the other quit the League, because they feared that League membership might hamper their freedom of action.

Since 1945, there has been one "branded" aggressor—Communist China—and many Powers with local revisionist aims. But most of them operate inside the U.N. and those that are outside demand admission because they know that membership in the U.N. will not in any way hinder their freedom of action and will increase their diplomatic weight and propaganda advantages.

Thus the U.N. has become, in one aspect, a great organ of the anti-colonial campaign where new nations have been able to operate as an international pressure-group with much greater diplomatic and propaganda weight than they would otherwise have enjoyed without it.

It has sometimes seemed that as the Holy Alliance was a coalition of sovereigns for suppressing revolutionary movements, the U.N. is an instrument of the new nations, the have-nots, encouraged, of course, by Russia, for promoting revolutionary movements.

Temperamenta

To offset this picture of Balkanisation and revolutionary intrigue, there are other circumstances. India's seizure of Goa is a depressing instance of how the most responsible of new states can succumb to lawlessness. On the other hand, there are Nasser and Nkrumah. Nasser has shown himself able to run the Canal with no less efficiency or respect for its users than did the Suez Canal Company. He

showed his maturity and restraint in his acceptance of the dismantling of the UAR [United Arab Republic] and the reassertion of Syrian independence.

The Congo operation showed Nkrumah's statesmanship. In so far as the Congo operation was noteworthy, it was due to Nkrumah's statesmanship. Hammarskjöld's would be generally agreed.

(a) Nkrumah backed the U.N. and staked his reputation on it. "A special responsibility, in my opinion, rests upon all African states to take vigorous steps to reassert the authority of the U.N. I consider it is essential for all African States to act with complete solidarity and to support a common policy."[6]
(b) He organized an African Group at New York in drafting resolutions and gaining support for them which gave Hammarskjöld enabling powers. He organized an Afro-Asian vote.

If it is statesmanship to work through an international organization in preference to direct action and by unflagging conciliatory diplomacy to secure cooperation between many Powers, Nkrumah is a statesman.

His aims, of course, were simple: to keep the Great Powers out of Africa; to avert intervention; and to promote a pan-African settlement of African issues. And Hammarskjöld agreed by inviting primarily troops of African Powers to compose the U.N. force (Morocco, United Arab Republic, Ghana, Guinea, and Ethiopia), plus Sweden and Ireland.

There is an interesting parallel with the decision of the 1884–85 Berlin African Congress, which recognized the Congo Free State as a central zone under the King of the Belgians, so as to keep it out of the Great Powers' scramble for Africa.

Was the operation a success? The Congo is still not reunited. African discipline broke down. The African States' will to cooperate in the U.N. evaporated, and the African High Command adumbrated in December 1960 to take independent action.

This is the kind of collapse that can overtake, has overtaken, all collective international actions outside wartime alliances.

This was due to the contradiction in the U.N. directives: to prevent the secession of Katanga and restore the unity of Congo without intervening in Congo's internal affairs.

But in so far as it was a success, this was due to the initiative of Hammarskjöld combining with African statesmanship.

Having spent so much time on Nationalism, let me say a final word on world order.

[6] Dispatch to other African States.

World order

World order, it may be argued, requires

- an effective international authority
- an international police force which can restrain Great Powers
- collective security
- a system of peaceful change.

This represents the whole institutional and procedural panoply which was glimpsed and argued about and groped for and fumbled between the World Wars. This we obviously have not got, and, given the Cold War and the arms race, it is not within the bounds of possibility to get it.

But prior to this, world order requires three conditions which are linked closely:

(a) a reasonably stable balance of power, a status quo which is at least not so unjust that many Powers will want to overthrow it,
(b) a minimum mutual acceptance of each other's territorial frontiers and international personalities, and
(c) a habitual respect for international law and diplomatic practice as the minimum body of rules needed for international social life.

And it is not clear that the contemporary world of the new nations has these conditions either.

The balance of power in the world is a balance between the two Great Powers, the nuclear stalemate; and the balance of forces throughout the great no-man's-land of the uncommitted world is the resultant of the balance of power between the two giants.

If mentally we subtracted America and Russia from the international equation, and China too, it seems likely that what remained might be less stable rather than more.

One only has to think of the precarious equilibrium between Pakistan and India, Israel and the Arab states, Rhodesia and Katanga, and the Republic of Congo and Black Africa.

Still less is there a habitual respect for law and treaties in the world. The predominant revolutionary philosophy is anti-legal.

"It is better to be carried away by emotions than bogged down by legal sophistications," said a Pakistani delegate to the U.N. in 1952.

The devaluation of international law and treaty rights is one of great contrasts between the world since 1945 and the world before.

Indonesian statesmen have developed the argument that international law was made in other centuries by other peoples—the European oppressors—without reference to changes wrought by history. At the London Conference of Users of the Suez Canal in August 1956, the Indonesian Foreign Minister lashed out at international law as "outmoded" and "a burden of modern life." He said that "international treaties … [are a] reflection of international law that does not recognize the sanctity of human beings regardless of race, creed, or locality."

In 1867 John Morley wrote that

> The Treaties of Vienna were not to the Revolution, what the Peace of Westphalia was to the Reformation. … The history of Europe since the Treaties of Vienna has been little else than the history of their abrogation; in other words, of the revival and spread of that Revolution which they were believed to have finally quelled. Old dynasties, old divisions of classes, old forms of privileged government survive, but little political foresight is needed to disclose that they are all doomed, and that they are only endured as temporary resting-places on an onward road. The conception of finality and equilibrium might seem to have vanished from the midst of every nation in Europe. Every statesman recognizes more or less frankly the transitory character of the system which he for the hour administers and upholds. Everywhere we discern the hand and hearken to the tread of the Revolution.[7]

There are several attitudes it is possible to take about such a situation.

First is the majority view. Probably most of us, most of the time, assume that it will sort itself out, that the new nationalism will run its course and reach an equilibrium.

We appeal, implicitly perhaps more than overtly, to Adam Smith's doctrine of the invisible hand, hoping that when every nation pursues its own interest, the common interest will result.

We argue that there is a world-wide international society with demonstrable institutions in the UN, that the material and technological unification of the world is bound to speed its cultural unification, and that in the long run we may look forward to the evolution and acceptance of common (perhaps mainly Western) institutions, ideas, and standards.

The minority view, on the other hand, holds that it is possible that the process of decolonization, the rise of new nations in Asia and Africa, is analogous to the barbarian invasions, the self-assertion of peoples outside our own civilization.

In this case, we may see the world-wide international society as entirely superficial, and concentrate our attention on the winding-up of European hegemony and

[7] John Morley, *Edmund Burke* (London: Macmillan, 1867), pp. 227–228, quoted in Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), p. 84.

the contraction of Western society within its proper frontiers as within a besieged castle. If so, the diplomatic enfranchisement of Afro-Asian states may resemble the *magisterium militum* with which Theodoric was invested by Emperor Zeno, or the honorary consulship that Anastasius conferred on Clovis, the external trappings of a dead past.[8]

The two views are not mutually exclusive.

[8] [Ed.] The Byzantine Emperor Zeno appears to have given the Gothic chieftain Theodoric the title of *magister militum* (master of the soldiers, or commander-in-chief) for tactical political reasons, while the title the Emperor Anastasius gave to Clovis did not come with any powers. On the former, see Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, trans. by Thomas J. Dunlap (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 268–278. On the latter, see Christian Pfister, "Gaul Under the Merovingian Franks," in H. M. Gwatkin and J. P. Whitney, eds., *The Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. II, *The Rise of the Saracens and the Foundation of the Western Empire* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 115.

6

Has Scientific Advance Changed the Nature of International Politics in Kind, Not Merely in Degree?

When the subject of this paper was agreed upon, I thought myself clear about what was intended by it.* When it comes to writing, I find myself a good deal less clear. The general argument of the paper may be summarised thus:

1. There are several tendencies in contemporary international politics that suggest that the state-system, or international society, as it has operated since about 1500, is undergoing a radical change, or may indeed be coming to an end. These tendencies are political, in the widest sense of the word.
2. Scientific advance, more especially in the form of military technology, is only an ancillary influence, and at no point seems to be determinant.

This discussion will take the form of an examination of various assertions that repeatedly recur in current discussion about international affairs and the nuclear deterrent, in an attempt to determine how far they are valid.

The political changes in international society are obvious and under constant comment, but it is not altogether easy to distinguish the substantial from the apparent. Some of the weaker runners may be eliminated at the outset.

1. There is the argument that international politics have been revolutionised because we live in an age of ideological conflict, when men's loyalties cut across frontiers. Many people still tend to look back to the diplomatic system of 1871–1914 as somehow "normal" or "classical," just as Burke or Malmesbury saw the diplomatic system of 1648–1789 as the norm by which to hedge the aberrations of the Jacobins. The argument is used even by those who recognise the recurrence of doctrinal conflicts, whether religious or ideological, throughout international history.

If the history of the state-system is considered as a whole, it will be seen that more time has been occupied by periods when the play of power politics has been

* Martin Wight presented this paper to the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics at the meeting of January 8–11, 1960. He seems to have been working on "The Political Consequences of Nuclear Weapons" at the same time, and there are significant overlaps in these two papers.

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confused by cross-tides of doctrinal passion and ecumenical loyalties than by periods when *raison d'état* has governed alone. It might be cogently argued that with the epiphany of Wilson and Trotsky in 1917–18 international politics *returned* to their norm; and Canning's famous dictum might be rewritten in reverse: "So things are getting back to a wholesome state again. No longer every nation for itself and God for all. The time for having loyalties concerning international society as a whole has returned."[1]

2. There is the argument of the growth of internationalism, exemplified previously, all by permanent international organisations, especially the League of Nations and the UN This seems to comprise four distinct propositions:

(a) That international society is now worldwide; the membership of the UN is virtually universal. This is incontestable and need not detain us here.

(b) That the members of international society are now more interdependent than ever before, economically, morally, and in every other way. The material interdependence, again, is incontestable. The moral interdependence seems much more disputable. Not only is there the cleavage due to the ideological conflict set up by militant Communism. There are older, and possibly deeper, cultural cleavages. It is still quite uncertain how far the non-European world has been assimilated to an international system that originated in Western Christendom. One of the problems in judging the Chinese People's Republic is to know how far it is (and how far its rulers see themselves as) a powerful new state asserting its equal rights in a world community, and how far it is a reincarnation of the Middle Kingdom surrounded by barbarian peoples who can be assimilated or chastised according to circumstances. It has even been suggested that the Chinese People's Republic has no prime interest in obtaining a seat on the United Nations Security Council.[2] One of the problems in judging the politics of Arab nationalism is to know how far Islamic principles are capable of being modified by Western conceptions. The resolute refusal to consolidate the Arab-Israeli armistice by making a settled peace with Israel is virtually unprecedented in Western diplomacy and indefensible in terms of Western international law, but it is an exact application of Islamic constitutional law. Many of the non-European nations seem to be living in two mental worlds at the same time. The surfaces of their minds, so to speak, are occupied with the processes of Western diplomacy and the elaborate ritual of the United

[1] [Ed.] Canning offered his celebrated dictum in a letter to Sir Charles Bagot on January 3, 1823: "Villèle is a Minister of thirty years ago, no revolutionary scoundrel: but constitutionally hating England, as Choiseul and Vergennes used to hate us—and so things are getting back to a wholesome state again. Every nation for itself, and God for us all." The letter is reproduced in Augustus Granville Stapleton, *George Canning and His Times* (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1859), pp. 369–370.

[2] [Ed.] The People's Republic of China has occupied China's seat in the UN Security Council since 1971.

Nations; but the depths are set in the ancient ways.[3] Thus the world-wide international society whose existence we have just conceded has a puzzling appearance. It may be a society whose material unification is speeding cultural unification, the spread and acceptance of predominantly Western institutions, ideas and standards. Or it may be a society whose unity is entirely superficial, covering the contraction of Western hegemony and the reassertion of its subject peoples. If so, the diplomatic enfranchisement of the Afro-Asian states may resemble the *magisterium militum* with which Theodoric was invested by the Emperor Zeno or the honorary consulship that Anastasius conferred on Clovis.[4]

(c) That international society has at length evolved constitutional organs, a rudimentary legislature, executive, and judiciary; and (d) that at length the Smaller Powers have been enfranchised and are no longer simply the objects of the policy of the Great Powers. These two points may be briefly considered together. It is obviously true that international society has elaborated constitutional and legal forms, but it is much less clear that this has altered the nature of power politics. The rules of the game have been made more complicated, but the game appears much the same.

It is the difference between auction bridge and contract, not between playing bridge and a more useful and cooperative activity. The Foreign Office spokesman who privately observed that "the only new thing the UN has introduced into diplomacy is a respectable means of passing the buck" was a little unfair to diplomacy: it has always had respectable means of passing the buck. The effect of international organisations on international politics deserves more extensive discussion, and it is a subject on which we might well have a paper at a later time. At our last meeting we tended to agree that the more elaborate an international organisation becomes, the more the making of real decisions is pushed outside the international organisation. As Noel Annan has said, "the intricate machinery of public international conferences is paradoxically only of use in solving small problems." Nor is it clear that the liberty the Smaller Powers have obtained to know, to utter, and to argue interminably according to conscience in the General Assembly has increased their

[3] [Ed.] See Wight's review of Adda B. Bozeman, *Politics and Culture in International History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960, and London: Oxford University Press, 1961). Wight published his review in *International Affairs*, vol. 38, no. 2 (April 1962), pp. 228–229.

[4] [Ed.] In other words, the diplomatic enfranchisement may be pro forma and without much practical significance. The Byzantine Emperor Zeno appears to have given the Gothic chieftain Theodoric the title of *magister militum* (master of the soldiers, or commander-in-chief) for tactical political reasons, while the title the Emperor Anastasius gave to Clovis did not come with any powers. On the former, see Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, Thomas J. Dunlap, trans. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 268–278. On the latter, see Christian Pfister, "Gaul Under the Merovingian Franks," in H. M. Gwatkin and J. P. Whitney, eds. *The Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. II, *The Rise of the Saracens and the Foundation of the Western Empire* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 115.

weight in international affairs. Once again, we must ask whether it is really new, and whether it makes a significant difference. Has any Small Power in international history had so great an influence as Geneva in the time of Calvin and Beza?[5] Did not the smaller German Powers have a voice in the Diet of the German Confederation? It may perhaps be said that the Smaller Powers in the UN General Assembly have exercised a negative influence: de Gaulle is said to have been as much influenced in his Algerian policy by the General Assembly as by the French Army.[6] But it is difficult to see whether they have exercised any positive direction over international politics.

3. There is the phenomenon usually described as "the revolution of rising expectations." This means the increasing discontent with their material conditions of the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Here there does seem to be a development without precedent. In some respects it seems to resemble the struggle between the have and have-not Powers in the first half of the twentieth century. The Afro-Asian bloc adopt the posture, the language and the propaganda of the "proletariat nations" invented by Mussolini. But there is a decisive difference: that Italy, Germany, and Japan aimed to rectify the *injuria temporum* by a redistribution of the world, by defeating the older Powers and dividing up their empires. The Bandung Powers on the other hand, with greater economic sophistication, assume that the world's increasing productivity will allow enough, given better distribution, to raise their standard of living nearer to that of the Western world.[7] Perhaps the nearest analogy would be the demand of the Protestant princes of Germany for religious *Freistellung*, first put forward in the negotiations leading to the Frankfurt Interim in 1539, and producing after a century's conflict the *Landeshoheit* conceded in 1648. The Protestant princes assumed that a *jus reformandi* and a full political sovereignty were intrinsic attributes of princely Power; the Afro-Asian

[5] [Ed.] Theodore Beza (1519–1605) was the successor to John Calvin (1509–64) as the leader of the Protestant Reformation in the Republic of Geneva, founded by Calvin in 1541.

[6] [Ed.] The UN General Assembly considered the Algerian question every year from 1955 to 1961, with increasing support for Algerian independence. From the outset the French government expressed "strong ... antagonism to any United Nations involvement in the issue," and the General Assembly's votes "in the early years of consideration of the Algerian case ... did very little to shift the situation." Arthur Lall, *Modern International Negotiation: Principles and Practice* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1966), pp. 72–73. Although de Gaulle had by September 1959 endorsed self-determination for Algeria, he was "instinctively hostile to concessions as a direct result of General Assembly pressure." Martin Thomas, "The British Government and the End of French Algeria," in Martin S. Alexander and J. F. V. Keiger, eds. *France and the Algerian War, 1954-62: Strategy, Operations and Diplomacy* (London, England, and Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 2002), p. 181. In other words, it can be argued (and this appears to have been Martin Wight's judgment) that the votes in the General Assembly in favor of Algerian independence did not promote this outcome, at least in the initial years of contention, but stiffened resistance to it in France.

[7] [Ed.] Wight compared various categories of "have not" Powers in greater detail in his paper, "The Power Struggle within the United Nations," in *Democracy on Trial, Proceedings of the Institute of World Affairs*, 33rd session, December 9–12, 1956 (Los Angeles, California: University of Southern California, 1957).

states assume that industrialisation and economic planning are inherent in political independence. The Protestants wrapped their aims in language of religious freedom. The Afro-Asians wrap theirs in language of democratic socialism.

4. There is the political configuration for which the Americans have invented the repulsive name "bipolarity." The word is ugly, unnecessary, and tautologous. (Could there be tripolarity?) It has come into use to describe an international society presided over by two Powers vastly stronger than any others. But precisely the same feature characterised the international society of the sixteenth century, polarised between the "two Emperiall greatnesses" (as Fulke Greville called them) of the House of Habsburg and the House of Valois. Mably, writing in his *Principes des Négociations* (first published in 1757) one of the earliest systematic treatises on international politics, conceived of international society as organised round rival "*puissances dominantes*." The antagonism of France and Austria had been replaced, after the Marlborough Wars, by the antagonism of France and Britain. On such a view, the nineteenth century, if the Concert of Europe be conceived as a rudimentary pentarchy,[8] would be an exceptional period, and the emergence of the United States and Russia as dominant Powers after 1945 would be a return to form. It might well be argued that the normal condition of international society is a diarchy of two dominant Powers which are rivals for hegemony but have a common interest in preventing an intrusion upon their duel.[9]

Of these political changes, only two seem to be directly connected with scientific advance. The "revolution of rising expectations" is a demand by the non-Western world for the benefits of the industrial revolution already experienced by the West. The "explosion of population" which reinforces it is also, at least indirectly, the result of medical science. The extension of international society to cover the whole earth is likewise the result of scientific advance in communications and in the creation of a worldwide economic system. But it is well not to exaggerate this. In 1500 international society was already theoretically worldwide, because medieval Christendom from which it was still imperfectly distinguished was too. Vitoria's *societas gentium naturalis*, which is the premise of perhaps two-thirds of the thinking about international politics and law from his day to ours, descends directly from the medieval conception of mankind as a single organism with a divinely ordained spiritual and temporal constitution and with Christ at its head. And it seems likely that, even if Western technology could be imagined as remaining

[8] [Ed.] The pentarchy consisted of the five Great Powers that led the Concert of Europe following the Napoleonic wars: Austria, Britain, France, Prussia, and Russia. For an authoritative account of the theoretical grounding of this enterprise, see Carsten Holbraad, *The Concert of Europe: A Study in German and British International Theory* (London: Longman, 1970).

[9] [Ed.] See Martin Wight's essay "Triangles and Duels," in *Systems of States*, Hedley Bull, ed. (London: Leicester University Press, in association with the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1977), pp. 174–200.

frozen in the state it had reached at the time of Columbus and Cortes, the Western state-system would have become worldwide. As with the spread of Hellenism, the degree of technical ascendancy over other societies was less important than a missionary culture.

Against the background of these political changes, let us consider the changes attributed to the development of military science. Here again, the application of science seems only to confirm or accelerate political tendencies. War, as a means of political control or change, is also a social convulsion with a steadily widening range of violence; and it was this before ever modern science came into the picture. "This was the greatest upheaval that had ever happened among the Hellenes, and part of the barbarian world as well—one might almost say among the greater part of mankind."[10] It is an epigraph for each successive general war in the European state system. The most striking effect of science has been to increase the destructiveness of individual weapons. A shaft from a long bow or a bolt from a crossbow was very unlikely to kill more than one man. When iron balls filled with gunpowder which exploded on their targets were introduced early in the sixteenth century, it became possible to aim to kill a group of men at a blow. The Memorial to the Men of the Machine-Gun Corps, erected outside St George's Hospital after the First World War carries the curious inscription, "Saul hath slain his thousands but David has slain his tens of thousands."[11] More recent achievements have been neatly summarised by Wayland Young:

> After the First World War, the statisticians estimated that it had taken an average of ten thousand rifle bullets or ten artillery shells to kill one man. That means that somewhere between ten and ten thousand individual acts of will were needed to extinguish one life. With the H-bomb and the H-rocket, one act of will became sufficient to extinguish three or four million lives.[12]

This tendency may be extrapolated in two different ways. Either the tendency leads to a Third World War which will probably destroy the state system and most of its social foundations. Or it will reach a point of Heracletian transformation into its own opposite, expressed by Churchill when he recalled a schoolboy memory that mathematical quantities on passing through infinity change their signs from plus to minus, so that "It may be that … when the advance of destructive weapons enables everyone to kill everybody else nobody will want to kill anyone

[10] [Ed.] This statement appears in the first paragraph of Thucydides's history of the Peloponnesian War.

[11] [Ed.] 1 Samuel 18:17, repeated in 1 Samuel 21:11 and 1 Samuel 29:5.

[12] [Ed.] Wayland Young, *Strategy for Survival: First Steps in Nuclear Disarmament* (London: Penguin Books, 1959), p. 10.

at all."[13] In whatever political terms such a *pax atomica* is conceived, they must comprise a final stabilisation of the balance of power and the abandonment of war as the *ultima ratio regum*; and this means an equally radical transformation of international politics.

In the discussion of these possibilities, certain propositions constantly recur, such as that war has "ceased to be an instrument of policy." Some of these propositions are discussed here together with certain corollaries which, if not so commonly expressed, seem to be implicit in the argument. They may be summarised thus: that the advances in military science have brought:

1. The end of the territorial impermeability of the state.
2. The end of the distinction between Great and Small Powers.
3. The end of the decisive role of industrial Power.
4. The final ascendancy of the offensive over the defensive.
5. The final ascendancy of land power over sea power.
6. The end of war as an instrument of policy.

About each of these propositions it may be asked, first, what does it mean; secondly, is it true; and thirdly, which is the subject of our enquiry, if true does it mark a radical transformation of international politics?

1. ***The end of the territorial impermeability of the state.*** The phrase is coined by John H. Herz in his admirable book *International Politics in the Atomic Age*. He argues that the unity, independence, and sovereignty of the modern state are to be accounted for ultimately by its physical existence "as an expanse of territory, encircled for its identification and defense by tangible, military expressions of statehood, like fortifications and fortresses."[14] In the classical period of international relations (by which he means roughly 1648–1914) the state was thus surrounded by a "hard shell" protecting it against foreign penetration, which made it the ultimate unit of protection for those living within its boundaries.

International society was a system of impenetrable elemental units of measurable power, comparable to the system of classical physics with its measurable forces and impenetrable atom as its basic unit. He finds this conception of international politics first formulated theoretically in Leibnitz's essay on the right of legation, with its argument that the principal criterion of sovereignty is the exclusive right to maintain garrisons on your territory.[15]

[13] [Ed.] Churchill speech in the House of Commons, November 3, 1953, in *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897–1963*, Vol. VIII, *1950–1963*, Robert Rhodes James, ed. (New York and London: Chelsea House Publishers in association with R. R. Bowker Company, 1974), pp. 8504–8505.

[14] John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 40. [Ed.] Wight published a review of this book in the *American Political Science Review*, vol. 54, no. 4 (December 1960), p. 1057. The review is reproduced in the present volume, Martin Wight, *Foreign Policy and Security Strategy*.

[15] Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age*, pp. 52–61.

In the twentieth century (his argument continues) the hard shell of the territorial state has dissolved, owing to economic blockade, ideological penetration, air warfare, and finally atomic warfare. The impenetrable units have become interpenetrable and can no longer afford protection to their inhabitants. NATO and the Warsaw Pact are a new kind of alliance, allowing semi-permanent establishment of foreign bases on the soil of allies by a predominant Power, with consequent arrangements for extraterritoriality of their troops, etc.[16] And by the supreme paradox, these two predominant Powers, being each the prime potential object of attack by the other, are more insecure and indefensible than other Powers. The great industrial concentrations that are the basis of their military might have become utterly indefensible. Thus "utmost strength now coincides in the same unit with utmost vulnerability,"[17] the extreme development of the means of power with extreme powerlessness.

The general truth of this picture is unlikely to be argued about. It contains some exaggeration. The norm of the territorial inviolability of the state is derived from postulating the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a "classical" period of international politics. It also requires the bracketing off of the periods 1792–1815 and 1859–71 as exceptional. However, it has become a commonplace that international politics since 1933 are distinguished from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by reproducing many of the features of the Wars of Religion. I have already argued that, if the appearance of international society be dated back to the fifteenth century, a different average results. Territorial impermeability in the sphere of politics and strategy, like sovereignty in the sphere of law, has never been more than an imperfectly attained ideal for most members of international society. It is easy to make generalisations about the "classical" period of international politics, forgetting that the states of Italy and the Holy Roman Empire formed the

[16] [Ed.] Wight's description of Cold War basing arrangements might be misconstrued to imply that in NATO only the United States engaged in "semi-permanent establishment of foreign bases on the soil of allies." Other NATO Allies have also deployed forces on the soil of fellow Allies on a long-term basis. For example, NATO's Northern Army Group (1952–93) included Belgian, British, and Dutch formations on West German soil, in addition to US units and West German forces (after the founding of the Bundeswehr in 1955). In addition to Allied forces stationed in West Germany, during the Cold War the Federal Republic of Germany maintained military training and storage installations in Canada, France, Italy, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Moreover, depending on how "extraterritoriality" is defined, the term may be too strong to describe accurately the umbrella NATO Status Of Forces Agreement (SOFA) signed in London on June 19, 1951 that governs stationing accords among the Allies or the bilateral agreement between Paris and Bonn concerning French forces in West Germany after 1966. Aside from basing forces on the territory of fellow Allies in peacetime, NATO featured at least two other features almost unprecedented in international history: (a) the establishment in peacetime of permanent institutions for political consultations (above all, the North Atlantic Council, or NAC) and military command (notably the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, SACEUR); and (b) the construction and maintenance in peacetime of commonly funded capabilities, facilities, and infrastructure. To some extent, the NAC, HQ Allied Forces Central Europe (AFCENT) in Fontainebleau, and NATO infrastructure in France and the Benelux countries were extensions of Western Union (WU) institutions created by the Brussels Treaty of 1948: the WU Council; the staffs of the WU Commanders in Chief Committee; and WU infrastructure.

[17] Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age*, p. 41.

majority of international society. So long as the public law of Europe was vestigialy feudal, the tendency towards territorial impermeability was struggling against the residue of the past (the enclaves of Avignon, Venaissin, and Orange, the confusion of jurisdictions in Alsace, the *stato dei Presidii*, and so on).

Once international law was oriented towards nationalism, the tendency towards territorial impermeability was obstructed by minority problems. Indeed, it might be argued that territorial impermeability, like exemption from international servitudes, is a mark of Great Power status, not of any Power. And most Great Powers have established spheres of influence among neighbouring states based on effective permeability: Russia in Poland in the eighteenth century, Austria in Italy in the nineteenth, the United States in Latin America, Britain in the Middle East between the Wars. Against this background, NATO and the Warsaw Pact appear as not unique, but simply further steps in political consolidation.

2. ***The end of the distinction between Great Powers and Small Powers.*** Mr. Macmillan and President de Gaulle have lent their authority to the view that possession of nuclear weapons is today the indispensable mark of Great Power status, as possession of overseas colonies became after 1870. If, however, nuclear weapons become generally diffused, all the nuclear Powers become Great Powers, capable each of annihilating the other.

> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And, hark! what discord follows; each thing meets
> In mere oppugnancy.[18]

The substance in this argument seems to be that nuclear Powers have an especial capacity to start the general nuclear war, and if nuclear weapons are diffused not only among "responsible" Powers (e.g., Canada, Sweden, Switzerland, India) but also among "irresponsible" (e.g., Syngman Rhee, Chiang Kai-Shek, Nasser, Franco), the dangers to peace will be increased. This may be agreed. It is an application of the general rule that Great Powers like to have a monopoly on making war. (The question might well be asked whether the capacity of Great Powers to enter or abstain from other people's wars has been decisively changed by nuclear weapons.) But to argue that any Power that obtains nuclear weapons becomes thereby a Great Power is greatly to oversimplify the criteria of Great Power status. Egypt with one H-bomb is not the equal of Russia with 500 H-bombs. Egypt with

[18] [Ed.] Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, lines 109–111. In this statement Ulysses warns that disregarding order and hierarchy could lead to chaos. Wight here inserted a footnote quoting Herz:

> What relations among nations would be like in such a system is hard to foresee. It might no longer be anything that could be called "system" at all, since this term implies at least a minimum of generality and calculability of attitudes and relationships. In principle, such countries acquire equal power status.
>
> Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age*, p. 182.

500 H-bombs is not the equal of Russia with 500 H-bombs. However one seeks to define a Great Power, among its qualities must surely be not only possession of a decisive weapon, but also capacity to fight a great war, to establish and maintain men and supplies on enemy soil, to endure a prolonged battle of attrition. And this implies not only the decisive weapon and industrial power, but today perhaps more than ever in the past, geographical extent, size of population, and morale.

3. ***The end of the decisive role of industrial power***. This may be a truer way of stating the truth in the previous formula. Before the French Revolution, the principal ingredient of Great Power status was men under arms. As the nineteenth century advanced, there was an increasing correlation between Great Power status[19] and heavy industry. In 1928, the last year of "normal" capitalist prosperity before the Great Crash, the seven Great Powers produced about four-fifths of the world's industrial goods. Each had a larger manufacturing capacity than any country outside their ranks. (Japan at that date was the least industrialised of the Great Powers, but she drew ahead of Italy with her conquest of Manchuria. The runner-up among the Small Powers was Canada.) The more, however, that industrial power is to be considered as vulnerable to nuclear weapons, the less decisive is it in international politics. Perhaps, with the invention of nuclear weapons, the industrial revolution has gone some way to cancel itself out. It is possible that a broken-backed war will be largely post-industrial,[20] in the present sense of the word "industrial," like the phase of the Korean War in the winter of 1950 when the Chinese drove the Americans into retreat.

It certainly seems clear that in a nuclear war the old, pre-industrial qualities of size of population and geographical extent (for dispersing the large population in) may reacquire decisive importance. The report last month by the Research Institute of Stanford University suggested that for these reasons Russia is much better able than the United States to evacuate her city populations and to sustain her economic and social life after an effective counter attack.[21] Similarly, the size, population, and industrial backwardness of China may make her invulnerable to

[19] N.B. not political influence.

[20] [Ed.] The term "broken-backed war" was current in the 1950s. For example, in 1952 Winston Churchill, then prime minister, suggested that

> the main decisions would probably come in the first month or even in the first week. The quarrel might continue for an indefinite period, but after the first month it would be a broken-backed war in which no great armies could be moved over long distances.
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> Churchill speech, "NATO," Savoy Hotel, London, October 14, 1952, in Winston S. Churchill, *His Complete Speeches, 1897–1963*,

Robert Rhodes James, ed. Vol. VIII, *1950–1963* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers and R. R. Bowker Co., 1974), p. 8419.

[21] [Ed.] It is not clear which December 1959 Stanford Research Institute publication Wight had in mind. Rogers Cannell's article, "The Active Role of Passive Defense," emphasized Soviet advantages in decentralized industry and dispersed population centers. (*SRI Journal*, Fourth Quarter, 1959, especially pp. 180–181.) The same issue of this periodical featured another article discussing the relative vulnerabilities of the Soviet Union and the United States in conflict: Herman Kahn, "The Nature and Feasibility of War and Deterrence," *SRI Journal*, Fourth Quarter, 1959, pp. 124–141. Wight might have

defeat by the United States. This seems to be the view of the Chinese government themselves.

4. ***The final ascendancy of the offensive over the defensive.*** This seems to be a postulate of the theory of deterrence. If it is to be accepted, it certainly revolutionises international politics where hitherto offence and defence have kept up a seesawing relation, and every advance by the one has quickly stimulated a counter advance by the other. Here the layman can offer no comment; he can only ask questions. (In the general activity which we euphemistically describe as "defence," is there still a distinction between defensive and offensive research? What proportion of British military research goes on the defensive? If it is possible to detonate an H-bomb electronically at a distance (e.g., from Cairo, an Egyptian bomb in a ship in Haifa harbour); if one line of defensive research is intercepting missiles and detonating their warheads at high altitudes, is it then conceivable that a means might be found of detonating all the enemy's stocks of bombs, by remote control, on his own ground? Such an achievement would obliterate the distinction between defence and offence. This proposition is rejected by those who find it difficult to believe in the enduring stability of the balance of terror and emphasize that the arms race implies all the time the possibility of a technical break-through. There is a natural preference for an assumption which involves a view of the future as "open" and not "closed," even when an "open" future presents unimaginable dangers and a "closed" future relative security.

5. ***The final ascendancy of land power over sea power.*** The ascendancy of sea power was established when the Great Discoveries proved that it could encircle all the continents. Sea power at its zenith could convey and maintain an army of more than a quarter of a million men at a distance of 6,000 miles through a three years' war, as Britain did in the South African War. Moreover, Britain could do this and at the same time preserve such an effortless command of the oceans that the continental Powers had no possibility of intervening against her. The classic triumph of traditional sea power was the economic strangulation of the Central Powers in the First World War. A German (Dibelius) writing in the 1920s paid it reluctant and perhaps exaggerated tribute—"Millions of warriors can annihilate provinces, but hardly destroy a whole nation: a dozen grey dreadnoughts, besieging a country, invisible in the far distance, can spread hunger and misery over an entire continent."[22] Belief in the supremacy of sea power was an inarticulate major premise of the Covenant of the League; there was a belief in the sufficiency of economic sanctions, because its drafters assumed the co-operation of the British and American fleets in maintaining peace.

read the shortened version of this article: Herman Kahn, "Why Russia Would Risk Nuclear War on U.S.," *U.S. News and World Report*, December 21, 1959, pp. 54–57, 110–112.

[22] [Ed.] Wilhelm Dibelius, *England*, Mary Agnes Hamilton, trans. (London and New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930), p. 103.

Already in 1919, however, Mackinder had argued that a new era was beginning which offered ever-increasing strategic opportunities to land power as against sea power.[23] His argument really had three points.

(a) He saw that the triumph of sea power in the First World War had been accidental and in a sense illusory, because the political strategy of the War had been unique in European history. It was the first time that the Dominant Power had not been overthrown by the combined pressure of sea power on the Atlantic flank and a rival land power on the Continent. The rival land power had been brought to bear upon Germany in the Atlantic bridgehead maintained by sea power, and this seemed to give sea power a predominant role. The Second World War reverted to type and illustrated once more the kind of combination of sea power and land power that had overthrown Napoleon.

(b) The ascendancy of sea power in the past four centuries had been possible because the bases of sea power were temporarily invulnerable, and because there were no great Eurasian land powers to challenge European predominance. The Mongol Empire was past; the Ottoman Empire, which came nearest to disproving the rule, declined from internal causes like the Mogul and Chinese Empires. But the First World War for the first time gave a hint of a new pattern of power. If the bulk of the Eurasian continent were permanently controlled by a single Power (as Germany had partially controlled it between the Russian collapse in 1917 and her own defeat in the West in 1918), such a Power would be master of more than three-quarters of the world's population and resources, and there would be no rival land power to contain it, as Napoleon was contained and as Hitler was to be contained. This would revolutionize international politics. It was the core of Mackinder's doctrine that it is easier for unchallenged land power to convert a margin of itself into sea power than for unchallenged sea power to convert a margin of itself into land power. (By the end of the Peloponnesian War the Spartans built a fleet and defeated the Athenians at sea; as early as the First Punic War the Romans built a fleet and beat Carthage at sea.) In the long run, land power uncontained by rival land power can deprive sea power of its bases, and then transform itself into a base of sea power. Thus, in a rivalry with the minor continents and insular Powers (America, Britain, Japan, Australia), a Power with unchallenged control of the Eurasian continent could outbuild them as regards ships and outman them as regards seamen.

[23] [Ed.] Sir Halford John Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (London: Constable and Company, 1919).

(c) He scarcely considered air power, except to define it as an instrument of land power.

These ideas have been developed and vulgarised by a generation of geopoliticians, German and American, and military developments have covered them with a three-dimensional super-structure of strategic bomber forces, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and earth satellites. Yet Mackinder had much perceptiveness about the consequences of increasing geographical concentration of political power and sometimes the situation that he foresaw may be glimpsed underlying our contemporary preoccupations. When Khrushchev announced early in 1958 that it was no longer the capitalist Powers that were encircling the socialist world, but the socialists who were encircling the capitalists,[24] he was displaying the strategic self-confidence of the first Power in history to occupy the role Mackinder had feared. When he told Eisenhower that surface navies have become fit for nothing but courtesy visits and targets for rockets (no doubt showing some wishfulness about the US Sixth Fleet),[25] he was again echoing Mackinder. Mackinder did not foresee the aircraft carrier, let alone the submarine-based missile; but these have tended to confirm his conclusion that the world's largest possible land power is less vulnerable to the world's largest possible sea power than vice versa. The middle of Eurasia is more inaccessible to sea-based attack than the middle of the South Pacific or the Indian Ocean to land-based attack. There is only one country in the world that does not have the bulk of its urban population within 200 miles of the seacoast, and therefore vulnerable to attack by submarine.[26] This is Russia. And she possesses three-quarters of the world's submarines.

If it be the case that the strategic advantages now lie in some sense with land power against sea power, this certainly marks the end of a long phase in international politics. It is not entirely the consequence of scientific advance, let alone of recent military advances; it could have come about without the invention of air power. The Russian achievement in maintaining an army of a quarter million 4,000

[24] [Ed.] Khrushchev made various statements to this effect. In March 1958, for example, he said that it was "no longer clear who encircles whom." Khrushchev interview with *Le Figaro*, excerpted in *Pravda*, March 27, 1958, quoted in William Curti Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 146.

[25] [Ed.] Khrushchev wrote to Eisenhower that the "heyday of surface navy power is over. In the age of nuclear and rocket weapons … these once formidable warships are fit for nothing but courtesy visits, gun salutes and as targets for … rockets." Khrushchev quoted in Paul Cohen, "The Future of the Submarine," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 38, no. 1 (October 1959), p. 110.

[26] [Ed.] Wight's impression as to the inaccessibility of the "middle of Eurasia … to sea-based attack" was technically obsolescent when he wrote. His assumption in January 1960 that only "population within 200 miles of the sea-coast" would be "vulnerable to attack by submarine" was overtaken by the US deployment of the first 1,200-mile range Polaris (A1) submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) in November 1960 on the U.S.S. *George Washington*. Current US Trident II (D5) SLBMs have published ranges of 4,600 miles or more. Current US Minuteman III ICBMs have published ranges of approximately 8,100 miles. It is noteworthy that Wight attributed a range of 8,000 miles to modern missiles in "The Political Consequences of Nuclear Weapons," also written in 1960.

miles away at the end of the Trans-Siberian Railway in the Russo-Japanese War was scarcely less remarkable than the equivalent British feat in the South African War. But plainly scientific advance has accelerated and confirmed it.

6. ***The end of war as an instrument of policy***. This is one of the most widely canvassed propositions of this kind. "Policy" is here equated with traditional or "rational" policy. Its general objects are described by such phrases as the maintenance of the balance of power, the preservation of the liberties of states, and the acquisition of territory and resources. War is the process of imposing your will by violence on the enemy in order to make him consent to your obtaining such objects. With nuclear warfare, however, (a) instead of the imposition of your will on the enemy there will be mutual annihilation, and (b) the objects of policy will themselves be destroyed or rendered unobtainable and irrelevant.

It is not to be denied that if "rational" policy is defined in this way, modern warfare no longer serves it. But it may be that the classical theory of war has been inadequate. Has it really ever been generally true that the object of war is to impose one's will on the enemy? True of the Great Powers, perhaps, and of the ambitious and aggressive; but of the majority of Powers would it not be a much truer formulation to transpose it into the negative key—to say that the object of war is to prevent the enemy imposing his will upon you? Denis Healey is fond of emphasising that this has traditionally been the principle of Smaller Powers in seeking security, and of quoting the examples of Sweden and Switzerland. And it has probably been true of most Powers in most ages of international politics that they have been concerned with survival (which does not exclude minor gains at the expense of neighbours) rather than with empire. Their deepest conception of war has not been to impose their wills on others, which in the long run and the last resort they know to be quite impossible; but to have just sufficient power of resistance to prevent Great Powers from imposing Great Power wills in normal circumstances on them. This is the relationship between Finland or Turkey and Russia, between Egypt or Afghanistan and Britain. It is what we now call deterrence. Finland's decision to resist the Soviet invasion in November 1939 was not less "rational," nor less the use of war as an instrument of policy, than were Bismarck's wars. The *ratio* and the policy simply happened to be different. If this be the case, then nuclear weapons have not ended war as an instrument of policy. They have only assimilated Great Powers to Small Powers in the conception of the ultimate purpose of war.

Eisenhower's frequently quoted saying, "There is no alternative to peace,"[27] to describe the new situation we are now in, conceals rather than reveals the changes that have occurred. In international affairs every country has always had, in principle, two alternatives to peace. One is submission; the other is war. Foreign policy

[27] [Ed.] Eisenhower quoted in Henry A. Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper and Brothers for the Council on Foreign Relations, 1957), p. 3.

has always swung uneasily within the triangle of these three ultimate points—peace, which is freedom at the price of vigilance; war, which is chosen in the hope of freedom (or aggrandisement) at the price of struggle; and submission, which presents itself to eyes wearied by vigilance or struggle as repose perhaps worth purchasing at the price of freedom.[28] The differences made by the advent of nuclear weapons are two: (a) the choice of war now appears more like annihilation rather than freedom at the price of struggle; and (b) submission accordingly is made to seem a rather less disadvantageous alternative than it has traditionally been.

Here the proponent of a decisive change in international affairs has his strongest point. "It may be that war is better understood as resistance to the imposition of another's will than the imposing of one's own. Neither form of words takes account of a decision to go to war now carrying the consequence of certain annihilation. Finland, when deciding to resist Russia in the Winter War, did not brave a nuclear attack on Helsinki and the destruction of three-quarters of her population in half an hour. The choice of war is now equivalent to mass suicide."[29] From this point some, like Blackett, go on to assert that the choice will not be made.[30]

There is great need here for precision in language to avoid misleading associations and emotional overtones. Suicide is a pejorative word; we do not naturally use it of the Spartans at Thermopylae or the defenders of the Alamo or Gordon at Khartoum. It is significant of our basic moral attitudes that it seems impossible to find a neutral word for such acts of desperate resistance and collective self-immolation: if we do not call them collective suicide we have to employ such words as mass heroism, martyrdom, and self-sacrifice. For want of a single word and a neutral word, I shall use *depugnatio* to describe collective acts of defiance

[28] Submission is an alternative naturally found much more frequently in the experience of Small Powers than of Great. Its manifestations range from the acquiescence of harassed neutrals in the violation of their rights to a Benes's acceptance of the Munich Agreement. The political philosophy of submission might be seen at its fullest development in Pétainism.

[29] [Ed.] Martin Wight was himself the source of this quotation, drawn in part almost verbatim from his paper "The Political Consequences of Nuclear Weapons," reproduced in the present volume, Martin Wight, *Foreign Policy and Security Strategy*, David S. Yost, ed. Wight sometimes used the rhetorical device of placing a certain point of view—here that of "the proponent of a decisive change in international affairs"—in quotation marks or set off in another way to serve as a representative of a particular outlook, as with the speeches in Thucydides. The best-known example of Wight employing this device is the three-cornered discussion among the Axis Powers, the Soviet Union, and the Western Powers in "The Balance of Power," in Arnold Toynbee and Frank T. Ashton-Gwatkin, eds. *The World in March 1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 508–531. This essay is also available in Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and London: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 95–118.

[30] [Ed.] Patrick M. S. Blackett (1897–1974), a British scientist who won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1948, wrote in 1958 that

> The main attack on both [Stephen] King-Hall and [George F.] Kennan is that the peoples of Western Europe are not heroic enough or impervious enough to Communist pressure to sustain a long passive resistance. … However, it seems to me clear that they are even less likely to be heroic enough to will their own certain destruction to avoid the possibility of occupation.
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> P. M. S. Blackett, *Studies of War: Nuclear and Conventional* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), p. 70.

against an enemy, maintained until the defenders are all dead or a few survivors are over-powered.[31]

It is at once apparent that the examples of *depugnatio* already suggested are not immediately apposite to nuclear war. These were military units resisting to the death, not whole communities or states, and in the cases at least of the defenders of Thermopylae and the Alamo, the states concerned gained advantage from the sacrifice of the military units.

Three questions arise about national *depugnatio*: (a) Could such an act ever be collective in the sense of being supported by the mass of the population? (b) Are there any examples or precedents which can help to make the idea of national *depugnatio* credible? (c) If credible, could there be circumstances in which national *depugnatio* would be "rational" or moral?

(a) The argument is used (Blackett has used it) that no electorate would ever vote itself into a nuclear war. But this is not how wars arise anyway: the British people did not vote themselves into war in 1914 or 1939. In no nuclear Power has there yet been a substantial challenge to the leadership of the government in nuclear policy on questions of defence and foreign policy; in none of them has nuclear policy been an election issue.[32] A decision to enter a nuclear war would be "collective" in the sense of resulting from the electorate's half-comprehending acquiescence in the decisions or omissions over two decades that made the government's final decision to go to war seem, at the moment of making it, unavoidable. *Depugnatio* would be no less and no more a collective act than most previous wars.

(b) It seems difficult, in the history of the Western state-system, to find a clear example of national *depugnatio*. There have been statesmen who have said, like Philip II, that they would lose all their states and a hundred lives into the bargain rather than be lord of heretics,[33] or like Churchill, that we would rather see London laid in ruins and ashes than be tamely enslaved;[34] but the sequel did not require that these words should be put into effect. Using similar language, the Estates of Holland agreed to cut the dykes to save Leyden; but this only flooded part of South Holland, and the damage was not irreparable. Meinecke observed

[31] [Ed.] The Latin word *depugnatio* may therefore be translated as "violent fighting" or "combat to virtual extinction."

[32] [Ed.] Wight's observation that "in none of them [that is, the nuclear powers] has nuclear policy been an election issue" was, it should be recalled, made in January 1960. In the US election later that year an alleged "missile gap" with the Soviet Union was an election issue. Nuclear deterrence policy was also an issue in the US election in 1964, and in the United Kingdom general elections of 1964, 1983, and 1987.

[33] [Ed.] Several versions of this statement have been attributed to King Philip II of Spain. According to one account, in 1566 he declared, "Before allowing any backsliding in religion, or in the service of God, I will lose all my dominions and a hundred lives, if I had them, for I will never be a ruler of heretics." Martin A. S. Hume, *Philip II of Spain* (London and New York: Macmillan Company, 1899), p. 111.

[34] [Ed.] Churchill said, "we would rather see London laid in ruins and ashes than that it should be tamely and abjectly enslaved." Churchill radio broadcast from London, July 14, 1940, in *Winston S. Churchill*: *His Complete Speeches 1897–1963*, Vol. VI, *1935–1942*, Robert Rhodes James, ed. (New York and London: Chelsea House Publishers in association with R. R. Bowker Company, 1974), p. 6249.

that Stein and his supporters were not dismayed by the possibility that Prussia's challenge to Napoleon might end in her total destruction: there were higher values than eking out the state's existence at any cost.[35] But Prussia won, and anyway "destruction" in this context would not have meant the annihilation of her population but only the extinction of the state and the repartition of its territories, probably among other German states. Hitler in 1945 wanted to annihilate the German people and destroy the foundations of their existence, but Speer and others refused to carry out his orders.[36] (Is this a precedent for conditions of nuclear war?) It seems that, in Western international politics, resistance has seldom if ever been carried beyond a point at which it was still possible to change policies and make a formal capitulation instead.

It is in antiquity rather that one expects of find examples of *depugnatio*. There are, of course, plenty of examples of the brutal extinction of states or communities; but *depugnatio* is extinction invited with open eyes by fortitude or fanaticism. Melos, Carthage, and Jerusalem come to mind. Yet the Melian case is not absolutely clear. The Melians seem to have fought against the Athenian investment for about a year, but then they surrendered at discretion. The Carthaginians, on the other hand, after receiving the Roman demand that Carthage be abandoned and the inhabitants removed to a spot at least ten miles from the sea, fought with a collective fury until the last horrors of the six days of street fighting in the Upper City, of which Polybius's eye-witness account has filtered to us through Appian. The resistance of Jerusalem to Titus was of comparable fanaticism, and if it did not mean the extinction of the Jewish nation (for the Jews of the Diaspora do not seem to have suffered as a result), it meant the destruction of the Temple, which was more precious to most Jews than the nation itself. It is significant of moral attitudes that these two examples of *depugnatio* do not on the whole seem to evoke comments of admiration from later historians: they are likely to be described as examples less of extraordinary heroism than of Semitic frenzy. It might be said in conclusion, then, that in so far as it is thought possible that governments might in certain circumstances choose nuclear war rather than the alternative, a new situation has come into international politics; or, that certain precedents for political behaviour that have had no importance since before the Christian era may now again have acquired some relevance.

(c) Whether *depugnatio* could in any circumstances be morally justified would be a subject for another paper or series of papers. Only one remark falls to be made here, on the assertion that war in the form of *depugnatio* would cease to be "rational." The argument for a decisive change in international politics would

[35] [Ed.] Friedrich Meinecke, *The Age of German Liberation, 1795–1815*, Peter Paret and Helmuth Fischer, trans. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 104–112, 119–126.

[36] [Ed.] Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, Richard and Clara Winston, trans. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1970), pp. 439–440, 453–460. See also Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler*, Richard and Clara Winston, trans. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), pp. 731–733.

be greatly strengthened if it were possible to affirm that governments and peoples now fear war more than they fear one another. Were this the case, international relations would indeed be revolutionised: the Hobbesian predicament would be dissolved,[37] and affairs would move forward into an entirely new social and political setting. Some writers, e.g., Toynbee, have come very near to asserting this to be the case.[38] But all the evidence seems to be against it. The assumption of every foreign policy, and of the great mass of every electorate, still seems to be that the potential enemy is more to be feared than nuclear war. "In the last resort," said Macmillan in his Statement of Defence when he was Minister of Defence, "most of us must feel that determination to face the threat of physical devastation, even on the immense scale which must now be foreseen, is manifestly preferable to an attitude of subservience to militant Communism, with the national and individual humiliation that this would inevitably bring."[39]

This is the traditional statement of priorities in international politics; it still seems as valid universally as it ever was. Indeed, the number of statesmen speaking this language has in the past six months been notably increased by the accession of Mr. Nehru.[40] War, even *depugnatio*, is still generally believed to be in certain circumstances the lesser evil, and to that extent still presents itself as a possibly "rational" alternative. This condition of opinion, more than any other circumstance, makes one hesitate to believe that international politics have undergone a radical change.

[37] [Ed.] Wight's essay, "War and Peace: The Hobbesian Predicament," is reproduced in the present volume, Martin Wight, *Foreign Policy and Security Strategy*.

[38] [Ed.] Toynbee wrote, for example, that

> The local national state, invested with the attributes of sovereignty—invested, that is, with the prestige and the prerogatives of the mediaeval Church—is an abomination of desolation standing in the place where it ought not. It has stood in that place now—demanding and receiving human sacrifices from its poor deluded votaries—for four or five centuries. Our political task in our generation is to cast the abomination out, to cleanse the temple and to restore the worship of the divinity to whom the temple rightfully belongs. In plain terms, we have to re-transfer the prestige and the prerogatives of sovereignty from the fifty or sixty fragments of contemporary society to the whole of contemporary society—from the local national states by which sovereignty has been usurped, with disastrous consequences, for half a millennium, to some institution embodying our society as a whole. … Sovereignty will cease, in fact if not in name, to be a local affair.
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> Arnold J. Toynbee, "The Trend of International Affairs Since the War," *International Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 6 (November 1931), p. 809.

[39] [Ed.] *Statement on Defence 1955*, presented by the Minister of Defence to Parliament by Command of Her Majesty, Cmd. 9391 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1955), par. 24, pp. 7–8.

[40] [Ed.] In September 1959, in the build-up to the 1962 war between China and India, Nehru said that with China's claims in the Himalayas "something happens which stirs our innermost convictions, something which hurts our pride, our national pride, self-respect and all that. So, it is not a question of a mile or two, or ten or even a hundred miles." China was, Nehru said, making "a claim which it is quite impossible for India or almost any Indian ever to admit, whatever the consequences." Nehru quoted in Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), p. 121. See also pp. 117 and 122.

7

The Political Consequences of Nuclear Weapons

Have nuclear weapons revolutionised international politics?* This is an extreme way of asking the question, how have nuclear weapons affected international politics?

Part of the trouble is to disentangle current revolutionary changes not due to nuclear weapons from revolutionary changes that can be attributed to nuclear weapons.

I want to examine some of the assertions about the political consequences of nuclear weapons which continually crop up in debate—assertions that the traditional rules of international politics have been superseded.

Nuclear weapons have brought about, some say: (1) the end of the territorial impermeability of the state, (2) the end of the distinction between Great Powers and Small Powers, (3) the end of the balance of power, and (4) the end of war as a rational instrument of policy.

End of the Territorial Impermeability of the State

Herz argues that the unity, the independence, the sovranty,[1] of the state is ultimately due to its physical existence: "an expanse of territory, encircled for its identification and defense by tangible, military expressions of statehood, like fortifications and fortresses."[2]

The hard shell against foreign penetration made it the ultimate unit of protection for those living within it. One might compare classical physics: measurable

* Martin Wight dated this paper January 20, 1960 and May 1960. It seems that he reworked and expanded the initial section, but did not discard the earlier draft. This text represents the more elaborate version.

[1] [Ed.] In some of his unpublished draft papers, Wight used the word "sovran" as a synonym for "sovereign", and "sovranty" for "sovereignty." According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, this usage dates to Milton in 1649, and has become "chiefly poetic." See David S. Yost, "Introduction: Martin Wight and the Political Philosophy of International Relations," in Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 2.

[2] John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 40.

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forces and an impenetrable atom. Liebnitz wrote that the criterion of sovranty was the exclusive right to maintain garrisons on your territory.

In the twentieth century, the hard shell of the territorial state has dissolved:

a. economic blockade;
b. ideological penetration;
c. air warfare;
d. atomic warfare.

Impenetrable units have become interpenetrable, no longer affording protection. NATO and Warsaw Pact are examples of a new kind of alliance: the semi-permanent establishment of foreign bases on allied soil by a predominant Power.

By a supreme paradox, these two predominant Powers, being each the prime object of attack by the other, are more insecure and indefensible than the others. The industrial concentrations which are the basis of their military might have become utterly indefensible. "Utmost strength now coincides in same unit with utmost vulnerability."[3]

An extreme development of the means of power coexists with extreme powerlessness.

This is Herz's picture.[4] Two comments are in order.

First, it is an exaggerated and selective picture. The norm of the territorial inviolability of the state is derived from postulating the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as "classical." This excludes the wars of religion and brackets off 1789–1815 and 1859–78.

The periods of doctrinal warfare and ideological permeation outweigh the "classical" periods.

But even apart from this, territorial impermeability in politics and strategy as equivalent to sovereignty in law was never more than an imperfectly attained ideal for most members of international society.

The majority of members of international society at any time have been Small Powers—whether Italian and German states before the French Revolution or Sweden's, Portugal's, Persia's, and Nicaragua's more recently. For them, territorial impermeability was never a true description. Their neutrality was violated in war by Great Powers. In peace, they were divided into spheres of influence, compelled to grant concessions and "unequal treaties," and suffered intervention—by US Marines, customs, and so on.

It would be truer to argue that territorial impermeability is a mark of great power status. Most Great Powers have had spheres of influence—that is, permeation among neighbouring states: Russia in Poland and Turkey; Austria in Italy

[3] Ibid., p. 41.
[4] Wight reviewed John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), in *American Political Science Review*, vol. 54, no. 4 (December 1960), p. 1057.

and the Balkans; the United States in Latin America; and Britain in the Middle East. NATO and the Warsaw Pact are not unique, but steps in further political consolidation.

Second, the logic of political consolidation has been strengthened. This is a positive side of Herz's formula and in these terms I should rather discuss this aspect of the effect of nuclear weapons.

There is a precedent for this in the supersession of city-states as effective political institutions at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This is connected with the military revolution which introduced artillery. The success of the French invasion of Italy in 1494 was partly due to French superiority in artillery. According to Guicciardini, "the French, on their invasion of Italy, infused so much liveliness into our wars, that up to the year 1521, whenever the open country was lost, the state was lost with it."[5]

It is generally true in politics that when an institution ceases to fulfill its function it is superseded by another that will do so. Small political units that have become ineffective are consolidated into larger ones, which are less ineffective. The justification of the state, ever since the sixteenth century, is that it has been the institution, above all institutions, which could afford protection and promote welfare for the individual. Obviously today it no longer can do either and to this extent is due for supersession.

Let us remind ourselves of the present situation. The world's circumference is only 25,000 miles, and the present range of rockets is apparently 8,000 miles.[6] A power possessing rockets and nuclear warheads can visit any part of the inhabited earth's surface with destruction which shall be instantaneous, total, and unavoidable—a greater power than any tyrant of the past dreamed of.

There are at least two obvious differences between then and now:

1. The Italian city-states were conquered and consolidated by greater powers outside Italy. The present society of states—if we leave out of account some Martian invasion which Professor Bernard Quatermass is not able to foil—cannot be consolidated unless by one of the states themselves.[7]
2. The city-states lost their independence in the old-fashioned military manner—by a single pitched battle. This resembles Hitler's conquest of Western Europe rather than nuclear warfare.

[5] Guicciardini, *Ricordi*, quoted in J. R. Hale, "International Relations in the West: Diplomacy and War," in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. I, *The Renaissance 1493–1520*, George R. Potter, ed. (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 275.

[6] [Ed.] In 1960 Wight attributed published ranges of approximately 8,100 miles to then-current US Minuteman III ICBMs.

[7] [Ed.] Professor Bernard Quatermass, a character created by Nigel Kneale, was the hero of three well-regarded science fiction serials on BBC Television in the 1950s. A brilliant and morally upright scientist, Quatermass bravely confronted menacing alien forces.

Nuclear attack is different from pitched battle. Battle is presumed to leave the fruits of victory intact. You knock down the farmer and then enjoy the orchard. Nuclear attack destroys the farmer, the orchard and you together.

This difference, however, is not simply due to military advance. It corresponds to political and economic changes. The French and the Spaniards wanted to enjoy the Italian orchard—accumulated wealth, productive power, industry, and art. This is no longer true today, perhaps. From Norman Angell onwards we have been told that there is no gain in modern war, no profit in conquest.[8] If this is true, there could be a reverse side to it, a diabolical converse—if something is not worth having, it does not matter if it is destroyed.

This is the position of Russia and America towards one another. Neither needs to conquer the other—there is no economic interdependence. The only political interest each has in the other is that the other is an obstacle to political consolidation.

There is not even ideological interdependence in that Russia requires or expects the triumph of socialism in America or that America expects the development of free democracy in Russia.

If either sank beneath the waves, the politicians and strategists of the other would only heave a sigh of relief.[9] This is not true of the relations of either with Europe: the cultural dependence of America, and the economic-strategic interest of Russia.

But in general it seems to me that the international struggle for power, partly through ideological conflict, and mainly through the process of political consolidation, has become drained of all non-political objectives, whether cultural or economic, and has become more purely political than ever before.

This is a new situation. I am not saying that the logic of political consolidation will be carried to conclusion or is going to express itself in political form or ought to express itself in political form.

[8] [Ed.] Norman Angell argued in *Europe's Optical Illusion* (1909), a work that became famous under the title *The Great Illusion* (1910) in subsequent editions, that economic interdependence made war profitless and catastrophic. In the book's preface Angell wrote that

> the scope of the whole argument … is not that war is impossible, but that it is futile—useless, even when completely victorious, as a means of securing those moral or material ends which represent the needs of modern civilized peoples; and that on a general realization of this truth depends the solution of the problem of armaments and warfare.
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> Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion: A Study of the Relation of Military Power to National Advantage*, fourth revised and enlarged edn (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), p. v.

Angell was, moreover, hopeful that widespread recognition of economic interdependence would avert great-power war: "… the commercial activities of the world lead directly away from war. … Now, as this tendency is common to all nations of Christendom—indeed, of the world—since commercial and industrial development is world-wide, it necessarily means, if it is true of any one nation, that the world as a whole is drifting away from the tendency to warfare." (Ibid., pp. 212–213)

[9] N.B.: there are non-political humane considerations, such as Pasternak and the Bolshoi ballet.

There are two reasonable arguments for skepticism about world government:

1. That political consolidation can only be carried to its conclusion by means so destructive that the absence of it is a lesser evil than the process of attaining it.
2. That political consolidation, if completed, would probably be so disagreeable—world government a fearful tyranny—that the absence of it is a lesser evil than the presence of it.

But it seems well to place the logic of political consolidation squarely at the beginning of the discussion because so much of the later part of the discussion tends to override or contradict it.

End of the Distinction between Great Powers and Small Powers

There are two distinct and partially contradictory assertions here.

The first is that a nuclear power is a Great Power. Macmillan and de Gaulle assumed that nuclear weapons will be widely diffused, and that therefore a wide variety of nuclear Great Powers will arise, each capable of annihilating another. This implies that there will be "n" Great Powers, with "n" equivalent to an indefinite number. Herz argues that in principle such powers acquire equal power status and that in such conditions there would no longer be any system, since the word "system" implies generality and calculability of attitudes and relationships.

The second is that nuclear powers, especially Russia and the USA, are particularly vulnerable. The greatest powers are now territorially permeable in the way the weakest Small Powers were hitherto. Looked at this way, it means leveling down to small power defenselessness rather than leveling up to great power potency.

Both of these arguments seem to me exaggerated. Whatever the criteria of great power status may be, they would be greatly oversimplified if reduced to the simple possession of nuclear weapons.

There is not only the obvious distinction between possessing nuclear weapons and the capacity to produce them and the capacity to deliver them—each of which might exist without the other two.

Still more important is the capacity to absorb them when attacked. This for me would be the chief criterion of great power status today—the ability to suffer nuclear attack without annihilation or social collapse.

The capacity to fight a great war, to establish and maintain men and supplies on enemy soil, and to endure a battle of attrition—these are the traditional requirements for a Great Power; and they point to, not only nuclear power, not only industrial power, but also to pre-industrial criteria of geographical extent, size of

population, and morale and social cohesion. Obviously only Russia, America, and China possess these—and China not the industrial power.[10]

So I disagree with Herz's contention that the two predominant powers are especially vulnerable and that an extreme of power coincides with an extreme of powerlessness, unless it be added that they have also especial advantages which largely offset their vulnerability.

In respect of having lost territorial impermeability the Great Powers have been assimilated to Small Powers; but in respect of the continued potential capacity to fight a great war they still stand out above their fellows.

End of the Decisive Role of Industrial Power

This is implicit in the foregoing: let us examine it. Before the French Revolution, the principal ingredient of great power status was men under arms. As the nineteenth century advanced, there was an increasing correlation between great power status (N.B., not political influence) and heavy industry.

In 1928, the last year of normal capitalist prosperity, seven Great Powers produced four-fifths of the world's industrial goods. Each had a larger manufacturing capacity than any outside their ranks.

But the more you consider industrial power as vulnerable to nuclear weapons, the less decisive you may make it seem in international politics except for bluff, for deterrence.

The kind of power which makes men reckon China as a great power is not industrial power, but industrial potential; but China today has no heavy industry, nuclear power, or air force.[11] China is the first non-industrialised great power since the Industrial Revolution. This can be taken as a portent.

When the Chinese drove the Americans into retreat in Korea, in the winter of 1950, there was some short-sighted *Schadenfreude* in Western Europe.[12] Some belief was expressed in the reassertion of the primitive over the technologically advanced. This line of thought is encouraged by the emphasis on the pre-industrial qualities of the size of the population and geographical extent (for dispersing the population in) as decisive.

In what sense (it may be asked) could America defeat China today? Doesn't China's industrial backwardness make her invulnerable to defeat (as Japan found)?

[10] [Ed.] It should be recalled that Wight wrote this paper in 1960. China's industrial power has substantially increased in the intervening decades.

[11] [Ed.] As noted previously, Wight was writing in 1960, when China's air force, nuclear power, and industrial potential were far from being developed.

[12] [Ed.] *Schadenfreude* is the pleasure derived from seeing or learning about the misfortunes of others.

Last December [that is, in 1959], a report by the Research Institute of Stanford University suggested that population and geographical size make Russia better able than America to evacuate her city populations and sustain her economic and social life after a nuclear attack.[13]

Insofar as one can imagine, quite speculatively, the circumstances of a nuclear war, it seems to me that survival value lies neither with the least urbanised nor the most urbanised states. The first, when their cities were destroyed, would fall apart into disconnected agrarian communes. The second, when their cities were destroyed, would have nothing left at all. But those that enjoy the maximum dispersal of industry and the best balance between urbanisation and the agrarian hinterland would have the greatest survival value.

End of the Balance of Power

This means various things, because the balance of power has various meanings.

(a) The assertion that bipolarity has ended the balance of power belongs to a class of misconceptions. International society has usually been organised around two rival predominant powers. The Russo-American rivalry is not a product of nuclear weapons.
(b) Another assertion is that the Cold War Balance of Terror has frozen the balance of power. This seems to me simply untrue. The Balance of Terror is one of the recurrent periods of stability in the balance of power, but it has only lasted since 1949.[14] The balance of power in Metternich's time was stable for 33 years.[15] The balance of power between France and the Habsburgs lasted from 1598 to 1618.[16]

That the balance of power is finally frozen requires a simple, fundamentalist belief in the theory of deterrence—a belief that the nuclear powers will deter one another indefinitely, that there can be no technological breakthrough, and that subsidiary vibrations of the balance (e.g., the Israeli invasion of Egypt) are negligible.

None of these seems to me granted. I suggest that the Balance of Terror must be studied as a contemporary manifestation of the balance of power.

[13] [Ed.] This source is discussed in Wight's previously unpublished paper "Has Scientific Advance Changed the Nature of International Politics in Kind, Not Merely in Degree?". This paper is reproduced in the present volume.

[14] [Ed.] Wight may have had in mind the Soviet Union's first successful nuclear weapon test, which took place in Kazakhstan in August 1949.

[15] [Ed.] Wight was presumably alluding to the period from the Congress of Vienna in 1815 to the Revolutions of 1848.

[16] [Ed.] Wight may have had in mind the two decades from the Treaty of Vervins, concluded in 1598 by Philip II of Spain and Henry IV of France, and the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War in 1618.

Nevertheless there are interesting peculiarities about it. On one hand, the nuclear deterrent has so far frozen the frontiers and strategic positions of the nuclear powers to such an extent that some observers have feared an international immobility that makes desirable political change impossible, e.g., the reunification of Germany.[17]

On the other hand, the nuclear deterrent has so far paralyzed the Great Powers in a rigid posture. The greatest possible activity has been going on between their legs; and they themselves, indeed, have administered each other some kicks under the table.

When have there been so many civil wars of international significance as since 1945? When has there been such a dissolution of empires? When such an emergence of new nations?

More conservative observers have feared that so far from being immobilised, the world has entered on a period of uncontrolled and indefinite flux.

This is the political counterpart of the ambiguous relationship between nuclear and conventional war. There are three kinds of war: nuclear, conventional, and irregular.

The more improbable nuclear war, the more likely are non-nuclear wars, subterranean or semi-official, as the only vents for political passion and change; but the more frequent and violent the non-nuclear wars, the greater the danger of nuclear war. This is the central conundrum.

To return to the original question, what effect have nuclear weapons had on international politics?

There have been frequent assertions that they have revolutionised international politics, of which "war has become impossible" is the most familiar.

Three preliminary points must be disposed of.

1. What effect *ought* nuclear weapons to have had on international politics? I am not concerned with this. As we all know, there are cogent arguments that the danger to the human race and to posterity from fall-out should impose a revolution in the defence and foreign policies of all countries. I mean to keep the discussion on the level of trying to examine whether any such revolution in policy has in fact taken place.
2. Political life is changing all the time. We need to disentangle what is attributable to nuclear weapons from what is the result of other causes. The Cold War is not a result of nuclear weapons—it antedated them. NATO is not a product of nuclear weapons, but of Russian superiority in conventional weapons.

[17] [Ed.] The reunification of Germany took place under the auspices of the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany (the "Two Plus Four Treaty") on October 3, 1990, despite the apparent "international immobility" imposed by the stalemate of the nuclear powers.

3. How are we to describe the degree of change? Will it be a change in kind or in degree? Qualitative or only quantitative? What kind of precedents might help?

End of War as an Instrument of Policy

What does this mean? A number of distinct ideas are tied up here.

(a) To get it out of the way: the common interest in disarmament. Today there is a greater common interest than ever before in disarmament, judging by the diplomatic effort put into it.

Now, all that need be said here is that (a) if there were nuclear disarmament, and still more if there were conventional disarmament, and (b) if the effect of this disarmament was not to compel competitive coexistence to express itself in irregular warfare, then a radically new situation would have arisen.

The logic of political consolidation would be indefinitely arrested. There might even be a symbiosis of the two Great Powers which would be quite unique in history and would fulfill our hopes that Western civilization is more moral, more rational, and more teachable by experience than its predecessors. However, it hasn't yet happened. Analysis of a hypothetical future where there can be no guidance from precedents is unfruitful.

(b) The traditional view of war holds that it is a "rational" policy. In the classical view war is a matter of imposing your will on the enemy in order to obtain certain "rational" objectives: e.g., the acquisition of territory and resources, the maintenance of the balance of power, and the preservation of the liberties of states.

With nuclear warfare, however, instead of your imposing your will, the result may be mutual annihilation; and the objects of policy will themselves be destroyed. Certainly if "rational" policy is defined in this way, nuclear warfare does not serve it. But perhaps the classical theory of war is inadequate? Has it ever been generally true that the object of war is to impose your will on the enemy?

It has been true of the Great Powers, perhaps, and of the ambitious and aggressive. But of the majority of powers, it has been truer in the negative: the object of war is to prevent his imposing his will upon you. Most powers in most ages have been more concerned with survival than empire.

Their deepest conception of war is not to impose their wills on others (which in the long run and last resort is impossible), but to have just sufficient resistance to prevent the Great Powers from imposing their great power wills on them.

This is the relationship between Finland or Turkey and Russia, between Egypt or Afghanistan and Britain. It is what we now call deterrence.

Finland's decision to resist Soviet demands in November 1939 was not less "rational" nor less a use of war as an instrument of policy than Bismarck's wars. The "ratio" and policy simply happened to be different. If this is right, nuclear weapons have not ended war as an instrument of policy. They have only assimilated Great Powers to Small Powers in their conception of the ultimate purpose of war.

(c) The "rationality" of war is nevertheless still at issue because, the counter-argument continues, it is no longer "rational" to incur a war in which you will be annihilated. Finland, when deciding to resist Russia in the Winter War, did not brave a nuclear attack on Helsinki and the destruction of three quarters of her population in twenty minutes. The choice of war is now equivalent to mass suicide.

Here it might help to distinguish the intentions of war:

(a) Aggressive intentions mean going to war to alter the arrangement of power to suit yourself.
(b) Defensive intentions mean responding to a direct attack on your own territory.
(c) Preventive intentions mean going to war to prevent an alteration in the arrangement of power detrimental to yourself.

The first is illustrated by Austria and Germany in 1914, and by Mussolini and Hitler in 1935–41. The second is demonstrated by Small Powers mostly, such as Finland in 1939, but also the USSR in 1941. The third is the widest and vaguest and involves mostly Great Powers. (Small Powers don't undertake preventive wars.)

According to A. J. P. Taylor's dictum, "Every war between Great Powers with which this book deals started as a preventive war, not as a war of conquest."[18] This—preventive war—is the most likely intention of nuclear war.[19]

[18] [Ed.] A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 166. It is probable that Wight had this statement by Taylor in mind. Wight reviewed Taylor's book for the *Manchester Guardian* (November 12, 1954) and marked this statement in his copy of the book. In the manuscript of this paper, "The Political Consequences of Nuclear Weapons," Wight here wrote simply "A. J. P. Taylor's dictum."

[19] [Ed.] Wight here wrote "Britain 1914, 1939." He perhaps intended to develop the idea that in each case the United Kingdom declared war without having itself been attacked in order to prevent an unacceptable outcome in a general war. As A. J. P. Taylor wrote in a work that Wight quoted in another paper ("The Causes of War: An Historian's View"), "in the circumstances of 1914, Great Britain could have kept out of war only if she had been prepared to let Germany defeat France and Russia." A. J. P. Taylor, *Englishmen and Others* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1956), p. 124.

But according to prevailing doctrine, these represent a scale of irrationality:

(a) Aggressive war would be completely irrational and unbelievable.
(b) Preventive war would be sufficiently irrational to be condemned in theory.
(c) Defensive war is probably irrational.

Two final points about this argument:

(a) This calculus of the rationality of war (equivalent to the fear of war) has reached unprecedented dimensions and is confined to one side in the struggle.

The Russians, it seems, agree that war is undesirable and would be destructive, but do not indulge in our elaborate calculations about what degree of war would be tolerable and how it may be limited to that degree. Their attitude, both official and personal, is more traditional and business-like. War would be a wasteful interruption of regular life, but if it comes, they will face it and win it.

Intensive study of the problem of nuclear war, not as a technical or military problem but as a political and moral problem, is confined to the West and has reached greater dimensions than analogous war-phobia or pacifism between the wars. Would it not be true to say that King-Hall,[20] Kennan,[21] and the CND[22] have for the first time in European history initiated public discussion in a major power about the point at which resistance to the enemy should cease, the conditions in which submission is preferable to fighting? This is quite new.

(b) But its importance must not be overestimated. It is probably a feature of British life rather than American. Whether it is a mark of British civilisedness or decadence each will decide for himself. But it is politically marginal.

It is characteristic of the relationship of the military and civilian leadership in Britain that our Defence Chiefs are attentive to the sort of discussion that goes on in the new Institute for Strategic Studies and that Mountbatten is reported to have

[20] [Ed.] Sir Stephen King-Hall, Baron King-Hall of Headley (1893–1966), was the author of *Defence in the Nuclear Age* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1958). He advocated Britain's unilateral nuclear disarmament and a national defense strategy of non-violent resistance.

[21] [Ed.] George F. Kennan (1904–2005), a prominent American diplomat and scholar, gave the BBC Reith Lectures in 1957. In these lectures, he advocated the disengagement and simultaneous withdrawal of US and Soviet forces from central Europe, the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in central Europe, and the neutralization and unification of Germany. The lectures aroused great interest and controversy, especially in West Germany and the United Kingdom; and they were published as *Russia, the Atom and the West* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958).

[22] [Ed.] The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, founded in 1957, has since its origins advocated unilateral nuclear disarmament by the United Kingdom as well as global nuclear disarmament.

been sympathetically interested in Labour policy for a non-nuclear club because if the electorate returned Labour to office, he might have to carry out a new kind of defence policy.[23]

But let us not lose a sense of proportion. In no nuclear power has there yet been a substantial challenge to the government on questions of defence and foreign policy. In no nuclear power has nuclear policy been an election issue.[24]

Ten years ago [in 1950], people used to fear that civilian morale might break under the perpetual strain of the atomic menace. Now, it is interesting to see how the mass of the people ignore it. Whether this is common sense or apathy, natural fortitude of the human spirit, or "stark insensibility"—again, each will decide for himself.[25]

The argument that nuclear weapons have made a decisive change in international politics would be greatly strengthened if it were possible to show that governments and peoples now fear war more than they fear one another. Were this the case, international relations would indeed be revolutionised: the Hobbesian predicament would be dissolved, and we should enter a new world of politics. But all evidence seems against it.

The assumption of every foreign policy and the great mass of every electorate still seems to be that the potential enemy is more to be feared than nuclear war. According to Britain's 1955 defense white paper,

> In the last resort, most of us must feel that determination to face the threat of physical devastation, even on the immense scale which must now be foreseen, is manifestly preferable to an attitude of subservience to militant Communism, with the national and individual humiliation that this would inevitably bring.[26]

This is the traditional statement of priorities in international politics. It still seems as valid universally as it ever was. War is still generally believed to be in certain circumstances the lesser evil, and to that extent still presents itself as a possible "rational" alternative. This condition of opinion, more than any other circumstance, makes one hesitate to believe that international politics have undergone a radical change.

[23] [Ed.] Mountbatten was serving as Chief of the Defence Staff in 1960, when Wight prepared this paper.

[24] [Ed.] This statement was accurate when written in January 1960, but it was overtaken by subsequent events in the United States and the United Kingdom. In the US election later that year an alleged "missile gap" with the Soviet Union was an election issue. Nuclear deterrence policy was also an issue in the US election in 1964, and in the United Kingdom general elections of 1964, 1983, and 1987.

[25] [Ed.] Samuel Johnson famously coined the phrase "stark insensibility" to explain his "nonchalance" in telling his tutor at Pembroke College that he had chosen to go "sliding in Christ-Church meadow" instead of attending his tutor's lessons. "I had no notion that I was wrong or irreverent to my tutor," Johnson said. James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, R. W. Chapman, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1980; first published in 1791), p. 45.

[26] *Statement on Defence 1955*, Cmd. 9391 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, February 1955), pp. 7–8, paragraph 24.

There has been a change in degree, not in kind. The logic of armed resistance has been carried to a new step, to the point where death may be reasonably regarded as preferable to submission—even collective, national death.

But this does not enter a new moral climate. It is part of the ideas we're familiar with. It is a manifestation of the heroism that we are accustomed to admire. Thermopylae, the Alamo, and Khartoum were not "irrational." There are even precedents in international history where the view has been taken that the highest duty is not to eke out the state's existence.[27]

Here is nothing new—only bringing out something always implicit in our moral experience, making issues clearer and the choice sharper. The same argument is sometimes put in the language of the national interest: the national interest can no longer be the yardstick of foreign policy. (National interest is virtually identical with the objects of policy described in the preceding paragraph.) Where a mere nuclear test can endanger the populations of neutral countries hundreds of miles away, where nuclear war would bring the general destruction of civilisation, foreign policy can no longer be guided by narrow national interest but must be framed in relation to the interests of mankind as a whole.

Addenda

Distinguish degree of change being looked for. Qualitative-quantitative, degree kind.

Have nuclear weapons affected diplomacy? Increased power of small states vs. Great Powers? Of Great Powers vs. Small Powers?

Literature which extrapolates new tendencies into the future: Knorr, Burns.

[27] [Ed.] Wight here inserted the words "Churchill on Southern States." It is not clear what Churchill statement Wight had in mind. In one of his historical works Churchill described "the whole life of the Southern states" as

> strange, fierce, old-fashioned. … An aristocracy of planters living in rural magnificence and almost feudal state, and a multitude of smallholders, grew cotton for the world by slave-labour. … The slave-owning aristocracy in much of the South felt a class-superiority to the business, manufacturing, and financial society of the North. … The Confederate states were defending hearth and home against invasion and overlordship. Proud and ardent, their manhood rallied to the newly forming regiments, confident that they would conquer, sure at least that they were unconquerable.
>
> Winston S. Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, Vol. 4, *The Great Democracies* (New York: Bantam Books, 1963), pp. 116, 119, 133.

Churchill expressed respect for Robert E. Lee, who had condemned slavery as "a moral and political evil," in ibid., pp. 120, 131–132. See also Churchill's imaginative essay, "If Lee Had Not Won the Battle of Gettysburg," in John C. Squire, ed. *If, or History Rewritten* (New York: Viking Press, 1931), pp. 257–284; and his speech to the General Assembly of Virginia, "The English-Speaking Peoples," March 8, 1946, in Winston S. Churchill, *His Complete Speeches, 1897–1963*, Robert Rhodes James, ed. Vol. VII, 1943–1949. (New York and London: Chelsea House Publishers in association with R. R. Bowker Company, 1974), pp. 7293–7296.

Dangers to human race of fall-out, etc. Do these factors result in new considerations of policy? Disarmament, certainly, is aimed at, but do they affect defence policy?

Political Changes

1. Ideological conflict
2. Internationalism
3. Rising expectations
4. Diarchy

Military Revolution

1. End of territorial impermeability—gunpowder revolution
2. End of distinction between Great Powers and Small Powers
3. Increase in destructiveness of war
4. End of distinction between combatant and non-combatant
5. End of distinction between foreign and domestic policy
6. End of distinction between national and universal interests
7. Negative—positive
8. Gresham's law: the more advanced assume they cannot win

8

War and Peace: The Hobbesian Predicament

What are the fundamentals of the situation in which we live in danger, not acute but ever-present danger, of four minutes notice of nuclear attack of a kind where a single bomb of so many megatons on Parliament Square in Westminster will set fire to Brighton, Oxford, and Cambridge?*

I found my mind "concentrated wonderfully" during the week of the Cuba crisis [in October 1962] and acquiring a new dimension of horror in my imagination by the thought that there would be no more Nature.[1] The shambles caused by war in cities is familiar in imagination or experience. There is a book on the bombing of Dresden.

In the First World War poets contrasted men dying in the No Man's Land with the permanence and continuity of Nature—poppies blooming, larks singing in the sky, May-time leaves opening on trees. Hardy too, in *The Dynasts*, pictured blood seeping down through grass among earthworms.[2]

But after a nuclear attack this poetic contrast will no longer be valid. If you were lying in this park, dying of burns and fall-out, you wouldn't have this consolation. No more poppies. No more larks. No more grass. Only black scorched surface to the horizon.

My imagination has been influenced by John Wyndham's *Chrysalids*, but it would be something like that.[3]

This situation, this danger, may be attributed to the stupidity and malice of our own government, to foolish or unnecessary policies; but the honest person who reflects about it must look deeper as well and ask whether, in addition to

* Martin Wight presented this paper in May 1963. The original title was simply "War and Peace." The subtitle has been added to distinguish it from another paper with the same title and date.

[1] [Ed.] The "concentrated wonderfully" phrase refers to Samuel Johnson's remark: "Depend upon it, Sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully." Johnson quoted in James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, R. W. Chapman, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1904; first published in 1791), p. 849 (19 September 1777).

[2] [Ed.] "The worm asks what can be overhead,/And wriggles deep from a scene so grim,/And guesses him safe; for he does not know/What a foul red flood will be soaking him!" Thomas Hardy, *The Dynasts: An Epic-Drama of the War with Napoleon,* Part III, Scene VIII, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1918), p. 483.

[3] [Ed.] John Wyndham, *Chrysalids* (London: Michael Joseph, 1955). This novel is set in Labrador thousands of years after an apocalyptic catastrophe, implicitly a nuclear war.

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these particular factors, there is a fundamental pattern of human experience to be recognised here and come to terms with.

The Hobbesian Predicament

One of the advantages of reading history—not studying it academically, but reading and reflecting about it—is that it tends to suggest that very few human situations or predicaments are unprecedented.

There is a cyclic or repetitive element in collective human experience which we call "history." This is not to say that there has ever been a quantitative threat of destruction on the present scale before; but there may have been a comparable qualitative threat, and a question we may ask is whether in the present case quantitative change has reached such proportions that it is indeed qualitative change.

Every student of political philosophy knows that this basic pattern was forecast by Thomas Hobbes more than 300 years ago—the grim, sardonic, penetrating philosopher who first analysed international politics realistically. Or rather, he imaginatively reconstructed the state of affairs obtaining before men came together to found the first state or civil society by social contract.

This condition of affairs he called "the state of nature" and described thus:

> Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man. For war, consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known. … But though there had never been any time, wherein particular men were in a condition of war one against another; yet in all times, kings, and persons of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their forts, garrisons, and guns upon the frontiers of their kingdoms; and continual spies upon their neighbours; which is a posture of war.[4]

This description had a profound effect on all international thinking and international law. There is a less famous passage later which also seems prophetic of the twentieth century's other preoccupation, with overpopulation: "And when all the

[4] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, Michael Oakeshott, ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), chapter XIII, pp. 82–83.

world is overcharged with inhabitants, then the last remedy of all is war; which provideth for every man, by victory, or death."[5]

It seemed so true to experience—indeed truer of international politics, with which Hobbes wasn't primarily concerned, than of the invention of civil society and the beginnings of domestic politics, with which he was concerned, because if the condition of things before men established society were really as Hobbes described—"a war … of every man, against every man"—how did men ever come to trust each other enough to establish society?

This is the stock criticism of Hobbes as a political philosopher: his statement of the problem is more convincing than his solution. The compelling force and savage irony of Hobbes' picture of the condition of nature have given it renewed fame and currency in the present century which it has seemed to describe and illuminate.

"The Hobbesian predicament" is often referred to, meaning the insoluble problem when each person or state is so afraid for his or its own security that he or it cannot achieve minimum cooperation with others, but there is an intrinsic "war … of every man, against every man." Here is a modern restatement of it:

> The situation is still further complicated by a certain human predicament which we are too seldom conscious of, and which I can only call the predicament of Hobbesian fear—Hobbesian because it was subjected to particular analysis by the seventeenth-century philosopher, Thomas Hobbes. If you imagine yourself locked in a room with another person with whom you have often been on the most bitterly hostile terms in the past, and suppose that each of you has a pistol, you may find yourself in a predicament in which both of you would like to throw the pistols out of the window, yet it defeats the intelligence to find a way of doing it. If you throw yours out the first you rob the other man of the only reason he had for getting rid of his own, and for anything you know he may break the bargain. If both of you swear to throw the pistols out together, you may feel that he may make the gesture of hurling his away, but in reality hold tight to it, while you, if you have done the honest thing, would then be at his mercy. You may even have an *arrière-pensée* that he may possibly be concealing a second pistol somewhere about his person. Both of you in fact may have an equal justification for suspecting one another, and both of you may be men who in all predicaments save this had appeared reasonably well-behaved and well-intentioned. You may both of you be utterly honest in your desire to be at peace and to put an end to the predicament, if only in order to enable you to get on with your business. If some great bully were to come into the room and try to take your pistols from you, then as likely as not you would both combine against him, you would find yourselves cherished allies, find yourselves for the time being as thick as thieves. Only, after

[5] Ibid., chapter XXX, p. 227.

> you had eliminated this intruder, you would discover to your horrible surprise that you were back in the original predicament again. In international affairs it is this situation of Hobbesian fear which, so far as I can see, has hitherto defeated all the endeavour of the human intellect.[6]

This is a simple parable of why all disarmament negotiations always fail except marginally and why the nuclear Powers are unable to reach agreement even on a nuclear test ban.[7]

Well, the Hobbesian predicament is a fundamental aspect of international politics, and I want to point out two things about it.

First, it is still true—the Hobbesian predicament hasn't been transcended or dissolved. If it were clear that governments and peoples now fear war more than they fear one another, then we could say that international politics had been radically transformed. But all the evidence is against it. The assumption of every foreign policy and of the great mass of every electorate still seems to be that the potential enemy is more to be feared than war.

The most obvious old-fashioned instance of the Hobbesian situation is the relations between Israel and the Arab states. Egypt actually refuses to make peace with Israel.[8]

The most striking new confirmation of the Hobbesian picture is provided by the case of India. Mr. Nehru had tried the patience of other governments for more than ten years, ever since 1947, with priggish and sanctimonious lectures about not building up their armaments, not making war-like alliances, and settling their disputes by peaceful conciliation. But when China invaded India, Nehru was instantly placed in the traditional posture of pledging his country to fight to the last man to throw the invader out of Indian territory.[9]

[6] Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity and History* (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd., 1950), pp. 89–90. [Ed.] An *arrière-pensée* might be translated as a misgiving, a second thought, a hesitation, or a mental reservation, among other synonyms.

[7] [Ed.] The Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the US signed the Treaty banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water, sometimes called simply the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), in August 1963. The treaty entered into force in October 1963. The parties to this treaty have been restricted to underground testing. The Soviet Union and the United States concluded the Threshold Test Ban Treaty (prohibiting underground tests with yields exceeding 150 kilotons) in 1974 and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty in 1976 (establishing similar yield restrictions on nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes). These treaties entered into force in 1990. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was opened for signature in 1996. Ratification by all the forty-four countries listed in Annex 2 of the treaty is required for its entry into force.

[8] [Ed.] Egypt and Israel concluded a peace treaty on March 26, 1979, following the Camp David accords the previous year. The treaty provided for mutual recognition, the termination of the state of war existent since 1948, and the complete withdrawal of Israeli military forces from the Sinai Peninsula.

[9] [Ed.] Nehru said that "war is a dangerous policy; but if war is thrust upon us we shall fight and fight with all our strength." Nehru said that he wished to "avoid" and "prevent" war, but, he added, "there are some things which no nation can tolerate. Any attack on its honour, on its integrity, on the integrity of its territory, no nation tolerates, and it takes risks, grave risks even, to protect all that." Nehru quoted in Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), p. 178. See also p. 421.

It seems no less true that the majority of every people still fears the potential enemy more than war even when war means nuclear war. This may seem repugnant to common sense—you may be reluctant to admit it—you may be inclined to say "If people only opened their eyes and faced up to reality, etc."—but I am concerned for the moment to establish what I believe to be a striking fact: It's now nearly 20 years since Hiroshima and the nuclear threat has grown immeasurably worse, but in no nuclear Power has there yet been a substantial challenge to the government on the issue of nuclear defense—in none has nuclear policy been an election issue.[10]

The coming election in this country may change this and give for the first time a chance to vote on the issue of scrapping the independent deterrent, but it will not involve the issue of repudiating the American nuclear umbrella. The party disagreement in Britain on defence is about means, not ends—an independent deterrent is a particularly inefficient and wasteful means—and both parties agree on the traditional statement of priorities in international politics that war, even nuclear war, is in the last resort, a lesser evil than the alternative.

Some say, "the deterrent will never be used," or that it is "obsolete." The experience of the Cuba crisis may lead to apathy or stoicism. Those who say they never expected war anyway are politically illiterate.

The second point to be made about the Hobbesian predicament is that serious qualifications of it are necessary. It manifestly isn't true that international politics equal a war of every state against every state.

The general rule is that every people dislikes all foreigners or more accurately, for political purposes, that every state has a potential conflict of interests with every other state. But all states and peoples grade their dislikes and have a hierarchy of interests and manage to cooperate with those they fear less against those they fear more. In other words, alliances are possible, and these make a basic modification of the Hobbesian pattern.

Here one can see light through chinks of the Hobbesian intellectual prism—the light of a non-Hobbesian or anti-Hobbesian philosophy of politics which denies that the fundamental primeval human condition is one of mutual fear and war but asserts that it is one of potential sociability and readiness to cooperate.[11]

[10] [Ed.] The accuracy of Wight's observation, made in May 1963, might be disputed because an alleged "missile gap" with the Soviet Union was an election issue in the 1960 US election. However, in the 1960 election the Democrats, with Senator John F. Kennedy as their presidential candidate, did not question the basic policy of nuclear deterrence, but accused the Eisenhower administration of having allowed the Soviet Union to gain an advantage in intercontinental ballistic missiles. In short, to use Wight's words, there was no "substantial challenge to the government on the issue of nuclear defense."

[11] [Ed.] Wight attributed this approach to the Grotian (or Rationalist) tradition. See Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991), pp. 38–40.

Alliances make it possible to have a system of a balance of power which introduces some order, regulative principle, into international anarchy, the war of all against all.

At its best, it means that smaller and less rapacious fish combine against the sharks. At its worst, it means that a couple of sharks attract opposing coalitions—as today.

Of course, the balance of power is unstable. Powers desert their allies, change sides, and the balance of power topples over into war; but on the whole the balance of power mitigates international anarchy and on the whole it has averted more wars than it has brought about.

There was, indeed, a marked tendency in international history to transform the balance of power system into something more coherent—into a kind of confederation, even a federal system. This was pursued, in the present century, under a double stimulus—a fear and a moral inspiration.

The fear was a fear of the logic of the Hobbesian predicament, which was seen to point to a solution of the international anarchy by a knock-out tournament. This is the way in which, in almost all historical situations of which we have record, the Hobbesian situation of war of all against all has worked itself out. This is the way in which the Roman Empire came into being. The realisation that this might recur became prevalent and anxious in the First World War. Spain had been knocked out, followed by France, and now Germany. Where would the process end?

So for the first time in human experience an attempt was made to get hold of this run-away situation and transform or divert it—to achieve unity by consent in order to forestall unity through force.[12] The inspiration was that of the anti-Hobbesian philosophy of politics, a philosophy which started from the premise that men are fundamentally cooperative animals, not fundamentally fearful and competitive.

The bridge from the balance of power to confederation was collective security, which meant a mutual pledge that an attack on one was an attack on all. This meant an alliance against an unspecified enemy. The balance of power had worked against a self-revealed enemy. When France or Germany became dangerously powerful, others combined against her. Collective security was intended to be more rational and more efficient. Its advocates hoped that if the great majority of states took this pledge to regard an attack on one as an attack on all, then any aggressor would be deterred in advance, and that in the long run habits of cooperation would develop which would eradicate the causes of aggression.

[12] [Ed.] Perhaps Wight meant "for the first time in human experience" on a global scale in the framework of the League of Nations. In other works he discussed collective security as a recurrent theme in international politics since the beginning of the modern European states-system in the fifteenth century, and noted interest in collective security in the ancient Hellenic states-system. [See Martin Wight, *Systems of States*, Hedley Bull, ed. (London: Leicester University Press, in association with the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1977), pp. 62, 149: and David S. Yost, "Introduction: Martin Wight and the Political Philosophy of International Relations," in Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 1–3.]

The collective security system was put to the test when Italy attacked Abyssinia in 1935. It very nearly succeeded, but was sabotaged by the British Government. This was the turning point in recent history.[13] It made the Second World War inevitable and depressingly confirmed the Hobbesian analysis that there is not enough cooperativeness in international politics to lift them out of the circle of fear. All international history since then has been retrograde, reversing that trend toward unity through cooperation, or unification by consent toward some kind of confederal system.

Now it was back to the knock-out tournament. The Second World War was the semi-final and duly eliminated Germany and Japan, leaving Russia and America to contend for the world championship.[14] The Hobbesian predicament seemed inescapable, as if it were the only fundamental of the situation.

At this point, by an irony of history, a second fundamental appeared in the shape of nuclear power applied to war. This contradicted the first fundamental and made nonsense, almost, of it. To finish the championship would now mean the destruction of the finalists, the spectators, the court, and the stakes.

The Meta-Hobbesian Situation of Nuclear Deadlock

This was what might be called a post-Hobbesian, even meta-Hobbesian, situation. Traditional mechanisms were still at work and produced the deadlocked stability of the balance of power in the form of the balance of terror.

But the new situation was intellectually devastating: producing a complete regression from the serious thought on international anarchy of the inter-War period about establishing a world political authority, a world order.

Various red herrings and opiates for the people were advanced—the United Nations and disarmament: a catchword freely used by politicians because it appeals to the simple-minded and utopians.

Disarmament can only be the object of policy if you recognise that it is a subsidiary object. The main object is what makes possible the inspection and control of armaments—i.e., an international authority, a world order.

[13] [Ed.] Wight advanced this argument repeatedly. For example, in *Power Politics* he wrote that "It was impossible to avoid the impression that the failure to impose effective sanctions against Italy in 1935–6 was a turning point in international history that has conditioned everything since, a seminal failure, the generator of a whole series of other failures." [Wight, *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), p. 208.]In another work, Wight observed, "Yet in the Abyssinian War of 1935–36 collective security, though theoretically impossible, came in historical fact very close to fulfilment." [Wight, "The Balance of Power and International Order," in Alan James, ed., *The Bases of International Order: Essays in Honour of C.A.W. Manning* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 110.]

[14] [Ed.] Wight developed this theme at greater length in his essay "Triangles and duels," in Wight, *Systems of States*, Hedley Bull, ed. (London: Leicester University Press, in association with the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1977), pp. 174–200.

The issue of world order was lost sight of until it was recovered by John Strachey as the spokesman of a group which, it is whispered, includes Kennedy and Khrushchev.[15] The hope is that America and Russia may recognise their common interest in preserving or recovering their monopoly of nuclear weapons and agree on a nuclear test ban and on preventing the diffusion of nuclear weapons among lesser powers. This might be the nucleus of a world order.

But note the truth of the story of the Sibylline books. King Tarquin wanted to know the future which was to be read in the Sibylline books of oracles. Sibyl named the price. He said it was too much. She threw half the books into the flames and waited. He came back more urgently. She named another price, double the first. Again he refused and again she threw half the remaining books into the flames. He came back a third time and again the price was doubled. This time he bought.

This is a profound parable of historical experience and particularly of international history, of history in a Hobbesian setting. The longer you wait, the less you get.

The world order now within sight, though perhaps not within reach, is a less satisfactory, grimmer, harsher world order than what was within closer reach when Haile Selassie came and made his noble appeal to the League of Nations at Geneva in June 1936.

Moral Protest

But there is one more fundamental thing—moral protest. There was moral protest between the wars, as with the Peace Pledge Union. It would be difficult to support one's impression that the volume of moral protest today is proportionately greater.

You cannot quantify moral protest. One may record the impression that moral protest today is more realistic, harsher, more activist, more animated by the inverted spirit of James Bond. Here one is thinking of the Campaign for Nuclear

[15] [Ed.] John Strachey (1901–63), a Labour MP from 1950 until his death, served as Secretary of State for War in 1950–51. Wight quoted Strachey twice in his essay "Western Values in International Relations," in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds. *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966, and London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), pp. 91n, 111n. Wight cited Strachey's view as an example of "a *via media*" or "*juste milieu* between definable extremes." According to Strachey,

> It would … be a disastrous error to suppose that there is nothing between leaving things as they are and the creation of a fully developed world authority. It will be suggested below that what may yet be possible is the gradual emergence of an elementary sense of common purpose, in a strictly limited field, between the Russian and American Governments.
>
> Strachey, *On the Prevention of War* (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 195.

The Strachey references in may also be found in Martin Wight, "Western Values in International Relations," in Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 51, note 4, and p. 69, note 40.

Disarmament, but they are perhaps only the spearhead of wider, more confused—or diffused—opinion below the surface.

But moral protest can be better or worse in quality. It can be assessed by two criteria:

(a) the assumptions or philosophy from which it springs, and (b) what it protests against.

This, in conclusion, I venture today to do.

What is the substance of this protest? I take it that it is protest in terms of what is technically called the "natural law" ethic. First, against indiscriminate means of warfare which obliterate the traditional distinction between combatants and non-combatants, between military and civilian objectives, on the grounds that it offends against the humanitarian ethic, natural law, cosmic piety, and the will of God. Second, against the preparation of these means for future contingencies as well as their use in the past.

Here controversy arises because their preparation, it can be argued, serves the subsidiary purpose of deterrence. Third, against the prevailing determinism of official statements combined with the religiosity of the British Council of Churches.

Moral protest is better the more clearly it contemplates the Hobbesian predicament—the more politically realistic it is—the more it doesn't assume that political order is immanent but recognises that political order has to be made and kept, the more it realises that disarmament, for instance, is a fringing issue.

The more, too, it realises the limitations of democracy and recognises that by the nature of the case issues of peace and war, of national survival, cannot be and have never been subject to democratic control.

It should recognise that the alternative to war, for states, is submission; and it should contemplate what submission means.

Foreign policy must always swing uneasily within the triangle of these three points: (a) peace, which is freedom at the price of eternal vigilance; (b) war, which is chosen in the hope of freedom (or aggrandisement) at the price of struggle; and (c) submission, which presents itself to eyes wearied by vigilance or struggle as repose perhaps worth purchasing at the price of freedom.

It is easy to say "rather red than dead" but not easy to apprehend its full meaning. If we say this, are we thinking with full seriousness of putting ourselves, and still more, those whom we care about—families and friends—in the situation of the people in East Germany who are constantly risking death to escape from it?

And are we thinking with full seriousness about comparing "being dead" with certain kinds of life? Is any kind of life, however shameful, better than being dead? Is there no fate worse than death?

Would you rather be a brothel-keeper for children or a reluctant torturer in a French military prison or a slave-trader in the Yemen than dead?

If a man says, "I'd rather be red than dead but I'd rather be dead than … torture in a French prison," we know his scale of moral values. If he says he'd rather be alive, in however degraded a way, than be dead, it is clear that he isn't concerned with quality of life at all, and he ceases to be a witness who interests us.

You may say here that I am illegitimately comparing and confusing the condition of political unfreedom with the condition of moral culpability. But the experience of totalitarian states suggests that there is no absolute distinction between them.

Choosing being alive in Redland rather than dead ought to imply choosing, with full consciousness, prospects of collective passive resistance in Redland. This is what submission means.

The future of the human race probably lies with what Negroes have been doing in Birmingham, Alabama, and the hope that this can be universalised.[16]

Three fundamentals are the Hobbesian predicament, the meta-Hobbesian situation of nuclear deadlock, and moral protest. A fourth fundamental is that you cannot coerce history. You can only clarify your conscience and do what you believe is right and for the rest, trust in Providence.[17]

[16] [Ed.] It should be recalled that Wight wrote this paper in May 1963. In April–May 1963, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, led by Martin Luther King, Jr, organized nonviolent protests against racial segregation and discrimination in Birmingham, Alabama. These protests drew national and international attention to social injustices, and contributed to the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

[17] [Ed.] Here Wight wrote "E. M. Forster, *Abinger Harvest*." It is not clear what passage in this book he had in mind. Wight quoted this book by Forster, however, in his essay "The Balance of Power," in Arnold Toynbee and Frank T. Ashton-Gwatkin, eds. *The World in March 1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 522n. In this essay, Wight attributed to the Western Powers the view "that, in certain moods, the Marxist analysis of recent history has seemed cogent to us, and made us wish to believe that what divides us from you is a disagreement about means rather than an incompatibility of ends." In support of this statement Wight quoted Gide, Forster, and Laski. The quotation from Forster was as follows: "I am not a Communist, though perhaps I might be one if I was a younger and braver man, for in Communism I can see hope. It does many things which I think evil, but I know that it intends good." E. M. Forster, address delivered at the *Congrès International des Écrivains at Paris*, June 21, 1935, in *Abinger Harvest* (London, Arnold, pocket edition, 1940), p. 63. In his lectures on the theory of international relations Wight said that the view that "all one can do is to retire within the sphere of private life and personal relationships and cultivate one's garden … is a position which is close, perhaps, to E. M. Forster's." Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991), p. 257.

9

War and Peace: Nuclear Weapons and Change in International Politics

Have international politics fundamentally changed by reason of the application of nuclear power to war since 1945?* If so, what is the nature of the change? Implicitly also, what is the nature of international politics? What are the norms of international life?

Supporters of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament assume that the situation has changed so radically that new policies are necessary—or at least some of them do. Spokesmen of official policy assume that the situation is still substantially the same and that traditional policies, perhaps modified, are still valid.

The position therefore is not self-evident, and arguments are used on either side which deserve more careful scrutiny than they sometimes get. I want to examine some of them this evening in hope of clearing my own mind. We must say at the outset that we must be prepared to reach no definite conclusion.

This is a controversy where the dictates of intellectual respectability—or safety?—are in conflict with the demands of moral passion; and in controversies of this sort it is often the case that reconciliation is impossible except in terms of the synthesis which events, or History, will in due course bring about.

Let us start, then, by asking in what way the nature of international politics has changed since 1945 and examining some of the assertions that are made on the matter. They all really seem to boil down to two: (a) that the state, which is the unit of international politics, is no longer effectively the ultimate means of protection for the individual; and (b) that war has ceased to be an instrument of policy.

It is obvious that the state is no longer the ultimate means of protection of our lives and liberties. The state used to be, from the days of Henry VIII, who built protective fortresses along the southern coast against the French—Brighthelmstone, Camber, Deal, Walmer, Sandon—to the days of Churchill's Government, who built anti-invasion defences in fields and woods, "concrete" evidences in both senses. But today the state cannot prevent us from being incinerated without warning as we sit here talking about it.

* Martin Wight prepared this paper in May 1963. The original title was simply "War and Peace." The subtitle has been added to distinguish it from another paper with the same title and date.

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The most interesting discussion of this change I know is in John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age*. He calls it the end of the "territorial impermeability" of the state.[1] He argues that the unity, independence and sovranty of the modern state is accounted for ultimately by its physical existence "as an expanse of territory, encircled for its identification and defense by tangible, military expressions of statehood, like fortifications and fortresses."[2]

In the classical period of international relations (roughly 1648–1914) the state was thus surrounded by a "hard shell" protecting it against foreign penetration, which made it the ultimate unit of protection for those living within its boundaries.[3] International society was a system of impenetrable elemental units of measurable power, comparable to the system of classical physics with its measurable forces and the impenetrable atom as its basic unit.

Herz finds this conception of international politics first formulated by Leibnitz, the German polymath contemporary of Newton and simultaneous discoverer of the calculus, in Leibnitz's essay on the right of legation, with its argument that the principal criterion of sovranty is the exclusive right to maintain garrisons on your own territory.

In the twentieth century (his argument continues) the hard shell of the territorial state has dissolved, owing to economic blockade, ideological penetration, air warfare, and finally atomic warfare. Impenetrable units have become interpeneterable and can no longer afford protection to their inhabitants. NATO and the Warsaw Pact are a new kind of alliance allowing the semi-permanent establishment of foreign bases on the soil of the allies by the predominant Power with consequent arrangements for the extraterritoriality of their troops, etc.

And by the supreme paradox these two predominant Powers, being each the prime potential object of attack by the other, are more insecure and indefensible than other Powers. The great industrial concentrations that are the basis of their military might have become utterly indefensible. "Thus utmost strength now coincides in the same unit with utmost vulnerability,"[4] an extreme development of the means of power with extreme powerlessness.

We are unlikely to argue about the broad truth of this picture, but it contains some exaggeration and needs to be qualified in those respects, at least.[5]

First, the norm of the territorial impermeability of the state is derived from treating the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a "classical" period of international

[1] John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 5, 41, and 50. Cf. pp. 60, 74, 104, 120, and 239.

[2] Ibid., p. 40. [Ed.] In some of his unpublished draft papers, Wight chose to use the word "sovran" as a synonym for "sovereign," and "sovranty" for "sovereignty." According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, this usage dates to Milton in 1649, and has become "chiefly poetic."

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 41.

[5] [Ed.] See also Wight's review of John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age*, in *American Political Science Review*, vol. 54, no. 4 (December 1960), p. 1057.

politics. "Norm" here is a concealed value-judgment, not a statement of statistical regularity. If you consider the international state-system as a whole, ever since it first became recognizable round about 1500, in the age of Machiavelli, you will find more time has been occupied by periods of ideological or doctrinal strife cutting across frontiers than by periods of power politics conducted between hard-shelled, impenetrable atom-like states.[6]

Most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was occupied by wars of religion, when men were more likely to account themselves Catholic or Protestant, Lutheran or Calvinist, than French or English, subjects of the Elector Palatine, or of the Elector of Brandenburg. From the French Revolution till well into the nineteenth century your nationality in Europe wasn't more important than whether you were Jacobin or anti-Jacobin, liberal or conservative. In the twentieth century whether you have been Communist or Fascist has been more important to you, and other people, than whether you have been German or Russian, Indian or Chinese.

Types such as the fifth column, the subversive agent, the political refugee, the traitor who "goes over" are more prominent in the reign of the first Queen Elizabeth than of the second. It would be possible to draw a picture of the history of international society which took these international allegiances as the healthy norm; and the periods when states pretended to be independent, sovran, and impenetrable, will be seen as extraordinary intervals of make-believe.[7]

The second qualification is that territorial impermeability in politics and strategy, like sovranty in the sphere of law, was never more than an imperfectly attained ideal for most states in international society. We easily forget that most states in international society, at most times, are small and weak, and that Great Powers are few, elite, and in a sort of aristocracy.

The majority of states in international society, before the unifications of Italy and Germany in 1860–70, were the little states into which Italy and Germany were divided; and these were highly permeable, imperfectly independent, and dubiously sovereign.

It might be argued that territorial impermeability has been the mark not of any state but only of Great Powers. And most Great Powers have established spheres

[6] [Ed.] Wight offered a different calculation in another work:

> If, taking conventional dates, we regard 1492–1517, 1648–1792 and 1871–1914 as unrevolutionary, and 1517–1648, 1792–1871 and 1914–60 as revolutionary, there are 256 years of international revolution to 212 unrevolutionary. If it be argued that religion was not the dominant influence on international politics until after 1559, the numerical balance is almost exactly reversed.
>
> Wight, *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), p. 92n.

[7] [Ed.] Wight developed this theme in the chapter entitled "International Revolutions" in *Power Politics*, pp. 81–94. See also ibid., pp. 302–303.

of influence among neighboring states based on effective permeability: Russia in Poland in the eighteenth century, Austria in Italy in the nineteenth century, Britain in the Middle East between the wars; and the US in Latin America. Against this background, NATO and the Warsaw Pact appear not as unique but simply as further steps in political consolidation.

And a new constellation of small states has appeared—Afro-Asian states which are, again, the majority of international society and are in principle highly permeable, if not in fact overrun by foreign troops as much as their predecessors. This is due to two reasons:

(a) a change of fashion, or shift in morality, which makes this sort of crude permeation or intervention disrespectable; they are permeated now by foreign technicians and economic aid; and
(b) mutual abstention by the Great Powers, who for obvious reasons are afraid to begin competitive intervention.

Nevertheless, the older kind of permeation crops up every now and then: for example, Stalin's attempt to take over Persia; Communist volunteers in Laos and Cambodia; and the Anglo-American intervention in Lebanon and Jordan in 1958.

The change that has taken place in international politics, then, is not so much that the state has ceased to be the ultimate protector of our lives and interests, since for the most part it has never been that, except notionally; but that Great Powers have ceased to be exceptions to this rule and have been downgraded and assimilated to Minor Powers.

Eisenhower once said, "there is no alternative to peace,"[8] an often-quoted phrase, illustrating a combination of high mindedness and low cerebral power which commended him for two terms of office to the American people. In international affairs every country has always had, in principle, two alternatives to peace. One is submission. The other is war.

[8] [Ed.] Eisenhower quoted in Henry A. Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper and Brothers for the Council on Foreign Relations, 1957), p. 3.

10
Arms Races

Since disarmament is part of the cant of popular politics, disarmament proposals are part of political warfare.* Governments, in putting forward disarmament proposals are concerned, first, to make a good impression on their own constituents, and secondly, to enhance their own influence and perhaps embarrass their opponents in international affairs.

The arms race described by Montesquieu, with some ironical exaggeration, took the form of augmentation of troops by rival monarchs. But the arms race was given a sinister propulsion by a triple development that became apparent during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. The first was the mechanization of war, which produced an independent momentum of technical innovation in armaments.[1] The second was the growth in Western countries of a public opinion about foreign policy. This has chiefly taken a nationalist and militarist form, concerned that the defenses of the country for which it spoke were being outstripped by rival Powers. But we may remember that there has also been a steady current of pacifist and internationalist opinion, giving rise to an international peace movement of lofty aims and negligible influence.

The contemporary use of the word technology to mean not the theory of the practical arts, but the totality of applied science in itself, or the combination of scientific expertise and industrial production, seems to reflect the sense of the arms race as autonomous, a sorcerer's apprentice over which the civilization that introduced it has no control.

* Martin Wight inserted these notes, undated and unpublished, in a folder entitled "Arms Races," which may be found in the Archives at the London School of Economics. Given the views expressed and the reference to Montesquieu's description of an arms race, Wight might have intended to include these notes in a revised edition of *Power Politics*. In the event, Wight did not live to complete this work. The revised edition was prepared for publication posthumously: Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978). A discussion of Montesquieu and "a threefold development" may be found in the 1978 version of *Power Politics* (p. 242). Wight's reference to "pacifist and internationalist" views appears in ibid. (p. 250).

[1] Wight wrote in the margin: "The first was the mobilization of the masses, through compulsory enlistment."

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11
Interests of States

> The Princes commaund the *People*, and the *Interest* commaunds the *Princes*.* The knowledge of this *Interest* is as much more raised above that of *Princes*' actions, as they themselves are above the *People*. The *Prince* may deceive himselfe, his *Counsell* may be corrupted, but the Interest alone can never faile. According as it is well or ill understood, it maketh *States* to live or die.[1]

Thus Henri de Rohan, the Huguenot soldier, in *De l'interest des Princes et Estats de la Chrestienté* of 1638, dedicated to Richelieu. The Cardinal incarnated the interest of France, and his regime illustrated Rohan's hierarchy of *raison d'état*, prince and people.

Interest, in this sense, is a difficult word to find a synonym for. It combines something of the nature of "advantage" with something of the nature of "concern." It can have a moral aspect as well as a material aspect. Whether the mora1 has come progressively to preponderate over the material, in the course of international history, may be debated.

But we must make a more important distinction. "Interest" is a word that can be used precisely or loosely. When we say, "the interests of mankind demand nuclear non-proliferation," or "the present generation must not endanger the interests of posterity," we are speaking loosely. When we say, "Israel's interests demand the retention of the Golan Heights," or "it would be against Britain's interests to antagonize the African members of the Commonwealth" we are speaking precisely. The distinction lies, not in the identification or formulation of the interest, but in the presence or absence of means of giving effect to it. Interests in the precise sense, in Rohan's sense, are an attribute of political organisation. Since the sixteenth century *interessi* have been indissolubly wedded to *stato*. Mankind has no interests, in the precise sense, because mankind is not politically organised to agree upon and pursue any goals. Statements about the interests of mankind, or of the Third World, or of the Free World, are statements therefore in the context of morals, or ideology;

* Martin Wight presented this paper to the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics in September 1970.

[1] [Ed.] Henri, duc de Rohan, *De l'interest des Princes et Estats de la Chrestienté* (Paris: Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevier, 1639); *A Treatise of the Interest of the Princes and States of Christendome*, translated into English by Henry Hunt (Paris: Tho. Broun, 1640), p. 1; italics in the original.

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not in the context of politics. It is to interests in the precise sense, interests in the political context, that this paper will try to confine itself.

Rohan saw the Interest of the State as something which incompetent politicians may not recognise, but which subsists above and beyond them, immutable and indefectible. "The Interest alone can never faile." He seems to transfer to the state some of the attributes hitherto claimed for the church: an unalterable mission, a consciousness of its inner essence, almost a *fides quae creditur*,[2] and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.[3] A generation later Puffendorf provided a less mystical and more secular account of state interest, in his *Introduction to the History of the Principal States of Europe* (1682).[4] The preface ends with the following paragraphs, which deserve to be quoted in full:

> For the Sake of giving a clearer View of the History of every State I have, without designedly flattering or undervaluing any one, added such Observations as have been usually made upon the Nature of its Soil, the Manners of its Inhabitants, its Strength, the Form of its Government, and its Interest with regard to other States. The Design of these is to incite in young Gentlemen a Curiosity to inquire when they travel, or when they converse with Men of Experience, into such Things. What I have said of the Interest of States must be understood as applicable chiefly to the Time when this Book was composed. It must be confessed, that the Knowledge of this is not so easily to be attained by young Persons as by those of riper Years: Yet I could not pass it by; for unless the Interest of a State be understood, no good Judgment can be formed whether its Affairs are well administred.
>
> It is proper for the Assistance of young Persons in this Particular to observe, that the Interest of a State may be divided into its imaginary and real Interest. The former of these, which I take to consist in aiming at universal Monarchy, a Monopoly, or some other Thing of the like Kind, can never be pursued by a Prince without infinite Expence and Destruction to his Subjects; and besides that no solid Benefit would arise therefrom if it should succeed, the Attempt at any one of these would certainly fail: It being for the Interest of all other States to oppose it with all their Might. *Num si vos omnibus imperare vultis sequitur ut*

[2] [Ed.] In the Catholic tradition, the phrase *fides quae creditur* is often translated as "the faith which is believed," "objective faith," or "the deposit of the faith," a set of beliefs derived from tradition, revelation, and the Church's teaching authority.

[3] [Ed.] The declaration that "the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" refers to Christ's statement to Peter: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18)

[4] [Ed.] *An Introduction to the History of the Principal States of Europe*, begun by Baron Puffendorf, continued by Mr. de la Martiniere, improved by Joseph Sayer (London: A. Wilde et al., 1764). This edition, cited by Wight, includes the "Preface" contributed by Puffendorf (1632–94) to a much earlier edition.

omnes servitutem accipiant?[5] In other words, *Is there any Reason that because you would be Masters of all Men all should submit tamely to your Yoke?* The other or real Interest of a State is to be considered as permanent or temporary. The former of these depends upon the Situation of its Dominions, its Constitution and the Disposition of its People: The latter upon the Strength or Weakness of the neighbouring States. An Alteration in either of these must vary the temporary Interest of such State; and hence it happens, that it is at some Times prudent in order to preserve the Ballance of Power for one State to assist another, which it is at other Times equally prudent to join against. As the temporary Interest of a State must one would think be in the general obvious, it may be asked, how it comes to pass that such great and pernicious Mistakes are so frequently made therein? One Answer is that the Persons, in whom the supreme Power is vested, are sometimes quite ignorant of the true Interests of their respective States; or which is still worse that they are entirely governed by their Passions, or by those of some Favourites. It likewise happens, where the Administration of Affairs is committed to Ministers, that these do not in many Cases see what is most proper to be pursued; or that they prefer their own private Interest to that of the State; or, which too often happens, that being split into Factions they are more intent upon ruining their Rivals than serving their Country. Upon the whole it appears that, although the temporary Interest of a State be for the most Part obvious, no good Judgment can be formed whether this will be pursued, without knowing the Capacities, Inclinations, Caprices and private Views, of those who have the Management of its Affairs; for it sometimes happens, that a State in itself weak is made respectable by the Prudence of its Directors: And on the contrary, a Nation naturally powerful is frequently brought by the weak or wicked Conduct of those who sit at the Helm into a most contemptible Condition. The Knowledge of these, which is quite necessary to all who have the Care of the foreign Affairs of a State, must as the Scenes are often changed in Courts be very difficult to acquire; because it is only to be learned by Observation, or from Men who are well acquainted therewith.[6]

Puffendorf's division of state interests into imaginary and real, permanent (arising from intrinsic qualities and resources) and temporary (arising from the changeability of relationships), is static and schematic. But it provides a point from which to consider the evolution of the notion of State interest.

[5] [Ed.] The question in Latin—"*Num, si vos omnibus imperare vultis, sequitur ut omnes servitutem accipiant?*"—may also be translated as "*Though you would rule over every nation of the earth, does it thence follow that all ought to submit to servitude?*" The question was put by Caractacus (or Caratacus), a first-century A.D. British chieftain, to the Roman Emperor Claudius, as reported by Tacitus. This translation is found in John Baptist Lewis Crevier, *The History of the Roman Emperors: From Augustus to Constantine*, John Mill, trans., Vol. 3 (London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1814), p. 305.

[6] [Ed.] Puffendorf's "Preface" to *An Introduction to the History of the Principal States of Europe*, 1764, Vol. I, pp. viii–x.

Vital Interests

Puffendorf's most obvious omission, to our eye, is the class of vital interests. These come under his permanent interests, and perhaps coincide with them. They also lurked within the older conception of "honour." When a minister said that "the honour, dignity and interests of my master's crown" required a certain course of action, he was probably asserting what would later have been called a vital interest. But the conception of vital interests was not formulated until the twentieth century.[7] The earliest use of the phrase I have come across is by Metternich: "*La politique est la science des intérêts vitaux des États dans l'ordre le plus élevé*."[8] But here it is still not focused and definite.

Vital interests are interests that a state deems essential to its security and independence, and for which it will if necessary go to war. This might serve as a positive definition, or a statement of their substance. In legal form, however, vital interests were first distinguished negatively, as those interests which Powers wished to exclude from the scope of treaties of arbitration. Brierly cites the Anglo-French arbitration treaty of 1903 as the earliest example: it referred differences of a legal nature or relating to the interpretation of treaties to the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague, provided "they do not affect the vital interests, the independence, or the honour of the two states, and do not concern the interests of third parties."[9] This formula was widely used in the spate of arbitration treaties before 1914. In the period of the League of Nations more discreet ways were found to safeguard states from having their international conduct judged unconditionally according to the rules of law, or rather, by an international court professing to interpret the law. Submission of disputes to the new Permanent Court of International Justice was voluntary unless a state accepted the Optional Clause of the Court's Statute, and though it became meritorious to accept the Optional Clause, many states did so only with reservations designed to safeguard their essential freedom. In the nuclear diplomacy of the 1960s the idea of vital interests reappeared. The Test Ban Treaty of 1963, article IV, reads thus:

"Each Party shall in exercising its national sovereignty have the right to withdraw from the Treaty if it decides that extraordinary events, related to

[7] [Ed.] In another work, Wight wrote that "'Vital interests' is a phrase that did not become usual until the latter part of the nineteenth century." Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), p. 96. Wight's wording implies that the phrase became current in the late nineteenth century, with a clearer conception following in the twentieth.

[8] [Ed.: "Politics is the science of the vital interests of states of the highest order."] *Mémoires*, i. 30. This comes from the *Matériaux pour servir à l'histoire de ma vie publique*, written for the family archives in 1844.

[9] J. L. Brierly, *The Law of Nations: An Introduction to the International Law of Peace*, second edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 211.

the subject matter of this Treaty, have jeopardised the supreme interests of its country."[10]

A similar clause occurs in the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America of 1967 (article 30(1)), and in the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 (article X (l)).

The notion of vital interests is formulated late in internationa1 history, in response to the growing pressure of internationalism in the shape of arbitration treaties. But the classic enunciation of a vital interest, for the instruction of other Powers and the avoidance of misunderstandings, is the Monroe Doctrine. It will be remembered that the United States Senate refused to accept the Covenant of the League of Nations unless it specifically reserved the Monroe Doctrine, and that Article 21 was added to the Covenant to meet the demand.[11] Headlam-Morley wrote a paper on Arbitration for the Foreign Office in 1928, in which he defended the conception of vital interests, on the grounds of staking claims which other Powers will probably respect. He offered the following examples. For Britain, (a) the independence of the Low Countries, (b) control of the Persian Gulf, (c) that the states on the northern border of India (Afghanistan, Tibet, Nepal) should not fall under the control of another Great Power. For France, control of the Maghrib, viz. north-west Africa. For Russia, that Constantinople and the Straits should not fall under the control of another Great Power. For Prussia, control of Germany north of the River Main, as conceded by the Treaty of Bâle of 1795.[12]

Three comments may be made about this list. First, they are all territorial interests, the protection of buffer zones or spheres or influence. The idea of the sphere of influence was a product of imperialist expansion in the late nineteenth century, and closely connected, historically as well as logically, with the idea of vital interests.

Secondly, they are to some extent programs of expansion. In May 1903 Lansdowne had announced that "we should regard the establishment of a naval base, or of a fortified port, in the Persian Gulf by any other Power as a very grave menace to British interests, and we should certainly resist it with all the means at our disposal."[13] This was to declare a vital interest in negative or defensive terms. A month earlier, in the debate on the Berlin-Baghdad Railway and the land route to India, Balfour had uttered a sentence that put the emphasis differently, as if the negative

[10] [Ed.] The text of the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space, and Under Water may be found on the website of the US State Department: may be found at https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/trty/199116.htm

[11] [Ed.] F. P. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), Vol. I, pp. 55–56.

[12] [Ed.] James Headlam-Morley, 1930. *Studies in Diplomatic History* (New York: Alfred H. King, Inc.), p. 45.

[13] [Ed.] Landsdowne was then the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. House of Lords Debates, May 5 1903, Vol. 121, column 1348, may be found at https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1903/may/05/great-britain-and-the-persian-gulf

and defensive was a *pis aller*: "it is on the whole our interest that countries which certainly we cannot absorb should not, on the other hand, be wholly and absolutely absorbed by either one or two other Powers."[14] But the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907 gave Britain a sphere of influence in Southern Persia, which enabled her, after the collapse of the Russian Empire, to occupy the whole of Persia in 1917–18, and in 1919 to make an agreement with Persia for a virtual protectorate with exclusively British advisers. At the same time the conquest of Mesopotamia and collapse of the Ottoman Empire gave Britain control of Iraq, in the guise of a mandated territory, and for a brief moment the land route to India was in British possession. A defensive vital interest had been transformed into effective management.

The Prussian example is similar. By the Treaty of Bâle in 1795, the French Directory seduced Prussia into leaving the First Coalition and making a separate peace. Northern Germany, defined by the line of the River Main, was to be neutralised under Prussian guarantee; in other words, Prussia was given a free hand there (at the expense of the Empire and its other members). This was perhaps the first time that the sphere of action in Northern Germany was defined which

Bismarck was afterwards to organise as the North German Confederation in 1866–67. However, the corresponding engagement in the Treaty of Bâle was that Prussia conceded a free hand to France on the left bank of the Rhine. If we are to describe Prussia's manifest destiny in Germany north of the Main as marking a vital interest, are we so to describe French ambitions for the Rhine frontier? In that case we should have to weigh a vital interest that history brought to a fulfillment which we continue to regard as being in the nature of things (with all due allowance for the present partition of northern Germany and former Prussia herself),[15] against a vital interest which attained only a fulfillment of seventeen years (1797–1814), before being discarded as contrary to the trends of history (with all due allowance to the E.E.C.).[16]

Tsarist Russia had ambitions in Persia resembling France's in Germany, except that they extended to the control of the whole country. In the twenty years before the Ang1o-Russian entente of 1907, Russia reduced Persia almost to the condition of a protectorate, and the Russian press demanded control not only of Persia but of "the waters that bathe its shores."[17] Whether all this was formulated by the

[14] [Ed.] Balfour was then the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, April 8, 1903, column 1374, may be found at https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1903/apr/08/the-bagdad-railway

[15] [Ed.] The "present partition" separating the German Democratic Republic from the Federal Republic of Germany, to which Wight referred when he presented this paper in 1970, ended with the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany in 1990.

[16] [Ed.] When Wight prepared this paper in 1970, the European Economic Community consisted of the six founding signatories of the 1957 Treaty of Rome—Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany).

[17] [Ed.] According to a Russian newspaper in 1901, "There must be an end once and for all to the idle talk about dividing Persia into a northern sphere of influence belonging to Russia and a southern belonging to England. There can be no division of spheres of influence in Persia, which, together

Russian government or diplomacy in state papers as a vital interest I do not know; and we might ask whether a popular agitation for some nationalist or expansionist object is sufficient to designate a vita1interest. The partition of Persia into spheres of influence with Britain in 1907 was a reversal of Russian policy due to her defeat by Japan. Nevertheless, the Russian sphere was the lion's share, and as soon as the World War began Russia exploited her position in northern Persia with annexation in view. It proved to be an abortive manifest destiny. Stalin returned to it in 1945–47, with his attempt to detach Azerbaijan from Persia and his manipulation of the Tudeh Party, but Persian nationalism was stronger than it had been when it defeated Britain in 1921, and once again Russia failed. Are we to consider the French frontier on the Rhine and the Russian control of Persia as mistaken vital interests, or contingent vital interests, or abortive vital interests?

Thirdly and most obviously, the majority of Headlam-Morley's examples of a vital interest have been attained and then, after a period of fruition, have passed away. Dismantled empires contain the bones of dead vital interests. They furnish the extreme example that a Power's notions of its vital interests will change with changing conditions. In the nineteenth century it was a British vital interest that Russia should not have Constantinople. In 1915, under the stress of a common war against Germany, Britain conceded Constantinople to Russia, and it was only the repudiation of the Tsarist secret treaties by the Bolsheviks that conveniently invalidated the agreement.

Wilhelmine Germany defined maritime expansion as a vital interest. Nazi Germany regarded this as an error and defined the supreme vital interest as *Lebensraum* in the Ukraine. In 1934 it was an Italian vital interest to preserve the independence of Austria, and when the Nazis murdered Dollfuss in 1934 Mussolini moved four divisions to the Brenner—or rather, to Tarvisio, believing that Yugoslavia had an understanding with Germany and might move troops into Carinthia. Four years later Mussolini acquiesced in the *Anschluss*, and received in acknowledgment the telegram from Dollfuss's murderer, "Mussolini, I shall never forget this."[18] Until 1956 it was regarded as a British vital interest that the Suez Canal should be an international waterway, i.e. that it should be predominantly under British control. After the failure of the attack on Suez in 1956, the ministers who had made the attack admitted that the blocking of the Canal without disastrous consequences proved that it was no longer vital. These are all examples of vital interests being modified under *force majeure*, in accordance with changed historical conditions.

with the waters that bathe its shores, must remain the object of Russian material and moral protection." *Birzheviya Vyedomosti* quoted in B. H. Sumner, *Tsardom and Imperialism in the Far East and Middle East, 1880–1914* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1940), pp. 21–22, in A. K. S. L., "The Azarbaijan Problem," *The World Today*, vol. 2, no. 2 (February 1946), p. 50.

[18] [Ed.] Hitler's message to Mussolini on March 13, 1938, quoted in Richard J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), p. 268.

It may strengthen the notion of vital interests as the recognition of a manifest destiny, an historical vocation, if we recall how often the politicians of a settled and mature Power become the agents of the national interest, irrespective of their personal policies or aspirations. Jefferson the peace-lover sent the United States Navy to the Mediterranean to chastise the Barbary pirates (incidentally using the British bases in Gibraltar, Malta and Sicily), a hundred and fifty years before the Sixth Fleet took up its station there; Jefferson the champion of the strict construction of the Constitution made an astonishingly bold exercise of presidential prerogative in order to purchase Louisiana. For over ten years Fox had opposed the war with Revolutionary France when he became Foreign Secretary after Pitt's death, with a policy of negotiating peace, but he soon recognised that it was impossible to treat with Napoleon. Gladstone was the greatest moralist and anti-imperialist in British history; but he occupied Egypt. Lloyd George held a key position among the pacifist members of Asquith's government, and it was he who broke the peace party in the Cabinet in 1914 by accepting the necessity of supporting France, and who in the event organised the victory. Woodrow Wilson and Neville Chamberlain, in their critics' eyes, sacrificed honour in order to avoid war, but in the end declared it. As Grey of Fallodon said, "in great affairs" there is "much more, as a rule, in the minds of the events (if such an expression may be used) than in the minds of the chief actors."[19]

The determining of vital interests is subjective. A Power's vital interests are what it decides them to be, and not what other Powers say them to be: what the configuration of forces allows the Power to decide those interests to be, with reasonable hope of furthering them. It is no good a satisfied Power (let us say, Philip II's Spain or Baldwin's England or Eisenhower's United States) telling a dissatisfied Power (let us say, Elizabethan England or Nazi Germany or Communist China) that its legitimate interests can be fully secured within the existing arrangement of power, for there will be little agreement between what the one calls "legitimate" and the other calls "vital." Even when two Powers are potentially on the same side, it is as often the course of events as the force of persuasion that has shown the less prudent where its interests lie, as is seen in the history of all the great international coalitions.

What are the vital interests of the leading Powers today? Of Headlam-Morley's examples, only the American and Russian survive. It is presumably still a Russian vital interest that Constantinople and the Black Sea Straits should not be in the hands of another Great Power. The Soviet government made clear also, in the later stages of the Second World War and afterwards, in deed if not expressly in words, that it regarded a belt of "friendly" states along its western border as vital

[19] Viscount Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-Five Years, 1892–1916* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), Vol. I, p. 51.

to its security. Thus it has come about that the maintenance of Communist governments in East Berlin, Budapest and Prague is a vital interest to Russia. Do we know how the Soviet government might now formulate its vital interests in the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, and the Indian Ocean?

Do we know how (and whether) the Chinese People's Republic formulates its vital interests? The Chinese conquest of Tibet in 1950 was described in the language of liberation; would it be right to assume a prior decision by the new Chinese government that it was a vital interest to reassert suzerainty over the territories of the former Empire? The Chinese intervention in the Korean War in November of the same year was obviously prompted, partly by fear that the American advance would not halt at the Ya1u River but would become an invasion of China, partly by a parallel anxiety lest the American neutralization of Formosa and MacArthur's apparent willingness to use the support of Chinese Nationalist troops betokened the intention to restore Chiang Kai-shek to power on the Chinese mainland. In traditional terms this might have been formulated as a vital interest in the continued independence of North Korea. What are Chinese vital interests in Indo-China? Did China see a vital interest at stake in the border war with India? Are vital interests admitted, by either side, in the Sino-Soviet border dispute, or has this dispute been kept from breaking out into war precisely because the interests in conflict have not been admitted as vital, and therefore remain in some degree negotiable?

The United States has used the language of vital interests freely since 1945. "Always he [the President] asked himself: Can we be sure that Khrushchev understands what we feel to be our vital national interest?" wrote Robert Kennedy. "The missiles in Cuba, we felt, vitally concerned our national security, but not that of the Soviet Union."[20] When the crisis was over the President said, in a television interview,

> Mr. Khrushchev has to understand that there are vital interests in the United States for which we will fight, ... it seems to me his vital interests are easily protected with the power that he has, and we could have a long period of peace. ... I think they [the Soviets] realize that West Berlin is a vital interest to us, and that we are committed there, and that we are going to stay there. On the other hand, he [Khrushchev] has a very vital interest in East Germany, in trying to prop up that regime, and trying to solidify his position in Eastern Europe.[21]

[20] [Ed.] Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1969), pp. 125–126.

[21] [Ed.] Television and Radio Interview: "After Two Years — a Conversation With the President," December 17, 1962, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States,* John F. Kennedy, *Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to December 31, 1962* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1963), pp. 900–901.

At the beginning of 1957 Eisenhower enunciated the Eisenhower Doctrine, in a special message to Congress (January 5): that the United States would protect the integrity and independence of Middle East nations that requested aid against aggression by international Communism. On 9th March the Eisenhower Doctrine was embodied in a joint resolution of Congress, "to promote peace and stability in the Middle East."

> "The President is authorized", said the resolution, "to undertake, in the general area of the Middle East, military assistance programs with any nation or group of nations of that area desiring such assistance. Furthermore, the United States regards as vital to the national interest and world peace the preservation of the independence and integrity of the nations of the Middle East. To this end, if the President determines the necessity thereof, the United States is prepared to use armed forces".[22]

When the Jordanian crisis became acute in the following month, the presidential press secretary was authorised to announce from the President's holiday headquarters at Augusta that the preservation of Jordan's integrity and independence was "vital to the national interest".[23]

Since then, American vital interests in the Middle East may have been redefined or modified. But the Eisenhower Doctrine and the Jordanian crisis of 1957 are interesting for two reasons. The style of Eisenhower's presidency affords an example both of the most authoritative definition of a vital interest, by joint resolution of Congress, and of the most informal, by an authorised statement of a press secretary. Secondly, the authoritative definition joins the

vital national interest to the wider interest of world peace. Whether this represents the rudiments of a magnanimous transcending of the conception of vital interests, or simply is ideological rhetoric, may be debatable. But I have not found a parallel to it.

[22] [Ed.] "Joint Resolution to promote peace and stability in the Middle East," Public Law 85–7, March 9, 1957 (H. J. Res. 117), may be found at https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/85/hjres117/text

[23] [Ed.]

> At a news conference at Augusta, Ga., on April 24 [1957], James C. Hagerty, Press Secretary to the President, said that he had been authorized to say that both the President and the Secretary of State regarded the independence and integrity of Jordan as vital. On April 25, Lincoln White, Acting Chief of the News Division, Department of State, told news correspondents: "I can only say with respect to Jordan that the statement issued in Augusta yesterday afternoon represented a reminder to the world by the President that a finding had been made in the Joint Resolution of the Congress on the Middle East that the preservation of the independence and integrity of the nations of the Middle East was vital to the national interest of the United States and to world peace."
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> *United States Policy in the Middle East, September 1956–June 1957: Documents,* Department of State Publication 6505 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, August 1957), p. 69n.

Moral and Ideological Interests

The vital interests we have considered so far have been concrete, and primarily territorial. But states also assert non-material interests and often talk of them as if they were vital.

On 4th August 1914 Henry Jackson, the Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge, wrote to a friend about the outbreak of war: "I do not see how England can honourably or honestly stand down. Our honesty and honour are the most important of our 'vital interests.'"[24] This is language that has a strong appeal in the Western tradition, arousing similar if different echoes in English, French and American history. The old radical view used to be that governments asked men to die for imponderables like "honour" and "glory," in wars that were really fought for sordid material objects. Has the democratising of politics reversed the situation, so that politicians now have to define the vital interest which will provide the *casus belli* with the utmost particularity—the invasion of Belgium, unrestricted submarine warfare, the incorporation of non-German peoples in the Third Reich;—or even wait until one's own country is attacked, as at Pearl Harbour—and can leave the moral resonances and the nobler implications to their constituents?

ln this class of intangible interests belongs the interest that Britain is said to continue to have in the existence of the Commonwealth. One of the arguments used against the sale of arms to South Africa has been that such a policy would probably cause a number of countries to leave the Commonwealth and would perhaps lead to the breakup of the Commonwealth altogether. And it is implied that Britain has a major interest, perhaps a vital interest, in maintaining the complex Commonwealth network of mutual association and communication, political, commercial, intellectual, sporting, between races, continents, and developed and underdeveloped countries. Clearly a large part in this view is played by sentiment, tradition and an honourable sense of history.

Are imponderable and moral interests of these kinds feebler and more transient than vital interests of the territorial sort, or are they the soul of which territorial interests are the body?

Ideological interests and sympathies may seem more powerful, but may prove less deeply rooted, than moral interests. Puffendorf seems to overlook altogether the possibility of moral interests and probably would have included ideological interests among those he deemed imaginary. Indeed the history of the Religious Wars in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries suggests that international doctrinal interests soon become subordinated to considerations of *raison d'état*. Pan-Slav agitation in Russia in the 1870s was a kind of froth secreted by Russia's concrete vital interests in competition with Austria's in the Balkans. Russia's protectorate

[24] R. St. John Parry, *Henry Jackson, O.M., Vice-Master of Trinity College and Regius Professor of Greek in the University of Cambridge, A Memoir* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), p. 93.

over the Orthodox subjects of the Sultan, formulated at Kustchnk-Kainardji in 1774 and abrogated only at Paris in 1856, is a more solid example; but it seems to have been formulated as a *claim* or a *right* rather than an *interest*. Is a claim the assertion of an interest? Is a right the legal confirmation of an interest?

Hayter says in his recent book (*Russia and the World*) "There is no real distinction to be drawn between the national *interest* of the Soviet Union and the *claims* of revolutionary ideology; they are two names for the same thing."[25] This trenchantly poses (and gives one answer to) the most important question about doctrinal or ideological interests today: whether they create a dynamism that transcends national interest and thus dangerously transforms international relationships. "The Party commands the People, and Marxism-Leninism commands the Party. The Party may undergo internal strains and crises, but Marxism-Leninism alone can never fail." Thus Soviet orthodoxy restates Rohan's formula. Thus American opinion in the time of Acheson and Dulles interpreted Soviet policy. The view has become unfashionable since the reputed ending of the Cold War, from about the time of the Test-Ban Treaty in 1963 or the fall of Khrushchev in the following year.

Doctrinal and ideological commitments and language have a two-fold effect on national interests: (a) they transform the *instruments* of politics; (b) they extend the *range* of claims and interests.

The transformation of the instruments of politics can be illustrated by a passage from the Soviet-Yugoslav dispute of 1948. The Yugoslavs complained that the Soviet ambassador in Belgrade had reported to his government that there was "no democracy" in the Yugoslav Communist Party. The Yugoslavs contended that it was no business of the ambassador to seek or transmit information about the Party: this was a matter of the relations between the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Central Committee of the CPY.[26] The Soviet Party replied as follows:

> "In their letter of 13 April 1948 Tito and Kardelj wrote: 'We consider that he [the Soviet Ambassador], as an ambassador, has no right to ask any one for information about the work of our party. That is not his business'".
>
> "We feel that this statement by Tito and Kardelj is essentially incorrect and anti-Soviet. They identify the Soviet Ambassador, a responsible communist who represents the Communist Government of the U.S.S.R., with an ordinary bourgeois ambassador, a simple official of a bourgeois state, who is called upon to

[25] [Ed.] William Hayter, *Russia and the World: A Study of Soviet Foreign Policy* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1970), p. 125; italics added by Martin Wight.

[26] [Ed.] The CPSU was the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the CPY was the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Martin Wight examined relations between state-governing Communist parties, states governed by Communist parties, "oppositional Communist parties within non-Communist states," and state institutions of non-Communist states. See Martin Wight, "The Communist Theory of International Relations," in Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 131–140.

> undermine the foundations of the Yugoslav State. It is difficult to understand how Tito and Kardelj could sink so low. Do these comrades understand that such an attitude towards the Soviet Ambassador means the negation of all friendly relations between the U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia? Do these comrades understand that the Soviet Ambassador, a responsible communist, who represents a friendly power which liberated Yugoslavia from the German occupation, not only has the right but is obliged, from time to time, to discuss with the communists in Yugoslavia all questions which interest them? How can they be suspicious of these simple elementary matters if they intend to remain in friendly relation with the Soviet Union?"[27]

Three views about the means of promoting state interests are here in conflict. The traditional view, degraded by Communists as "bourgeois," is that normal diplomatic channels exist to accommodate interests between governments, and have also a subsidiary function of providing intelligence. The Yugoslav view is that the traditional purpose of the normal diplomatic channels holds between both bourgeois and socialist states, and that the particular interests of the Communist parties in power in socialist states should be negotiated directly between the parties. The Soviet view is that normal diplomatic channels, being bourgeois, have the function of undermining the foundations of socialist states; but that when they are instituted between socialist states they are transformed, and acquire the purpose of mutual criticism, supervision and guidance, in relation to the whole range of governmental and ideological interests. (The Soviet letter went on to emphasise the mutuality of the process, as if to forestall the thought that the Soviet ambassador in Belgrade was bound to carry more weight than the Yugoslav ambassador in Moscow.)

The extension of the range of claims and interests, made possible by ideological commitments, can perhaps be illustrated by the Brezhnev Doctrine. The Soviet Government judged it a vital interest, we may assume, to prevent the erosion of an orthodox Communist regime in Czechoslovakia in 1968, because of the repercussions this would have elsewhere in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union itself. But it might have been difficult to justify intervention to protect this vital interest, without the language of international Communism, which enabled Brezhnev to assert a doctrine of unlimited Soviet suzerainty over socialist countries in terms of fraternal cooperation.[28]

Is there any difference in this respect between Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and American intervention in Santo Domingo in 1965? The United States intervened in Santo Domingo, probably, from fear that the republic was on

[27] *The Soviet-Yugoslav Dispute* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1948), pp. 25, 34–35.

[28] Helmut Schmidt, "The Brezhnev Doctrine," *Survival*, vol. 11, no. 10 (1969), pp. 307–313, reprinted from *The Atlantic Community Quarterly*, Washington, DC (Summer 1969).

the way to becoming a second Cuba through a Communist take-over, and that this would further alter the balance of power in the Caribbean. The parallel with Soviet interests in Czechoslovakia is close.

But there are two differences. First, which does not concern us here, the American intervention was at the request of the legitimate Dominican government, and was vindicated a year later by an election which rejected the candidate of the Communist forces in the country. Secondly, it was not justified in terms of ideological interests, but on the insufficient plea of saving American lives.[29] Nevertheless, the landing of the Marines in Santo Domingo was in the long tradition of United States intervention in Latin America, recognised by the Soviet Union as part of the game (though of course made political capital out of) no less than the United States recognised Soviet vital interests in Europe. Compare two statements. The first is the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine:

> Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.[30]

The second is Brezhnev's Warsaw speech of November12, 1968:

> When the internal and external forces hostile to socialism seek to turn back the development of any Socialist country to restore the capitalist order, when a threat emerges to the cause of socialism in that country, a threat to the security of the Socialist Commonwealth as a whole, this is no longer a matter only for the people of the country in question, but it is also a common problem, which is a matter of concern for all Socialist countries.

It goes without saying that such an action as military aid to a fraternal country to thwart the threat to the Socialist order is an extraordinary, enforced that is, last resort measure. It can be caused only by the direct actions of the enemies of socialism inside the country and beyond its boundaries—actions which create a threat to the common interests of the Socialist camp.[31]

[29] The best account I know is in Brian Crozier, *The Masters of Power* (Boston and Toronto: Little Brown and Company, 1969), pp. 140–146, 280–283.

[30] President Roosevelt's Annual Message to Congress, December 6, 1904, in Ruhl J. Bartlett, ed., *The Record of American Diplomacy: Documents and Readings in the History of American Foreign Relations*, fourth edn (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), p. 539.

[31] Victor Zorza's translation, *Guardian*, November 13, 1968.

There is a difference between the two statements in philosophical terminology. There is a difference in candour: Brezhnev in speaking of "military aid to a fraternal country" maintains the fiction that the intervention was solicited from within. Apart from these, the resemblance is so great as to make me uncertain whether ideological interests substantially extend a Great Power's interpretation of its interests within its own sphere of influence.

Another example of ideological interests is afforded by Nasser. Eden's interpretation of Nasser's policy in 1956 was notable for its underestimate (as his critics thought) of the strength of Arab nationalism. He saw Nasser as ambitious for territorial expansion justified by linguistic affinities, but the only nationalism Eden took account of was the nationalism of each separate Arab state. The contrary view, that Egyptian policy has been dynamically transformed by ideological nationalism, was restated recently by Malcolm Kerr:

> Since 1964, however, it has become doubtful whether any carrots and sticks usable in Egypt [by the Western Powers] really exist at all. It is an overly narrow view of the character of the Egyptian revolution that supposes that Nasser can be induced once and for all to renounce militancy in the Arab world, in Africa, or towards Israel. This is not to pass judgment on Nasser but simply to note that he, like others, has developed his own conceptions of vital interests (conceptions which have become objective for him, however subjective they may seem to others) and his own national constituency from which he derives strength. When he declares, as he habitually does, that Egypt will not sell her revolutionary principles for any amount of American aid, the statement may have the ring of bombast but it also signifies an important reality: that activism in foreign fields has become an integral part of the character of the Egyptian revolution and that it cannot be renounced by a simple decision in favour of attention to internal development simply because encouragement for the latter has been offered.[32]

This was written in 1966. It has been put in a new light by Egypt's acceptance of the cease-fire in August 1970, and her implied abandonment of the Palestine guerrillas. Has Nasser redefined his vital interests because of combined Soviet and American pressure, or because he finds Egypt's security has become dangerously dependent on Soviet arms? Or has he not redefined them and is the cease-fire for him a tactical move?

[32] Malcolm Kerr, "'Coming to Terms with Nasser': Attempts and Failures," *International Affairs*, vol. 43, no. 1 (January 1967), p. 83.

The Choice of Interests

The student of international affairs, whether he is historian or international relationist, probably tends to concentrate his attention on crises. They are important, definite, dramatic, manageable as units of study. It may seem to him that in times of crisis the mountain range of vital interests stands out momentarily clear above the haze or mist of routine policy. (At closer range he may find that those moments are charged with electrical storms of emotion which color the vision and distort the judgment for actors and historians alike.) But in the haze or mist of routine decision the greater part of diplomatic life is conducted. Every Power, and especially every Great Power, presides in practice over an intricate web of interconnected interests. Though a modern Power that enjoys a tradition of settled policy will probably have formulated its vital interests, and indeed have made them known to other Powers, it probably does not make Puffendorf's sharp distinction between permanent and temporary interests. Even vital interests can be eroded by time; all interests are subject to the flux of history; there are only more important and less important, in an even gradation. Foreign policy on the whole consists of day-to-day decisions, in which those varying interests and objectives have to be balanced one against another. Some can be promoted; some must be left quiescent. Every decision will have both cumulative and ricochet effects. Every decision will cost a price in foreseeable consequences, both positive and negative. The price has to be estimated. The merit of Puffendorf's description of interests is that he recognises state interest to be neither self-evident or self-fulfilling, but rather requiring moral and intellectual qualities in politicians.

In this realm of political decision between important interests and less important, the outcome can be very various. Here are some situations of which history offers examples.

1. An indubitable vital interest may in fact not be defended. Thus Benes refused to go to war in September 1938, against the advice of his military chiefs, because of the unreliability of his allies.
2. A vital interest may be defended by the wrong means, or at the wrong time. When Bulganin and Khrushchev came to England in April 1956, Eden told them that the uninterrupted supply of oil from the Middle East was vital to the British economy. "I said I thought I must be absolutely blunt about the oil, because we would fight for it."[33]

   Probably Eden was right about the vital importance of oil, wrong in drawing the corollary that it was vital to keep the Suez Canal under British control. Was he possibly wrong also about the dependence on *Middle Eastern* oil?

[33] Anthony Eden, *Memoirs*, Vol. 3, *Full Circle* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), p. 401.

3. A vital interest can be misjudged; in other words, an objective can be canonised as "vital" which retrospect shows not to have been. This is Puffendorf's imaginary interest. The example he gives is the ambition for universal monarchy, and he would presumably have adduced Philip II, Ferdinand II, and Louis XIV in support. The examples most familiar to us are those consequent upon fits of collective national mania, like the French frontier on the Rhine and Nazi colonisation of the Ukraine. But here once again we may be troubled by the ghost of Cavour, who will whisper that the only classification of vital interests is according to the success or failure of asserting them.
4. A vita1 interest may be voluntarily abandoned, in the hope of a greater recompense. When Britain negotiated the Irish Treaty in 1921, she retained strategic control of Berehaven, Queenstown and Lough Swilly, because their possession had been deemed vital in the anti-submarine campaign of the First World War. Churchill quotes Michael Collins as having said to him, "Of course you must have the ports … they are necessary for your life."[34]
4. In 1938 Britain surrendered the ports to the newly independent Eire. The Chiefs of Staff advised that they were indefensible anyway; Chamberlain hoped that their cession might bring an imponderable return of goodwill. Was this a voluntary surrender of a vital interest, or a judgment that a vital interest was no longer vital? Churchill's final comment makes another distinction, between a vital interest safeguarded in time of peace by an international agreement and a vital interest protected on grounds of necessity as an act of war: "It is true that in the end we survived without the ports. It is also true that if we had not been able to do without them, we should have retaken them by force rather than perish by famine."[35]
5. A Power may decide, after careful consideration, that an interest is not vital, but may then find itself defending it. There are two recent occurrences which resemble this, though the first is deceptive.

In 1935, when Italian relations with Abyssinia were deteriorating and at the same time an Anglo-Ethiopian Boundary Commission was surveying the grazing grounds in the Ogaden, the British Government appointed a committee under Sir John Maffey, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, to enquire into British interests in Abyssinia. The committee reported confidentially in June 1935 that there were no vital British interests in Abyssinia or in neighbouring countries to make it necessary to resist an Italian conquest of Abyssinia, so long as the headwaters of Lake Tsana remained safe. Mussolini had already in January asked for a statement of British interests in Abyssinia. He was irritated and

[34] Michael Collins quoted in Winston S. Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, *Vol. I of The Second World War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), p. 276.
[35] Churchill, ibid., p. 277.

made suspicious by the delay in getting a reply, especially as British diplomacy was active in seeking to conciliate the Walwal dispute between Italy and Abyssinia and in warning Italy not to resort to force. When the report of the Maffey Committee reached the British Embassy in June, the Italian secret service succeeded in photographing it, together with other confidential documents.

This strengthened Mussolini's belief that Britain was double-crossing him.[36] British hypocrisy was confirmed in Mussolini's eyes by Hoare's astonishing speech in the League Assembly in September 1935.[37] But the British government refused, or was unable, to play the handout, and defend the interest that was greater than any local interests in North-East Africa. In February 1936, when the League was discussing the oil sanction, Mussolini published the Maffey Report in the *Giornale d'Italia* as anti-British propaganda, with the perverse logic of a dictator incapable of distinguishing between the denial or dissimulation of an imperial vital interest and the half-hearted assertion of a general interest that the Covenant of the League should be upheld.

A similar scenario with a different outcome was provided by United States policy towards Korea in 1950. After the final Communist victory in China in 1949 the Truman administration was inclined to wash its hands of China, and the National Security Council agreed that Formosa was not sufficiently important strategically to justify American intervention on the Nationalist side or the risk of Soviet intervention on the Communist side. On 12 January 1950 Dean Acheson made the celebrated speech at the National Press Club in which he defined the United States' defensive perimeter in Asia. This enclosed Japan, Okinawa, and the Philippines, in whose defence the United States would not weaken. It excluded Formosa and South Korea, which were implicitly declared not to be American vital interests. This probably encouraged North Korea to attack South Korea, and Russia to calculate that the United States would not intervene. But by June 1950 both the administration's policy and American public opinion had swung back towards intervention. When the war began on June 25, therefore, Truman sent the Seventh Fleet to "neutralize" Formosa, i.e. to protect it from

[36] Sir Samuel Hoare, Viscount Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years* (London: Collins, 1954), p. 157.

[37] [Ed.] In his speech in the Assembly of the League of Nations, Hoare called for "the collective maintenance of the Covenant in its entirety, and particularly for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression." F. P. Walters summed up the impact of Hoare's speech as follows:

> It would be difficult to exaggerate the effect of this speech. Once more, it seemed, after four years of uncertainty, timidity, opportunism, the true voice of Britain was heard. Now that the test was at hand, she was ready to take her natural place as leader of the League and all it stood for—the respect for treaty obligations, the rights of small nations, the prevention, or, if need be, the defeat, of aggression, through collective action.
>
> F. P. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), Vol. II, p. 648.

invasion, and decided on immediate armed support to South Korea. The American ascendancy in the [United Nations] Security Counci1 enabled this revision of United States interests to be pursued in the name of collective security. Britain's position in the League in 1935–36 was decisively weaker. The aggressor had not attacked an interest which, even on reconsideration, she deemed vital; and she had an equal partner in the League, France, with whom she was at odds on the issue.

There are interests which are formally embodied in treaty obligations. For example, when Malaysia became independent in 1963, Britain signed a defensive treaty with the new state. This unintentionally committed Britain to military support for Malaysia in her confrontation with Indonesia which immediately ensued, despite the eviction from the Malaysian Federation in 1965 of Singapore, which presumably represented Britain's principal defense interest. Australia and New Zealand have continuing military commitments to Malaysia; Britain has comparable commitments to the Gulf Sheikdoms. These interests would be particularly interesting to analyze, since they comprise three elements: (a) the identification of a concrete interest which merits protection; (b) readiness to enter into a legal commitment with another Power to defend this interest; (c) readiness to accept the moral obligation of "honour" to fulfil the legal commitment in defence of the interest.

Major interests, even former vital interests, which have putrefied into intractable problems, can be abdicated. One of the functions of the United Nations has been as official receiver for such problems. Thus Bevin abandoned Palestine to the United Nations in 1947; the Dutch handed West New Guinea to it in 1962; and Harold Wilson abandoned Rhodesia to it in 1965. The United Nations can provide little that did not exist before it was founded to help solve such problems (except perhaps organizing international economic sanctions), but it affords a moral balm to the humiliation of incapacity for declining Powers. A similar purpose was served a hundred years earlier by Francis Joseph's ceding Venetia, immediately after Sadowa, to Napoleon III, to avoid the indignity of ceding it directly to Italy.

The tentative conclusions I draw from the cases discussed in this paper are these:

(i) There is a sharp distinction between vital interests and non-vital. Every major interest is underpinned by and dependent upon minor interests. The interests for which Powers say they will be prepared to go to war do not coincide with the interests for which in fact they do go to war.

(ii) Nevertheless, the definition of vital interests is valuable since it dissipates ambiguity and gives notice of danger zones.

(iii) Vital interests are sometimes defined by formal declaration, sometimes to be inferred from the tradition or trend of a Power's policy. Formal declaration is preferable, but it is easier to achieve in the degree that a Power is both stable and detached.

(iv) Vital interests are territorial interests beyond the frontier of the state. They sketch the corona of influence to embrace which the Great Power may in favourable circumstances expand.

(v) Discussion about vital interests is on the whole discussion about Great Powers, in the sense of Powers with universal interests. (This includes regional Great Powers, as Israel and Egypt in the Middle East.) Small powers can be said to have vital interests only when they are expansionist. If (as is perhaps true in most cases) they will not go to war unless directly attacked, their vital interest is limited to repelling attack, which is a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*.

12
Interests, Honour, and Prestige

For the vast majority of human beings today, the state—which is a Power seen from the inside—is the most immediate and beneficent feature of political experience.* Although the majority of the states of the world are, by Western standards, which Western states themselves often fall short of, in some degree inefficient or corrupt or tyrannical, nevertheless they are in general the organisers and protectors of individual lives which, without them, would be even more insecure and impoverished.[1] This is why, as we said in the first chapter, the state or Power is for most men the ultimate loyalty for which they will die.[2]

Yet this is only one way of solving a latent conflict of loyalties. Most men are aware of ties beyond the state—ties of common creed or common culture or economic interdependence, and the more civilised the state, the more its citizens are aware of these ties. Yet for all except an insignificant fraction of mankind, these ties do not compete with loyalty to the state. Economically advanced countries do not help economically backward countries at the expense of endangering their own standard of living; possessors of empty lands do not permit immigration from overpopulated ones; workers fight workers; Catholics fight Catholics. And there are cogent reasons for such a primacy of loyalties, both moral and material. The duty a man has to his own community is much clearer than the duty he has to other communities or mankind at large, so much so that it is difficult to formulate the wider duty at all except in negative terms. Towards foreigners the individual can only feel a diffused and occasional goodwill, as when he subscribes to a fund

* Martin Wight wrote no date on this paper, but he may have intended to develop it and make it serve as a chapter in the revised version of *Power Politics* that he did not live to complete.

[1] [Ed.] In another draft of this introductory passage, Wight wrote,

> Outside Western Europe, North America and Australasia most states are in various degrees tyrannical or corrupt or both (nor is the corrupt state unknown in the American Union); yet there are few cases where it can be imagined that men would be better off if the apparatus of the state were to collapse, and that the state-apparatus would not quickly be reassembled in other, and worse, hands.

[2] [Ed.] In the first chapter of the original 1946 version of *Power Politics*, Wight wrote, "A Power is a modern sovereign state in its international aspect, and it might almost be defined as that ultimate loyalty for which men today will fight." Martin Wight, *Power Politics* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1946), p. 9. In the 1978 version, the word "international" was replaced by "external," and "that ultimate loyalty" was replaced by "The ultimate loyalty," in Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978). p. 25.

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for the relief of victims of a catastrophe or is hospitable to foreign visitors. There are no international civic duties, for the reason that there is no international state, to exert its authority over me.

Since 1945 there has been a widespread sense of duty in the Western world to promote the economic advancement of the underdeveloped territories, but this sense of duty has all been within the context of the assumption that it will not conflict with the duty to maintain (or increase) the standard of living in one's own country. And in fact this sense of international duty has been the happy by-product of a situation in which the rich countries are becoming richer and the poor countries becoming poorer. In any conflict of duties, it is natural—and it may be right—to sacrifice the less definite to the more definite.

It is equally clear that the material needs supplied by the state are more definite than those supplied from beyond the state. As Hobbes remarked, after describing the natural liberty of sovereigns (by which he meant their mutual suspicion and anarchy), "because they uphold thereby, the industry of their subjects; there does not follow from it, that misery" which would accompany a corresponding license among individual men.[3] He was writing at the end of the Thirty Years War, when it might seem that the natural liberty of sovereigns had created as much misery for the individual as at any time in international history, yet he was probably right. Power politics do "uphold the industry" of ordinary men. Competition in armaments secures full employment as well as bringing war;[4] tariff barriers protect as well as obstruct. It is widely said that the threat of nuclear war has at last made the state manifestly obsolete, and made international interests obviously superior to national interest. Yet this is far from certain. The clearest international interest is to avoid war. But this is a negative formula. Some have the courage of logic and translate this into a positive statement, saying that the clearest international interest is to have world government. But here far fewer are able to agree. It is not impossible that the majority of men would find themselves worse off under a world government than they find themselves under a number of competing sovereign states. There is no world government in being as an alternative, only a dominant Power with open jaws. In any conflict of interests it is natural, and it may be right, to sacrifice the less definite to the more definite.

Perhaps the prevailing political fallacy of today is the belief that political arrangements do not exact their price, that desired ends can be achieved without moral risk and material sacrifice. If the Western world has in the past few centuries

[3] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, Michael Oakeshott, ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), chapter XIII, p. 83.

[4] [Ed.] The proposition that "competition in armaments secures full employment as well as bringing war" raises questions that Wight examined in greater depth in "On the Abolition of War: Observations on a Memorandum by Walter Millis," in Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 178; and "The Arms Race," in Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), pp. 239–257.

achieved a very high degree of civilization, prosperity and security within a number of sovereign states, the price has been the instability of international society and the frequent wars. It is reasonable to think that the price has become too high for payment of continued instalments, but it is not reasonable to think that you can at the same time continue to enjoy the article itself. The Roman Empire brought substantial benefits, but the cost was the destruction of the Greek and Italian city states and the Hellenistic kingdoms. Enthusiasts for federal union, in Europe or in a wider area, sometimes might remember that states which would consent to federate might not be the admired and vital states whose preservation is the purpose for suggesting federation at all, for their brilliance and vitality were connected with their independence and competition.

This is the crux at the heart of power politics. It underlies the difficulty we have in the use of the word "interest." In a vague way we speak of "the interests of mankind," but in international politics the word interest usually means something more definite and concrete, like maintaining a strategic buffer state or a certain line of communications or access to certain raw materials, something one will go to law over or go to war over. In international politics the prime duty of each government is to preserve the interests of the people it rules and represents against the competing interests of other peoples. A foreign minister is chosen and paid to look after the interests of his own country, and not to be a delegate for the human race. When Burke made his classic statement of the duties of a member of parliament, it was with a diplomatic representative that he contrasted him:

> Parliament is not a *congress* of ambassadors from different and hostile interests; which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but parliament is a *deliberative* assembly of *one* nation, with *one* interest, that of the whole.[5]

Almost every Power is confident that its interests are compatible in a general way with the interests of the community of Powers, but its own interests are its first concern. "Our first duty," said Lord Salisbury, "is towards the people of this country, to maintain their interests and their rights; our second duty is to all humanity."[6]

One way of distinguishing the greatest statesmen might be to say that they are the few who do not, in the stress of foreign policy, altogether lose sight of the second duty.

There are certain things that a Power deems essential to its continued independence. These are its vital interests, upon which it insists before the world, and which it will go to war to defend. It is a vital interest for Britain that the Low Countries should remain independent, for Russia that the states on her Western flank

[5] Edmund Burke, Speech to the Electors of Bristol, November 3, 1774.

[6] Lord Salisbury, speech at the Guildhall banquet, November 9, 1896, quoted in A. L. Kennedy, *Salisbury, 1830–1903: Portrait of a Statesman* (London: John Murray, 1953), p. 275.

should not fall under hostile domination and become an avenue of invasion; the Monroe Doctrine is a statement of the vital interest of the United States.

When Powers have agreed to submit their disputes to arbitration (i.e., settlement by a third party) they have nearly always expressly excluded disputes affecting their vital interests, and a special article was added to the League Covenant to say that it did not prejudice the Monroe Doctrine (Article 21). The Test Ban Treaty of 1963 contained the old doctrine in a new wording: "Each Party shall in exercising its national sovereignty have the right to withdraw from the Treaty if it decides that extraordinary events, related to the subject matter of this Treaty, have jeopardized the supreme interests of its country." (Article IV) A similar clause occurs in the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America of 1967 (Art 30 (1)), and in the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 (Art. X (1)).

Of all interests, vital interests are both the most concrete and limited, parochial, and the least likely to be accommodated to more general interests. A Power's vital interests are what it decides them to be, and not what another Power says them to be. It is no good a satisfied Power (let us say, Philip II's Spain or Baldwin's England or Eisenhower's United States) telling a dissatisfied Power (let us say, Elizabethan England or Nazi Germany or Communist China) that its legitimate interests can be fully secured within the existing arrangement of power, for there will be little possibility of agreement between what the one calls "legitimate" and what the other calls "vital." A wise politician does not try to teach other Powers what their vital interests are, but lets events do it, as Churchill did with the United States between the Battle of France and Pearl Harbour.

A Power's notions of its vital interests will change with changing conditions. In the nineteenth century it was a British vital interest that Russia should not have Constantinople; but in 1915, under the stress of a common war against Germany, Britain conceded Constantinople to Russia, and it was only the repudiation of the Tsarist secret treaties by the Bolsheviks that conveniently invalidated the agreement. Imperial Germany regarded maritime expansion as a vital interest; Nazi Germany regarded this as an illusion and pursued expansion in Ukraine instead. In 1934 it was an Italian vital interest that Austria should not be united with Germany, and when the Nazis murdered Dollfuss in 1934, Mussolini moved four divisions to the Brenner (or rather, to Tarvisio, to guard against Yugoslavia's moving troops into Carinthia, on the strength of Yugoslavia's supposed entente with Germany). In 1938 Mussolini acquiesced in the Anschluss,[7] and received in acknowledgement the telegram from Dollfuss's murderer: "Mussolini, I shall never forget this."[8] Until 1956 it was regarded as a British vital interest that the Suez Canal

[7] [Ed.] The German word *Anschluss* literally means "connection" or "joining." It has become shorthand for Nazi Germany's annexation of Austria in March 1938.

[8] [Ed.] Wight cited this quotation without giving a source in his book *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), p. 96. Sources differ. Richard J. B. Bosworth quoted Hitler's message to Mussolini on

should be an international waterway (i.e., that it should be under predominantly British control); after the failure of the attack on Suez, the ministers who had made the attack declared that the blocking of the Canal without disastrous consequences proved that it was no longer vital.

These are all examples of vital interests being modified under force majeure, and this is what usually happens. Yet examples can be found of Powers voluntarily abandoning a vital interest in the hope of imponderable recompense of goodwill, as when Britain in 1938 surrendered to Ireland the three ports whose possession had been so vital in the anti-submarine campaign of the First World War that they had been retained in British hands in the Irish Treaty of 1921.

But the politicians of a settled and Mature Power, whatever their personal policies or aspirations, usually end up as the agents of national interest. Jefferson the peace-lover sent the United States Navy to the Mediterranean to chastise the Barbary pirates; Jefferson the champion of the strict construction of the Constitution made an astonishingly bold exercise of presidential prerogative to purchase Louisiana. For over ten years Fox had opposed the war with Revolutionary France when he became Foreign Secretary after Pitt's death with a policy of making peace, but he soon declared that it was impossible to treat with Napoleon. Gladstone was the greatest moralist and anti-imperialist of English history, but he occupied Egypt. Lloyd George was the most pacifist member of the Asquith Government,[9] but he it was who broke the peace party in the Cabinet in 1914 by recognising the necessity of supporting France, and who organised the first victory in the First World War. Wilson vacillated for three years "between dread of a German victory and dread of a war to prevent a German victory,"[10] but at last he intervened to prevent Germany from gaining control of the Atlantic. Neville Chamberlain pursued a wilfully personal policy to appease the dictators, but it was he who declared war on Hitler. As Lord Grey of Fallodon wrote, in great affairs there is much more "in the minds of the events (if such an expression may be used) than in the minds of the chief actors."[11]

The idea of vital interests tended, in the course of the nineteenth century, to oust the idea of national honour. In the dynastic age it was more likely that a sovereign would speak of the dignity, honour, and interests of his Crown. The

March 13, 1938 as "Mussolini, I shall never forget this" in *Mussolini* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), p. 268. Churchill, however, cited a transcript from the Nuremberg tribunal documents of a telephone conversation on March 11, 1938 in which Hitler told Prince Philip of Hesse, his envoy to the Italian dictator, "Then please tell Mussolini I will never forget him for this." Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. I, *The Gathering Storm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), p. 269.

[9] [Ed.] The Asquith Government was that headed by H. H. Asquith, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from April 1908 to December 1916.

[10] Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943), p. 32.

[11] Viscount Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-Five Years, 1892–1916* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1925), Vol. I, p. 51.

notion of a state, a Power, having dignity and honour was appropriate when the state was legally indistinguishable from the monarch, and foreign affairs were his personal relations with his fellow sovereigns. In these circumstances it was true to say that if Louis XIV had made a treaty with James II, his honour was involved in its fulfillment.

But the notion of national honour has had a hard battle against the idea of *raison d'état*, that monarchs as representatives of their peoples cannot be expected to observe the same rules of morality that they would as private persons. So at length it became thought that monarchs were the one kind of persons who were not bound by the ordinary rules of honour. When the Prussian Crown Prince wanted to coerce the South German states towards unification during the Franco-Prussian War, Bismarck remarked, "Your Royal Highness, a prince can perhaps act in that way, a gentleman like me cannot."[12] But the same tendency would inevitably circumscribe and dilute the honour of elected governments. With the transition to the democratic or mass state, the sense of honour has tended to become diffused and lost among the anonymous electorate. One of the causes of Britain's reputation as "perfidious Albion" was the resentment with which continental Powers came to learn that her international commitments were subject to the party politics of a parliamentary state. Moreover, honour in itself is an ambiguous word. It can mean allegiance to traditional and lofty standards of conduct. In this sense, the idea was given a new currency by Mr. Churchill, and it is interesting to note that it furnished the ultimate grounds for his condemnation of the Munich Agreement, in one of the most searching passages of his War Memoirs.[13] Again, honour can mean a touchy and imperious pride, and in this sense it easily slips over into an uncompromising assertion of national interest. For militaristic Powers like Germany and Japan before 1945, honour and interest habitually mean the same thing. "Germany was prepared for any concession save one," said Hitler in 1936; "she would never sacrifice her honour, and part of this honour was a people's right to be able to determine and decide upon its own living-space (*Lebensraum*)."[14]

In general, the phrase "national honour" is coming to have an old-fashioned and rhetorical flavor, and in the twentieth century Powers talk more about their freedom and their interests.

[12] A. J. P. Taylor, *Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955), p. 130.

[13] Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, pp. 319–321. Cf. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. V, *Closing the Ring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951), pp. 373–374; and *Triumph and Tragedy*, Vol. VI (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), pp. 639, 642.

[14] Hitler, speech at Munich, March 15, 1936, in Norman H. Baynes, ed. *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, Vol. II (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 1307.

13

Is the Commonwealth a Non-Hobbesian Institution?

The title of this paper has provided some difficulties.* Professor Robinson invited me to speak on "The Commonwealth in the light of the Theory of International Relations." With the confidence we all display in approaching another man's subject, he supposed that there was something called "The Theory of International Relations," and he flattered me by supposing I should know about it. If I begin in this cautious way, it is because students of International Relations are no less divided into warring factions than any of the other autonomous members of the commonwealth of learning, and nothing could be put forward by one student of International Relations as "the theory of International Relations" which would not be greeted by cries of disclaimer from others equally qualified. It is easier to begin with the theory of the Commonwealth.

Commonwealth theory, as it finally crystallised in the formative years between 1926 and 1931, might be summed up in three points. First, the Commonwealth is unique—"it defies classification," in the familiar words,[1] "and bears no real resemblance to any other political organisation which now exists or has ever yet been tried." It is a unicorn among the beasts of the international field. Secondly, it is a model of an international community to the rest of the world. "The British Commonwealth is itself," said Sir Robert Borden in 1920,[2] "a community or league of nations which may serve as an exemplar to that world-wide League of Nations which was founded in Paris … last June." Here was the latest way in which England might remember her precedence of teaching nations how to live.[3] The most

* Martin Wight gave this lecture in 1958 at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London. It was published in *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, vol. XVI, no. 2 (July 1978). Kenneth Robinson, who was then the Director of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, added some references and comments. These are indicated in the notes by the name "Robinson," while the present editor's notes are indicated as "Ed." Martin Wight's own notes have no bracketed indications.

[1] [Robinson.] The "familiar words" may not—twenty years later—be quite as familiar as Wight could safely assume them to be in 1958. They are from the *Report of the Committee on Inter-imperial Relations* (Cmd, 2768, 1926), p. 14. Professor Miller has pointed out that this "crystallisation of Commonwealth theory" was not "final" in the sense that it was still current in the late 1950s. I do not take Wight as meaning "final" in that sense as, I think, is implicit in his statement that "the last thirteen years have given the general argument another emphasis."

[2] *Journal of the Parliaments of the Empire*, vol. I (1920), p. 89.

[3] [Ed.] "Let not England forget her precedence of teaching nations how to live." John Milton, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643).

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recent expression of this view I have chanced on is in Lord Elton's *Imperial Commonwealth* (1945);[4] no doubt more recent examples could be found, though the last thirteen years have given the general argument another emphasis. Thirdly, this uniqueness and exemplariness of the Commonwealth consist in its having squared the circle of freedom and unity, common action, and independence. As Professor Mansergh has said,[5] with Hancock's endorsement, the Commonwealth is a product of the political philosophy of Burke. Christopher Dawson, a writer whom one does not usually think of in this connection, has put it neatly:

> The experience of the British Commonwealth has disproved the Hobbesian doctrine that if political power is not concentrated, society returns to the jungle. It has shown that it is possible to divide sovereignty and yet preserve the bond of peace and the order for civilised community.[6]

The student of International Relations is likely to regard this theory with some degree of reserve or scepticism. He may take up high theoretical ground and say that we have learned only too much reason lately to doubt whether Hobbes is so easily disproved. If we are all realists nowadays, it is because we have all been influenced by the political philosophy of Machiavelli and Hobbes, as it has been refurbished by Professor Carr in this country and Professor Morgenthau in America, pre-eminent among a host of lesser writers[7] and Commonwealth theory looks today like the last tottering stronghold of the liberal optimism of a bygone age. Or he may admit that the Commonwealth is remarkable in the extent to which it has maintained ties of sympathy as against those of interest (to use Bryce's distinction in his essay on "Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces"[8]); that it is certainly a ruminant, not a carnivore, in the international jungle; but he will say that it is not the only one of its kind and that to understand it he must examine it alongside the relations between the Scandinavian countries and the integration of Western Europe, and the Organisation of American States, which all display much the same characteristics. Or he may adopt a posture of political common sense, and assert that the whole of history proves, without a single exception, that the only lasting

[4] "The gift of the British Empire to the future is likely rather to be of the Empire-Commonwealth itself as the pattern, and it may even be the nucleus of some wider organisation yet to be." Lord Elton, *Imperial Commonwealth* (London: Collins, 1945), p. 523.

[5] P. N. S. Mansergh, *The Irish Free State: Its Government and Politics* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1934), p. 270. See W. K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, Vol. I, *Problems of Nationality 1918–1936* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937) p. 18.

[6] Christopher Dawson, *Understanding Europe* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1952) p. 61.

[7] See e.g., E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1939); Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948).

[8] Lord Bryce, *Studies in History and Jurisprudence*, Vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1901), p. 254.

way to unite states is to federate them; that anything less than the federal bond dissolves more or less rapidly, with a progressive ascendency of the centrifugal over the centripetal tendencies; and that the Commonwealth illustrates this inexorable law no less clearly than the League of Nations or the United Nations.[9]

It is somewhere on ground like this that I must take my stand. In order to fortify myself, I thought it might be instructive to see what the principal handbook of the realist theory of international relations says about the Commonwealth. I turned up the Index of Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations*. Towards the end of his report on the Fifth Unofficial British Commonwealth Relations Conference at Lahore,[10] Professor Mansergh remarks that in the first edition of *The Wealth of Nations* the only index reference to Oxford runs, "Oxford: sinecures at;" and adds that were his present report indexed, the only reference to the United States would run, "US: need for restraint upon." Morgenthau's encyclopaedic book repays the debt. The Commonwealth does not appear in the index at all. Under "British Empire" we find "based on prestige; see Great Britain," and under "Great Britain," "decline in power."

When he examines this theory of the Commonwealth, the student of International Relations may be inclined to make two criticisms of it. (i) That it has been disfigured by constant false prediction and inaccurate analysis of Commonwealth relations. (ii) That it has failed adequately to explain what has been, essentially, the progressive disintegration of the British Empire, and the steady assimilation of its internal relationships to the condition of international politics.[11] Let me take these in turn.

The dynamic character of the Commonwealth leads to false prediction, as its indefinite character leads to false description. Every writer on the development of Dominion status has to quote the fallacious estimates of his predecessors as milestones for measuring so swift an evolution. We smile a warm understanding smile when we remember how Mr Asquith told the Imperial Conference in 1911 that the conduct of foreign policy and the issues of peace and war could never be shared; and how Lloyd George told the House of Commons in 1921—nine months before Chanak[12]—that the Foreign Office now had "the shoulders of those young giants"

[9] [Robinson.] British experience in the sixties suggests that federation is no panacea either.

[10] P. N. S. Mansergh, *The Multi-Racial Commonwealth* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1955), p. 139.

[11] [Robinson.] The theme of the assimilation of Commonwealth relations to those of international politics was developed in my "Machinery of Inter-governmental Commonwealth Consultation and Cooperation," in W. B. Hamilton, K. Robinson, and C. D. W. Goodwin, *A Decade of the Commonwealth 1955–64* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1966), pp. 89–123.

[12] [Robinson.] The most recent and comprehensive discussion of the "Chanak Incident," in P. Wigley, *Canada and the Transition to Commonwealth: British-Canadian Relations 1917–1926* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). [Ed.] The Chanak crisis arose in September 1922, when the British government threatened Turkey with a declaration of war by the United Kingdom and its Dominions. London had not fully coordinated this threat with the Commonwealth Prime Ministers. Mackenzie

to help it along with British foreign policy. How little did they foresee the future! We smile, rather more wanly, when we recall that in 1931 it was the golden circle of allegiance to the Crown that bound the Commonwealth together. After the Conference of 1926 in the heyday of exegesis and vaticination, the attempt to define dominion status produced innumerable statements, often predictive in character, seeking to establish the *ne plus ultra* of Commonwealth flexibility. Secession was impossible. Neutrality in war was impossible. War between the members of the Commonwealth was impossible, not only for the technical reason that the King could not declare war on himself but also because such a war was, for Professor Coupland in 1935, "unthinkable."[13] Dictatorship—*videlicet*, a violation of the principles of democracy and individual liberty—in any of the Dominions would lead to the disruption of the Commonwealth and so for Professor Coatman in 1936 it too was "unthinkable."[14] Hancock's *Survey* pokes gentle fun at these enthusiasts and can afford to.[15] The present paper has made me turn again to this literature after ten years in other pursuits, and Hancock stands out like Roman masonry in a London suburb.[16] Hancock and Berriedale Keith. With what a shock of pleasure one finds Keith writing in 1938 that "if no place can be found in a British Commonwealth for republics, then the enduring character of the Commonwealth may well be doubted."[17] It is not as if the shape of things to come was concealed from these writers. One or two things, it is true, no man could be expected to have foreseen in the 1930s: the possibility of carving a viable Moslem state out of an independent India, the pace of constitutional development in the dependent territories in the next twenty years. But most of the evidence—Irish republicanism, Afrikaner nationalism, the resentment of India against South Africa—was before their eyes in 1918. It is interesting to see how much space Coupland, in his inaugural lecture in 1921, gives to what we now call race relations.[18] But in general there was a joint

King, the Canadian Prime Minister, held that the Canadian Parliament would determine Canada's role, thereby asserting Canada's diplomatic independence from the United Kingdom.

[13] Sir Reginald Coupland, *The Empire in These Days* (London: Macmillan, 1935), p. 92.

[14] J. Coatman, *Magna Britannia* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1936), p. 368.

[15] [Robinson.] It is not altogether clear what passage in Hancock's *Survey* Wight had in mind but Sir Keith Hancock has suggested to me that "poking fun" began on page 1 when he remarked that in "the years of emergence from the Great War … Leading statesmen of Great Britain and the Dominions, assembled in conference, looked at their Empire with a fresh awareness and wonder—as if it were an Ethiopian who had changed his skin, or, more surprisingly, a skin which had changed its Ethiopian." W. K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, Vol. I, *Problems of Nationality, 1918–1936* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1937).

[16] [Ed.] Hedley Bull attributed the simile "like Roman masonry in a London suburb" to Martin Wight in his Preface to *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. ix. It was, however, used by R. H. Tawney in his essay, "In Memory of Sidney Webb," *Economica*, New Series, vol. 14, no. 56 (November 1947), p. 249. Wight ascribed the simile to Tawney in his paper "What Is International Relations?", available in Martin Wight, *History and International Relations*, David S. Yost, ed. (London and Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming in 2023.

[17] Arthur Berriedale Keith, *The Dominions as Sovereign States* (London: Macmillan, 1938), p. ix.

[18] Coupland's inaugural lecture, *The Study of the British Commonwealth*, is reprinted in *The Empire in These Days*, pp. 6–31. [Robinson.] To the "colour problem," the "second of the two transcendent political problems of our time," Coupland devoted about two-thirds of his lecture.

will to believe in the easy things and not the difficult. "Ireland," wrote Sir John Marriott in 1938, "is fortunately *sui generis*."[19] It was left to Professor Mansergh to point out, *ex-post facto*, that Ireland was, rather, the precedent for the Commonwealth, apart from its four founder members.[20]

Since 1945, imperial literature has had a more sober note, and indeed the public in this country has had, I would judge, a cooler interest in Commonwealth affairs. Yet the wish to find permanence in every transient point remains. It is so judicious and restrained an observer as Professor Mansergh himself who could write a year later of the 1947 Defence Agreement with Ceylon that "the foundation of Commonwealth cooperation, some part of the obligations each partner incurs, are here set out in a way that may well provide a useful and valuable precedent."[21] That Defence Agreement lasted nine years. "We are really only at the beginning of this new Commonwealth relationship that has sprung up over the last ten years," said Mr Macmillan on his return from his tour last month.[22] But if this new relationship lasts as long as the relationship which emerged in 1919 and was defined in 1926 and 1931, we are already a third of the way through its history; and the pace of change is accelerating.

All this has its parallel, of course, in the literature about the League. Here again one finds the combined assumptions of infancy and maturity: the institution is the heir of the ages, the final product of human wisdom, but if you touch it to see whether it works, you are told that too great a strain must not be put on it at this early stage.

We are accustomed to think of Commonwealth theory, in historical depth, as the ripened fruit of British political thinking. It is not less instructive to think of it, in historical contemporaneity, as the product of a spell of genial weather, an auspicious conjunction of circumstances, which also produced the League of Nations from a more gnarled and ancient tree. There is a fascinating book on British statesmanship to be written, which will trace these two streams of thought and practice, the League and the Commonwealth, as they converge, separate and interact. Lloyd George, Balfour, and Smuts were concerned equally with other institutions. Then the two streams sweep apart, one marked by Lord Cecil, Austen Chamberlain, Sir Arthur Salter, and Churchill; the other by that extraordinary band of men whose successive embodiments were the Kindergarten and the Round Table and the

[19] [Robinson.] Sir John A. R. Marriott published in 1938 *This Realm of England* but I have not found the quotation in it. In his *The British Empire and Commonwealth* (London, 1939) he states that the "status" of Southern Ireland "defies definition," p. 8, and that "Ireland has always been an anomaly in the British Empire," p. 29.

[20] Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Wartime Cooperation and Postwar Change 1939–52* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 292–298.

[21] P. N. S. Mansergh, *The Commonwealth and the Nations: Studies in British Commonwealth Relations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 22.

[22] Macmillan's speech at the Royal Empire Society from which this is taken is in *The Times* of March 14, 1958. See also his retrospective account of his impressions in *Riding the Storm 1956–1959* (London: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 375–414.

Moot and the Cliveden set, with Amery—and, we may add, Sir Keith Hancock—on an intersecting waterway.[23]

The second group had a disastrous influence on British policy. Repeating words of Milner's in a state of affairs far different from that in which that great man had uttered them, they contended that "the maintenance of the strength, the preservation of the unity of the Empire is ... by far the greatest and most practical contribution which British statesmanship can make to the welfare of mankind."[24] The age of imperial soliloquy was over; they sought to confine the age that followed to a Commonwealth colloquy. And when the catastrophe of which they had been the unwitting architects resulted they justified themselves by arguing that at least Britain had been able to lead a united Commonwealth into the war. This argument still needs, I think, more critical examination than it has yet had. At the turning point of history, in the Abyssinian War, the Dominions as a whole were ahead of Britain. And it is noticeable that United Kingdom governments habitually made the Commonwealth unity argument a reason for evading their duty; but when they have been preparing something disgraceful, as the Hoare–Laval Plan or the attack on Suez, they have acted without consultation.[25] If today, however, there is no danger of a repetition of these errors, one reason surely is that the Commonwealth has become more disunited, its mystique is past its zenith, and it no longer commands a priesthood powerful enough to deflect the attention of British governments from the primacy of European security.

The radical vice of writing about the Commonwealth has been emotional commitment. Like the greater part of the writing on International Relations between the Wars, it has been confident instead of prudent, commendatory instead of detached. It has sought to communicate a faith rather than to deepen understanding. Distinguished writers, when they turn their pens upon the Commonwealth, are in danger of misusing and confusing political language in a way which, in an undergraduate's essay, would earn just censure; and they are encouraged by the unclassifiability and indefiniteness of the material. When we read in a book of 1930 that "the present position" of the Imperial Conference "may perhaps be likened to that of the English parliaments of the fourteenth century"[26] are we meant to forget

[23] [Robinson.] For Sir Keith Hancock's brief association with the Round Table group see his *Country and Calling* (London: BBC, 1954), p. 181.

[24] Viscount Milner, "Our Undeveloped Estate," in *Questions of the Hour* (London, 1923), p. 178.

[25] [Robinson.] The fullest account of the genesis of the Hoare–Laval plan is in J. A. Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare: A Political Biography* (London, 1977), chs. 5 and 6. [Ed.] In December 1935, British Foreign Secretary Samuel Hoare and French Prime Minister Pierre Laval proposed a partition of Ethiopia (then known as Abyssinia) to Benito Mussolini, the Italian dictator, as a means of settling the Second Italian-Abyssinian War. When news of the Hoare–Laval plan leaked to the press, it was widely denounced as a betrayal of the Abyssinians. The public outcry forced Hoare and Laval to resign, and some historians hold that the plan undermined the pursuit of collective security via the League of Nations. For an overview of interpretations, see James C. Robertson, "The Hoare–Laval Plan," *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 10, no. 3 (July 1975).

[26] J. A. Williamson, *The Evolution of England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), p. 447.

that in the fourteenth century the Commons first began to control the policy of a central administration already more than 300 years old, by forcing the dismissal of ministers, by withholding supply and by the audit of accounts? Parallels used to be drawn between the Commonwealth and the League of Nations, in which the elaboration of superficial resemblances obscured the contrast that the League, for all its weaknesses, had a constitution in the form of a multilateral treaty of great solemnity, while the Commonwealth, for all its supposed strength, chose to have nothing of the kind. "Discussion," we are told, "is one of the essentials, perhaps the great essential, of democracy. ... By that test, the British Commonwealth of Nations is an international democracy. It relies upon discussion."[27] But is it impertinent to observe that democracy, however you describe it, is by definition a form of government while the Commonwealth, however you describe it, is by definition an association excluding government?

Sometimes the creed of empire is more impressively mysterious when one overhears the prophets communing privately together. "I am a firm believer in the Commonwealth," Smuts wrote to Geoffrey Dawson in January 1940,

> not only for its own sake and that of South Africa, but as the first tentative beginnings of great things for the future of the world. ... Gladstone once said that the Constitution of the USA was the greatest attempt in human government ever made. In the British Commonwealth we see the beginnings of something incomparably greater. The League experiment based on it has for the moment failed.[28]

I find this sentence astonishing. Had Smuts really convinced himself that the League of Nations was *based on* the Commonwealth? And while it was the unity in diversity of the Commonwealth that before the Second World War we were invited to admire, it has since been the diversity in unity. We are now told that diplomatic disunity is as good an evidence of the virtue and effectiveness of the Commonwealth as common policy. In these lofty ranges of thought, the contradictions of political science are transcended: no government becomes the beginnings of the greatest attempt in human government ever made, freedom from commitment constitutes the best guarantee, cooperation thrives on divided purposes, and agreement is perfected in agreement to differ.

Secondly, I suggested that the Commonwealth theory has failed adequately to explain what has been, essentially, the progressive disintegration of the British Empire, and the steady assimilation of its internal relationships to the condition of international politics.

[27] [Ed.] Nicholas Mansergh, *The Commonwealth and the Nations: Studies in British Commonwealth Relations* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1948), p. 26.

[28] The quotation from the letter from Smuts will be found in Sir Evelyn Wrench, *Geoffrey Dawson and our Times* (London: Hutchinson, 1955), p. 407.

"Implicit in the Commonwealth of Nations," Mansergh has written, "is a philosophy of social obligation. Individual right, national right, has its all-important and recognized place. But it has to be balanced and is balanced by a sense of obligation. It is that sense of obligation," he continues, "that somehow or other continues to elude a definition satisfying to all the members of the Commonwealth."[29] Surely because it has been fighting a long losing battle against "individual right, national right." If since 1918 writers about the Commonwealth—I will not say statesmen, who are under stronger compulsions to evade and dilute the truth—but if writers had on the whole taken the view of Sir James Stephen that the centrifugal tendencies[30] were bound to triumph and that in a world crammed with authentic tragedy this was no more than something sad, they would certainly have committed fewer errors and probably suffered fewer disappointments, and would have been agreeably surprised by the resilience with which bonds of sentiment have survived bonds of interest.

One of the constant features of international society, ever since such a thing becomes recognisable around about 1500, has been the existence within it of subsocieties which display on a smaller scale all the characteristics of international society as a whole. Thus the Italian states and the German states used each to form a special community within the general community, each with its own balance of power. In the nineteenth century the South Slav states began to form a similar group; today the Arab states and the Latin Americans do. These microcosms have several features in common. Each has been the *Lebensraum* or sphere of influence of a Great Power—the Holy Roman Empire succeeded by Spain succeeded by Austria, in Italy; Spain succeeded by the United States, in Latin America; the Ottomans succeeded by the British, in the Arab world. And perhaps because of this tutelage the rudimentary social bond uniting the sub-group has been stronger than that uniting international society as a whole. It has in due course led individuals to transfer their loyalties from the separate states to the sub-group as a whole, and a national unification has resulted. This was successfully carried through by Italy and Germany; has been partially fulfilled by the South Slavs where the federation of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria remains unachieved; is occurring at the present moment in the Arab world; and in the case of Hispanic America is a matter of the speculative and distant future.

[29] Mansergh, *The Commonwealth and the Nations*, p. 25.

[30]

> It is evidently possible, I think it is probable, that the day will come when our Canadian and our native dependencies will calmly and deliberately insist on being dependencies no longer. … And when that demand shall be so made, is there a man among us who would discharge, I do not say a single cannon, but so much as a single lucifer-match, to resist it?
>
> Sir James Stephen, *Colonisation as a Branch of Social Economy* (1858), reprinted in Paul Knaplund, *James Stephen and the British Colonial System, 1813–1847* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953), p. 286.

How far does the Commonwealth resemble this pattern? The similarities are obvious. The Commonwealth too emerged in the former *Lebensraum* of a Great Power. It, too, has a private sense of community. By prodigies of legislation it has even brought into existence a system of reciprocal citizenship similar to that which the Latin Americans have apparently enjoyed in practice, without any legislation, for the past 100 years.[31] But the differences are equally striking. The First British Empire *had* illustrated the pattern in a way. Thirteen states had shaken themselves free from Britain in North America, and then united and continued to multiply themselves forming a federated sub-society. The British were permanently disenchanted by this experience, and henceforth had the general purpose whatever they ruled (except in Ireland) of ultimate abdication. In the second place the peoples of the Empire were so diverse that even if there had been the purpose and the power to maintain common rule over them, they would probably not have developed a common national feeling. In the third place the Empire had the fatal weakness of geographical discontinuity. It was only the unique and transient circumstances of British naval supremacy in the nineteenth century that could hide the fundamental truth that in politics, if not in commerce and culture, the ocean divides.

The student of international politics, therefore, when he considers the Commonwealth, may tend to single out for attention those matters which the Commonwealth enthusiasts chew over rather dolefully and then pushes out to the side of his plate, as unedifying bone and gristle, while he gets on with his potatoes and gravy. He will point to the steady march of decentralisation, in policy, in defence, in economics, as illustrating the general laws of parochial self-interest which operate in international politics. He will observe that the last occasion on which the centrifugal tendency was checked for a moment was when on December 5, 1921, the British Government threatened immediate and terrible war against the [Irish] Free State. And he will remark this as the most poignant evidence that while effective unity in the Commonwealth might have changed the course of history, it could only have been purchased at a price which Ireland and India at least would have called servitude.

A fashionable academic doctrine in International Relations today is that of the National Interest as a corrective to the legalism and moralism which flourished in the age of the Covenant and the Kellogg Pact and are still not dead in the age of Eisenhower and Dulles. Sovereign states, it is contended, when their policy is healthy are guided, and at all times ought to be guided, by considerations of the national interest. There has of course been much controversy about a conception so undefined and running so easily to tautology, but it need not bother us now. For the history of the Commonwealth has illustrated the working of the national interest in the simplest and most straightforward way. If the British Empire is the first in history which has not developed a common citizenship for all its peoples

[31] [Robinson.] Wight was first employed at Chatham House on a survey of South America.

throughout its whole extent, it is because it accepted at the very outset the principle that every member state should enjoy complete control of the composition of its own population.[32]

It was the same principle to which the Canadian government appealed when in September 1922, to the discomfiture of Lloyd George, it refused to share in joint control of imperial foreign policy or to admit responsibility for anything but Canadian national interest, as defined by the Canadian Parliament. The same principle is seen at work in the declaration of war. Let me put it in percentages. In 1899 and 1914, 100 per cent of Commonwealth membership was committed to war by the United Kingdom's declaration. In 1939 this category was reduced to 50 per cent; 33 per cent preferred to declare war on their own authority; 17 per cent remained neutral. In 1950 the first category had disappeared altogether except for the UK itself; 50 per cent entered the war by their own motion; the neutrals had risen to 37 per cent. It would be unfair to cite November 1956 as completing the demonstration.[33]

Again, those who quote Burke's phrase about "ties which, though light as air, are as strong as links of iron," sometimes forget the preceding sentence. "My hold of the colonies is in the close affection which grows from common names, from kindred blood, from similar privileges, and *equal protection*."[34] Until 1939 it was still possible to believe that the Commonwealth, which in this case still meant primarily the UK, could provide equal protection for its members. Canada to be sure was in the special position of being unprotectable, were protection needed, against the United States, and this of course inspired her initiative in asserting national control of foreign policy. At the end of 1941, when the Pax Britannica in the East was in ruins, the inability of the Commonwealth to provide equal protection was manifest. It was very nearly the situation Hobbes described: "when … the forces of the commonwealth keeping the field no longer, there is no further protection of subjects in their loyalty; then is the commonwealth DISSOLVED, and every man at liberty to protect himself by such courses as his own discretion shall suggest unto him."[35] Thus Mr Curtin's broadcast of December 27: "I make it clear that Australia

[32] [Robinson.] I am not altogether clear what Wight had in mind in his argument that the British Empire accepted "at the very outset" that every member state should enjoy the complete control of the composition of its own population. The combination of the terms "British Empire" and "member state" is by no means clear, but perhaps he was thinking of the debates at successive Imperial Conferences on the discriminatory legislation excluding Indian immigrants in certain Commonwealth countries.

[33] [Ed.] It is not clear exactly how Wight calculated these percentages. For example, in 1950, when the North Korean invasion of South Korea began the Korean War, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa joined the United Kingdom (and the United States and other countries) under the authority of the United Nations in fighting against North Korea and its Soviet and Chinese allies, while India provided medical support to the United Nations coalition. In the November 1956 Suez Crisis, the United Kingdom had no Commonwealth partners.

[34] Burke's Speech on Conciliation with America in *Works*, Vol. 11 (World's Classics edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1915), p. 234; italics added.

[35] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Michael Oakeshott, ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), ch. 29, p. 218.

looks to America free from any pangs about our traditional links of kinship to Britain."[36]

You will remember that this was, in a sense, the position Lionel Curtis foresaw at the climax of the argument of *Civitas Dei*. Seeing that the inexorable loosening of Commonwealth ties told against his belief in federation, he suggested that the beginning of a true Commonwealth—in which common concern would be expressed through a common government and would gradually preponderate over national interest—would be the federation of the insular communities at either end of the existing Commonwealth—Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. These were also the most unmixedly British of the Commonwealth nations. Once these poles had been firmly erected he hoped that intermediate countries, India and Egypt, would fill in the intervening gaps. He argued that geographical remoteness was not an insuperable difficulty in modern terms.[37] Indeed it was not primarily a case of *Natura obstat*. National pride, national interest *obstat*. Such a proposal has no appeal to young countries rejoicing in their strength and a rich future of individual development. It would be pleasant to speculate how a federation such as Curtis proposed, if it had been formed in 1934, let us say, would have fared seven years later. But without it the influence of geography had no counteracting factor and the Pacific Dominions gravitated inevitably towards the stronger mass of the US. The [1951] ANZUS Treaty has only formalised the fundamental relationship laid bare in 1941–42.[38]

Take, as a third example, the matter of territorial frontiers. It is almost a rule that common territorial frontiers are disputed frontiers. A territorial neighbour is normally an enemy, and alliance is sought with the power in his rear. This is the "sandwich" principle of international politics, formulated by Sir Lewis Namier.[39] There are three exceptions to this rule. One is when the common frontier partitions a submerged people whose restlessness will cement the neighbours: the classic example is the remarkably stable Russo-Prussian frontier across partitioned Poland. The second is when two Powers maintain a buffer state between them.[40]

[36] As printed in Mansergh, *Documents and Speeches on British Commonwealth Affairs 1931–1952* (London, 1953), Vol. I, p. 550, this appeared in an article in the *Melbourne Herald*, December 28, 1941. Sir Winston Churchill quoted it as "a signed article" appearing on December 27 in *The Second World War*, Vol. IV, *The Hinge of Fate,* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin), pp. 7–8. [Robinson.] Professor Miller tells me it was actually a New Year message from the Australian Prime Minister. [Ed.] The wording of Curtin's statement differs slightly in the Houghton Mifflin edition: "I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links with the United Kingdom."

[37] [Ed.] Lionel Curtis, *Civitas Dei: The Commonwealth of God* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1938), pp. 932–939.

[38] Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.

[39] Sir Lewis Namier, "Basic Factors in Nineteenth Century History," in *Vanished Supremacies* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1958), p. 171.

[40] [Ed.] Wight discussed buffer states in international history (including Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Switzerland) in his book *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), pp. 160–167, 202.

The third is when the territorial neighbours have indefinite room for expansion in a different direction so that pressure is diverted from the common frontier: the classic example is the frontier between the United States and British North America.

The Commonwealth has eight territorial frontiers, six with the external world and two internal. The most remarkable of these in its freedom from dispute is the external frontier between Canada and the United States. The frontier of Ghana is enlivened, so far as I know, only by the desire of the Ewes to be united with their brethren in French Togoland. The Indian-Burmese frontier is uncontentious, mainly because of Burma's internal disorder and preoccupation with her Chinese border, perhaps also because of India's embarrassments with the Nagas. Pakistan's north-west frontier is a normal disputed Middle Eastern frontier by reason of Afghanistan's Pushtunistan claims. India's frontier with China is Delhi's principal strategic headache, kept from acuteness by the existence of Nepal and the surprising tenacity of Tibet as buffers.[41] The frontiers between the Irish Republic and the Six Counties is one of the reasons that took Ireland out of the Commonwealth, and the chief that keeps her out.

There remain the two frontiers within the Commonwealth. The first is that between the Union of South Africa and the British territories to the north, which means, of course, for three-quarters of its length, with the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland. For the student of international politics the problem of the High Commission Territories is simply a complicated kind of territorial dispute, and it is a useful touchstone for distinguishing the characteristics of such a dispute when it is intra-Commonwealth and not international. Formally, of course, it is a matter of giving effect to an imperial statute. Practically, the dispute is carried on in a subdued voice, which is a great thing in all diplomacy. But its moral significance is made more portentous by the Commonwealth relationship, and it is difficult to see how the Commonwealth relationship touches the essential conflict of interest. I would guess that if South African pressure on the protectorates is moderated or reduced to accepting a compromise, this will be due more to avoidance of international disadvantages than to the loyalty to the Commonwealth of any foreseeable South African Government.

The remaining frontier, of course, is the Indo-Pakistani. If you have crossed this frontier, as I did at Wagah on the road between Amritsar and Lahore with a party of Canadians in March 1954, dismounting and carrying our luggage on foot through a double line of military checks on either side with an uncomfortable stretch of no-man's land in between where we wondered whether so rare and suspicious a piece of traffic was not just the stuff that frontier incidents are made of, you will think that no international frontier could give a more vivid illustration of that "posture of

[41] [Robinson.] It seems fair to conclude that Wight might not have found the Chinese conquest of Tibet "surprising."

gladiators" which Hobbes described as the natural condition of sovereigns.[42] It is not the internal Commonwealth frontiers which a political scientist studying these several examples would find needs a separate category and a special explanation but that between Canada and the United States.

In fact, the development of the Empire and Commonwealth since 1939 has shown a double trend towards standardisation. The non-self-governing territories have undergone a process of standardisation imposed by the Colonial Office; among its victims have been the Rajah Muda of Sarawak and the Kabaka of Buganda. The process is designed to speed their movement into the self-governing class where the trend towards a standardised independence is seen. When the Free State registered the Irish Treaty with the Secretary of the League of Nations, it was in order to assert that Commonwealth relations possessed the character of international relations. When the UN resounds with the complaints of India against South Africa and appoints a mediator for the Kashmir dispute, the contention can be seen to have won. When Chatham House launched the annual *Survey of International Affairs* in 1925 it withheld Commonwealth relations, in accordance with the *inter se* doctrine, for treatment in a separate *Survey* which in due course Hancock wrote. Since 1945 the distinction has been pedantic and unreal. Mr Calvocoressi rebelled against it and Professor Barraclough, I understand, has now repudiated it altogether.[43]

The important distinction between kinds of international relationships is that between relationships which are of concern to other Powers because they upset general tranquility, and those which are of such a habitually peaceable nature that they interest nobody but the parties themselves. And this is not the distinction between international and intra-Commonwealth relations. There are intra-Commonwealth disputes which threaten the peace of the world. And while the relations between the older members of the Commonwealth happily fall into the second class, so do the relationships between the countries of Scandinavia and the Pan-American Union.

Indeed, I ask whether there is any assertion one can make about the relations of Commonwealth countries inter se which will not be equally true of the relations between some Commonwealth countries and some countries outside the Commonwealth. If it is the erosion of sovereignty through joint consultation on economic and military policies, there are the extraordinary complex arrangements

[42] [Ed.] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 13, p. 83.

[43] [Robinson.] Peter Calvocoressi may have rebelled against the Chatham House distinction between international affairs and relations between Commonwealth countries, but all I have been able to find on this point in those volumes of the *Survey of International Affairs* written by Mr. Calvocoressi is the statement in the preface to the *Survey* for 1949–50 (London: Oxford University Press, 1953) that "once more the domestic affairs of the British Commonwealth and Middle Eastern affairs are excluded. The former omission is a permanent feature of this series." In the preface to the first of the volumes edited by Geoffrey Barraclough (*Survey*, 1956–58), there is a brief statement to the effect that recent developments have made it necessary to deal with Commonwealth relations in the *Survey*.

of OEEC and NATO to which Professor Beloff directed our attention and his own in his inaugural lecture.[44] If it is reciprocal citizenship, does not Ireland enjoy it? If it is a common language, common culture, common values, the Common Law, all this is true *a fortiori* of the relations of Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand with the United States.

The United States is the great refutation of all exclusive and introverted theorizing about the Commonwealth. Its existence has been the unacknowledged major premise of all Commonwealth theory, since but for the United States the Commonwealth might not have survived the First World War and certainly would not have survived the Second.[45] For this reason I find our relations with the United States philosophically prior to any Commonwealth relations; they are more extraordinary and pose more profound and interesting questions about the nature of politics. And they are also, of course, historically prior: they show that the errors of Lord North have had as happy an issue, in the designs of providence, as the wisdom of Lord Durham.[46]

At the end of the last Unofficial British Commonwealth Relations Conference at Lahore there was an interesting discussion on the essentials of Commonwealth unity in which Gaitskell played a leading role.[47] Three hypothetical situations were adumbrated which it was suggested would be incompatible with Commonwealth membership (and what was implied was some kind of expulsion since secession is always open to the individual member). (i) If one member went to war with another member. (ii) If a member joined a hostile bloc—if India had joined China and Russia in the Korean War, for example. (iii) If a member abandoned democratic government, which in the case of Communism would approximate to (ii). However, the supply of arguments for flexibility in the Commonwealth is now so

[44] Max Beloff, *The Tasks of Government* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 20. [Ed.] The OEEC, the Organization for European Economic Cooperation, was established in 1948 to support the implementation of the US Marshall Plan for Europe's economic recovery. In 1961 the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development superseded the OEEC.

[45] [Ed.] Churchill underscored the decisive importance of the United States for the survival of Britain and the Commonwealth in his reaction to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941:

> No American will think it wrong of me if I proclaim that to have the United States at our side was to me the greatest joy. … England would live; Britain would live; the Commonwealth of Nations and the Empire would live. … We should not be wiped out. Our history would not come to an end.
>
> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. 3, *The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), pp. 606–607.

[46] [Ed.] Lord North was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during most of the American War of Independence (1775–83). Lord Durham is perhaps best known for his *Report on the Affairs of British North America* (1839). The report's recommendations concerning self-government influenced British policies concerning Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and other colonies.

[47] [Ed.] Hugh Gaitskell (1906–63) served as the leader of the British Labour Party in 1955–63. The Unofficial British Commonwealth Relations Conference convened at Lahore in 1954 was the fifth in a series of six such conferences. For background, see W. David McIntyre, "The Unofficial Commonwealth Relations Conferences, 1933–59: Precursors of the Tri-sector Commonwealth," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 36, no. 4 (2008), pp. 591–614.

copious and varied that I wonder whether any of these cases would fall outside them. If there were war within the Commonwealth there would be even greater reluctance and difficulty than there usually is in determining which side was the aggressor, and every reason for keeping the disputants within the family, so as to contribute what Mr Nehru calls its "touch of healing" when the fighting was over. If a Commonwealth country joined a hostile bloc, the familiar argument of diplomatic bridge-building would have redoubled force.[48]

And it seems to me that if a Commonwealth country by parliamentary process went Communist, it might be taken as only a more extreme example of the kind of advantage of having the Prime Ministers of South Africa and Ghana sitting at the same conference. I am reminded, to digress, of a story Radhakrishnan told when he was last in Oxford.[49] When Radhakrishnan visited Peking he was received by Mao who enquired with special interest why India had chosen to remain in the Commonwealth. Radhakrishnan exerted all his intellectual powers to explain this subtle point in a way that might make it intelligible to the Marxist mind. When he had finished Mao beamed through his spectacles, and touching his guest's sleeve gently, said, "Yes, I *quite* understand your reasons, and I hope India will *stay* in the Commonwealth." "Whereupon" said Radhakrishnan, "I began to feel uncomfortable, and to wonder whether it wasn't perhaps the wiser course for India to leave the Commonwealth …."

It was a frequent theme in the nineteenth century to compare the British Empire with the Roman Empire. Macaulay used it, and so did Seeley; Bryce wrote an essay on it; as late as the First World War Sir Charles Lucas published a book called *Greater Rome and Greater Britain*.[50] The comparison might lead to another, between the two successors: the Commonwealth and the Holy Roman Empire. Each was the construction of a master-race, extending a mainly benevolent protection to many different peoples. Each went through a long chain of transformations. "It was a series of things," says Barraclough of the mediaeval empire, "different at different times, and most of the salient changes are implicit in its changes of title."[51]

[48] [Robinson.] When in 1970 there was open war between India and Pakistan, recognition of the resulting state of Bangladesh by several Commonwealth members "led the truncated state of Pakistan to withdraw from the Commonwealth." Miller concludes, "This crisis does not seem to have been regarded as a major Commonwealth issue by other members, who viewed it as either a domestic affair of the sub-continent, or as an occasion for Great-Power rivalry." J. D. B. Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Expansion and Attrition, 1953–1969* (London and New York: Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1974), pp. 61–62.

[49] [Ed.] Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975), a distinguished scholar of comparative religion and philosophy, was serving as the first Vice President of India (1952–62) when Wight gave this lecture in 1958.

[50] Bryce's essay, "The Ancient Roman Empire and the British Empire in India," is Essay I in *Studies in History and Jurisprudence*, vol. I. Sir Charles Lucas's *Greater Rome and Greater Britain* was published by the Clarendon Press in 1912.

[51] Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Mediaeval Empire: Idea and Reality* (London: Historical Association, 1950), p. 7.

Each, as its political disintegration proceeded, engendered a great body of political and legal theory, partly noble, partly fantastic. Smuts' rhapsodies about the Commonwealth are a kind of analogue of the doctrine of the Emperor's *imperium mundi*, elaborated in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when the Empire, as an effective organisation, was collapsing. Each had an extraordinary capacity to evoke loyalty long after the power to command it had vanished: as late as the eighteenth century the father of Frederick the Great assumed, as the first principle of his policy, that he must not act in opposition to his Kaiser. The Empire was one of the embodiments in Europe before the French Revolution of the ideal of human unity; and perhaps the lasting significance of the Commonwealth will be in the sphere where it is politically weakest, in the leveling out of different civilisations and cultures and the affirmation of the unity of mankind. It would be no ignoble destiny to be one of the mediators of this ideal to some Power with the ability and will to make it effective.

14

Suggestions for a Projected Study of International Security Organisation

It must be supposed that the theme of such a study, undertaken in the next three years, will be a comparison between the nascent United Nations Organisation and the League.* Its main line of enquiry would be, Why did the League fail and how far does the United Nations Charter avoid the causes of that failure? Perhaps it will emerge, however, that the question ought to be put the other way round: What defects of the Covenant is the United Nations Charter designed to circumvent, and were these really the defects that brought about the failure of the League?

The weight of the enquiry, therefore, falls on the failure of the League.

There is an immense literature about the genesis, drafting and nature of the Covenant. (Query: how much do we yet know, in comparison, about the genesis and drafting of the Charter?) The heyday of the League, up to about 1929, has also been fully treated. This period was chiefly concerned with theoretical constructions to meet crises that had not yet occurred, such as the Geneva Protocol and the General Act. The period after 1929, when the crises became actual and the League broke down under their strain, has been less closely studied. It is significant that the last important book on the League published in this country was Zimmern's *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law*, completed at the opening of the Abyssinian War.[1]

It is suggested that the central question of the study should be the relation between the ambiguities or defects of the Covenant and the failure of the League in practice. And this, seen from another point of view, means a study of the working of the League against the background of the political forces that wrecked it. As Mr. F. P. Walters has observed, "It is a weakness in much of the discussion on the history of the League, that writers fail to distinguish between the consequences which flowed from the text of the Covenant and those which flowed from particular political decisions, e.g., the defection of the United States." (*International Affairs*, April 1945, p. 143).[2]

* Wight prepared this paper for the meeting on December 19, 1945 of the Publications Committee of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, and it was found in the library of Chatham House.

[1] [Ed.] Sir Alfred Zimmern, *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, 1918–1935* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1936). The Abyssinian War began in October 1935.

[2] [Ed.] F. P. Walters, "Dumbarton Oaks and the League: Some Points of Comparison," *International Affairs*, vol. 21, no. 2 (April 1945), p. 143.

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It would be necessary to try to assess the relative importance of the following factors in the development and failure of the League (no doubt others too would appear):

1. The balance of power which conditioned its existence: the prostration of Germany, the isolation of America and Russia, the interests of the smaller powers.
2. The differences in interest, and consequently in Gevenan theory, between the League Great Powers themselves. For example, how far was there a continuous development, observable at, and influencing, Geneva, from Signor Scialoja's proposals to the League of Nations Committee of the Peace Conference in 1919 up to Italy's withdrawal from the League in 1937?[3] Again, how far was the Soviet theory of the League as a "thieves' Kitchen" traceable in Russia's policy at Geneva after 1934? (In this connexion the epilogue to the League's history, when the Powers which had expelled neither Japan nor Germany nor Italy, hastened to expel Russia in December 1939, deserves study). On a wider plane, the growth, influence and justice of the whole controversy about revision—Peaceful Change (later "appeasement") vs. Collective Security—would need examination.
3. The differences in aim and interpretation within the bosom of the democratic League Powers; of which the most important manifestation was the Anglo-French controversy about disarmament and security, but more subtle aspects of which are pointed out in Mr. Vickers' paper.[4]
4. The growth or perversion in practice of the original design of the League. For example, the failure of the Council as a standing conference of Great Powers, through its being swamped by temporary members.

Most of these factors have their bearing on the United Nations Charter. It seems unlikely that either disarmament or revision will be subjects of international controversy in the foreseeable future. There will perhaps be fewer differences and illusions among the Western peoples about the aims and prospects of the new organisation than there was about the old. But the controversy over the security provisions of the Charter shows differences between the Great Powers not less deep than those between the Great Powers of the League, and the inclusiveness of the United Nations must be weighed as an asset against the tenuity of their common platform. The Charter, like the Covenant, must be analysed in relation to the balance of power from which it springs.

[3] [Ed.] Vittorio Scialoja (1856–1933) participated as a member of the Italian delegation in the drafting of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

[4] [Ed.] It is not clear what paper Wight had in mind. It might have been Geoffrey Vickers, *Purpose and Force—The Bases of Order*, in *World Order Papers*, Series 1 (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1940).

A difficulty about studying the League lies in the material. Professor Woodward's *British Documents* will not of course be available yet, still less the archives of other governments. The Official Records of the League are only what might be called "surface material." But the League itself was only a surface phenomenon—as Zimmern has said, "not a seat of government but merely a centre of influence." Both the subject and material will tend to make a realistic study of the League a study of opinion more than of policy. Public opinion in the Western countries, therefore, would perhaps be an important subsidiary avenue of enquiry.

15
From the League to the UN

"Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"*
"To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."
"The dog did nothing in the night-time."
"That was the curious incident," remarked Sherlock Holmes.[1]

The curious incident of the League of Nations in September 1939 has generally escaped notice. There had been three years of international rivalry with the Great Powers divided into two groups—the League Powers and the Axis Powers. But when at last, to defend a small state against aggression, the two senior League Powers were compelled to declare war on the senior Axis Power, they ignored the possibility of doing it through the League of Nations.

The reasons for this neglect are very familiar. The League was thoroughly discredited by the previous policy of Britain and France. Time and again now one and now the other had prevented the League's machinery from being used against an aggressor. At the greatest of these tests, when Italy was conquering Abyssinia, they had joined their efforts to sabotage the application of sanctions under the League Covenant.

Their policy of compounding with aggressors culminated at Munich, which decisively alienated Russia, their fellow Great Power in the League. After Munich Russia virtually left the League and made her own terms with Germany. Britain and France would therefore have looked extremely silly if they had mobilised the League in order to denounce German aggression against Poland in September 1939. It is extremely unlikely that the possibility of using the League in this way occurred to the Chamberlain and Daladier Governments.

In the retrospect of seven years the position looks a little different. By September 1939 Britain and France already looked extremely silly. They had abandoned a policy of principle for a policy of expediency, and this policy of expediency had contemptibly failed. But political principle is not a kind of virginity, once abandoned never regained. Great states may be exempt, like animals and imbeciles,

* Wight appears to have composed this previously unpublished essay in late September 1946. He refers in the essay to "the retrospect of seven years" after September 1939; and to "15 months after the San Francisco Conference," which ended on June 26, 1945.

[1] [Ed.] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "Silver Blaze," *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1903), p. 22.

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from the obligations of repentance and confession, but they are not precluded from amendment of life. If Britain and France had based their resistance to Germany on the principles of the Covenant they would not have gained immediate credit from a generation whom their previous policy had educated in cynicism. They would probably not have gained the immediate support of the smaller League Powers. But in the long run they would have put the European resistance to Hitler upon a different and a higher footing.

It is insufficiently recognized that the resistance to Hitler was morally and legally identical with the resistance to the previous attempts to dominate Europe, from imperial Germany back to Counter-Reformation Spain. Because Hitler was so evil it seemed that his opponents were peculiarly noble. The attempt to crush a nihilist revolt against the Western tradition seemed to need no adventitious justification.

Thus it was forgotten that with the creation of the League of Nations an attempt had been made to advance to a new code of international principles, and that the rise of Hitler had been part of the same process as the portrayal of that attempt, and had been assisted by it. But in fact the resistance to Hitler was the last inglorious movement of the traditional mechanism of the balance of power. None of Hitler's opponents went to war with him for a moral or juridical principle; all of them acted in desperation and self-defence; Britain and France when they saw that their betrayal of Czechoslovakia had failed of its purpose, and all the other Powers when they were individually attacked. They all without exception acted not on the moral principle of collective security, but according to the *sauve-qui-peut* of international anarchy.

Nevertheless the League idea, having been expelled in its original form, kept on creeping back. National self-defence against aggression was not enough. The idea persisted that the Allied Powers were a collective body with standards and aims that distinguished them from the Axis. The two inter-allied conferences at St. James's Palace in 1941 were the ghost of the League. The first passed a resolution that "the only true basis of enduring peace is the willing cooperation of free peoples."[2] The second, at which Russia was represented, having now been drawn into the war, declared its "adherence to the common principles of policy set forth in" the Atlantic Charter.[3] On January 1, 1942, there was a joint

[2] [Ed.] The Declaration of St. James' Palace, June 12, 1941, may be found at http://www.un.org/en/sections/history-united-nations-charter/1941-declaration-st-james-palace/index.html

[3] [Ed.] The resolution at St. James' Palace, September 24, 1941, may be found at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/at17.asp. The Atlantic Charter was a declaration by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and US President Franklin D. Roosevelt on August 14, 1941, may be found at http://www.un.org/en/sections/history-united-nations-charter/1941-atlantic-charter/index.html

declaration by the United Nations in the same sense at Washington.[4] But the inter-allied conference was destroyed and superseded by Great Power agreements just as the League had been. In May 1942 Britain and Russia signed the Treaty of Alliance which henceforward was the diplomatic linch-pin of the anti-German coalition.[5]

Here was another turning point. If Britain had invited Russia to join a multilateral pact of mutual assistance, as one among the company of the United Nations, the wheels of the Soviet omnibus might conceivably have been given a twist towards the road of international cooperation. But multilateral pacts involving small states are tiresome things; bilateral pacts of Great Powers are realistic; and the inter-allied conferences accordingly faded out as the Big Three took the stage.[6]

There was thus no thread of moral or juridical continuity from the signing of the Covenant of the League of Nations after the first victory over Germany to the second victory over Germany. In due course the Charter of the United Nations was produced, a compromise between the necessities of Great Power politics on the one hand and the desire of Western public opinions and of small states for a true international system on the other hand. The Charter dressed up the naked rule of the Big Three in rags torn from the dead body of the League, but 15 months after the San Francisco Conference scarcely the most starry-eyed internationalist believes any longer that the rags add up to a suit of clothes. Under the UN there is no promise of justice for anybody, the Small Powers have fewer rights than they had under the League; the Great Powers on the other hand accept fewer restraints than they did under the League, and retain an unqualified right to go to war whenever they please. "The UN does not embark on a new experiment. It merely does away with the League of Nations experiment."[7]

Our retrogression has been so rapid and has gone so far that it is still difficult to take the measure of it. There are still those who do not want to face it and who talk of the UN being an advance upon the League.

If we believe that international organization is both desirable and possible—if we are not determinists about the matter—we can measure the extent of our retrogression by asking whether we would regard it as an advance if the Council of Foreign Ministers announced that they had come to the conclusion that

[4] [Ed.] The Declaration of the United Nations on January 1, 1942, was made by representatives of the twenty-six countries at war with "members of the Tripartite Pact [Germany, Italy, and Japan] and its adherents." Each of these countries pledged to uphold the "purposes and principles" of the Atlantic Charter and "not to make a separate armistice or peace with the enemies." This was the first official use of the term "United Nations" and it may be found at http://www.un.org/en/sections/history-united-nations-charter/1942-declaration-united-nations/index.html

[5] [Ed.] Twenty-Year Mutual Assistance Agreement Between the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, May 26, 1942, may be found at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/brsov42.asp

[6] Cf. William C. Bullitt, *The Great Globe Itself: A Preface to World Affairs* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), p. 193.

[7] [Ed.] Wight did not indicate the source of this quotation.

the UN Charter was inadequate and recommended the re-adoption of the League Covenant. If international confidence were such that they added that they felt there was need for a reaffirmation of that generally despised instrument, the Kellogg Pact for the Renunciation of War as an Instrument of Policy, there would be excited enthusiasm throughout the world.

16
The United Nations Assembly

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

An international assembly which has no single purpose like a peace conference, but discusses everything and nothing, forces the observer to be selective.*,[1] Indeed, it is not until you go to one that you realise how little of what is going on you can follow. Once the Assembly at New York had split up into its six committees, and these in due course had produced their sub-committees and there were, in addition, three joint committees, and there was also the knockabout travelogue of the headquarters committee, the newspaper correspondents trudged the corridors of the Sperry Gyroscope Plant at Lake Success with the consciousness that nine-tenths of this peace-building activity must be for them neglected and unsung.

To give two examples. I was unable to follow the long battle that Mrs. Roosevelt waged against the Soviet bloc over the International Refugee Organisation. I was doubly sorry about this, because it illustrated many of the differences between the Soviet bloc and the West and also because, if I had had a quite private and personal Order of Merit to bestow at the Assembly, it is upon Mrs. Roosevelt that it would have been conferred. I was unable, again, to follow the parallel battle which Mr. La Guardia fought against the American and British Governments about the continuation of UNRRA;[2] and this, too, was a deprivation, because it illustrated the limits of the Anglo-Saxon internationalism, and, moreover, a committee which contains Mr. La Guardia is, for excitement and interest, able to compete on equal terms with a committee containing as many of the world's diplomats as you please to choose.

* Martin Wight presented this address at the Royal Institute of International Affairs on March 6, 1947, Sir Ivison Macadam, then Director-General of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA), in the Chair.

[1] The material in this chapter has been reproduced with the permission of Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

[2] [Ed.] Founded in 1943 at the suggestion of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) consisted of forty-four countries that brought relief to victims of the Second World War. It was called a "UN" organization because this was the term used since 1942 to describe the Allies fighting against the Axis Powers. After the establishment of the UN based on the UN Charter in 1945, a number of UNRRA functions were transferred to specialized agencies of the UN. Fiorello La Guardia, a former mayor of New York, was director-general of the UNRRA from April to December 1946; and he resisted the US and British decisions to withdraw from the UNRRA and support other organizations. For background, see Jessica Reinisch, "Internationalism in Relief: The Birth (and Death) of UNRRA," *Past & Present*, vol. 210, no. 6 (2011), pp. 258–289.

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It was, of course, the Political and Security Committee and the Trusteeship Committee which had the greatest news value and were most crowded by the public and the Press. All I can try to do this evening is to give you some impression of the forces which I discerned there, to put them perhaps in a historical perspective, and to give you a quite personal and subjective impression of the atmosphere of the Assembly.

I want to talk about three conflicts of interest which are mirrored in the United Nations. The first is the conflict between the Western imperial Powers and the new ex-colonial nations, chiefly of Eastern Asia. The second conflict is the conflict between Great Powers and Small Powers. Thirdly, there is the conflict between the Soviet bloc and the West. These all interpenetrate and influence one another, but each of them would exist without the others. The first two are at present governed by the third—the Soviet-Western clash; but they are quite independent of it in origin and may surpass it in potential importance.

This ex-colonial nationalism first of all is the contemporary expression of the general reaction of non-Western peoples against the West. After the First World War, you will remember, the main non-European trouble spot was the Near and Middle East, as a result of the break-up of the Ottoman Empire. At New York in 1945 it was striking how quiescent or perhaps mature the Middle Eastern countries have now become; their only activity was the drearier kind of Assembly intrigue, log-rolling and jockeying for committee posts. The storm-centre now has shifted right away to the East, to the further end of the Old World, as a result of the debilitation of the British, French, and Netherlands Empires, which have barely survived, at the price of being transformed out of recognition, a crisis that shattered their less resilient Ottoman predecessor.

The leaders and spokesmen of this new nationalism were, of course, India and the Philippines. I should like to convey to you, if I can, something of the passionate force that went into what they said there. One instance, which I did not see myself, because I was sitting at the time on the other side of the room, but which I have been told about since I got back by a Belgian who was there with the Belgian Delegation: Sir Maharaj Singh,[3] when he was attacking Smuts,[4] was so worked up that he was clenching his hands, digging his nails in the palms until the blood ran.

That is the sort of passion generated by the ex-colonial nations against the Western Powers. In her opening speech Mrs. Pandit observed proudly that this was the first time India was represented at an international assembly by a delegation accredited by a national government.[5] Those of you who may have heard Nehru

[3] [Ed.] Raja Sir Maharaj Singh (1878–1959) held a number of positions in the Indian Government and was Governor of Bombay (1948–52).

[4] [Ed.] Field Marshal Jan Christian Smuts (1870–1950) served twice (1919–24 and 1939–48) as Prime Minister of South Africa.

[5] [Ed.] Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit (1900–90) led India's first delegation to the UN and became the first woman elected President of the UN General Assembly (1953–54).

himself speaking here a year or two before the War will be able to imagine the feline grace and strength, the capacity to outdo the West at all the West's own tricks, which his sister brought to the leadership of the Indian delegation. We must hope that India will be able to keep its nepotism on such a successful and admirable level.

Mrs. Pandit is not only beautiful, she is also brilliant, and since she had the third qualification of being anti-British she was immediately taken to the heart of the great American people. She was, I suppose, the outstanding personal success of the Assembly. She has great charm. It was very attractive how, at the end of the long committee meeting at which Smuts had finally lost his case, she impulsively crossed the room and grasped the old man by the hand. Her political thrusts were delivered in the most silken and soft manner. She would refer to the British Empire as being "now happily in a state of liquidation," and the British delegation unfailingly rose to the bait. I think the best verbal stroke of the whole Assembly was the remark she made to Sir Hartley Shawcross after one of his speeches.[6] "Sir Hartley," she said, in demure tones, "won his international renown as prosecutor in one case involving racial discrimination at Nuremberg. Now he is appearing for the defence in another case involving racial discrimination. Only a very able lawyer would be capable of this." It was the one occasion on which I saw Sir Hartley at a loss for a comeback.

The Indians were the most successful of the fifty-four delegations at the Assembly; they attained all their objectives, which were principally concerned with the defeat of South Africa. There were two separate questions concerning South Africa—the Indian Government's complaint about the treatment of Indians in the Union, and the South African proposal to annex the mandated territory of South-West Africa. These became linked by the racial issue, partly through the skilful advocacy of the Indians and partly through the unskilful advocacy of the South Africans. The question of South-West Africa was fought by the Indian and Soviet delegations, not only on the general grounds that the mandate system was not intended to represent territorial aggrandisement, but also on the particular grounds that the incorporation of South-West Africa in the Union would extend the Union's policies of racial discrimination to another vast territory. Here the Indians had the sentiment of the great body of the Assembly behind them, and it was unfortunate that the only delegation which supported South Africa was the British.

The question of the treatment of Indians in South Africa had wider repercussions: it raised the spectre that matters of domestic jurisdiction would be dragged into the international arena. That is what the United States and Britain feared; that is why they suggested that the complaint should be sent to the International

[6] [Ed.] Sir Hartley Shawcross (1902–2003) is best known for having served as the United Kingdom's lead prosecutor in the Nuremberg Trials.

Court. Mrs. Roosevelt expressed grave concern about the principle involved, and Mrs. Roosevelt does not belong to the Bilbo-Talmadge wing of the Democratic Party.[7] It involved, of course, the interpretation of the Charter, which declares that it does not authorise the United Nations to intervene in matters which are within the domestic jurisdiction of a member state, but also says that the purpose of the United Nations is to encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. Implicitly, the two here conflicted, and it was the second which won. That, I believe, was a pointer to the future.

The Philippines are, of course, in a slightly different psychological state from India. India was not offered its independence before its demand for it became irresistible; it was not occupied by the Japanese; it was not liberated by the British. General Romulo's muse assumed a more lofty and more universal strain than Mrs. Pandit's.[8] He had a fine forensic manner and a flood of generalities which for my part I found tedious, but to which the Assembly listened with rapt attention and repeated applause. The pet proposal of the Philippines was for a system of regional conferences at which the peoples of non-self-governing territories might express their wishes and aspirations. Romulo frankly declared that this proposal was experimental, but that the Philippines was interested in it because as the youngest republic of the world it had an acute recollection of what it was like to be non-self-governing. The imperial Powers, led by Britain, the United States and France, opposed it as an invasion of sovereignty, and claimed that their subject peoples had already had full expression for their wishes and aspirations. But they were half-defeated; they were able to secure no more than a modification of the resolution which recommended that not the Economic and Social Council but the governments themselves should call such a conference should one ever be called.

This ex-colonial, non-European nationalism is the greatest single advantage that the Soviet Union has in its duel with the Western Powers; and it is an advantage which is maximised by the trusteeship system. The Indian and Soviet delegations co-operated closely in attacking the trusteeship drafts, Russia refusing to accept any of the trusteeship drafts or to take part in the elections to the Trusteeship Council. If it developed according to the Soviet intentions, the trusteeship system would become the greatest international organisation for intervention since the Holy Alliance—but one-way intervention by the Soviet Union against the oceanic empires.

[7] [Ed.] Theodore Bilbo (1877–1947) was twice governor of Mississippi and later elected to the US Senate. Eugene Talmadge (1884–1946) served three terms as governor of Georgia. Both were notorious for their racist and white supremacist views.

[8] [Ed.] General Carlos Romulo (1898–1985) served as President of the UN General Assembly (1949–50) and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines (1950–52 and 1968–84).

However, Russia's position as the champion and fomenter of colonial nationalism is clearly at its maximum where the colonial nationalism is on the verge of fruition. A people struggling to be free will very likely accept the helpful hand for the last stages of its climb. But if the hand thereafter continues to be too attentive it is equally likely to get bitten. This happened at the Assembly. Before it was over Russia and India had quarrelled, and what they quarrelled about was the veto.

The conflict between the Great and Small Powers was at its most evident in the veto discussion. In so far as Russia refused to be bound by the gentleman's agreement which the other four Great Powers desired, this was a facet of the Soviet and Western issue. But in so far as all the Great Powers, except China, were resolved to keep the veto, it was an issue in which the common interest of the Great Powers overrode their differences. The veto is the symbol of their sovereignty, that the Small Powers are under the law while the Great Powers are above it. The extreme case was put by the Philippine delegation which declared that the veto "disfranchised sixty percent of mankind," and demanded a total recasting of the United Nations.

The resolution finally adopted [by the UN Assembly], which requests the permanent members of the Security Council to consult together to ensure that their special voting privilege does not obstruct the Council's work, was not accepted by Russia, and was much watered down by the other Great Powers before they approved it. It was accepted by the Small Powers only because it was that or nothing. Nevertheless, I do not know whether anybody had really felt that a modification of the veto was possible. The controversy had been largely unreal and had fulfilled its purpose in providing the Small Powers with an emotional catharsis. This Assembly indeed may prove to be the last flicker of the *fronde* which the Small Powers have been conducting against the Great Powers ever since San Francisco.[9]

If that is the case, then I think two consequences will follow. The first is the end of Small Power solidarity and the consolidation of blocs; the second is the end of the possibility of institutional growth, which would make the Assembly something more than a talking shop and assimilate it in prestige and authority to the Security Council. The horizontal division between Great and Small Powers, which is, perhaps, the mark of a healthy organisation, will be replaced by the vertical divisions between one Great Power bloc and another.

The *reductio ad absurdum* of the Small Powers' case was the Argentine proposal that they could exercise a collective veto of their own by boycotting the United Nations. The truth is, of course, that provided the Big Three were agreed, all the

[9] [Ed.] The literal meaning of the French word *fronde* is "sling." Protestors used slings to break the windows of French authorities and thereby express their opposition to official policies, notably increases in taxes. The French apply the word *fronde* to the unsuccessful campaigns of aristocrats against royal Power in 1648–53. The word has come to mean any resistance to established authority.

Small Powers could walk out, and nobody would know the difference; whereas if one of the Big Three leaves the United Nations, it is going to be the end of it.[10]

The Small Powers tried to exercise their weight over the elections to seats on the Economic and Social Council. The Latin-Americans and the Arabs, amounting to 26 votes, were so annoyed with the Soviet bloc over the vote that they deliberately prevented the election of the Soviet satellite [White Russia] to join Russia and Czechoslovakia. The United States, in deference to the principle of "equitable geographical distribution," had switched its own vote from support of the Netherlands to White Russia, and reprimanded the Latin-American delegation for their obstructive bloc-voting tactics. Three weeks later, after sober reflection, the Latin-American-cum-Arab bloc had dissolved and White Russia was duly elected.

What this shows is that no effective blocs are possible except round a Great Power. The principle of equitable geographical distribution means that the Big Powers back one another in agreed proportions, and this was exactly what happened under the League.

But the result of this unsuccessful essay in Small Power bloc-voting was to increase the tension between the Great Power blocs. The Russians, mortified by the new demonstration of how they were outnumbered, became more insistent than ever on retaining the veto, which is the indispensable protection of the minority group, and more suspicious that the veto controversy was instigated or encouraged by their fellow Great Powers as a kind of pressure tactics.

An American colleague, whose shrewd judgment I learned to rely on, said to me one day as we were sitting listening to the veto debate: "All this is bunk. Nobody wants to get rid of the veto, and, indeed, if you could get rid of it, it would be a bad thing. I am looking ahead to the day when the majority of the nations round this table will be Communist, and then we will be mighty glad that we have got the veto."

From this sombre and perhaps exaggerated reflection the transition is easy to the third conflict—that between Russia and the West.

The cleavage between the Soviet bloc and the West was illustrated by the most conspicuous topics on the agenda of the Assembly—the reduction of armaments and the troop census; it dominated the long argument about the International Refugee Organisation; it conditioned the discussions about Spain and UNRRA trusteeship; it lurked behind the discussions of practically everything else.

Now, I don't want to discuss these issues in detail; I want to suggest one or two points about the perspective and atmosphere which governed them, particularly about the Russian attitude towards the United Nations itself.

[10] [Ed.] The "Big Three" were those identified in this book title: William T. R. Fox, *The Super-powers: The United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union—Their Responsibility for Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1944).

It has by now become a commonplace that Russia's immediate *positive* interest in the United Nations is as a platform for propaganda, just as her immediate *negative* interest in it is the prevention, through the veto, of ganging-up against the Soviet Union. Sitting in the Political and Security Committee one warm and sleepy afternoon—and every afternoon in that building is warm and sleepy; if the members of the Secretariat want to know what the weather will be like on their way home they have to ring up their wives to find out—watching Molotov's doming head across the table and trying to make sense of a very tedious debate, I had that familiar sensation that I had experienced this or read about it somewhere before.[11] It was then I remembered the negotiations between Trotsky and the Germans at Brest-Litovsk in 1917, and when I got home I looked up the passage in Wheeler-Bennett's book that I had had in mind. Here it is:

> No two groups could have thought more differently. The Central Powers spoke the ancient language of diplomacy, time-honoured and crusted with tradition. They thought in terms of strategic lines, of provinces ceded, of economic advantages to be gained. Not so the Bolsheviks. Theirs was not a parlance of frontiers and concessions. This was the first contact of Bolshevism with the Western World, and it was the aim of the Soviet representatives to utilize the meetings as a sounding-board for the propagation of their doctrine. In their principles of a general European peace they were not concerned with geographical terms and expressions. They banked upon the immediate effect of their propaganda on the war-weary masses of Europe to achieve what they knew could not be achieved by force of arms, namely the World Revolution and the replacement of Imperialism by "the rule of the proletariat."[12]

Much has changed, but not, I think, the essentials. And it is not in the United Nations that Russia pursues those new primary, vital interests which have grown up as a result of the consolidation of the Soviet State, and which did not yet exist at Brest-Litovsk. It is in the conferences of the Big Three and in the Council of Foreign Ministers that the Soviet Union bargains for her strategic lines, her provinces ceded, her economic advantages. The United Nations has the secondary function of propaganda, moulding opinion, trial balloons, defamation of opponents, and, above all, preaching of the gospel.

Let us remind ourselves how it appears to the Russians themselves. Here is an extract from an article in *Pravda* during the Assembly, which was given

[11] [Ed.] Vyacheslav Molotov (1890–1986) held various posts in the Soviet Union, including Minister of Foreign Affairs (1939–49 and 1953–56).

[12] [Ed.] John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Brest-Litovsk: The Forgotten Peace, March 1918* (London: Macmillan, 1938), p. 115.

prominence in *The New York Times*, on the theme that the ideological struggle on a world scale is continuing with unprecedented fierceness:

> Aloud, all over the world, from the tribune of our art we speak and will speak that we are fighting and will fight for Communism, that we consider that Communism is the only correct road into the future for humanity ... Our diplomats are speaking with such a conquering splendor and depth on the stage of international conferences not only because they are brilliant personalities and speakers but also because, above all, contrary to all the lies and slanders that are spread on the subject of peace, only they are telling the truth about humanity ...

At the Assembly, Molotov is still playing the rôle of Trotsky at Brest-Litovsk. I couldn't understand why the British or Americans did not sometimes take the opportunity to compliment him on rivalling Trotsky in greatness as a Soviet Foreign Minister. It would have been such fun.

Now, this may seem a very silly thing to say, but I think it needs saying: Molotov is a person of immense distinction. I mean, distinguished in a way in which Ribbentrop was not; and, again, distinguished in a way in which Vyshinsky and Manuilsky and Gromyko are not.[13] He dominated the Assembly, and he was quite the most interesting object of study there. At the end of the last meeting of the Political and Security Committee, as they were walking out, I heard Shawcross say to Connally,[14] "I'm very glad to have been working with you; if it hadn't been for us, I don't think anyone would have spoken against Molotov at all: he seems to freeze them all up." It was indeed noticeable. He sat there, with his cigarette and his pince-nez, looking like a wise, reflective, grizzled Pekingese, speaking quietly and deliberately, with considerable pauses between his sentences, inclining his head now this way, now that; expounding the matter in hand—this was reasonable and that was not, if those were the premises then these were the consequence, if A then B. He was like a headmaster talking over school policy with a group of prefects. Then one remembered that Lenin used to be called "the headmaster" in an affectionate joke by his disciples. Perhaps Molotov is the nearest we can now get to a glimpse of what Lenin was like. His style of speaking reminded me of what one has read about Lenin: the absence of ornament and gesture, the impersonality, the unselfconsciousness, so complete as to be selflessness. But then, just when you thought you were beginning to understand him and have a sympathy with him,

[13] [Ed.] Andrey Vyshinsky (1883–1954) was at the time of Wight's address the Soviet Union's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. Dmitry Manuilsky (1883–1959) was the permanent representative to the UN of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1945–52. Andrey Gromyko (1909–89) was the Soviet Union's permanent representative to the UN in 1946–48.

[14] [Ed.] Thomas Connally (1877–1963) was a US Senator from Texas (1929–53). He was vice chairman of the US delegation to the UN Conference on International Organization in San Francisco in 1945, and US representative to the first session of the UN General Assembly in London and the second session in New York in 1946.

the impression would be shattered by some dry, quiet phrase, some misrepresentation or misunderstanding, which would light up the whole gulfs of feeling and belief, with beyond them the uncommunicable mind of the fanatic.

And the application of the man! He would spend half the day at Lake Success, the other half twenty-two miles away, at the Council of Foreign Ministers. Then, as often as not, he would go back to Lake Success to another meeting, passing from the leadership of the debate on armaments to the intricacies of Trieste, refusing to attend the more redundant of Mr. Byrnes's official luncheons and dinners.[15] There were two or three occasions, I think it was twice Molotov and once Gromyko—when the question arose of fitting in an extra meeting of the committee in order to get through its business, and Molotov said quietly: "Well, why not have a meeting at 11 o'clock tomorrow night." It made people furious. It took delegates, I think, three-quarters-of-an-hour in their automobiles to get back to their hotels; it took us proletarians of the Assembly anything like one-and-a-half hours on the Long Island Railroad. It made people doubly furious because you knew it was a bluff which could not be called; you knew the Russians would be quite ready to sit and debate from eleven to two or three in the morning and would reappear in the morning session as alert and indomitable as ever. Indeed, it was said at the Assembly that the only person who worked as hard as the Russians was Mrs. Roosevelt.

Molotov's peculiar contribution to the Assembly was, of course, the disarmament proposal. This and the motion for a Great-Power troop census which it at length superseded were propagandist in origin. Nevertheless, it is important to realise that disarmament is and has been Russia's peculiar interest throughout the past fifty years. Nicholas II called the Hague Conferences in 1899 and 1907; Litvinov proposed complete disarmament at the Preparatory Commission in 1927; Molotov scooped the Americans at New York. The reason is simple: Russia in that period has been one of the weakest of the Great Powers. In 1899 her position had not been illustrated by the Russo-Japanese War, but the Tsarist Government was acutely conscious of its financial weakness and of Germany's greater rapidity of mobilisation. Today, when there are only two Great Powers left, Russia is still the weaker. But since her power and attraction rest ultimately on a proselytising creed and on disciplined cadres of revolutionaries rather than on force of arms, total disarmament would strengthen her relatively to the United States. This, again, is a bluff which could not be called.

But, of course, disarmament was a misnomer. What was in question was an agreed reduction of armaments; and this raised the unsolved and perhaps insoluble question of a scale of measurement for different kinds of armaments. Sir Hartley Shawcross said here last month that the armaments discussions raised real hopes among the delegates of the Minor Powers. With every respect, and with far

[15] [Ed.] James F. Byrnes (1882–1972) was the US Secretary of State in 1945–47.

less authority, I cannot record the same impression. I do not know of anybody who did not regard them with scepticism. That in this year of our Lord, the relations between the Great Powers being what they are, and with the experience of the Preparatory Commission from 1926–32, of the Disarmament Conference from 1932–34—that now we could really have any chance of reduction of armaments—for that I found no credence. The controversy settled down into a cleavage between the Western Powers, who look to an evolutionary international system with gradually widening scope, and the Soviet bloc which insists on the jealous retention of national sovereignty. The resolution finally arrived at was a portmanteau of everybody's points of view instead of a selection. For the Western Powers it seemed to have the germs of a system of international inspection; for the Soviet bloc it retained the veto.

The root of this matter is that Russia will not entrust her vital interests to an international organisation in which she is in a minority position. Let me here make an excursus into simple arithmetic. The American bloc numbers twenty-one, or, since we cannot include the Argentine as a reliable member, twenty. The British bloc numbers six—Britain, the four Dominions [Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa] and Greece, an assiduous supporter. I think we have to admit that these are blocs: whatever we admit, foreigners think of them as blocs—and particularly the Russians. They are more flexible, more highly articulated than the Russian bloc, allowing greater latitude to their constituents: they compare with the Soviet bloc as Congress or Parliament compare with the Supreme Soviet; but they are blocs in that their cohesion in the last resort is taken for granted. Hence the competition for adherents among the seven Western European States, the eight of Western Asia and the four of Eastern Asia. And it is worth noticing that Russia would have to capture all these, plus the two African states—which, without another world upheaval, she obviously has no chance of doing—in order simply to equal the Anglo-American twenty-seven. Hence, too, the fight over new members: the attempt to get Albania and Mongolia elected; the need for blocking Eire, and Portugal, and Transjordan; and the agreed election only of Iceland, and Afghanistan, and Siam, which are all buffer states which Russia has reasonable hopes of adding in due course to her own collection.

But the Russian attitude towards the United Nations is ambiguous. That is only one side of it; the other side I regard as more important, and it was for me the most significant impression I gathered from the Assembly, and from sitting hour after hour listening to the almost predictable convolutions of Soviet rhetoric. It is this: the Russians do feel the United Nations to be their own show. On a sordid and bourgeois level of analysis, the Soviet Purchasing Commission would not be buying up real estate in Manhattan and Long Island, even for prestige reasons, unless they thought the show was going to run long enough for it to be worthwhile. But more than that, the Russians have made a real psychological investment in it. All the values of the Charter—the human rights and fundamental

freedoms—mean as much to the Soviet Union as they do to the West, only something different. Indeed, the philosophical inadequacy of the Charter is that it is spun out of two incompatible philosophies. Hence these two ambiguities on which I have already touched.

Perhaps it is best expressed in this way. If we think of a Pax Americana as the ultimate destiny of the world, we can imagine it very likely dressed up as a constitutional development of the United Nations. Well, if it is to be a Pax Russica, then I think this is almost equally likely. In the recent War there was no question about who was the residuary legatee of the League. The Axis hated the conception on which the League was based, while the guilt of the Western Powers was only to have destroyed it in practice through their own folly and sloth. Now, in the next War if it should come, both sides will probably make an equal claim to the moral and juridical succession; as, in the Religious Wars of the sixteenth century, Catholics and Lutherans and Calvinists all claimed to be the true and universal church. This reflection illustrates, I think, the profound contrast between the issue between the West and Nazi Germany on the one hand, and the issue between the West and Russia on the other.

Let me now in conclusion make three brief points. First, about Anglo-American relations. I asked a member of the British delegation whether he thought frankly the international situation would be any different if the United Nations did not exist. His answer was "No!" He did not think the United Nations made the least difference, "except for one thing—the alphabetical accident that the United Kingdom and the United States sat side by side." That is a very important exception. The two delegations worked in close co-operation throughout the committee meetings. I do not think they concerted policy much outside; but in the committee meetings they worked sitting side by side and discussing things the whole time; in fact, towards the end it became almost offensive to other delegations when Shawcross seemed to be briefing Connally in public.

There is a wider aspect to this. The United Nations is an American institution. As my colleague, Peter Whitney, said of the United Nations when it was at Hunter College in the Bronx:

> For a superficial onlooker it is sometimes difficult to remember that it is an international body, and not another well-organised element of American life—a small but prosperous college, for example, or one of the clubs for professional women, of which every American city has its allowance.

It is the consequence of location, of preponderance in the Secretariat, of the financial and psychological resources which America alone can pour into a new political experiment. I gained the impression that the United States is now entering an L.N.U. [League of Nations Union] phase of enthusiasm such as we went into after

1919. From the purely Occidental point of view the United Nations represents the reintegration of the United States into Western civilization.

Secondly, I went to New York with a prejudice about the United Nations, based on ignorance. It seemed to me that the only intelligent objective was to convert it into a real international organisation based on the association of like-minded states, i.e., the Atlantic community. After seeing it at work I found myself no longer thinking in that sort of way. With all its inadequacy it seems to be preferable to any alternative which is within reach. It generates a diplomatic false bonhomie which is one of the protective tissues grown by a wounded world. So long as Vyshinsky and Shawcross can bandy pleasantries about their professional ties as public prosecutors, so long as Tom Connally can pound on the table and shout at Manuilsky, "We want you to get acquainted with democratic ways," and Manuilsky will grin and pull at his cigarette, and then give a ruling which—whether from mischief or sheer incompetence it is impossible to tell—still further bedevils the business of the committee; so long as this amiable ritual continues, I think we can feel safe.

Thirdly, the "success" of the Assembly at New York was conditioned by what was happening elsewhere in the world. From the political point of view what mattered in November was not the activities at Lake Success, but the fact that the Russians got out of Azerbaijan.[16]

In its broadest terms I think the issue throughout 1946 was something like this. Would there be a period of settled peace, or would the world be carried forward by its own momentum, with only the barest breathing-space, to the final grapple between these two great constellations of power which had lost their common interest through their joint defeat of their common enemy? Remember, that would be very like how the First World War ended. It began with Russia and the West as Allies, but ended with Western armies of intervention deep in Russian soil. There were two junctures at which such a repetition seemed to be more than a speculative possibility. The first was the Iranian crisis in April; the other, and probably the more important, was the Straits crisis of July.

But then, while the Assembly was sitting at New York there came the break, and the Russians allowed the Pishevari régime [in northern Iran] to collapse. This was the first sign of Soviet retraction since the Russians had stormed Berlin, and the effects of the delicate adjustment in the balance of power were communicated through all the gradations of the diplomatic superstructure—the final agreement of the Council of Foreign Ministers on the minor peace treaties, the agreement of

[16] [Ed.] Wight was referring not to the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (part of the Soviet Union from 1936–91), but to the Azerbaijan People's Government, an unrecognized state in northern Iran. With the assistance of the Soviet army, the communist Azerbaijani Democratic Party undertook a *coup d'état* in 1945 in this Iranian territory adjacent to the Soviet Union. In 1946 the Soviet armed forces withdrew, and the Iranian military took control of this Iranian territory. Jafar Pishevari and the other coup-makers sought refuge in the Soviet Union. For an authoritative concise analysis of these events, see Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 60–64.

the Political and Security Committee on a resolution on armaments, the mutual congratulations of the delegates in their pastel-tinted, plush-upholstered lounge, the joviality of the Press boys in the bar who stood one another extra drinks and said, "Well, it's been a success," and the newspaper readers who did, or didn't, believe them.

Sir Geoffrey Mander asked about the consultation of native opinion in South-West Africa. The South African delegation said it had been done fairly and reasonably, but that was denied by their opponents. It would look as if it was desirable for the United Nations to send out a Commission to find out for themselves. To what extent had that been discussed?

Mr. Wight said that the Indian delegation did propose that a Commission ought to go out. General Smuts' statements about the consulting of the natives were regarded as very unsatisfactory. In fact, the only impartial witness of the matter had been Lord Hailey, who had regarded the taking of opinion among the natives as fairly conducted. The proposal for a United Nations Commission was quickly disposed of by South Africa's refusal to agree.

Professor C. A. W. Manning asked how far the South Africans' defeat had been due simply to their "unskilful advocacy," and how far to the merits of the case.

Mr. Wight said that he thought it was primarily due to the moral indignation aroused against them. The Indians had the sympathy of the Assembly from the start.

Mr. J. Ridley asked Mr Wight if he could say how the members of the Assembly voted on the issue. He had said that Britain was the only delegation that supported South Africa on the issue of South-West Africa. Was that really so or had he misunderstood?

Mr. Wight said that it was so. The United Kingdom was the only supporter of the South African case in debate. It was a different matter to say how the voting went because after conflicting resolutions and amendments had been disposed of a compromise resolution was arrived at.

Miss K. D. Courtney asked what line the United States took. Domestic jurisdiction was a matter that touched them very nearly.

Mr. Wight replied that on the question of South-West Africa the United States opposed the South African claim, on the grounds that insufficient evidence had been submitted to the Assembly to justify their concurrence. The issue of domestic jurisdiction arose in the other question involving South Africa, that of discrimination against Indians. Here, the United States and Britain wanted a ruling by the International Court of Justice on whether it was a matter of domestic jurisdiction or within the competence of the Assembly.

Miss K. D. Courtney asked if there was any feeling that a mistake had been made in not letting the matter go to the International Court of Justice.

Mr. Wight said that he did not find anybody expressing that view.

Mr. P. H. Hodgkin asked Mr Wight if he could say a little more about the particular objections of the Russians to the Trusteeship system.

Mr. Wight said it seemed that nothing about the Trusteeship system could please the Russians. Their particular arguments were, first, that the Trusteeship system was mandatory and not voluntary. Secondly, he himself thought the most significant difference between the Mandatory system and the Trustee system was that under the former there were restrictions on the right of fortification, etc, and conscription was forbidden, while under the Trusteeship system the Power administering the Trust territory could incorporate the Trust territory into its own defence system. The Indians were very strong on this point, and stressed it more than the Russians: they said it was monstrous that these people who could not govern themselves were being tied to the imperialist Juggernauts. The third thing about which the Russians were very insistent was a time-limit for Trusteeship status: they wanted to hurry up the process of development towards self-government. Fourthly was the question of the "States directly concerned." This was a difficult question of interpretation of the Charter. The British—and, he thought, the French—interpreted "the States directly concerned" as the contiguous states. But here the peculiar position of the United States came in, because mandated territories were the possession or the responsibility of the Allied and Associated Powers, not of the League of Nations, and consequently reports from the Permanent Mandates Commission used to be sent to Washington every year.

Miss Freda White said that this was a matter of courtesy. The United States had a right to be consulted only in the event of an alteration of frontier.

Mr. Wight agreed. His point was that America, as one of the Allied and Associated Powers, had presumptive rights to be regarded as a "State directly concerned" in the Trusteeship Agreements, but she had waived her rights. The Russians had been very coy about their interpretation of the phrase. They had got something up their sleeves. They refused to press this question, though they expressed every kind of disapproval short of that. They were holding their hand for something. There were a number of uncertainties in this connection. He did not think anybody knew what was going to be done about the Kurile Islands. Korea was an independent state.

Miss Freda White corrected him. According to the Moscow Conference of December, 1945, Korea was to be under Four-Power Trusteeship for five years. The Russians, however, wanted to block the whole thing until Korea became an independent Soviet republic. In the end they refused to vote for any Trusteeship Agreement and they refused to vote for elections to the Trustee Council. They stayed away from that so that they might have a completely free hand; and even then they still had the question of the "states directly concerned" to fall back on and argue about. They had blocked the whole construction of the system from the word "Go," from the Preparatory Commission, steadily and without intermission. For example, Britain had regarded as "states directly concerned" more than

just contiguous States; she counted as "states directly concerned" members of the Security Council. Consequently, she had sent her draft agreements to Moscow. Russia hung on to them and never commented on them for eight months, and then turned up at the Assembly and raised objections point by point, the obvious idea being delay. The Russians were simply concerned with what they could get for themselves of the ex-enemy territories, and obviously the best from their point of view was Korea, which was at present potentially under a Joint Trusteeship and was ultimately to be independent. The Russians were working very hard in Korea to get up a Communist army. They had got it in the North, and if or when the Americans retired the whole country would become Soviet.

Sir Geoffrey Mander asked whether the point might arise when they would use the Trustee system as a form of general intervention.

Mr. Wight replied that it would be only in the sense of propaganda. They were using everything they could as propaganda; the Trusteeship system would be an excellent vehicle for this.

Miss Freda White said that the colonial issue was a strong card in their hand.

Miss K. D. Courtney asked how the position was left with regard to the new candidates for membership of the United Nations. Sweden had not been mentioned, and how did the matter stand concerning Portugal?

Mr. Wight said the Assembly resolved that the whole question of the admission of these candidates—there were nine of them—should be re-submitted to the Security Council for their consideration, and the Security Council in its wisdom reconsidered three, who were admitted during the Assembly.[17]

Miss Freda White said that if the matter were referred back to the Security Council it was an assertion of authority by the Assembly.

Mr. Peter Matthews asked if that construction could be supported by the Charter.

Miss Freda White thought that technically it could not be, but actually there had been a very strong assertion of authority on the part of the Assembly and it was argued in the Assembly that the Security Council was acting on behalf of the Assembly. She thought a very strong case was made there and it was a point scored by the Assembly.

Mr. Wight said this was the extreme case put forward by delegations like the Philippines; but he did not think it got into the wording of the ultimate resolution, which was carefully drafted.

Miss Freda White referred to Mr. Wight's remark that the veto discussion was perhaps the dying flicker of the attempt to get the veto modified.

[17] [Ed.] According to the UN website, Afghanistan, Iceland, Siam, and Sweden were admitted in 1946, may be found at https://www.un.org/en/sections/member-states/growth-united-nations-membership-1945-present/index.html#1945

Mr. H. Mackinnon Wood asked if that meant that the people who had been patiently engaged on it were going to lie down now.

Mr. Wight replied that the general impression he got was that they felt this was a limit to what they could do. They had tried everything and they were very guarded about the possibility of bringing it up again. It had been quite clear that they were not going to get the full support of all the Great Powers.

Mr. Peter Matthews was rather puzzled by one point, when the speaker referred to the horizontal structure between the Small and Great Powers being replaced by a vertical structure between different Blocs. Surely that had already happened, and surely in one Bloc there was never any trace of that horizontal line.

Mr. Wight said it might be possible to discern a loosening within the Russian Bloc. Poland had been showing a certain amount of independence and had got out of step with Russia.

Miss Freda White said that on one occasion Poland voted on the British side against Russia.

Mr. Wight: one other development, which he supposed to-day was the only visible result of the Assembly's resolutions and recommendations, was in regard to the Veto. He thought it was right to say that since the Assembly Russia had not used the veto; she had abstained instead. Those who wanted to add up what the Assembly had done could certainly add that as a real triumph.

A Member asked if it was not the case that Russia regarded abstention the same as a veto.

Mr. Wight said that was a constitutional point which had been cleared up by the Assembly. It was argued in direct terms in the Political and Security Committee. Vyshinsky was pressed as to what abstention meant. Did it mean that if you walked out it would count as a vote against? Vyshinsky got very red and said, "How can you cast a vote if you are out of the room?" Mr. Wight said he thought it could probably be taken henceforward that abstention did not count as a vote.

A Member asked whether the Charter did not say something about the affirmative vote of members of the Security Council.

Miss Freda White pointed out that the Charter says that the consent of the Great Powers is necessary. Gromyko on two occasions had said, when he abstained from voting, that it was understood that it was not to count as a vote against. This was not in accordance with the article, which was extremely badly drafted. But he did make it clear that it was not to prevent an affirmative vote.

Mr. Wight said this was perhaps a sign of constitutional growth.

Professor Manning asked Mr Wight if he would say something about the contrast between the atmosphere of the Geneva Assembly and that of the United Nations. Was there a bigger contrast than people had expected?

Mr. Wight replied that he had had no experience of Geneva, and therefore could not say.

Miss Freda White said she thought the similarities were greater than the differences. She thought the thing that used to be called with great contempt "the atmosphere of Geneva," the tendency of a bloc of people on the whole trying to work out an agreement, was a case of crowd psychology. She did not know if Mr. Wight would agree with that. She thought the Small States had much more experienced internationalists than the Great ones. They knew the kind of thing that could be made to work in the way of procedure and that they exercised great influence; they used the experience they had got at the League.

A Member pointed out that none of the resolutions adopted against South Africa could possibly have been adopted at Geneva. Certainly, the manners of organisation compared with those at Geneva were extremely plebian.

Mr. Wight, in reply, said that was perfectly true. It was the consequence of "democratic diplomacy." For instance, Sir Hartley Shawcross was quickly reduced to "Mr. Shawcross," and he remained that during the whole of the Assembly.

E. J. Gough recalled that a previous speaker at Chatham House, who was discussing not the Assembly but the Peace Conference, had described the Russian propaganda as "singing hymns." Would Mr Wight confirm that, or would he say, as he gathered from his remarks, that possibly it was having rather more effect on some of the Smaller Powers than the mere phrase "singing hymns" might suggest? Also, Mr Wight's interpretation of the personality of Molotov differed very widely from that of the previous speaker he had mentioned when he was dealing with that subject.

Mr. Wight said that the real influence of Russian propaganda was with people who were still struggling to be free and wanted a helping hand. The Indians broke away from Russia when they voted for the resolution which said there had been an abuse of the veto. At the same time they were trying to get elected to the Security Council, but the Russians, in retaliation, voted against it; so that they ended on bad terms. He did not think that Indonesia, when it came in, or the Philippines would be much affected by the blandishments of the Soviet Union, except for their own purposes.

Professor C. A. W. Manning was very interested in what the speaker had said about the USSR's interest in UNO being the development of propaganda. How would he reconcile that with their position on the veto?

Mr. Wight replied that this inconsistency was a very grave embarrassment to the Russians. They had a double policy. They had to cling to the veto because of their minority position, and yet the whole time they recognised that they were losing support because the Small Powers were so resentful about the veto.

Mr. J. Ridley could not quite get the tie-up between the position of National Sovereignty and the veto. A recent article in *Pravda* explaining the virtues of National Sovereignty had said that the sovereignty of Poland and Rumania and Hungary was very gravely endangered by the policy of the Western Powers.

Mr. Peter Matthews said that was also said about Western criticisms of the way the Poles conducted their elections.

Miss K. D. Courtney observed that the Russian papers said that any kind of inspection of armaments would be an infringement of national sovereignty, so that it would appear they were quite definite about it. The veto was very closely tied up with the inspection agreement.

Miss Freda White agreed. What the Russians demanded was national inspection. What they did not accept was international inspection.

Mr. Wight said that it all came back to their position as a minority group. When he was in Washington after the Assembly he was talking to the head of the United Nations Division of the State Department, and speaking about the A.D.A. [Atomic Development Authority] he asked who, in fact, it was going to consist of. This official admitted that in the first instance it must consist of Anglo-American-Canadian personnel because they, as far as was known, were the only people with the "know-how" and qualified for the job. How could the Russians be expected not to see a capitalist plot in this? They were not going to have the A.D.A. running all over their own territory, because they might obstruct the development of atomic energy for peaceful as well as warlike purposes.

Miss Freda White asked had there ever been a serious suggestion that the personnel of the A.D.A. should be confined to these three countries.

Mr. Wight replied that these three countries at present had the discovery, but Russia had not and therefore in the first instance the A.D.A. would have to be staffed like this. Ultimately it was intended, of course, that it should be a truly international body.

Miss Freda White said there were certain points about the veto which were noticeable. The veto as a unanimity rule among the Five Powers with regard to imposing sanctions, for example, [or] the use of an international army against aggression (saving if one of themselves was the aggressor) was a sensible thing to envisage.

A Member said that he did not think the Small Powers resented the organisation of force against aggression. What they resented was that any Great Power could prevent their case from being heard. If Britain was in a minority of one, he did not think it would want that particular power of veto.

Mr. Wight agreed. The Russian argument was that the whole thing had been decided by the Four-Power Agreement at San Francisco. They said in effect: you have all agreed to the veto being included in the Charter; and in a subsidiary agreement the decision as to when we are to use the veto is left with ourselves. Why, then, this hullabaloo because we have used it? The Small Powers' chief objection was, he thought, against the Great Powers' San Francisco declaration which allowed the veto in deciding whether a thing was a vetoable question or not, which, of course, made nonsense of the whole veto procedure.

Miss Heather Harvey said that when she was in San Francisco at the First Assembly she had been struck by the enormous advantage which the British Commonwealth had over others through their knowledge of parliamentary technique. The Russians were always under a disadvantage through their unfamiliarity with it. The British delegates were perfectly at ease; the Russians were tense, hands gripping the backs of their chairs, and one felt it added enormously to their suspicion. This also had other manifestations: countries like India and Egypt, that shared some of the oriental attributes of the Russians, but had an acquaintance of parliamentary technique, were in a very flexible position. The Russians suffered from their rigidity in debate.

Mr. Wight agreed. Did anyone, he asked, have any real knowledge of how the Russians worked their own committees at home?

17
The United Nations General Assembly

The program of the General Assembly can be summed up in a single agendum: an American proposal that the nature of the United Nations should be fundamentally modified.*,[1] There are three factors here: the unbroken general conviction that an international organisation is desirable, the organisation as it is, and the organisation as it might be. The Marshall proposals,[2] like the Molotov disarmament initiative last year, are themselves a tribute to the sentiment of world community which sustains the UN, and which is nowhere more formidable than in the American electorate. The United States would be quite capable on its own of defending Greece against the Communist guerrillas, or of supporting Persia's resistance to Russian pressure: what Mr. Marshall seeks is external (and internal) moral backing for such measures. The resolution condemning Greece's northern neighbors and the proposal for a standing Assembly committee on peace and security are attempts to sanction and to institutionalize the Truman Doctrine. On the other hand, the sentiment of world community may be Mr. Marshall's chief obstacle. Politically, his proposals compel Small Powers to take sides, a course especially repugnant and difficult to those of Western Europe and France, in chief; ideologically, they would externalize the split into two worlds, when millions of well-meaning Occidentals still cling to Mr. Willkie's theory of international relations, which sacrifices clarity, coherence, and discipline to comprehensiveness.[3]

* Martin Wight published this article in the "Notes of the Month" section of *The World Today*, vol. III, no. 10 (October 1947), pp. 419–421. As with other papers in this volume, Martin Wight's own notes have no bracketed indications.

[1] Even the Palestine issue has only a delusive detachment from the central controversy. It is the single world issue which cuts across the conflict between Russia and the West, and its main interest from the point of view of the UN is that here alone America and Russia have still to define their vital interests and choose sides.

[2] [Ed.] In his speech to the UN General Assembly on September 17, 1947, US Secretary of State George Marshall proposed a revision in the veto power of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council: "The United States would be willing to accept, by whatever means may be appropriate, the elimination of the unanimity requirement with respect to matters arising under Chapter VI of the Charter, and such matters as applications for membership." The Soviet Union rejected this proposal. Marshall also proposed that the General Assembly establish an Interim Committee on Peace and Security. The General Assembly founded such an Interim Committee on a temporary basis in November 1947 and then on an indefinite basis in 1949, but it has not met since March 1951. Anthony Clark Arend and Robert J. Beck, *International Law and the Use of Force: Beyond the U.N. Charter Paradigm* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 59.

[3] [Ed.] In 1943 Wendell Willkie (1892–1944), the Republican nominee for President in 1940, published a popular book entitled *One World*. Willkie argued that, owing in part to modern aircraft, the

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Russia's line of defence is the institution as it is. For Russia the U.N. has worked as it was meant to work, and the Marshall proposals are an attempt to wreck it. The principle of the unanimity of the Great Powers is the only Soviet safeguard against the overwhelming majority vote of the Western Powers. A year ago Russia refused to limit the use of the veto by convention; the constitutional change which Mr. Marshall, reversing American policy, now proposes can itself be vetoed. Nor could the Soviet position be outflanked by the proposed Assembly committee on peace and security, for its decisions could only be permissive. In truth the veto controversy has become for Russia a matter of prestige, and in such matters there may be a yield to *force majeure*, but there is never an opening for reason or compromise.

There is a single crevice in the mausoleum of the Charter through which the international institution might grow towards light and sanity. Article 51 allows collective security in anticipation of action by the Security Council. On this basis the standing Assembly committee might become an effective international organisation, by the same kind of development as that whereby in British history the Cabinet grew up within and superseded the Privy Council. *A fortiori* this would be true of an atomic authority with majority vote; if, as is not yet clear, Mr. Marshall aims to salvage so much of the Baruch Plan.[4] Politically, these developments would be the organisation of the sphere of interest of the greater of the two dominant Powers; ideologically, they would create an association of like-minded States.

But the veto is not the only question. It is arguable that the United Nations would be more dangerous if it worked than it is impotent. It is a quinquevirate[5] which, given unanimity, possesses despotic and irresponsible powers. If the five can agree about the exercise of the "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security" (Article 24), there are no legal limits to their power, and the rest of the United Nations are compelled to carry out their directions (Articles 25, 41). Even in its present state the U.N. plays the world government differently

United States could no longer pursue isolationist policies and that it should cooperate in the formation of a world government to promote and preserve international peace.

[4] [Ed.] The US set out the so-called Baruch Plan in June 1946. This proposal, named after US statesman Bernard Baruch (1870–1965), would have set up an international organization to ensure that nuclear energy would be used solely for peaceful purposes. As Wight noted, the Baruch Plan would have worked based on a "majority vote"—that is, without the veto of the five permanent members of the Security Council (Britain, China, France, the Soviet Union, and the US). The Soviet Union rejected the Baruch Plan because Moscow was unwilling to relinquish its veto, accept international inspections of Soviet nuclear facilities, or allow the US to retain its nuclear weapons pending the establishment of the International Atomic Development Authority envisaged in the Baruch Plan. Moscow preferred to pursue and acquire its own nuclear weapons.

[5] It is true that the Security Council votes by a majority of seven; and this just raises the speculation that if the five permanent members were ever unanimous they might not be able to secure two additional votes but would instead drive the non-permanent members into habitual opposition. The Security Council would then be frustrated by a cleavage along the line of Power status instead of between *blocs*, and the obstacle of the veto would be replaced by the difficulty of obtaining a majority. [Ed. In August 1965, the UN Charter was amended to increase the Security Council's membership from eleven to fifteen, with the supermajority needed for a decision increased from seven to nine votes. The five permanent members retained their veto power.]

from the League; it has in no case consented to a definition of its own jurisdiction; it has tended to encroach upon domestic jurisdiction and to override treaties.[6] The Small Powers which contribute to this by hastening or threatening to bring their doubtful quarrels before it—India against South Africa, Pakistan against India, Egypt against Britain (it will probably be Egyptian tactics to bring this up again in the Palestine debate)—are preparing a rod for their own backs like that which was used at Munich. The sentiment of world community may require too high and ill-considered a price for international organisation. The Marshall proposals try to rectify the veto but they do not touch the decision of Dumbarton Oaks, where the Western Powers agreed to an organisation built on a quasi-totalitarian principle. It may be less important that Greece should be defended against aggression than that the concept of the rule of law in international relations should regain the adherence of the Western world.

[6] The inconsistency between Article 2 (7) and Article 34 equals that between Article 2 (1) and Article 27 (3). In either case the later Article is the one that matters; and Article 24 (2) is worthless.

18
The Security Council

The Security Council is essentially an ambiguous institution bound up with everyone's hopes for peace.* On the other hand, it is obvious that the Security Council has practically no influence at all. It is almost a phoney institution, the reason being our exaggerated hopes of it. Contrast the optimism about the U.N. in 1945 with the disillusionment and lack of interest now prevailing. Looking back on the history of the League of Nations in the inter-war years, one is forced to the conclusion that it did not effect anything at all. International events would have followed the same course if the League had not existed. The Security Council has had no political influence on international events since 1945. It has merely issued commentary on them.

The first dispute coming before the Security Council was when Russia occupied the province of Azerbaijan. Gromyko walked out, but shortly afterwards Russia evacuated the province. The reason was said to be because "world opinion" was against her, but it was more probably because Britain sent a cruiser to the Persian Gulf. The State Department and the Foreign Office have methods of letting the Kremlin know how far they can go which are more effective than the Security Council. The Palestine dispute was not settled by the U.N. In fact, it is still formally on the agenda. They sent an extremely good mediator to Palestine—Dr. Ralph Bunche—who did very good work, but the frontiers in Palestine today are not those laid down by the U.N., but rather the result of military operations. The Balkan States intervened in Greece and fomented civil war. The U.N. Commission is still sitting but has not accomplished anything. The valour of the Greek Army has crushed the rebels and sent the Albanians back across the border. The same applies in the disputes over Berlin, Kashmir and Indonesia.

Why do we have the Security Council? The answer is because we want it. If it was put to a vote, a majority would be in favour of retaining it, partly because we still hope something may come of it, partly because it is a statement of our good intentions. Civilization today has a split personality. The U.N. represents our good principles, a statement of how we think things ought to be run. Hence the paradox of a phoney institution which is at the same time necessary.

* Martin Wight made this presentation as part of *The United Nations*, an Advanced Course on International Affairs arranged in conjunction with the education department, admiralty, the directorate of army education, war office, and the directorate of educational service, Air Ministry (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, September 29–October 1, 1949), pp. 4–8.

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Circumstances under which the U.N. Came to Birth

In 1944/45, when the new international organization was being established at Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco, there were many illusions about the nature of international organizations in general and illusions about the new one in particular. The general illusion was common to all Western parliamentary peoples. The Americans and the British alike thought that the setting up of an international organization was the solution to war and not merely an instrument. The illusion was to think that to set up a constitution means that it will work, whereas all constitutions presuppose the will to work them. These misapprehensions in the U.N. arise out of the emotional stress under which it was born and the history of the League behind it. After the First World War the victorious Allies formed the League. Russia hated it, then tried to work it, and was then expelled, while Germany, Italy and Japan had been allowed to remain members. That proved to Russia that the League was a capitalist racket. When the U.N. was formed, the Western Powers had a guilty conscience about the League; they had not used its machinery, had not applied sanctions, and war resulted. They thought that now we should improve on the League. Some of the arguments used were as follows:

(1) The League had failed because it did not include all the Great Powers. The U.S. did not come into the League. Now all the Great Powers were in the U.N. But we now wish Russia was out because she makes the U.N. unworkable.
(2) The League failed because it had no teeth. Teeth are now represented by the Military Staff Committee, which has met only once.[1] Teeth have never been used under its auspices.[2]

[1] [Ed.] The situation has not changed since Wight wrote. According to Eric Grove, a British historian, The Military Staff Committee of the United Nations has received little study from historians of the postwar strategic scene. This is hardly surprising, as it soon became a sterile monument to the faded hopes of the founders of the UN that the organization would support a true collective security system with provision for the use of armed force, under UN command, to counter aggression. The outbreak of the Cold War in 1948 caused the committee to cease to function as all but the most empty shell.

Eric Grove, "U.N. Armed Forces and the Military Staff Committee: A Look Back," *International Security*, vol. 17, no. 4 (Spring 1993), p. 172.

[2] [Ed.] It should be recalled that Wight prepared this presentation in 1949. His statement that "Teeth have never been used under its auspices" refers to the Military Staff Committee. Beginning with the response to North Korea's invasion of its southern neighbor in 1950, the UN Security Council has authorized the use of military force for various purposes, including to counter aggression by one state against another, to enforce sanctions, and to support UN peacekeeping operations. With one noteworthy exception (Operation Allied Force in March–June 1999), all NATO operations involving the use of military force have been undertaken under UN Security Council resolutions explicitly authorizing such action or Article 51 of the UN Charter ("the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence"). For background, see David S. Yost, *NATO and International Organizations*, Forum Paper no. 3. (Rome: NATO Defense College, September 2007), available at http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/fp_03.pdf, pp. 54–55.

(3) In a new organization authority must be placed where power lies—in other words, sanction the Great Powers to do what they like. But the problem is not that authority should be given to holders of power, but that their exercise of power should be limited.
(4) The League failed because it was linked with the Peace Treaties. The U.N. is not linked with the Peace Treaties. It is not yet in sight of calling a Peace Conference, but the organization does not work any better.

The particular circumstances at San Francisco must be recalled. There was enormous emotional stress for having won the greatest war in history and a feeling that the war-time alliance must be projected into peace. This was closely bound up with ideas about cooperation with Russia. Those two illusions have evaporated side by side. Russia on her side makes much propaganda for external consumption. The U.S. Government does so also for internal use: Roosevelt had a difficult task in convincing the Senate that the new international organization would not be against American interests. He had to convince the isolationists in the Senate and had to get the organization passed by American public opinion. One must never lose sight of the fact that the veto is of American origin. Britain also would not have joined the U.N. without the veto to safeguard her rights.

Theory of New Organization as Set Up

In any political institution there are two possible theories which it can represent—two political philosophies to be seen all through history: (1) that power must be under the law; and (2) that power is above the law and creates law. The first theory says that law is of external origin, not produced by governments; it originates with God or the natural order of things. The second says that law is what the holders of power say it shall be. The first theory is represented by the democratic governments, the second by dictatorships and totalitarian governments. The League of Nations represents the first of these philosophies, that power should be under the law.

The League of Nations Represented Constitutional Principle

(1) The League was set up by Powers who agreed in their political philosophy and had common ideals; Britain, France and America were the main creators of the League.
(2) The League was based on the paramount authority of international law; all states pledged to uphold it. Article 10 in the Covenant had guaranteed

territorial integrity to every member state.[3] All the other articles followed from that. Article 16 defined sanctions.

(3) The legalism of the Covenant provided that all states were equal before the law.

The League was divided into two bodies, an Executive Committee called the Council, and the Assembly. Both had equal rights to deal with any matter affecting the peace of the world or the security of states.

A weakness of the League was that its legal system was placed behind a particular settlement, that of 1919, and the redrawing of the map in that year which had many injustices; and when Powers which had been defeated once again came to the fore and wanted more the system collapsed with that particular settlement. There was inadequate provision for peaceful change.

The U.N. is comparatively based on totalitarian principles. In contrast with the League, the Powers which drew up the U.N. had no common philosophy. The Western Powers had to compromise with Russia on matters of principle, which introduced a fundamental flaw in the UN, particularly that enshrined in the Security Council doctrine that law is expressed by power because all power in the world is vested in the Security Council. A negative side is that the Security Council cannot act unless the majority includes the unanimous support of the 5 permanent members. The Security Council consists of 11 states—5 permanent members (the Great Powers) plus 6 others.[4]

The small states cannot control or influence what the Security Council does and are pledged to carry out whatever the Security Council decrees. If the Security Council comes to a decision about some international arrangement all members of the U.N. have to use their armed forces to carry out that decision. The General Assembly, the general body at which all members sit, does not have equal powers with the Security Council—it can only discuss and recommend. All powers are vested in the Security Council, with no legal limitations. It is not bound like the League Council to preserve the political integrity of all states. Law no longer

[3] [Ed.] In the words of Article 10 of the Covenant of the League of Nations,

> The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled.

For the full text of the Covenant, see "The Covenant of the League of Nations" may be found at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp

[4] [Ed.] In 1965 the number of non-permanent members of the Security Council increased from six to ten. The membership of the Security Council increased from eleven to fifteen, and the majority requirement increased from seven to nine. The five permanent members of the Security Council retained their veto power. Thomas G. Weiss, "The Illusion of UN Security Council Reform," *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 4 (Autumn 2003), p. 149.

affords security. Under the constitutions of the U.S. and the Australian Commonwealth there is a clause which states that the Federal Government shall do nothing to prejudice the interests of a particular state unless that state agrees. There is nothing like that in the U.N. Charter. The Security Council can change the existing order as it pleases, directed by the Great Powers. A precedent for that is in what happened at Munich when four Great Powers of Europe met together and settled the map of Central Europe against the interests of a Small Power which was not represented.[5] That is the system which operated in the 19th century when the Great Powers formed the Concert of Europe and governed at the expense, if necessary, of Small Powers.

Therefore, it is possible to say that the Security Council would be more dangerous if it worked than it is at the moment when consistently jammed and obstructed, because its power remains powerless without unanimity—i.e., because of the veto. The Security Council consists of 11 members, and votes by a majority of 7 including all permanent members. Under the League, where all states were equal in theory, all states had the veto. In practice, there is a general agreement that most things should be regarded as procedural and decisions are to be taken by a majority. The Great Powers have the veto and therefore decide the law.

One can recommend the book by Professor J. L. Brierly, *The Covenant and the Charter*. In that book he says: "We must realize that what we have done is to exchange a scheme which might or might not have worked for one which cannot work."[6]

The U.N. petrifies the post-war balance of power. There are curious provisions in the Charter which deprive enemy states of any legal protection. On the theory that henceforth aggression will only come from Germany or Japan, if there is a threat to peace and security from them, any Power can take action against them without taking the dispute to the Security Council. The document was unrealistic in that it overlooked the possibility of threats to peace coming from within the victorious Allies. It is possible that Germany will provide the next threat to peace and security, but the threats at the moment are those which come from the division between the two groups within the coalition, i.e., between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. As they both possess the veto, the Security Council is unable to deal with the threat.

[5] [Ed.] In Munich in September 1938, representatives of Britain, France, Germany, and Italy agreed on "the cession to Germany of the Sudeten German territory," which was part of Czechoslovakia. For the full text, see "Agreement concluded at Munich, September 29, 1938, between Germany, Great Britain, France, and Italy," may be found at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/munich1.asp

[6] [Ed.] J. L. Brierly, *The Covenant and the Charter* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1947), p. 23. The full sentence reads as follows:

> We must realize that what we have done is to exchange a scheme which might or might not have worked for one which cannot work, and that instead of limiting the sovereignty of States we have actually extended the sovereignty of the Great Powers, the only States whose sovereignty is still a formidable reality in the modern world.

Wight quoted the full sentence in his review of Brierly's monograph in *International Affairs*, Vol. 23, no. 3 (July 1947), pp. 381–382.

Practice of the UN

The Security Council does not work. Great Power unanimity is never achieved. Russia has used its veto 30 or 40 times already.[7] The enormous concentration of power vested in the Security Council has never been used. The Council acts as a useful mirror for world disputes. All issues coming up are fought out—not settled but discussed.

Three kinds of cleavage are illustrated in the U.N.:

(1) Between Small and Great Powers: the proposal that the veto should be abolished comes up at every Assembly and is consistently sidetracked. It would mean reform of the Charter, and the Charter cannot be reformed without a majority vote of the Security Council.
(2) Between ex-colonial and imperial Powers: the ex-colonial Asiatic nations who have just gained their independence bring their disputes before the Security Council: Indonesia vs Holland; India v. South Africa; Arab States v. Palestine (Palestine is regarded as a stooge of the Western Powers). These issues are all magnified by Russia, who professes to be a champion of colonial nationalism.
(3) The great central issue is Russia v. the West.

What Does Russia Get Out of the Security Council?

Russia has a negative interest in the Council; by use of the veto, she can prevent the U.N. being turned into an alliance ganging up against the Soviet Union. The final answer to whether Russia is likely to resign is that, although she is in a minority in the UN, she is unlikely to resign because she can obstruct the machine if it is likely to affect her interests. The numerical strength of the blocs in the U.N. is roughly as follows:

American bloc
(U.S. and Latin American States who vote with the U.S. on all large issues, with the exception of Argentina—21 votes)
British bloc
(UK and Dominions—6 votes)
Soviet bloc
(now reduced to 5 since Tito's defection—6 votes)
Other West European states (7 votes)
West Asia

[7] [Ed.] The Soviet Union had used its veto thirty-eight times by September 13, 1949.

(Arab League—8 votes)
East Asia
(including India, Siam and Philippines—5 votes)
Africa
(Abyssinia and Liberia—2 votes)

The Great Powers try to attract the floating vote, but even with this floating vote Russia is still outnumbered. That is why she uses the veto. Vyshinsky put this clearly at the Assembly last November:

> The veto is a powerful political weapon. In the political struggle now going on even a simpleton would not let such a weapon fall from his hands. The fewer votes we have on our side, the more we shall use the veto. It causes more of a balance between the forces in the present struggle. The veto is one of the primary principles, the bastion, the greatest defence of the minority. Law is merely a tool of policy. We have political ends just as you have, except that ours happen to be not quite the same as yours.[8]

This statement is interesting now that we are just beginning to weigh up a situation when we might conceivably ourselves want to use the veto. China is on the point of setting up a central government which will claim to be the officially recognized Chinese Government, and probably Great Britain, the U.S., and all the rest will withdraw their recognition from the discredited Kuo-min-tang Government and recognize the Communist Government. That makes the ratio of Communist Great Powers 2–3 instead of 1–4. Supposing that, say, France should turn Communist, there would then be three Communist Great Powers and we should then be forced to use the veto. That is the negative side.

Russia is in the minority but has a positive interest. The U.N. provides a good pulpit for propaganda. Vyshinsky made another statement last November attacking a Western resolution on international control of atomic energy in the General Assembly:

[8] [Ed.] Wight's text (perhaps an unofficial translation) of Vyshinsky's remarks differed from that published as follows in the official record:

> The veto was a very powerful political weapon. No one who held such a weapon would be foolish enough to let it go in the midst of a political struggle; those who were in the minority admitted that frankly and based themselves on the Charter, while those in the majority gave generous-sounding assurances of their willingness to dispense with the veto, but were in fact not at all disposed to do so and would not do so if they were a minority.
>
> UN General Assembly, Ad Hoc Political Committee, Eleventh Meeting, Continuation of the discussion on the admission of new members, Held at the Palais de Chaillot, Paris, November 24, 1948, p. 125.

> They forget that a majority here is a minority in the world. The majority disregards the opinions of the peoples of the world. Therefore it is necessary for us to formulate our views so that the outside world shall hear the voice of truth.[9]

He believes he is speaking to the great downtrodden oppressed majority throughout the world, who are longing to throw off the yoke of imperialism. That is the audience addressed by Russian delegates.

Have the Western Powers any interests in the Security Council, or use for it? It provides a center for Anglo-American collaboration. The U.N. has played an immensely important part in clearing the U.S. of isolationism and educating Americans to take their position as a leading world power. They are learning a sense of responsibility. The American people really do believe in the U.N., though they are now becoming disillusioned. The U.N. is an American institution. (It is difficult to understand why Russia agreed to the U.N. being set up in the U.S.) Any organization set up in the U.S. becomes American. By alphabetical accident, the U.K. and the U.S. sit side by side in the Assembly; this gives great opportunity for Anglo-American cooperation.

Loophole in Charter.

Article 51, on which an increasing number of hopes are based and on which the Atlantic Pact is based, reserves the right to any Power to take any measures to defend its own security.[10] It is controversial whether the Atlantic Pact is

[9] [Ed.] Once again, Wight's text of Vyshinsky's remarks differed from that published as follows in the official record:

> The minority in the United Nations represented, in fact, the majority of public opinion; the majority of peoples who wanted peace at all costs, who were against war-mongers, and who demanded measures to ensure peace throughout the world. In the United Nations, however, there existed a majority which ignored the views of the minority. It was the latter's duty, therefore, to state its case so that the peoples outside the precincts of the General Assembly hall should hear the voice of truth.
>
> UN General Assembly, 156th Plenary Meeting, Continuation of the discussion on the reports of the Atomic Energy Commission, Held at the Palais de Chaillot, Paris, November 4, 1948, p. 408.

Wight provided a paraphrase of Vyshinsky's remarks, with references to the official records, in *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), p. 226.

[10] [Ed.] According to Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, referred to by Wight as the Atlantic Pact,

> The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such

justified by this; Russian propaganda has consistently described it as a breach of the Charter.[11]

The U.N., with the Security Council as its central organ, is a useful diplomatic organization for limited purposes. There must be an organization to transact business which is not transacted by means of war.

The conclusion is that issues of peace and war are unlikely to be decided by the Security Council but, as always in the past, by the operation of the balance of power.

> measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.

This wording is consistent with that of Article 51 of the UN Charter:

> Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.

[11] [Ed.] It is worth noting that the Warsaw Pact, also known as the Warsaw Security Pact or the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance Between the People's Republic of Albania, the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the Hungarian People's Republic, the German Democratic Republic, the Polish People's Republic, the Rumanian People's Republic, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the Czechoslovak Republic, of May 14, 1955, justified its formation by referring to the provisions of Article 51 of the UN Charter concerning the right of individual or collective self-defense. See Article 4 of the Warsaw Pact, may be found at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/warsaw.asp

19
Two Blocs in One World

The clash between Russia and the West has become the most familiar feature of the post-War world; and I want to suggest looking at it as far as possible as if it didn't concern ourselves, but as if we were historians five hundred years hence.*

It is a commonplace that the modern world is continually shrinking because of the improvements in communications; of which better aircraft and new air-routes, like those over the North Pole, are the most obvious examples. But the diplomatic effect of this shrinking—the effect on international politics—is less often recognised. It is very marked, and what it amounts to is this—that the number of Great Powers, or if you like the number of effective power-units in the world, is getting smaller and smaller. You may know how it is if you have dropped quicksilver on a smooth surface, so that it breaks up into several beads or blobs; you try to round them up, and as you press them together they pop into one another, making bigger blobs, until at last there is only the single globule of mercury left. We haven't yet reached the stage of the single globule, which would be of course a single world state, though we can see it lurking behind current events and it is a likely guess that it will have come into being in one way or another before this century ends.[1] But since the end of the First World War the number of beads of mercury has been growing less with startling rapidity.

In 1919, for example, there were seven Great Powers: the victorious Big Five of the Peace Conference, America, Britain, France, Italy, and Japan; and then Germany, whom they had defeated, and Russia, whom Germany had defeated, both in a state of collapse, but both expected to resume their place as Great Powers in due course. Today there are only two Great Power-blocs, one built round America and the other round Russia, and practically every other state in the world has been forced to choose sides.

Being a Great Power is not a matter of coming up to a given standard of manpower, territories and economic resources. The standard is not fixed, it is constantly changing. A Great Power is judged such only in relation to the other Powers in the field. If you take South America alone, Argentina and Brazil are Great Powers; if you take the Arab world alone, Egypt is a Great Power. The best definition of a Great Power is a Power that is strong enough to play a lone hand (and this

* Martin Wight prepared this commentary for a BBC Home Service broadcast, October 21, 1947.

[1] [Ed.] Wight was usually cautious in offering forecasts, in contrast with this statement.

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includes a lone hand in war—the ability single-handed to take on all likely comers).[2] Now, today, only Russia and America would have any chance of being able to stand against the world without any allies at all. Only Russia and America have the three basic requirements: geographical extension—space, space for strategic retreat and for dispersal of your industries against air attack; population—men; and economic resources—the stuff (goods in peace, arms in war).

First, as we well know, no international issue can be treated on its merits; it inevitably becomes aligned with the struggle between East and West. You might say that there was an exception to this in the matter of Palestine, since last week Russia agreed with Britain and America on a policy of partition to solve the Palestine problem. But even here, if we look at it from the Russian point of view, I think we will see that what is really the motive of Russian policy is a manoeuvring for position in a region whereas yet she has no foothold. Russia's ideal policy for Palestine is obvious: she would like it a bi-national state run by the Arab and Jewish Communist Parties, on the lines of Tito's Yugoslavia. But first of all she has got to be allowed a voice in the Palestine issue at all, which has hitherto been an Anglo-American monopoly. If the United Nations now approves the partition policy and asks the Big Three to implement it, Russia will have gained her foothold in the Levant and will be able to develop her policy accordingly.[3]

The cleavage of East and West, moreover, can be seen in geographical fact on the map. It is the most important frontier in the world, running in a great loop through the Old World from the Bering Straits in the East, cutting China in half, down to the southern end of the Caspian Sea and then up again more sharply through Constantinople and the Adriatic, cutting Germany in half, to the western end of the Baltic. All the points of friction in the world today are localised along this line, and what happens at the one end of it quickly affects what happens at the other. For instance, last week [the U.S. Secretary of State] Mr. [George C.] Marshall persuaded the United Nations Assembly to appoint a commission to investigate the frontier between Greece and her northern Communist neighbours, a move which Russia very much resented. Almost the following day [the Soviet

[2] [Ed.] Wight wrote, "If we remember that a political definition describes a pattern to which every historical example only approximates, we might define a dominant Power as a Power that can measure strength against all its rivals combined." Wight cited examples beginning with the imperial Athens of Pericles, and added,

> Perhaps the most perfect specimens of dominant Power are Britain in the mid eighteenth century, who won her oceanic triumphs single-handed against the combined navies of France and Spain; and Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, which with no allies of importance overthrew three military coalitions within fifteen years, before the fourth brought her to her knees
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> Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds. (London: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), pp. 34–35.

[3] [Ed.] The "Big Three" at that time were also known as "the super-Powers," as indicated in the title of William T. R. Fox's book: *The Super-Powers: The United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union—Their Responsibility for Peace* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1944).

Foreign Minister] Mr. [Vyacheslav] Molotov retaliated with the proposal that both Russian and American troops should be withdrawn from Korea, a course which would almost certainly leave the resulting vacuum in Korea to be filled by the well-organized Communists, but which the Americans find it very embarrassing to oppose because they themselves have been pressing for Korean independence.

In the same way, what happens on one side of the line immediately affects the other side—a decrease of pressure here means an increase there. On August 15th [1947] British power in India came to an end, and the two weak new Dominions [India and Pakistan] came into being. Within a week Russia was renewing her pressure on Persia for oil concessions, which would tend to bring at least northern Persia within the Soviet sphere.

But this great frontier only exists on the political surface: it is like a fence which the rabbits can get under, and the rabbits are ideas. Beneath the vertical conflict, so to speak, between the two blocs, there is a horizontal conflict throughout the world between the two ideologies. As well as what the Americans call "the Cold War" there is a cold civil war. The two blocs keep up a mutual radio-active penetration. On the Russian side this is seen negatively, in the extreme precaution taken against such penetration, against rabbits getting under the fence: the care with which the Soviet citizen is screened from Western ideas, the persecution of bourgeois tendencies among Soviet artists. From the outside we cannot see how many rabbits get through and what sort of a run they have for their money before they are caught. But we can see what it looks like on our side of the fence, because we have Communist parties carrying on the ideological war with great courage and determination in our midst. The Communist parties outside the Soviet bloc are the most plain evidence that the fence between the two blocs is not a real insulator. The most plain hint of that world unity which, as I suggested earlier, can be seen lurking behind the events of the present. And if, from the detached standpoint we have been taking, we ask why there are Communist parties in the Western world, we find two answers, both of which should be kept in mind: first, that the principles of the Western world prevent it from suppressing political opponents except in extreme cases; and secondly, that to suppress the Communist parties would not in any case be very much good, because they are influential and powerful only where they have social and national grievances to feed on.

This clash and inter-penetration of two blocs in one world is of course an unpleasant picture, chiefly because it seems to deprive us to a great extent of our freedom of action. There seem to me to be two conclusions. The first is familiar enough, but it cannot be said too often. The West may have no diplomatic elbow-room in its relations with the Soviet bloc, but it has as much freedom as it ever had to settle its own internal affairs. And the more successful it is in doing this, according to its own principles, the less ideological warfare and penetration from the Soviet bloc will there be on the Western side of the fence. The second conclusion is less often realised. If we have in one sense lost our freedom of political

action, and feel fatalistically that the future is beyond our control, we at least gain the compensating freedom of not having to worry about it. If we have a disagreement of principle with Russia, we at least need not temporise, as we did sometimes with Germany before the war, in the hope of avoiding bad feeling and averting a clash. I remember watching Mrs. Roosevelt at the United Nations Assembly, a year ago, arguing with Mr. Vyshinsky, and how the Russian statesman's face became more and more flushed as she remorselessly but with perfect courtesy, pinned him down, point by point, on the fundamental inconsistency of principle between Russia and the West on the question of whether displaced persons were to be treated as individuals with human rights or as the property of the government of the state from which they originally came. So honestly and so skilfully did she press this most civilized experiment in third degree that the moment came when Mr. Vyshinsky, his face now quite crimson under his white hair, hurried from the room. We may have lost the freedom which would come from being able to have permanent agreement with Mr. Vyshinsky; but we can have the freedom which comes from recognising the fact and letting neither ourselves, nor him, forget it.[4]

[4] [Ed.] Wight discussed the differences at the United Nations between the West and the Soviet bloc (and the distinct contributions of Mrs. Roosevelt) in more detail in his address, "The United Nations Assembly," presented at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) on March 6, 1947, and published in the present volume, Martin Wight, *Foreign Policy and Security Strategy*, David S. Yost, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

20

The Power Struggle within the United Nations

Mr. Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen: the wise, learned, and perspicacious men who organize the Institute of World Affairs gave me this subject when they honored me with an invitation to speak to you.* "The Power Struggle within the United Nations" is a title that seems to clash with our theme for today, "Democracy on Trial in the International Community." Perhaps it was in their minds that it would be useful to look at international society from another angle, to drop the word democracy for the moment, and to examine our situation in other terms. This is how I guess their purpose, and this is what I shall try to do.

What then, first of all, is "the power struggle"? Ever since the breakdown of international order in 1914, international society has been torn by a tripartite struggle. When we recall the Allies versus the Central Powers, the United Nations versus the Axis, the Cold War between Russia and the West, we think of international politics dualistically and tend to overlook the underlying three-cornered conflict. Let us define the triangle in these terms: Communist Powers, status quo Powers, have-not Powers.

Communism is the point of the triangle easiest to establish; it has remained the most constant. The Communist state which came into being in Russia in 1917 has probably changed less than any other power or group of powers, except that it has grown steadily stronger.

The status quo Powers have been what we usually call the Western Powers: the core of the successful coalition against the Central Powers in the First World War, especially Britain, France, and the United States, together with the Commonwealth countries of European stock, also Belgium, Holland, and Portugal. From the point of view of international politics, it is better to describe them as status quo Powers than as "democratic" or "liberal" or in terms of some other category derived from domestic politics. What binds them together, in the last analysis, is neither constitutional government nor democratic values, but a common interest in the existing international distribution of power and wealth. They have not always recognized

* Wight published this paper in *Democracy on Trial, Proceedings of the Institute of World Affairs*, 33rd session, December 9–12, 1956 (Los Angeles, California: University of Southern California, 1957), pp. 247–259.

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this common interest in the same degree. Britain and France were usually in disagreement and sometimes nearly in conflict from 1918 until the remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936. The United States was isolationist until 1941. Only after these three Great Powers had fought a second world war together in defense of the *status quo* did they give expression to their common interests by forming a close alliance with one another.

The Powers occupying these two points of the triangle since 1917 have remained constant. The group of the *status quo* Powers has not changed its composition, though the balance of power within the group has decisively changed. The Communist Power has remained constant, with this ominous qualification—that it has been joined by a second Communist Great Power, China. These continuities of role have given continuity to the historical drama. It is the have-nots, at the third point of the triangle, who have changed most.

Admiral Mahan first applied the phrase "have-not" to international politics in 1907,[1] when he described the world-wide struggle for territory, sea room, and commercial opportunity between Britain, France, and the United States on the one side and Germany, Japan, and Russia on the other. Germany was the original have-not Power of the twentieth century: her claim for a place in the sun and a destiny on the ocean was perhaps the deepest cause of the First World War. The chief loser in the war, she became the chief revisionist Power. She was joined in the malcontents' camp by the weakest and most dissatisfied of the victors, Italy and Japan; and these together, as the Anti-Comintern Pact Powers, launched the Second World War for the redivision of the world. In consequence of this second war, Italy, the weakest of the trio, has become a reformed character, and has accepted her reduction to the status of a second-class European state. Germany and Japan, the more formidable confederates, have been put out of business for ten years, and are only now tentatively reappearing. Since 1945, the role of the have-not Powers has been played by new actors, whom we call the Afro-Asian bloc or the Bandung Powers.

There is one important similarity between the Bandung Powers and the Axis Powers, and one important dissimilarity. At the outset, let us not be unduly influenced by certain affinities of internal political regime between the one and the other group. It is true that the Bandung nations, like the Axis Powers, tend to authoritarianism, with outstanding exceptions in India and one or two others, such as Ceylon and the Philippines. So the other day when President Soekarno declared that the welfare of Indonesia required the abolition of political parties, he was talking language familiar to those who remember Europe between the Wars. But it is a vice in the study of international relations to classify countries primarily in terms of their internal regimes. The similarity between the two groups lies in their *having not*. And here it is important to notice that "have-not" is not the same as "non-Western." The Latin American states are members of Western civilization,

[1] T. Mahan, *Some Neglected Aspects of War* (1907), pp. 69–70.

and are frequently the most eloquent and penetrating spokesmen of Western ideals, but they are also, on a social analysis, have-nots. This creates a tension in their attitudes that is often to be seen in the United Nations.

Between the Wars we called the have-nots "revisionist": Germany aimed at revising the Versailles settlement in Europe, Japan at revising the Washington Treaties in Eastern Asia. Today we call the have-nots "underdeveloped" (a name which skates over the awkward question whether we ourselves may not be overdeveloped). Both of these words imply dissatisfaction with the existing distribution of power and wealth in international society, and they also infer the aim of a redistribution. Each implies a different way of redressing the international division of labor that marked international society before 1914, when Western Europe was the workshop of the world as a result of having been first with the industrial revolution.

Perhaps the essence of the have-not Powers is to be found in a state of mind, a motive, in which resentment, a sense of inferiority, and self-pity are prime ingredients. They are the self-consciously proletarian nations—a conception formulated by Mussolini as early as 1919. "The war which we have begun," said Mussolini of the Abyssinian War in December 1935, "is the war of the poor, of the disinherited, of the proletariat. [It requires a slight effort of concentration to realize that he is speaking of the Italians, not the Abyssinians.] Against us is ranged the front of conservatism, of selfishness, of hypocrisy." "For many generations," said President Soekarno in his opening speech to the Bandung Conference in April 1955, "our people were the voiceless ones in the world, disregarded and living in poverty and humiliation." The Bandung Powers and the Axis Powers are united in history through a common resentment of Western civilization; and by a familiar and elementary psychological mechanism, the resentment is combined with a passionate desire to imitate. Italy and Germany were the newest and most politically retarded of the European Great Powers: they resented Western civilization from within, as its most backward and unfortunate children. Japan resented it from without, as its most precocious apprentice. (It may be Japan's destiny to be the link between the old Axis coalition and the new Afro-Asian bloc, to be a proletarian of both generations.) The Axis Powers were driven by resentment of the territorial empires and deep-rooted stable cultures of France, Britain, and America. The Bandung Powers are moved correspondingly by the contrast between their poverty and our wealth; by the enormous gap in living standards which is increasing steadily, not diminishing; by resentment against the privileged minority dwelling in Western Europe and North America, who form one-sixth of the world's population and possess two-thirds of its wealth. At its best this is expressed in the demand for equality, and clothes itself in Wilsonian language of national rights, liberty, and self-determination. But it would be an error to suppose that this language means the same to those whose historical experience and religious premises are totally different from ours as it does to us.

Hitler, too, employed it with consummate effect.

"Asia's fundamental grievance," a distinguished Orientalist has said,

> is something that is nobody's fault and that nobody can help; it is the plain historical fact that Asia stayed behind when the West was creating the modem world. The sense of frustration instilled in Asians by their "backwardness" is ultimately a feeling of dissatisfaction with themselves. But human nature being what it is, especially in its collective responses, this feeling is relieved in being projected outward in hatred of the West.[2]

Afro-Asians resent what Bismarck called the *injuria temporum*, the injustices of history, and demand, sometimes arbitrarily, the rectification of these injustices. They sometimes speak of economic aid as a kind of reparations due to them from the West for the crimes of colonialism.

I overstate the case, to be sure, but the overstatement may light up some elements in our present situation which we tend to ignore. Nationalism of the kind I have described is perhaps found among the masses rather than the intelligentsia, though I am not confident of this. It is found in general in the Islamic states, and especially in the Arab states. It is found in China (and it is the singular importance of China that she is both a Bandung and a Communist Power).

> There is just enough evidence to render plausible the idea that everything wrong in the world is due to imperialism, and once this connection is believed in it is not necessary to demonstrate it in any particular case. If America is rich, it is only because Americans have plundered other countries; if Western money has endowed schools and hospitals in Asian lands, it must have been for imperialist ends (or in the case of Catholic orphanages, according to the official Peking version, for the purpose of murdering children!). Are we not faced here with a paranoiac construction as crazy and as impervious to reason as the anti-Semitism of the Nazi Reich?[3]

Nationalism of this kind is least found in India and the other lands of Hindu or Buddhist culture. Yet many educated Indians, perhaps most, believe that the United States dropped atomic bombs on Japanese rather than on Germans because she wanted to spare white Europeans but did not mind killing Asians, and they believe too that this is why the United States tests hydrogen bombs in the Pacific. We have lately seen the double standard which Indians themselves instinctively apply, when injustice was done simultaneously to an Arab and a European people. And it is not only President Nasser who can hold language in international relations depressingly similar to that of earlier have-not Powers, but also Mr. Nehru,

[2] G. F. Hudson, *Questions of East and West* (London: Odhams, 1955), p. 118.
[3] Ibid.

as when he declared in September 1955, with less than his usual sophistication, that his government was "not prepared to tolerate the presence of the Portuguese in Goa, even if the Goans wanted them."

If an emotional affinity springing from resentment against the West constitutes the inner similarity between the have-not Powers of the present generation and their predecessors, the dissimilarity between them lies in the conduct of their foreign policies. The Axis Powers operated *outside* the League of Nations; the Bandung bloc operates *inside* the United Nations. Here we come to the second part of my title.

The three-cornered power struggle between the World Wars was not confined within the framework of the League. The League never included more than two points of the triangle. In the 1920's, before revisionism grew strong, it included victors and revisionists and excluded Bolshevik Russia. In the 1930s the revisionist Powers walked out—Japan, Germany, Italy—and Russia came in under the name of collective security, herself to be expelled in 1939, leaving Britain and France alone as the rump of the League. The United Nations, on the other hand, is a body within which the tripartite struggle can go on. This might almost be said to define its nature.

The League was regarded from the outset as the organ of the status quo Powers; in 1919 Mussolini described it as "a racket in the interests of the rich nations against the proletarian nations." The Covenant was drafted by the status quo Powers; indeed it was primarily an Anglo-American document.

The United Nations, in origin, was the organ of the *status quo* Powers and the Communist Power in conjunction. Russia had as much opportunity as the United States or Britain to contribute to the drafting of the Charter, and that document includes all she wanted it to include. The Western Powers can salvage their honor by attributing to this circumstance, in some degree, the most retrograde feature of the Charter: the way it raises the Great Powers above the law that they impose on the rest of international society, by arrogating to them alone the continued protection of the unanimity rule which all other powers forfeit.

It is convenient to view the tripartite struggle in the United Nations as passing through three phases up to the present time. The first phase runs from 1945 to 1947. This saw the collapse of the original organization, the breakdown of the assumption of Great Power unanimity on which the Charter was based, as a result of Russia's use of the veto for purposes of obstruction. Whatever the United Nations may have become since, it is nothing like the organization which was hailed at San Francisco in 1945. In 1947 the West reluctantly recognized the existence of the Cold War, with the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the breakdown of the Council of Foreign Ministers in London in December.

In the second phase, therefore, which runs from 1947 to 1953, the United Nations becomes part of the diplomatic equipment of the Cold War. In the constitutional history of the United Nations, this phase is marked by the transfer of

authority from the Security Council to the General Assembly, which of course is a constitutional development or a violation of the Charter, according to the point of view. Already in 1947 came the first attempt to find a vetoless alternative to the Security Council, the establishment of the Interim Committee. The phase culminates in the United Nations' defense of South Korea in 1950—an action due primarily to the courage of Mr. Truman, who made the military decision first and sought United Nations authorization afterwards, and secondly, to the combined accidents that Russia failed to exercise her veto in the Security Council and that China's seat there was occupied by Formosa instead of Peking. The Korean War completed the transfer of authority from the Security Council to the General Assembly, that is to say, of such authority as was capable of being transferred, by means of the Acheson Plan, the Uniting for Peace Resolution, which was first operated in February 1951 in order to declare Chinese intervention in Korea as aggression.

This constitutional development, this transfer of authority, was only possible because, during the first and second phases, the United Nations was a piece of diplomatic machinery controlled by the United States. Russia was in a constant minority of one among the five permanent members of the Security Council, in a minority of two among the 11 members of the Security Council as a whole. Her positive motions could never obtain the requisite majority of seven, and they were thus stillborn; American or Western motions were normally backed by a majority, which forced Russia into the invidious position of using the isolated negative vote which we call the veto. In the General Assembly, up to 1955, the Western and Latin American blocs numbered 38 votes, the Afro-Asian and Communist blocs only 22 (though of course the voting never rigidly followed these alignments). The United States could consequently indulge the illusion that the United Nations was a natural expression of her own interests. When a conflict appeared between the United Nations and American interests, American enthusiasm for the United Nations at once evaporated. The classic illustration is the Guatemalan case in 1954. Guatemala, menaced by armed intervention, appealed to the Security Council. Mr. Lodge declared in the strongest terms that the United Nations must keep out of this affair, which was to be settled by the Organization of American States. This was the moral equivalent of a veto. To the parties not immediately concerned, the Guatemalan episode appeared quite as shabby a betrayal of the United Nations as the Anglo-French intervention in Suez has, but because of the differences in circumstances the United States was able to dispose of the threat to her interests more tidily and with less fuss.

So the veto is the weapon of the minority: the doctrine was formulated explicitly by Vyshinsky. One day this boot might be on the other foot. If Britain and France were to retire into a resentful neutrality (which alas seems not an impossible contingency), the United States might find herself in a minority of two to three among the permanent members of the Security Council, and the power of veto would

then acquire the same importance in her diplomacy as it has had in Russia's. As the corollary of the doctrine that the veto is the weapon of the minority, Vyshinsky also formulated another doctrine, whose roots are deep in Marxist thought: that a majority in the United Nations is a minority in the world, and that "an immense majority throughout the world stands behind the minority in the United Nations." To this assumed audience, vast and unseen, Soviet diplomacy skilfully appealed. It was in the hope of seducing it that Stalin, during the second phase of the United Nations' history, developed the World Peace Movement, which was deliberately conceived as an alternative international organization to a United Nations dominated by America. And the greater part of the "world majority" is provided by the have-not Powers. This leads us to the third phase, which may appropriately be named the Bandung period.

The second phase, I suggested, ended in 1953. That date saw the Korean armistice. More important, it saw the death of Stalin. In one aspect, the third phase is the post-Stalin era. Soviet diplomacy now showed less rigidity and more flexibility in its use of the United Nations. The World Peace Movement faded into oblivion; Russia joined the ILO, she returned to UNESCO. But the basic reason for her renewed interest in the United Nations was that it was moving increasingly in a direction that suited her. The head-on conflict between Russia and the West, in which Russia was at a disadvantage, was gradually ceasing to be the dominant theme of United Nations' politics. It was being replaced by the anti-colonialist campaign.

The anti-colonialist campaign was rooted in earlier phases. It had first made its mark on United Nations's machinery as early as 1946, when the Committee on Information was set up. You will recall that Article 73 of the Charter declares the obligations of Powers which administer non-self-governing territories, and it lays down that, in respect of these territories, such Powers shall "transmit regularly to the Secretary-General for information purposes, subject to such limitation as security and constitutional considerations may require, statistical and other information of a technical nature relating to economic, social, and educational conditions." The Charter says nothing about how such information shall be handled, nor whether it shall be debated. Accordingly, in 1946 the General Assembly set up an ad hoc committee for the job, which the colonial Powers received with grave reserve and which France claimed was a violation of the Charter. Here you see the pattern appearing: when the peace and security arrangements of the United Nations were amended or developed, Russia claimed the Charter was being violated; when the arrangements concerning trusteeship and non-self-governing territories were amended or developed, the colonial Powers claimed the Charter was being violated.

From now on, the Committee on Information and the body to which it reported, the Fourth Committee, or Trusteeship Committee, of the General Assembly, became the grand annual battleground for the struggle between the *status quo* and

the have-not Powers. The battle did not draw blood; it only caused irritation rising into exasperation. Russia judiciously stimulated it when occasion served, but in general she could sit back and watch its progress with satisfaction. From the outset, the have-not Powers sought to widen the scope of Article 73 by demanding the transmission, not only of technical information about economic, social, and educational conditions, but of *political* information also. This was hotly resisted by the Colonial Powers. In 1949 the General Assembly passed a resolution making it obligatory to submit political information. The British delegate condemned the resolution as an illegal and "backdoor" effort to amend the Charter, and declared that Britain would not comply with "misguided and sometimes incompetent policies" urged by countries "actuated by emotion and envy." But a couple of years later, with what was perhaps a tardy access of wisdom, the Colonial Powers, deciding that they had nothing to conceal but much to be proud of, began submitting political information voluntarily, and did some useful counter-propaganda with it.

During these debates the United States tended to sit on the fence, trying to mediate between the two sides. In 1952 she announced that she was about to cease transmitting information on Puerto Rico, which was about to cease being non-self-governing. This threw the Fourth Committee into consternation: How could it prevent a Colonial Power from escaping its clutches by the mean subterfuge of announcing that a non-self-governing territory had become self-governing? With the crazy logic of political passion it began a search for a list of factors or criteria of self-government, as a guide to determine when the interesting condition of non-self-government under the supervision of the United Nations has not yet been outgrown. In their violence and abstraction, the debates of the Fourth Committee now resembled those of the legislative assemblies of the French Revolution. The search for the "list of factors" produced a grandiose essay in half-baked political philosophy, adopted in October 1953. But two months earlier Belgium had finally withdrawn from the Committee of Information on the grounds that it abused its powers, nor has she since returned to it.

Meanwhile the anti-colonialist campaign had widened. It was moving from the Fourth Committee to the General Assembly itself, from the question of non-self-governing territories to the question of domestic jurisdiction. The Charter is an ill-drafted document, full of potential contradictions. Perhaps the most famous is the contradiction between Article 2, Paragraph 7, which precludes the United Nations from intervening "in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state," and the tenor of much of the rest of the Charter.

The limits of Article 2, Paragraph 7, were first explored in the case of South Africa. The question was this: If South Africa infringes human rights, can the General Assembly infringe South African domestic jurisdiction? The Afro-Asians argued that respect for human rights overrides juridical limitations. "It is better to be carried away by emotions," said the Pakistani delegate in 1952, "than bogged

down by legal sophistications"—a highly revolutionary sentiment. Accordingly in that year the General Assembly began debating South Africa's policy of racial discrimination, and it established a three-man committee of inquiry under the title of the United Nations Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa. (The initials of UNCORSUSA would apply equally to the United States of America, but that is yet to come.) Since UNCORSUSA was flatly refused entry into South Africa, it set up shop in the summer of 1953 in Geneva, and held public hearings of Solly Sachs, Michael Scott, and other critics of South African policy. It became an open tribunal for propaganda against South Africa. Dr. Malan responded by describing the United Nations as "a cancer eating at the peace and tranquility of the world," the closest thing yet in the history of the United Nations to what Hitler used to say about the League. UNCORSUSA continued its activities until 1955, when in a dramatic debate the South African delegate accused India of conducting a "vendetta" against his country, and withdrew from the General Assembly. Immediately afterward UNCORSUSA collapsed, to the chagrin of the Afro-Asians, for the quite undramatic reason that the Budgetary Committee refused to provide funds for continued trips to Geneva.

It was in the same assembly, you remember, that the campaign against French domestic jurisdiction came to a head. Already in 1951 France had withdrawn from the Fourth Committee because Egypt discussed French rule in Morocco. In 1955 the General Assembly put on its agenda the question of Algeria, which is part of metropolitan France. The French thereupon withdrew from the Assembly. This caused some scandal: France is a Great Power, and she has traditional admirers among the Latin Americans. The Afro-Asians reluctantly climbed down and allowed Algeria to be removed from the agenda. The package deal for the admission of new members was being negotiated, and France on the Security Council might have vetoed the whole bargain. So the Afro-Asians sacrificed the Algerian issue, for one year, in order to become the largest bloc in the United Nations.

The development of the United Nations in these directions is remarkable. It was not contemplated at San Francisco that the United Nations should be an organization for collective intervention in the domestic affairs of its members. Yet, as the Holy Alliance was a coalition of kings for suppressing revolutionary movements, so the United Nations is tending to become an instrument of the have-not and Communist Powers for promoting revolutionary movements. "I believe wherever you find a revolution," a Pakistani delegate has said, "you should drag it into the United Nations so it can be controlled and bloodless." But it is arguable whether the activities of the General Assembly either control revolutionary movements or reduce their violence. As a New Zealand delegate once remarked, If certain situations are inflamed, are not our annual debates themselves an inflammatory factor? And indeed, these interminable debates sometimes seem to be the diplomatic equivalent of brain-washing—an adaptation of that new revolutionary technique

in domestic affairs to international relations. The reiterated oratorical denunciations of colonialism suggest a desire to convert the victim for his own good. In international politics the victim has an advantage over his domestic counterpart, in that if driven beyond endurance he can walk out of the United Nations. This of course spoils the fun, and it is amusing to see the Afro-Asian inquisitors pleading with him to come back, so that the process of his enlightenment may be continued.

I personally happen to share Michael Scott's convictions about South African racialism. But the issue here is something different: Is it desirable that the United Nations should be an organ for collective intervention, and is it desirable when the organ is manipulated by a coalition of the have-not and Communist Powers? All the arguments used to justify the General Assembly's discussing the racial situation in South Africa could be used equally well to justify discussion of the color-bar in London, England, or the tardiness of the southern states in complying with the Supreme Court's ruling on desegregation. And this apparatus of propaganda is not impartial. It works against the Powers which are naturally liberal, which indeed invented liberalism, and serves to obscure the real atrocities. South Africa, to be sure, is bad enough, but Soviet Russia and Communist China are far worse. Yet their domestic affairs have had virtually no discussion in the General Assembly. The deportation of the Baltic peoples, the abominable activities of General Serov,[4] the slave camps in Siberia, the mass-trials and mass-executions in China, these are judged by a different standard, and do not disquiet the Bandung conscience. Only tardily has it been brought to regard Soviet intervention in Hungary as deserving censure.

Yet the important feature of the United Nations is not that it has dramatized the *entente* of sympathy and perhaps of interest between the proletarian nations, who believe they have nothing to lose but their backwardness, and the Communist Powers, who offer the most highly-colored diagnosis and remedy for this condition. Such an entente existed irrespective of the United Nations. Nor is it that the United Nations has played only a small part in the power struggle between Russia and the West. This was predictable and in accordance with all historical experience. It is rather that the United Nations has enhanced the power struggle between the have-nots and the status quo Powers. The existence of the United Nations has exaggerated the international importance of the have-not Powers, enabling them to organize themselves into a pressure-group with much greater diplomatic and propaganda weight than they would otherwise have had. The paradoxical consequence has been that Powers which, taken collectively, exhibit a low level of political freedom, governmental efficiency, public probity, civil liberties, and human rights, have had the opportunity to set themselves up in judgment over Powers which, taken collectively, for all their sins, have a high level in these respects.

[4] [Ed.] General Ivan Aleksandrovich Serov (1905–90) was head of the KGB in 1954–58.

To this paradox let me add one other observation. It is the most prominent, and the most neglected, contrast between the United Nations and the League of Nations. The aggressor Powers one after the other quit the League, because they feared that League membership might hamper their freedom of action. But the aggressor Powers, branded and potential, clamor for admission to the United Nations, because they know that membership in the United Nations will not in any way hamper their freedom of action, and will increase their diplomatic and propaganda weight. On the other hand, the Powers which have withdrawn from United Nations organs and have considered complete resignation, are mostly Powers which were the core of the League. (I hope I may have some agreement in regarding South Africa as *sui generis*.) Britain has threatened withdrawal from the Committee on Information, Belgium has withdrawn, France has on one occasion withdrawn from the General Assembly and has considered resignation from the United Nations. Now, whatever you may think of the Anglo-French intervention in Suez (and in my opinion it was immoral in purpose, imprudent politically, incompetent in practice, and disastrous in consequences), these Powers, France, Belgium, Britain, have in their history not deserved less well of the society of nations than have any of the Bandung Powers.

The Bandung phase of the United Nations has culminated with the 16 admissions of 1955 and the four more in 1956. The Afro-Asians are now the largest single bloc, 26 out of 80: in an Assembly that votes by a two-thirds majority, they have virtually a veto by themselves, even without the support of the Soviet bloc; and this ascendancy may become as valuable on important issues to Soviet diplomacy as is the Soviet veto in the Security Council to Afro-Asian diplomacy.

Although the United States' diplomatic initiative in the General Assembly this November, putting herself at the head of the Afro-Asians, was occasioned by the Anglo-French adventure, it was in a sense inherent in the new balance of voting power and an attempt to come to terms with it. It was an interesting and even honorable initiative, yet the long-term obstacles to regular United States cooperation with the Afro-Asians are obvious. The admission of Communist China is the least awkward issue that will be pressed. The arguments for regarding the Nationalist regime in Formosa as an American puppet government on Chinese soil, which have already convinced most Afro-Asians, will increase their cogency. The Philippines have begun to question the "unequal treaty" establishing American military bases. The American position in Japan is no different morally or politically from what was the British position in Egypt, and will suffer the same forces of erosion. (It may be significant that the first repercussion of the Hungary-Suez crisis in the Far East was not a Communist Chinese attempt on Formosa, as some had feared, but a demand by Mr. Shigemitsu, the most pro-American of Japanese statesmen, that the Japanese-American security treaty be abolished and replaced by something less favorable to the United States.) The Saudi Arabians will ask whether they are

getting a fair deal on their oil revenues. And the Panamanians will say, as they are already beginning to say, that if Nasser can expropriate his Canal, why may we not expropriate ours? The blessed word *democracy* will not disguise the incongruity of the greatest and richest of the *status quo* Powers putting itself at the head of the have-nots.

In trying to describe the power struggle in the United Nations, I may have conveyed to you some of the reasons why Europeans regard the United Nations with less enthusiasm than do Americans. Let me offer, in conclusion, a few words of evaluation. International society does its business through the machinery of diplomacy. It does not have a government; it only has, at best, accommodation of interests between sovereign states. There is no analogy between international society and domestic society; they are quite different animals. The United Nations is a complicated bit of this diplomatic machinery, nothing more. In mechanical terms, it is like the governor which controls the speed of an engine, or the flywheel which keeps it balanced; it is not itself an energizing force. If energizing force is supplied by a Great Power which has defined its own interests and knows its own mind, then the United Nations can perform a useful function in clothing the Great Power's action with a decent respect for the opinions of mankind. The successes the United Nations has had have been of this sort. What we call "the United Nations in Korea" was in fact the NATO Powers plus three other Commonwealth states and one Latin American state, together with a fringe of Asian Powers who felt directly threatened by communism. The United Nations Emergency Force in Egypt today is similar. Of course it is not a police force, since it lacks both legal competence and effective power. It is a substitute for the United States sending her own boys to the Middle East, and you see its dependence on the United States when you consider that the majority of contingents have been flown to the staging area at Naples in American planes.

The United Nations is useful as a clearing-house for minor disputes. It cannot settle big issues; these are settled, if at all, as they have always been, in direct negotiation between the Powers directly concerned; thus the Korean armistice was reached, and thus the Indo-China crisis was handled at Geneva in 1954. It is almost an axiom about international political organization that the more universal it is, the less efficacious, because universality maximizes conflicting interests. No government or army chiefs regard membership in the United Nations as adding anything to the security of their country, except in so far as the rulers of weak states calculate its publicity advantages. Within these limits the United Nations has a certain modest utility, though I think there is reason for real disquiet in the new ascendancy of the combined Communist and have-not blocs, and we may come to find ourselves in the position of regarding the United Nations as a diplomatic embarrassment.

But the United Nations does a disservice in so far as it tends to obscure the abiding conditions of international life: the unending patient undramatic work

of diplomacy; the inescapable conflicts of interest between nations; the reiterated need to make adjustments to new pressures and new relationships of power, themselves destined in a few years to dissolve; the perpetual strain of choosing which of the possible courses is the lesser evil and the constant moral tension lying at the heart of statecraft, of discriminating clearly the interests of your own people (the statesman's first responsibility) and judging how this can be followed with least injury to the interests of other people—the moral effort of finding such a policy, in the words of President Washington, "as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel."[5]

[5] [Ed.] This phrase appears in Washington's Farewell Address, published September 19, 1796.

21

Review of Henrique de Pinheiro, The World State or the New Order of Common Sense (Rio de Janeiro: Grafica Olimpica, 1944)

International confederations and world-state utopias can be as respectable as Penn and Saint-Pierre, but few remain readable after the lapse of a couple of years.* This one, written by a Brazilian diplomat in London during the "blitz," organizes the whole of humanity as a federal democracy on the highest Western ethical and juridical principles. It has nothing to do with the international politics which produce the structure and fitful functioning of the Security Council.

* Henrique de Pinheiro published *The World State or the New Order of Common Sense* with Grafica Olimpica in Rio de Janeiro in 1944. Wight published this review in *International Affairs*, vol. 22, no. 4 (October 1946), p. 542.

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22

Review of John Middleton Murry, *Trust or Perish* (Rickmansworth: Andrew Dakers, 1946)

Mr. Middleton Murry makes a profound, brilliant and lucid analysis of the present crisis of civilization, of war, totalitarianism and the inadequacy of the United Nations Organization.* But the suggestion that a unilateral renunciation of war by Great Britain might turn Russia's heart and contribute to a reign of law seems to repeat the pacifist illusion, familiar during Hitler's ascendancy, that you can have collective security without force, and non-violence without suffering.

* John Middleton Murry published his paper "Trust or Perish" with Andrew Dakers in Rickmansworth in 1946. Wight published this review in *International Affairs*, vol. 22, no. 4 (October 1946), p. 542.

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23

Review of David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System, An Argument for the Functional Development of International Organization*, fourth edn with a new Introduction (London: National Peace Council, 1946)

This is a useful essay, but an essay in political theory rather than political science.* Everything that has happened since the first edition,[1] particularly the history of U.N.R.R.A. [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration] and of the specialized agencies of the United Nations, suggests that the functional development of international organization cannot eradicate or by-pass conflicts of interests: it presupposes their absence.

* David Mitrany published the fourth edition of his essay, *A Working Peace System, An Argument for the Functional Development of International Organization*, with the: National Peace Council in London in 1946. Wight published this review in *International Affairs*, vol. 23, no. 3 (July 1947), p. 384.

[1] Reviewed in *International Affairs*, January 1944, p. 109.

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24

Review of Ely Culbertson, *Must We Fight Russia?* (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1946)

This opulent pamphlet is the most vigorous, lucid and intelligent restatement of the collective security case that has been published in the US or Great Britain since the war.* It faces all the defects which make the revision of the United Nations Charter imperative, all the difficulties which make it virtually impossible. "The General Assembly today is an assembly of mice, presided over by a few cats" (p. 27). "Time is no longer the ally of the United States; it has become the ally of Russia" (p. 54). Nevertheless, "in the light of America's tremendous power, the United States is perfectly able to build an honest and effective system for international security—with Russia if possible, without her if necessary" (p. 53). It has the quality and the urgency of Mr. Churchill's prophetic cry in 1936: "Never till now were great communities afforded such ample means of measuring their approaching agony. … Stop it! Stop it!! Stop it now!!!" It may indeed be damned as the Fulton speech dressed up.[1] But it has made at least one reader feel that the American people might yet rise to the height of Mr. Culbertson's argument and avert the Third World War.

* Ely Culbertson published *Must We Fight Russia?* with the John C. Winston Company in Philadelphia in 1946. Martin Wight published this review in *International Affairs*, vol. 22, no. 4 (October 1946), p. 543.

[1] [Ed.] The "Fulton speech" was Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech, delivered at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, on March 5, 1946

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25

Review of C. E. M. Joad, *Conditions of Survival* (London: Federal Union, 1946)

The case for federal union is common sense, and Dr. Joad argues it, as might be expected, with a more than common range of reference and inventiveness of illustration.* But like other enthusiasts he goes too far. The history of Switzerland and the United States proves not that federation abolishes war (p. 21), but that it substitutes civil war for international war. And the formation of federations short of a single world federation would not abolish international war but would only increase the size of the units which continued to live in a state of anarchy.

* C. E. M. Joad published *Conditions of Survival* with the Federal Union in London in 1946. Wight published this review in *International Affairs*, vol. 23, no. 1 (January 1947), p. 81.

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26

Review of J. L. Brierly, *The Covenant and the Charter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947)

Professor Brierly contrasts the co-operative character of the League, which was based on the agreement between sovereign states to do certain things, with the quasi-organic character of the United Nations, which confers the power of directing how the collective body should act on one of its organs, the Security Council.* Article XVI precisely defined the event upon which sanctions were to become applicable; Chapter VII gives the Security Council instead a blank cheque to determine both when peace is endangered and the measures to be adopted—which might well be another Munich (p. 13). The corollary of the Covenant's co-operative principle was the unanimity rule, which, *pace* the disingenuous statement of the Great Powers at San Francisco, did not paralyse the League. The corollary of a quasi-organic development would be majority voting, but this has been achieved only in the perverted form of the Great Power veto. The veto precludes the United Nations from taking action against a Great Power, and a collective system which "does not propose to deal with aggression by a Great Power, is, I venture to say, not a system of collective security at all" (p. 18). For the Charter reflects the assumptions prevalent at Dumbarton Oaks, that unity of purpose among the Big Three would continue, and that renewed aggression would come only from Germany and Japan. Thus the Covenant system of public law and graded sanctions has been replaced by the Charter system of security intended to be always ready for immediate action, but capable of being jammed by a single Great Power. "We must realize that what we have done is to exchange a system which might or might not have worked for one which cannot work, and that instead of limiting the sovereignty of States we have actually extended the sovereignty of the Great Powers, the only states whose sovereignty is still a formidable reality in the modern world" (p. 23). How different is this cool analysis in language of studied restraint, from the cant and self-deception that accompanied the establishment of the United Nations, the disagreeable lack of candour of the Great Power statement

* J. L. Brierly, D.C.L., L.L.M., Chichele Professor of International Law and Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, 1947, delivered *The Covenant and the Charter*, The Henry Sidgwick Memorial Lecture at Newnham College, Cambridge, on November 30, 1946. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947). Wight published this review in *International Affairs*, vol. 23, no. 3 (July 1947), pp. 381–382.

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at San Francisco,[1] the lack of realism of the official British Commentary.[2] These few pages are the best thing we have yet had on their subject.

[1] [Ed.] The "disingenuous statement of the Great Powers at San Francisco" and "the disagreeable lack of candour of the Great Power statement at San Francisco" concern the San Francisco Declaration of June 7, 1945. In this declaration the permanent members of the UN Security Council presented the veto they gained under the Charter as less exigent than "the rule of complete unanimity of the League Council." In the words of the San Francisco Declaration,

> As regards the permanent members, there is no question under the Yalta formula of investing them with a new right, namely, the right to veto, a right which the permanent members of the League Council always had. … It should also be remembered that under the Yalta formula the five major powers could not act by themselves, since even under the unanimity requirement any decisions of the [Security] Council would have to include the concurring votes of at least two of the non-permanent members.
>
> The San Francisco Declaration is reproduced in Bruno Simma, ed., *The Charter of the United Nations: A Commentary*, second edn, Vol. I (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 521–523.

As Brierly pointed out in this lecture, "the failure to enforce the Covenant [against Italy] had nothing whatever to do with the fact that the League Council had no power to make a decision on behalf of the League as a body" (p. 12), "the rule of unanimity did not in fact paralyse the League" (p. 14), and its "real effect … was to prevent a member being forced to accept some addition to the obligations by which it was already bound under the Covenant" (p. 15). In contrast, in the Charter the members "confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf" (Article 24) and rule out via the veto an enforcement action against any of the permanent members of the Security Council.

[2] [Ed.] Wight expressed a more positive view of the "realism" in the official British Commentary on the UN Charter in his essay, "The Balance of Power and International Order," in Alan James, ed., *The Bases of International Order: Essays in Honour of C. A. W. Manning* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 113.

27

Review of W. W. Rostow, Harmsworth Professor of American History *The American Diplomatic Revolution: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered before the University of Oxford on November 12, 1946* (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1947)

Among the flood of books on American foreign policy this unobtrusive lecture is likely to be overlooked when it most deserves to be bought and read.* Professor Rostow was a Research Fellow of Yale, was in O.S.S. during the War and had just been appointed Assistant Professor of Economics at Harvard when he was elected to the Harmsworth Professorship at Oxford. His American diplomatic revolution is that from the isolationism of 1939 to the expanding world commitments of 1945. "For Great Britain and France the problems presented by Germany, Austria, and Eastern Europe are basically familiar; and there are, whatever their present worth, traditional formulae of the national interest on which to guide the day-to-day operations of diplomacy. Similarly, the position of Russia in Europe and in northern Asia, however striking it may be to this generation, is in many ways a reversion. Russian troops have been in Berlin before; and a powerful Russian interest in Eastern Europe, in Manchuria, and in Korea is not new. In the case of the United States, not only the public at large but the Department of State as well have been forced to define the American interest in strange regions under novel circumstances" (p. 9).

The lecture falls into five parts: a historical retrospect; the revolution in strategy and politics forced upon the United States by Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima; the post-War balance of power and the danger of a Soviet domination of the Eurasian continent; an analysis of American policy in the new circumstances, with an excursus on "the schizophrenia of Potsdam" (p. 13); and a wider view of the strength and

* W. W. Rostow delivered this lecture at the University of Oxford on November 12, 1946 and published it with the Clarendon Press in Oxford in 1947. Wight published this review in *International Affairs*, vol. 23, no. 4 (October 1947), pp. 610–611.

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weakness of the United States in relation to its new objectives. The discussion combines the academic qualities with experience of diplomacy and of the organization of war from the inside, and has a sobriety, a judiciousness, and a comprehensiveness of vision which put it in a class of its own. Professor Rostow not only gives the immediate background to the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan; on every page he illuminates the permanent factors that govern the policy of the United States.

28

Review of William C. Bullitt, *The Great Globe Itself: A Preface to World Affairs* (New York: Scribner, 1946; and London: Macmillan, 1947)

Messrs Alsop and Kintner described William Christian Bullitt in *American White Paper* as mixing with great brilliance and remarkable far-sightedness "a failing for Oppenheimism."* Both the brilliance and the failing appear in this aggressive book. Mr. Bullitt was United States' Ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1933–36 and to France from 1936–41. Thereafter he joined the ex-diplomats in Washington who find their most innocuous consolation for the loss of direct responsibilities in instructing the American public on foreign affairs. His book has three facets. (1) It is a standard work for followers of the anti-Red crusade. It describes the insatiable tyranny and aggrandizement of Russia as continuous from Ivan the Terrible to Stalin, from the Oprichina to the N. K.V.D., from the conquest of Kazan in 1552 to the occupation of Persian Azerbaijan in 1945–46. "There is but one nation that we do fear may some day use the atomic bomb against us. We fear the Soviet Union" (p. 3). Two appendices are of great value, one giving the indictment of the Nuremberg defendants for violation of international agreements with a similar indictment of the Soviet Union in parallel columns, another containing excerpts from the New York *Daily Worker* to show its inconsistencies and dishonesties from July 1939 to October 1945. (2) It uncompromisingly criticizes Roosevelt's war-time diplomacy and his failure to coax Stalin into good-neighbourliness. By his happy death "the tired President was never forced to admit that he had lost, that not even he with all his genius could appease the unappeasable" (p. 22). This is an important contribution to a controversy which is likely to occupy historians for years to come.

* William C. Bullitt published *The Great Globe Itself: A Preface to World Affairs* with Scribner in New York in 1946, and with Macmillan in London in 1947. Wight published this review in *International Affairs*, vol. 23, no. 4 (October 1947), pp. 611–612. [Ed.] "With great brilliance and remarkable far-sightedness, Bullitt mixes a failing for Oppenheimism. He kept the Frenchmen elaborately under cover, and persuaded the President to make Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. their liaison with the government." Joseph Alsop and Robert Kintner, *American White Paper: The Story of American Diplomacy and the Second World War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940) p. 29. Edward Phillips Oppenheim (1866–1946) was an English novelist, a popular author of thrillers. An Oppenheimism is thus a gesture worthy of a plot twist in such a novel.

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(3) It sketches a policy of a Defence League of Democratic States to resist Soviet aggression and prepare a federal organization of the world, which foreshadows the Truman doctrine and the Marshall plan. "It is in our national interest to stop further aggressions by Stalin while his forces are still far from our shores and we have in our hands the means to stop him—a far stronger air force than the Soviet air force, and the atomic bomb" (p. 147). It was this sentence that evoked from Communists and fellow travelers, when the American edition was published, the shrill cry that Mr. Bullitt wants a preventive war against the Soviet Union, which in fact he expressly rejects (p. 145).

There is nothing vulgar about the book: it is scholarly, documented, candid in its appeal to Christian standards and the traditions of Western civilization. Why can it leave unsatisfied even those who agree that the Soviet regime is a detestable tyranny, and that appeasement is contemptible folly? Partly because of the wartime mood in which it is written, without doubts, qualifications, or half tones, "the forces of evil" against "God's righteousness" (p. 180). Mr. Bullitt, like Mr. Koestler, assumes too surely that the Russians' opinion of their government is the same as his own. This may be true, but the examples of Kravchenko and Gouzenko are insufficient evidence, and unless proven it looks like a counterpart of the old illusion that the German people did not support Hitler, or of the Soviet belief that the broad masses of the American people care more for the doctrine of Mr. Wallace than for the American way of life. On the other side, Mr. Bullitt fails to explain the sickness and apostasy of Western civilization which bred both communism and fascism and is all Russia's strength. A good American, he postulates "the surge of all mankind toward freedom and democracy" (p. 174), with America in the van and the oppressed Russians far behind, following in spirit but impotent to follow in fact. There is too much of the egocentric illusion here to give the truest perspective in which to see the Russo-Occidental conflict, and the deepest grounds on which to understand and condemn the Stalinist despotism.

But most interesting and at the same time least satisfactory is the criticism of Roosevelt's diplomacy. We know from Miss Perkins the naïve optimism with which Roosevelt approached Stalin, repeating Chamberlain's approach to Hitler.[1] Bullitt isolates and emphasizes it. "Few more disastrous errors have ever been made by a president of the United States, and those citizens of the United States who bamboozled the president into acting as if Stalin were a cross between Abraham Lincoln and Woodrow Wilson deserve a high place in an American roll of dishonor" (pp. 160–161). (We are left to guess their names.) But there was a much better case for appeasing Stalin during the war than for appeasing Hitler before it. Mr. Lippman has pointed out that the Republicans who now attack Roosevelt on this score were those who vehemently feared, between Teheran and Yalta, that

[1] See Frances Perkins, *The Roosevelt I Knew* (New York, 1946) pp. 382–383. [Ed.] Wight reviewed this book in *International Affairs*, vol. 24, no. 1 (January 1948), pp. 144–145.

Stalin would halt his armies at the Russian frontier and make a separate peace with Hitler. Posterity will continue to debate whether Roosevelt paid too high a price to keep Russia in the war, but Mr. Bullitt scarcely recognizes that the price paid secured goods punctually delivered and of surpassing quality. He has not quite Mr. Sumner Welles's art to persuade us that if he had been Secretary of State the world would have been in less of a mess. The Oppenheimism lingers in the mind after the brilliance and far-sightedness, the disagreeable taste of a subtle retrospective denigration of Mr. Bullitt's great chief.

29

Review of Frances Perkins, US Secretary of Labor from 1933 to 1945, *The Roosevelt I Knew* (New York: Viking Press, 1947; and London: Hammond, Hammond & Co., 1947)

This is the best book that has yet been written about Franklin Roosevelt, and it will remain a major authority.* Miss Perkins was his Secretary of Labor, his only cabinet officer besides Mr. Ickes to cover the whole span of the administration. She had already been thrown together with Roosevelt in the Democratic politics of New York State, being appointed Industrial Commissioner by him when he became Governor; and she had first met him twenty years earlier, when she was beginning her social work and he his political career. Her central theme is the spiritual evolution of the tall and arrogant young patrician of 1910, with "a youthful lack of humility, a streak of self-righteousness, and a deafness to the hopes, fears and aspirations which are the common lot" (p. 14), into the Roosevelt of the New Deal.

The largest part of the book is naturally concerned with his social policies; indeed, among its other merits, it is the most enlightening description of the New Deal that has been published in England. There are also important chapters on the War President, his energizing effect upon the war effort, and the simplicity (unless Miss Perkins here failed to probe the subtleties of his mind) of his Soviet diplomacy. But it is not for evidence on these matters that the book is most important, but for its picture of how the man's mind worked, and his policies were formed. Miss Perkins describes him with affectionate and critical detachment. He was "the most complicated human being" she ever knew (p. 9), with his intelligence and naivety, humility and boyish vanity, his "four track mind" (p. 305), his opportunism that was an artistry in political construction, his dependence on non-political friendships, his generous hatred of the callousness of the rich. She tells

* [Ed.] Frances Perkins, US Secretary of Labor from 1933–45, published *The Roosevelt I Knew* with (Viking Press in New York in 1947, and with Hammond, Hammond & Co. in London in 1947). Wight published this review in *International Affairs*, vol. 24, no. 1 (January 1948), pp. 144–145.

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how Keynes had "supposed the President was more literate, economically speaking" (p. 183), how John L. Lewis angled for the vice-presidential nomination in 1940, how the curate of St. John's introduced Roosevelt to Kierkegaard and how Kierkegaard explained the Nazis to him, how he baited Churchill at Teheran in order to make Stalin laugh. One anecdote seems more than any other to reveal his quality. "A superficial young reporter once said to Roosevelt in my presence" "Mr. President, are you a Communist?" "No." "Are you a capitalist?" "No." "Are you a Socialist?" "No," he said, with a look of surprise as if he were wondering what he was being cross-examined about. The young man said, "Well, what is your philosophy then?" "Philosophy," asked the President, puzzled. "Philosophy? I am a Christian and a Democrat—that's all"" (pp. 266–267).

There are two other major figures in this book besides F.D.R. The first is Mrs. Roosevelt. More than a glimpse is given here of how much his triumph was hers also. (There is one enchanting flash: "I remember saying to Mrs. Roosevelt, 'You know, Franklin is really a very simple Christian.' She thought a moment and, with a quizzical lift of her eyebrows, said, 'Yes, a very simple Christian'" (p. 115).) The second is the author. Miss Perkins is the least egotistical writer possible, but her own picture emerges none the less. It is Roosevelt's greatness that he could inspire the loyalty of such a colleague while he was alive, and such a book as this when he is dead.

30

Review of Barbara Ward, *Policy for the West* (London: Penguin, 1951)

Miss Ward is like a good doctor who takes the feverish and dejected patient firmly under control, notes his symptoms, sees more than he tells him, inspires his confidence, and assures him that if he sensible there is every chance of recovery.* This is the book for those who feel that the West has no constructive answer to Communism, that we are fighting with our backs in a corner against a more skillful antagonist, who has better weapons in his hand and history on his side. Miss Ward's qualities are clarity of principle—a fervent but critical attachment to the traditions of the West; intellectual span—the power of seeing the political and economic world-picture as a whole; and hopefulness of temper.

The lucid rationality of her argument recalls Sir Norman Angell's writings between the Wars. The mark of political literacy at that time (it is now generally agreed) was to see Collective Security as the only means of transforming the international anarchy into a rule of law. Today, with the world divided into two blocs, the premises of Collective Security are gone: its place must be taken by Containment. This is what Miss Ward's book is about.

The policy of Containment rests on two assumptions. The first, reluctantly and slowly accepted by the West, is that Russia "is a force of general and undeviating hostility." The second has not yet been so widely accepted: that war is not inevitable, and that a combination of strength and patience in the West will control further Communist aggression. Such a policy must be "sustained, calm, and supremely positive." It will be the condition of Western survival for the foreseeable future, just as (though the analogy is fallacious) the Roman Empire depended on maintaining for centuries a stable frontier against the barbarians.

While still inchoate and instinctive this policy has already produced astonishing and revolutionary results. On the defensive side are the Berlin air-lift, the winning of the Greek War, and America's self-commitment to a European alliance; on the positive side are the Marshall Plan, which restored pre-War levels of European production within eighteen months of its beginning, and the grant of independence to India, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon and Indonesia, which has prevented Communism from assuming the leadership of Asiatic nationalism. Miss Ward's book describes

* Barbara Ward published *Policy for the West* with Penguin in London in 1951. Wight published this review under the title "The Policy of Containment" in *The Observer*, February 18, 1951.

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Containment with more coherence and comprehensiveness than any previous account; she discusses every facet of it judiciously and constructively, from the risk of inflation lurking in rearmament to the federal-functional controversy about unifying Europe.

Does she over-estimate the reserves of sound principle and rational policy in the West? There was not enough of them for Collective Security. Today, the decisive political illiteracy is no longer on the Right but on the Left. What the "Tablet" was in the thirties the "New Statesman" is now; the ideological malevolence that decried the legal rights of Haile Selassie and the Spanish Republicans now decries the legal rights of the "reactionary puppet Government" of South Korea. Instead of the old cant about the injustices of Versailles and the civilizing missions of Mussolini and Franco we have the new cant about the peace-loving Slavs or Chinese people, a "Socialist foreign policy" and "American intervention in Asia." It was this kind of moral incapacity that inspired the somber prophecies of George Orwell. Miss Ward shows us the possibility of not deserving them.

31

Review of John MacLaurin, *The United Nations and Power Politics* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952)

This is the most useful general book about the United Nations that has yet appeared in English.* It covers the entire work of the organization thoroughly, simply, clearly, and freshly. It is extraordinarily readable, and makes the dreariest convolutions of procedure exciting. It is studded with good quotations from the official records; the documentation is complete and will provide a switchboard of clues for the intelligent student. Mr MacLaurin (of whom the publishers tell us so much that one wonders what the value of the pseudonym is) combines an outspokenly moral approach to politics with plenty of realism about power. But he is emotionally less interested in the Cold War ("an unsavoury power struggle with the Politburo," p. vi) than in the social advancement of the under-developed regions, where he thinks the Western Powers are losing ground more rapidly than they may be gaining it in the direct struggle with Russia. He trounces the British for their record of reaction and mean subterfuge in trusteeship debates (e.g., pp. 371, 386), and in a sense Michael Scott is the hero of the book. "Man's struggle against man," he concludes, "has … been and remains largely the struggle of the ruled against oppressive rulers. It is this struggle that is basic. Compared with it, international conflicts form a fleeting pattern imposed on the surface" (p. 440). A generation ago the popular liberal interpretation of international affairs saw political arrangements as broadly rational; today, an element of inherent conflict is acknowledged, provided it is horizontal not vertical; we have moved from Locke to Rousseau, but not to Hobbes. The lack of historical depth, the tinge of sentimentality which construes extra-European nationalism as "The Little Man's Revolt" (p. 442) is the only criticism to be made against Mr MacLaurin. Henceforward, if anybody asks for one book to explain the United Nations, this is the answer.

* Wight published this review in *International Affairs*, vol. 28, no. 2 (April 1952), pp. 212–213.

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32

Review of Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Pattern of Communist Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1953)

The interest and value of this book are not to be judged by whether it succeeds in what it sets out to do.* It is a comparative historical analysis of Communist movements throughout the world. It is concerned neither with Marxist theory nor with the Communist vocation. It emphasizes the relationship of the Communist movement in each country to social classes and to the internal balance of political power; and so comprehensive is it that the attentive reader notes only as an afterthought that North America and Australasia have been omitted. Like his father before him, Professor Seton-Watson is the principal British authority on eastern Europe; he has a prodigious linguistic erudition, a lively, comprehensive, classificatory mind, an easy style, and a radical political faith which regards Stalinism as our grandfathers regarded Tsarism. In spite of the modest disclaimers in his preface, he scarcely manages to observe the distinctions he lays down; with the consequence that (excepting possibly Dr Borkenau's *The Communist International*) this is the most useful single book for the general reader on Communism as a political force known to the reviewer. The index is excellent, and the documentation gives a complete guide to further enquiry.

Communism is a product of the European socialist movement, which itself has a double origin: industrialism and the development of democratic ideas. The Soviet Union is to be explained, not only by reference to the tradition of Tsarist autocracy, but also by comparison with the early industrial age in Britain and America. "Most of the unpleasant phenomena—exploitation of the proletariat, aesthetic philistinism, imperialism—which were regarded by Marx as products of capitalism," are reproduced in Soviet Russia and "seem rather to be products of early and rapid industrialization" (p. 245). Outside Europe, Communism appears when industrialism appears, and both have been produced by the impact of the West. "The great attraction of Bolshevism [in China], and especially of Lenin's doctrine of imperialism, was that it could reconcile admiration for Western civilization with

* Wight published this review under the title "Communist Movement Throughout the World" in *The International Review of Missions*, Vol. 44, no. 173. (January 1955), pp. 107–110. The American edition of this book, entitled *From Lenin to Malenkov: The History of World Communism*, was published by Praeger in New York.

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resentment against Western policy in China" (p. 137); and this has a universal application.

Communists are professional revolutionaries. Whatever their social origins, they stand outside class and must not be confused with the classes from which they derive support. Lenin's tactic was a partnership between the disciplined conspiratorial Bolsheviks and the ignorant, gullible masses; hence a preference for Soviets over parliamentary government and for factory committees over trade unions. This has remained constant and defines the rôle of artless ecclesiastics and unsophisticated scientists in the World Peace Movement. More important, it explains why Communism has had its greatest triumphs in the industrially backward regions of the world. In industrially advanced countries the Communist cadres as well as their followers come chiefly from the workers, but in backward countries the Communist cadres come from the intelligentsia and the followers from the peasants. Mao Tse-tung has written a new chapter in Marxist theory by defining the peasants, instead of the proletariat, as the revolutionary vanguard. All the same, "the Chinese communist movement was a movement of peasants, but not a peasant movement" (p. 153).

The Communist struggle for power provides the extreme example in history of a policy of disruption, of divide and rule. The party thrives on triangular conflicts, fighting the Mensheviks as well as the Tsarist government, Kerenski as well as Kornilov, the Second International as well as capitalism, Hitler as well as the Western Powers, Chiang Kai-shek as well as the Japanese. A united enemy is split, as Lenin split the Socialist Revolutionary Party in Russia in 1917, as the Communists of eastern Europe tried to split the peasant parties after 1945, as attempts are made to split Britain and France away from America; the weaker fragment is then devoured. The tactic of the united front is only a variation of this: it aims to undermine the authority of the temporary allies, as was seen in the Popular Front in Spain and in the Resistance movements. I will support a social democrat as a rope supports a man that is hanged, said Lenin. Chiang must be used to the end by the Communists, said Stalin, and then "squeezed like a lemon and thrown away."

Once in power, Communism provides the extreme example in history of centralization:

> Rulers and intellectuals of past ages have talked of *raison d'état* as the supreme consideration, but in fact they or their advisers were inhibited to an important extent by moral or religious scruples or superstitions. The Stalinist régime is the first systematically to apply the criterion of state interest to absolutely every part of its subjects' lives. (p. 246)

Though the book is chiefly concerned with Communist bids for power, about one quarter of it is devoted to Communists in power, in Russia, eastern Europe and

China. Mr Seton-Watson contrasts Lenin's revolution with Stalin's revolution, discusses the purges of 1934–39 and indicates the different course of the Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions.

> Russian Bolshevism had needed a whole generation to grow into the full flower of totalitarianism. Thirty years separated the November revolution from the pronouncements of Zhdanov on literature, art and philosophy. China became totalitarian at once. (pp. 283–284)

On the relations between the Chinese and Russian régimes he maintains a judicial balance: there is a latent conflict of interest between the two Powers, but it is prudent to assume that in the foreseeable future Mao will show himself more Communist than Chinese.

This is a *livre de circonstance* as well as an essay in comparative historical analysis, and there is both moral passion and political wisdom in the concluding section on the menace of Stalinist imperialism and the illusions to which the West is prone. "Fascists must not be allowed to take the leadership of the struggle against communism, as the communists once took the leadership of the struggle against fascism" (p. 351). "Of all obnoxious commodities that the West has exported to the East, none is more harmful than the belief that every man and woman is entitled, of right, to be presented with the standard of living of a Chicago businessman" (p. 353). If something of the quality of the Communist vocation, its devotion and heroism, seems to escape Mr Seton-Watson's analysis, it is perhaps to be described in categories with which he explicitly repudiates a concern. He admits that the Communist policy of "mass enlightenment" has exploited enormous human reserves, never before touched; that "men—and perhaps even more, women—of initiative and efficiency, who had never before had responsibility, who had never before been thought worth consulting, were given opportunities of which they had never dreamed" (p. 216); in fact, that Communism is a substitute for the liberation promised to those who accept the Gospel. He says that one of the reasons for the triumph of Communism in China is that "religion had less hold on the Chinese than on any other people of Asia or Europe" (p. 154). This, however, does not apply to Russia or Serbia. Lenin once described a peasant festival he had attended in a remote village, where a peasant made a speech welcoming the introduction of electric light: "We peasants were unenlightened, and now the light has appeared among us, an unnatural light, which will light up our peasant darkness."[1] This naïve salute to industrialism in the language of St John suggests something that was not in Lenin's mind when he repeated the story: that Communism is perhaps to be ultimately interpreted by an image more familiar to the Russian peasant than to the Western Christian intellectual, the image of Antichrist.

[1] Report to the Eighth All-Russian Congress of Soviets, December 22, 1920 (*Selected Works*, viii. 27).

33

Review of A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power* (London: Macmillan, 1959)

British imperialism has produced one of the great debates in the history of political thinking—a debate largely between absolute and conditioned morality.* No man is good enough to be another's master. True; but if masters are inevitable, some are better than others. We may have no right to be there, indeed; but if enterprise and accident have put us there the question quickly becomes, have we a right to leave? Good government can be a duty overriding the grant of self-government, as the young Churchill argued in the South African debate in 1906. "We must stand by our friends" may seem a dubious principle when used of King Hussein and the Gulf sheikhs, but what when our friends are the Africans of the High Commission Territories?

Under the combined emotions of the First World War and the Oxford countryside, Santayana wrote celebrated words about the English (towards whom his attitude was always faintly erotic):

Never since the heroic days of Greece has the world had such a sweet, just, boyish master. It will be a black day for the human race when scientific blackguards, conspirators, churls, and fanatics manage to supplant him.

The other side may be given in two quotations. Dilke, traveling in India in the sixties, found notices in all the hotels: "Gentlemen are requested not to strike the servants." Nehru, when still a conspirator or fanatic, described the Raj as an enormous country-house, with the Indians kept below stairs: "Sometimes we were treated to a rare honour—we were given a cup of tea in the drawing-room."

Out of this debate Professor Thornton has made a rich, brilliant, and disturbing book. It is a history of ideas and emotions from Palmerston to Eden, widely based on parliamentary debates and proconsular memoirs and the "Round Table," with a literary accompaniment from Trollope's Melmotte through Dick Hannay and Sanders of the River to "Mad Dogs and Englishmen" and "Shooting an Elephant."[1]

* A. P. Thornton published *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power* with Macmillan in London in 1959. Martin Wight published this review under the title "Other Men's Masters" in *The Observer*, February 8, 1959.

[1] [Ed.] Richard Hannay is a fictional character in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* and other works by John Buchan. Edgar Wallace's *Sanders of the River* is one of a series of novels set in British colonies in Africa.

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(Sometimes the accompaniment gets out of time. "Cities and Thrones and Powers," perhaps the greatest poem of the greatest imperialist writer, is quoted in the same breath as "Sick Heart River": but it appeared in 1908, a generation earlier).[2]

The wit is of the kind likely to strike posterity as penetrating common sense. "More absence of mind was to be shown in governing the Empire than ever there was in getting one together." "The population of Southern Africa was, after all, a black population, and the fact that the white races had just finished a fierce tribal war of their own was irrelevant to the main issue."

A disturbing book, not because it contains new discoveries, but because it puts in perspective, with passion but with justice, a story which we mostly forgot or recall in scraps. The debates of 1909 on self-government for the Boers, with their prescience of what this would mean for the Africans; the climax of imperialist appetite and irresponsibility in the conflicting promises over the Middle East in the First World War; the mental corruption of the governing class between the wars; the romantic obtuseness that lines the magnanimity of our greatest living statesman; the catalepsy of Middle Eastern policy since 1945, interrupted but not ended by the paroxysm of Suez—how little wisdom is there in the government of a democracy we suppose mature, and how it is the prisoner of a destiny laid down by its own shortcomings! Does the prime minister read his own publications; one wonders? And would it help if he does?

It is a book every reader will embroider. Conan Doyle's "The Last of the Legions" and Kipling's Parnesius stories foreshadowed the terms in which Churchill in 1929 described the catastrophe of evacuating Cairo for a new-fangled Canal Zone. It is curious that Professor Thornton mentions neither the "Letters of John Chinaman" nor "A Passage to India," milestones in the middle-class reaction against imperialism.[3] He salutes Mr. Crankshaw's Skorzeny-rescue of Milner's reputation,[4] but ignores Mr. Kedourie's Ardennes offensive on behalf of Western "imperium" in general.[5]

"Mad Dogs and Englishmen" is a song written by Noel Coward in 1931, its title drawn from a saying attributed to Kipling: "Only mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun." George Orwell's essay "Shooting an Elephant" was first published in 1936 (London: Secker and Warburg).

[2] [Ed.] Rudyard Kipling published his poem "Cities and Thrones and Powers" with his story *A Centurion of the Thirtieth* in *Puck of Pook's Hill* (London: Strand Magazine, 1906). John Buchan's *Sick Heart River* was published posthumously by Hodder and Stoughton in London in 1941.

[3] [Ed.] Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson published *Letters from John Chinaman* in 1901, and E. M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India* came out in 1924.

[4] [Ed.] Otto Skorzeny, a Waffen SS commando, played a prominent role in the September 1943 Gran Sasso raid, the German rescue of Mussolini, then a deposed dictator and a captive of the Badoglio government.

[5] [Ed.] The "Ardennes Offensive," also known as the Battle of the Bulge, was a massive German campaign against US and British-led forces in Belgium and Luxembourg in December 1944–January 1945. With regard to Elie Kedourie's action "on behalf of Western 'imperium' in general," Wight may have had in mind Kedourie's book *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1921* (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1956). Among other controversial points, Kedourie defended the Sykes–Picot agreement as "an agreement in the old tradition of European diplomacy, an attempt to work out a viable solution to the problems caused by the impending collapse of the Ottoman empire,

The book's chief weakness is that while it describes from the inside the nationalism of the older Dominions (so distressing to imperialists), Indian and Egyptian nationalism are seen from the outside, as the imperialists saw them, and remain a mysterious and unanalysed force. But it is reassuring to see how little the anti-imperialist case has rested on any belief that if only British despotism is dismantled, democracy will spring up in its place.

British liberalism, Thornton concludes, is the story of a privileged class working to abolish or extend its privileges. "But no group of men that has yet governed Britain has come to the decision that political and international power are also privileges which may be given away on grounds of conscience or humane principle." The book leaves you debating with yourself (as the scientific blackguards increase their pressure) whether this statement is true, and if it be true whether it is right.

one which would secure a reasonable future for the peoples of the region and which would avoid conflict between the great powers;" and he deplored the British abdication of commitment to "the ideas which inspired it." M. E. Yapp, "Elie Kedourie and the History of the Middle East," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 41, no. 5 (September 2005), pp. 668–669.

34

Review of John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959)

This is a book to cheer all those who prefer, instead of the fashionable apparatus and collective display of the social sciences, what Professor Herz calls "simply the product of the application of whatever intelligence was available."* Readers of *Political Realism and Political Idealism* know that the intelligence is of a rare, sensitive and comprehensive order; and its present product is one of the two or three most distinguished books on international politics since 1945.

Herz has an admirable sketch of the classical state-system, built (like the classical system in physics) out of territorially impermeable state-atoms. This territoriality is the basis of international law, and the presupposition of the Clausewitzian doctrine of war. With deep historical insight, he sees the collective security system of the League of Nations as the culmination of the traditional system of the balance of power, and argues that the League's action against Italy in 1935–36, so far from being doomed to inevitable failure, is remarkable for having nearly succeeded. The picture can of course be focussed differently. The attributes of sovereignty first defined by Leibniz (it is one of Herz's best touches to direct attention to the *Entretiens de Philarète et d'Eugène sur le Droit d'Ambassade*) had all existed for 150 years at least before the Peace of Westphalia. And if the state-system is recognisable from the time of Machiavelli or earlier, then two features which are abnormal in Herz's classical system become normal. One is bipolarity. The predominance of America and Russia since 1945 repeats the predominance of the Hapsburgs and France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of France and Britain in the eighteenth; only between 1815 and 1939 is the international diarchy put partially into commission. The other is doctrinal strife. Only in the decades before 1517 and in the period from 1648 to 1789 (some would date it rather from 1713) is duty to the state not seriously complicated by international religious or ideological loyalties.

Herz's estimate of the contemporary strategic revolution follows from his picture of the classical state-system. Ideological conflict and nuclear weapons have,

* John H. Herz published *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959). Wight published this review in *American Political Science Review*, vol. 54, no. 4 (December 1960), p. 1057.

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in principle, replaced territorial impermeability by mutual pervasion, "so that the power of everyone is present everywhere simultaneously," and in the two Great Powers the extreme of military strength coincides with the extreme of vulnerability. But here, once again, it might be permissible to reduce the emphasis on discontinuity with the past. In every age the majority of Powers have been Small Powers, and for them territorial impermeability, like legal sovereignty, has been largely a fiction. Effective impermeability has been a mark of Great Power status (witness Soviet anger over the U2). Similarly, the Clausewitzian doctrine of war as imposing your will on the enemy may need reformulation. It might be truer if transposed into the negative, saying that most Powers in most ages have seen war as the means to prevent the enemy (usually a neighbouring Great Power) from imposing his will on them, by maintaining forces to discourage any but the most determined attack. This is what we now call deterrence. On such a view, the chief political consequence of the strategic revolution has been to reduce the Great Powers to the Small Powers' condition of permeability, and to adopting a deterrent instead of an acquisitive conception of war. Which is very different from the abandonment of war as an instrument of rational policy.

The book inspires such reflections and provides many of the counter arguments. Its last third explores the means of survival, a "holding operation," along the lines of piecemeal solution of concrete issues, an abatement of ideological zeal, and restricted territorial disengagement. Herz combines a recognition of the limits of the politically possible with a profound moral concern. He still calls his position "Realist liberalism," but confesses that the nuclear danger has made him more sympathetic to "utopian idealism" than he was in his former book. It might be argued that the universalism he now persuasively urges can be illustrated only from the Western side of the line, not the Russian and Chinese. It might also be argued that it is better that the West should be capable of Herz's balance, moderation, and noble solicitude for the future of mankind, and lose the Cold War, than that it should win the Cold War with a more Machiavellian philosophy. On a more prosaic level, let it be said that Herz has so much sensible and illuminating to say about the whole field of international politics, from amity lines to the definition of aggression, and from NATO to the principle of non-recognition, that it is a great pity he has not provided an index of more than names. Despite this lack, it is a book that ought to appear at once in paperback, so that students of international politics can be made to possess and study it alongside their text.

35

Review of Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation: The Rise to Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; and London, Oxford University Press, 1960)

More has probably been written on the economic problems of the Afro-Asian nations than on their politics, and a general and comparative survey of their political development has been needed.* It is fortunate that so experienced a student of colonial government as Professor Emerson has been moved to write this large and satisfying volume on the world-wide dismantling of colonial government. The core of the book is a discussion, first of nationalism; secondly of the relation between nationalism and democracy; thirdly of self-determination. All the nineteenth-century doctrines on these matters were already undermined by the experience of Eastern Europe; have they any relevance to Asia and Africa? The question is discussed with admirable caution, empiricism, and skill in mustering the diverse and recalcitrant political realities which make every generalization incomplete. The relaxed manner, the ranging mind, the level judgment, the tolerance and humanity recall the writings of Sir Keith Hancock. The only induction Emerson allows himself is that nationalism is a phase of "the expanding Western revolution," an imprecise term comprising the disruption of traditional communities and the appearance of a money economy, industrialism, urbanization, social mobilization, and mass politics. He notes respectfully Karl W. Deutsch's proposal for quantifying nationality studies but is more concerned with "the subtle task of appraising human emotions" (p. 334), or rather, of tracing the interactions between political principle and practice and the transformations each imposes on the other. He concludes by pointing out that, if historical experience is worth anything, the economic development of these nations will make them *more* unstable internally and *more* warlike. Nevertheless, "the chances that development will move in acceptable directions are far better if the West is actively engaged in the

* Wight published this review in *International Affairs*, vol. 37, no. 3 (July 1961), pp. 343–344.

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process than if it either grudgingly holds back or lays its emphasis too heavily on military goals" (p. 417).

The field is prodigiously wide, and its edges are left conveniently indistinct. He includes Cyprus, the West Indies, and British Guiana, and uses Eastern Europe and Latin America illustratively. He omits mention, however, of the High Commission Territories in South Africa (the Khamas are a good example of an old royal family leading Westernization) and of the inter-racial experience of New Zealand. There is more evidence on nationality problems in the Soviet Union than might be inferred from this book. Emerson does not ask whether new nations which (for the first time in history) have been *given* independence by a peaceable transfer of sovereignty will survive so well as the great majority which have won independence by blood and struggle—what is a nationalism without its Joan of Arc or Armada victory, its Lexington, Calatafimi, or Easter Rebellion? By a slip he sends Mr Nehru to Oxford (p. 197). Why include Iraq among the "new states to emerge on the international stage in the inter-war decades" (p. 295), and exclude Egypt, which was likewise admitted to the League? In describing how Lenin "sidled up to" the theory of rich bourgeois nations versus poor proletarian nations (p. 181), he does not add that it was by the ex-socialist journalist Mussolini that the theory was at last espoused, to become standard Fascist doctrine, echoed at the Bandung Conference.

The index is inadequate for a book so rich in names and ideas. But these are trifles. Anybody concerned with the political future of the undeveloped world, and every student of nationalism, is likely to consult Professor Emerson's book regularly from now on, and one may guess that its wisdom and learning will not be less apparent thirty years hence.

36

Review of Hugh Seton-Watson, *Neither War nor Peace: The Struggle for Power in the Post-War World* (London, Methuen, 1960)

Professor Seton-Watson is a natural encyclopaedist: a scholar with a range of interest unconventionally wide, a genius for lucid exposition, and a desire to instruct.* What he did in his first book for Eastern Europe, and in his last but one for Communist revolution,[1] he now does for the contemporary world as a whole. The result is a superbly comprehensive text-book of world politics, which includes pretty well everything from the Allied meeting along the Elbe in 1945 down to Khrushchev's visit to the United States in 1959, from the Rhodope mountains to the Buryat Mongol A.S.S.R. [Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic], from the bummarees of Covent Garden to Governor Faubus of Arkansas, from Sekou Touré in Guinea to the APRA in Peru, and from rural overpopulation to nuclear defence. By the crude test of foresight it can scarcely be faulted. New editions will need a sentence added here and there, but very little rewriting. It would be an improvement however if the tiresome triple index were consolidated into one (are Britain and Pakhtoonistan subjects or placenames?) and made much more complete.

The book is not a potted survey: it is concerned less with international politics in the strict sense than with international social forces. Hence such omissions as the disposition of the ex-Italian colonies, the union of the Somalis and their relations with Ethiopia, or the pressure of Saudi Arabia on the Gulf sheikhdoms. And though it is a first-class text-book, it is vastly more than that. The heart of the book is a discussion of the forces of revolution and the nature of totalitarianism, and its most original section is that on the intelligentsia, "the social group that specializes in the formulation of political ideas" (p. 164). These chapters carry the study of politics forward out of the twilight of academic clichés and obsolete categories into the clear bleak light of our daily experience. Seton-Watson's analysis of the ways in which power is seized, of totalitarian regimes, dictatorship, the police

* Wight published this review in *International Affairs*, vol. 36, no. 4 (October 1960), pp. 495–496.

[1] *Eastern Europe between the Wars, 1918–41* (London, Cambridge University Press,1945); reviewed in *International Affairs*, January 1946, p. 132.

[1] *The Pattern of Communist Revolution: A Historical Analysis* (London, Methuen, 1953); reviewed in *International Affairs*, July 1954, p. 378.

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state and democracy, of cold war and world revolution, leaves most of the conventional study of constitutional and diplomatic forms with the kind of educational justification enjoyed by the composition of Greek verses.

Few books so close-packed are so continuously readable. The style is always clear and often arresting, the material is well ordered, and the argument moves with a sober zeal for justice and freedom. Quotation may suggest its political force, though not its historical range. "Cold war is not a Western policy, but a state of affairs, and results from the basic Soviet attitude. … There is not necessarily any harm in using their phrase, 'peaceful coexistence,' provided that it is understood that peaceful coexistence and cold war are exactly the same thing" (p. 256). "The first priority for the West, the irreducible minimum, is that a given country should not become a satellite of the Sino-Soviet bloc, the second that it be not totalitarian, the third that it be not a dictatorship" (p. 451). "In Persia no less than in Iraq before July 1958, everything depends on one man's life. … The overthrow of the Shah would be the removal of the last obstacle to the Sovietization of the Arab world. … It is unpleasant to have to conclude that the peace of the world largely depends on the efficiency of Persia's security police" (p. 381). "The belief that opponents must be wicked, and that virtuous and courageous people cannot be implacable and dangerous enemies, is the most foolish of all democratic fallacies" (p. 457). "The unpleasant truth [is] that powerful nations are often hated not so much for their crimes as for their virtues" (p. 96). "'A high standard of living is the first priority' is just not true. To be alive and not to be a slave is more important than to live opulently" (p. 443). "The Marxist-Leninist doctrines about the decay of capitalism and '*bourgeois* democracy' may be wrong, but it does not follow from this that there is no decay" (p. 463). "A sceptic might observe that the race between totalitarianism and democracy … is a race to see which competitor will first collapse from his own ill health" (p. 246). What is remarkable in sayings like these is neither brilliance nor profundity nor novelty of thought (though these are often present) so much as the rare combination of political clear-sightedness and fortitude—the level gaze at the struggle for power, and the knowledge that a victory for justice and freedom is not guaranteed by history.

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Index

For the benefit of digital users, indexed terms that span two pages (e.g., 52–53) may, on occasion, appear on only one of those pages.

Note: Various countries are discussed under different names eg Soviet Union/Russia/USSR, Britain/England/United Kingdom, America/United States and Holland/Netherlands but for the sake of consistency, countries have been indexed under their current title or the name used most throughout.

Abyssinian War (1935-6) 74, 180, 235
Acheson, D. 35, 166–167
Acheson Plan - Uniting for Peace Resolution 237–238
Acton, Lord 64
Aden Protectorate 94
Adolphus, G. 87
Afghanistan 94, 115, 128–129
Africa 9, 33, 43–44, 94, 98, 100, 105–106
  see also Afro-Asian states
Afro-Asian states 39–40, 75–77, 271–272
  nationalism and world order 95–96, 100–101
  nuclear weapons and international politics 102–103, 105–106, 147
  United Nations 23, 234, 240–241
  see also see Bandung Powers
aggressive intentions/war 129–130
Algeria 241
Alliance, Treaty of (Britain and Russia) 195–196
Allied Powers 20, 195–196, 211
Alsop, J. 255–256
America *see* United States
American Revolutionary War 17, 30–31, 33, 37–38, 45–47, 73
Amery, L. 179–180
Anastasius 100–103
Ancien Regime 47, 82–83
Ancient Rome 28–29, 58, 75, 78, 113
Angell, N. 35, 123
Anglo-Ethiopian Boundary Commission 165–166
Anglo-French arbitration treaty (1903) 152
Anglo-Russian convention (1907) 153–154
Annan, N. 104–105
Anne, Queen 63
anti-colonialist campaign 239–240
Anti-Comintern Pact (1937) 58–59
anti-Hobbesian philosophy of politics 5, 25
ANZUS Treaty (1951) 185
Appian 118
Arab States 75–77, 88, 92, 182, 203, 236
  and Israel 94–95, 99, 137
  and Palestine 225
Argentina 88, 202–203, 229–230
Aristotle 62
Armada, War of the 60
arms competitions 13, 18
'Arms Races' 13, 148
Armstrong, E. 91
Asia 9, 21, 94, 100, 105–106, 199, 236, 253
  see also Afro-Asian states
Asquith, H.H. 156, 173, 177–179, 182
Associated Powers 211
Atlantic Charter 195–196
Atlantic Pact 227–228
Atomic Development Authority (ADA) 215
Australia 113, 167, 185, 223–224
Austria 36–38, 64, 88, 182, 253
  and Balkans 121–122, 159–160
  and Italy 110, 121–122, 146–147
  nuclear weapons 106, 129
  Succession 33
Axis Powers 17, 37–38, 96, 194–196, 233, 234–235, 237

Bacon, F. 63
Bahrein 94
balance of power 2–5, 17, 26–51, 269
  analysing balance of power prescription 4–5
  demise 126–127
  Diplomatic Investigations 2–3
  distinct meanings 28
  equal aggrandizement 33, 35
  equipoise 29, 35
  equivocalness and plasticity of metaphor of balance 27
  even distribution 28–33, 35, 36, 40, 41–43
  holding the balance 36

balance of power (*Continued*)
and international order in *The Bases of International Order* 3
multiple balance 28–29, 33, 34–35
normative and descriptive use, overlap between 27–28, 30–31
pattern of power 26–27
predominance 43–46, 49–50
simple balance 28–29, 33, 34–35
subjective and objective estimates 35, 39–40
United Nations 20
weighing balance implying estimate requiring judicial detachment 27–28
see also balance of power and international order
balance of power and international order 52–78
alliances, flexibility of 64
balance of Italy 64
balance of the north 64
bipolar balance 56–57, 60, 75, 78
collective security 64, 73–77
common cause 58–60
conservative dominant power 75
counter poise 64
democracy 73
divide and rule 57–58, 60
dynamic and revisionist power 75
dynamism of policy 64
dynastic succession 64
even distribution of power 64
external balance 64
external freedom or independence 54
external power 62
geopolitical position and common frontiers 55–56
internal balance 64
internal freedom 54
internal power 62
international alignment - odd-and-even numbers system 55–56
middle balance 64
mixed constitution theory 62
multiple balance 74–75, 77–78
nationality 64
national self-determination 73, 75–77
preponderance of power 64
regional balances 64
self-preservation doctrine 64
simple balance 74–75
status quo 64, 75–77
upsetting the balance 64
Bâle, Treaty of (1795) 153–154
Balfour, Lord A. 153–154, 179–180
Balkanisation 93, 95
Balkan states 93–95, 220
Bandung Conference (1955) 96, 235, 272
Bandung Powers 23, 105–106, 234–238, 241–244
Baron, H. 53–54
Barraclough, G. 43–44, 187, 189–190
Baruch Plan 218
Bases of International Order, The 3
Bavarian Succession, War of 37–38
Beales, A.C.F. 81
Beck, J. 95
Belgium 36, 86–87, 93, 233–234, 240, 243
Bell, C. 41
Beloff, M. 187–188
Benes 164
Berlin African Congress (1884-5) 98
Bevin, E. 50–51, 167
Biafra 75–77
Big Three Powers (Britain, United States and Russia) 196, 202–204, 230, 251–252
Big Two Powers (United States and Russia) 43–44
bilateral pacts 196
bipolarity 106, 126, 269
Bismarck, O. von 93, 154, 174, 236
Blackett, P.M.S. 116–117
Blenheim, battle of 41
Bolingbroke, H. St. J. 64
Borden, Sir R. 175–176
Borkenau, F. 263
Botero, G. 61
Bowles, C. 41–42
Brazil 229–230
Brezhnev Doctrine 161
Brezhnev, L. 161–163
Briand, A. 18
Brierly, J.L. 24, 81, 152, 224
The Covenant and the Charter (review) 251–252
Bright, J. 47, 52–53, 64
Britain 17, 20, 247, 253
and Abyssinia 165–166
balance of power 30, 36, 37–45
balance of power and international order 56–59, 62, 63–64, 75–77 n.87, 77–78
Commonwealth as non-Hobbesian institution 175–179, 185
and Czechoslovakia 195
defeat in American War 45–46
Great Powers 229
and Gulf Sheikdoms 167
Hobbesian predicament 137 n.6, 138
and India 231

interests, honour and prestige 174
interests of states 153, 155, 159
and Iraq 153–154
and Ireland 173
Italy and Abyssinia 140
League of Nations and United Nations 194–196
and Low Countries 171–172
and Middle East 110, 121–122
nationalism and world order 96–97
neutrality 88
non-intervention 89
nuclear weapons: political consequences 128–131 n.24, 131
nuclear weapons and international politics 10, 106, 112–113, 115, 117
and Russia with Constantinople 172–173
and South Africa 114–115
and Suez Canal 155, 172–173
United Nations 23
United Nations: power struggles 233–235, 237, 239–240, 243–244
United Nations General Assembly 198, 200–201, 210, 211–213, 215, 216, 218
United Nations Security Council 221–222, 226
see also British Commonwealth; British Empire
British Committee on the Theory of International Politics 9
British Commonwealth 15, 175–181, 188–189, 216
British Commonwealth Relations Conference (Lahore, 1954) 15
British Empire 1–2, 15, 79, 93, 177, 181, 183–184, 189–190, 200
British imperialism 16
Brougham, H. 64
Browne, I.H. 63
Brussels Treaty (1948) 109 n.16
Bryce, Lord 176–177, 189–190
Budgetary Committee 240–241
Buganda 187
Bulganin, N. 164
Bulgaria 94
Bull, H. 13–14
Bullitt, W.C. 4
The Great Globe Itself: A Preface to World Affairs (review) 255–257
Bunche, R. 220
Burghley 64
Burke, E. 31, 45, 64, 102, 171, 175–176, 184–185
Burma 92
Calvocoressi, P. 187
Cambodia 147
Cambrai, Treaty of (1529) 58–59
Camden, W. 36
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) 130, 141–142, 144
Camp David accords 137 n.8
Canada 111, 184–187
Cannell, R. 111–112 n.21
Canning, G. 41, 64, 102–103
Carlyle, T. 91
Carr, E.H. 176–177
Catherine the Great 30–31, 37–38, 45–46
Cecil, Lord 179–180
Central Powers 112
Ceylon 94, 179, 234–235
Chamberlain, A. 179–180
Chamberlain, N. 74–75, 156, 164, 173
Charles V 39
Charles VIII 56–57
Charter *see* United Nations Charter
Chaumont, Treaty of (1814) 64
Chiang Kai-shek 157, 264
China 83, 226, 263–265
balance of power 33, 43–44
balance of power and international order 55–56, 75–78
battle of concessions (1897-8) 34
and India 119 n.40, 137
and Indo-China 157
and Korea 157
nationalism and world order 92, 97
nuclear weapons 111–112, 124–125
and Russia 157
and Tibet 157
United Nations: power struggles 234, 236, 237–238, 242, 243–244
Churchill, W. 14, 16, 30–32, 35, 40, 54–55, 64, 107–108, 111 n.20, 117–118, 132 n.27, 132, 144, 164, 172, 174, 179–180, 249, 266–267
Ciano, G. 31–32
Clausewitzian doctrine of war 11, 269–270
Clovis 100–103
Coatman, J. 177–179
Cobden, R. 47–48, 52–53, 73–74
Cold War 41, 75, 79, 109 n.16, 237–238
Balance of Terror 126
nationalism and world order 94–95, 99
collective responsibility doctrine 86–87
collective security 49–50, 64, 73–77, 249, 260–261, 269
interests of states 166–167
nationalism and world order 97

collective security (*Continued*)
United Nations General Assembly 218
war and peace: Hobbesian predicament 139–140
Collins, M. 164
Colonial Powers 239–240
Committee on Information 239–240, 243
Commonwealth as non-Hobbesian institution 15, 175–190
Commonwealth theory 15
Communism 15, 30–31, 75–77, 79, 95, 97, 102–103, 118–119, 131, 158, 161, 188–189, 204–205, 239, 244, 256, 260–261, 263–265
Communist Powers 94, 97, 226, 231, 233–234, 237–238, 241–242, 244
community and neutrality 6–9
Commynes, P. de 3, 26, 55–57, 59
Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (1996) 137 n.7
Concert of Europe 31, 34, 54–55, 64, 77–78, 80–84, 106, 223–224
Concert of Italy 54–55
Concert of the Powers 49–50
confederation or federation 79–80
Congo 93, 98, 99
Congress of Berlin 94
Congress system 64
Connally, T. 205–206, 208, 209
containment 4, 77–78, 260–261
Continental Powers 41
conventional war 127
Council of Constance (1414-18) 91
Council of Europe 23
Council of Foreign Ministers 204, 206, 209–210
counterpoise 40, 53–54, 60, 64
Coupland, Professor 177–179
Courtney, K.D. 210, 212, 215
Covenant *see* League of Nations Covenant
Crimean War 64, 80–81
Cripps, Sir S. 31–32
Cuba 78
Cuban missile crisis 134, 138, 157
Culbertson, E. 4
Must We Fight Russia? (review) 249
Curtin, J. 184–185
Curtis, L. 185
Czechoslovakia 50–51, 75–77 n.87

Davenant, W. 62
Dawson, C. 15, 175–176
Dawson, G. 181
Declaration of Paris (1856) 86–87
decolonization 1, 9, 77, 100
Defence League of Democratic States 255–256
defensive intentions/war 129–130
de Gaulle, C. 38, 77–78, 104–105, 110, 124
Dehio, L. 43–44
democracy 16–17, 73, 95, 123, 142, 160, 177–181, 233, 243–244, 246, 256, 267, 268, 271–274
Demosthenes 3, 53
Denmark 59
depugnatio (violent fighting to extinction) 9–10, 116–119
Deutsch, K.W. 271–272
Dibelius, W. 112
Dilke, Sir C. 266
diplomacy 2, 18, 53–54, 80, 104–105, 154–155, 186, 204, 244, 253–254
accidents of 54–55
British 165–166
conciliatory 98
constructive 60
democratic 214
nuclear 132, 152–153
Roosevelt 255–259
secret 17, 73
Soviet 238–239, 243
Western 102–103
Disarmament Conference (1932-34) 206–207
disarmament and public opinion 16–19
divide and rule 57–58, 60
does peace take care of itself? 6, 79–85
confederation or federation 79–80
diplomacy 80
imperialism 79
Dominant Powers 113
Dulles, J.F. 183–184
Durham, Lord J. 188

Eastern Question 64
economic development 93
Economic and Social Council 203
Eden, A. 30–32, 163, 164
Egypt 163, 185, 216, 229–230
and Arab states 94
and Britain 218–219
and French in Morocco 241
Hashemite kingdoms 94
and Israel 137
nationalism 16, 95
nuclear weapons 115, 128–129
and Sudan 94
Eisenhower, D.D. 114–116, 147, 183–184
Eisenhower Doctrine 158
Elizabeth, Tsaritsa 37–38
Elton, Lord 175–176

Emerson, R.: *From Empire to Nation: The Rise to Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples* (review) 271–272
equitable geographical distribution 203
Ethiopia 82–83, 92, 94, 98
Europe 83, 176–177
  balance of power 31–32, 34, 37–38, 40, 41, 43–44, 47, 49
  balance of power and international order 52–53, 56–57, 60, 61–64, 74
  nationalism and world order 92–93, 96, 100–101
  nuclear weapons 107, 113, 122, 125
  see also Concert of Europe

Far East 64
federation or confederation 6
Fénelon, F. 62, 64
Fenton, G. 40
Ferdinand II 164
Final Settlement, Treaty on (1990) 75–77 n.87
Finland 115–116, 128–129
First World War 48–51, 8183, 112–113, 134, 139, 234
Five Powers (Australia, Britain, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore) 215
force majeure 155, 173
Fortescue, Sir J. 91
Four-Powers Agreement (Britain, France; Soviet Union, United States) 215
Four-Power Trusteeship (Britain, China, Soviet Union and United States over Korea) 211–212
Fourth Committee *see* Trusteeship Committee of the United Nations General Assembly
Fox, W.T.R. 156, 173
France 20, 23, 139, 229, 253
  balance of power 30–31, 36, 37–38, 45, 48–49
  balance of power and international order 56–61, 64, 75–77 n.87, 77–78
  and Czechoslovakia 195
  Empire 93
  and Habsburgs 126
  interests of states 153–154
  and Italy (1494) 122
  League of Nations and United Nations 194–195
  and Morocco 241
  nationalism and world order 96–97
  neutrality 88
  nuclear weapons and international politics 106
  and Prussia 154
  United Nations: power struggles 233–235, 237, 239, 243–244
  United Nations General Assembly 201, 211, 217
  United Nations Security Council 222
  see also French Revolution
Franco, General F. 88
Franco-Russian alliance (1892) 34
Franco-Turkish alliance 39
Frankfurt Interim (1539) 105–106
Frederick the Great 88
French Revolution 16–17, 47, 64–73, 92
functional development 248

Gaitskell, H. 188–189
Geneva Assembly 213–214
Geneva Conference on the Indo-China question (1954) 75–77, 89
Geneva Protocol 191
Gentz, F. von 64
George III 30–31, 45–46
Germany 49–50, 182, 229, 231–232, 251–253
  and Austria 95
  balance of power 31–32, 35, 37–38, 41, 45–46, 49–50
  balance of power and international order 59, 61, 62, 64, 75–77
  East Germany 157
  Hobbesian Predicament 139–140
  interests, honour and prestige 174
  interests of states 155
  International Security Organisation 192
  League of Nations and United Nations 194–196
  nationalism and world order 92–97
  neutrality 88
  nuclear weapons 104–106, 113, 117–118, 129, 146
  and Poland 194
  and Prussia 154
  reunification 127
  and Ukraine 172–173
  United Nations: power struggles 234–235
  United Nations General Assembly 206
  United Nations Security Council 221, 224
Ghana 94, 98, 186
Gladstone, W.E. 64, 156, 173, 181
Goa 75–77, 236–237
Godolphin, Earl of 63
Gough, E.J. 214
Gower 27
Grand Alliance (Britain; Soviet Union; United States) (1914-19) 75–77

Grand Alliance (League of Augsburg) (1701) 62–64
Grand Design 59, 61, 64
Great Powers 229–230, 251–252, 269–270
  balance of power 38, 43–44, 48–51
  balance of power and international order 52–53, 64, 75, 77
  Commonwealth as non-Hobbesian institution 182–183
  interests of states 163–164
  International Security Organisation 192
  League of Nations and United Nations 194–196
  nationalism and world order 94, 96, 99
  neutrality 89
  nuclear weapons: political consequences 120–122, 125, 127–129
  nuclear weapons and international politics 102–103, 110, 111, 115, 146–147
  power and pursuit of peace 83–84
  and Small Powers, end of distinction between 110–111, 124–125
  United Nations: power struggles 237, 244
  United Nations General Assembly 199, 202, 203, 206–207, 213, 214–215, 218
  United Nations Security Council 221, 223–226
Greece 53, 64, 88, 217, 218–219, 230–231
Greece, Ancient Greece 53–54, 75
Greville, F. 106
Grey of Falloden, Viscount 64, 156, 173
Gromyko, A. 206, 213, 220
Grotius, H. 8, 64, 86–87
Guatemala 238
Guicciardini, F. 29, 40, 54–55, 57, 122
Guinea 98

Habsburg Empire 56–57, 64, 92, 106
Hagerty, J.C. 158 n.23
Hague Conference (1907) 86–87
Hailey, Lord 210
Halifax 62
Hall, I. 2–3
Hamilton, J. 45, 74
Hammarskjöld, D. 98
Hancock, Sir W.K. 175–180, 187, 271–272
Hardy, T. 134
Harrington 62
Harvey, H. 216
have-not Powers 97, 105–106, 233, 234–235, 238–244
Hawkins-Brown, I. 31
Hayter, W. 160
Headlam-Morley, J. 153, 155, 156–157
Healey, D. 115
Heeren, A.H.L. 64
Hellenism 106–107
Hellenistic States 43–44, 53, 78–79
Henry II 39
Henry IV 58–59
Henry of Navarre 60
Henry VIII 39, 57–58, 63, 144
Herz, J.H. 12, 82–83, 108–109, 121, 122, 124, 125, 145
Herz, J.H., *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (review) 9, 11, 269–270
Hinsley, F.H. 6, 79–85
Hitler, A. 10, 20, 31–32, 53–54, 95, 113, 117–118, 122, 129, 174, 194–195, 235
Hoare-Laval Plan 180
Hoare, Sir S. 166
Hobbesian doctrine 15, 175–176
Hobbesian predicament *see* war and peace: Hobbesian predicament
Hobbes, T. 15, 36, 93, 135, 170, 176–177, 186–187
Hodgkin, P.H. 211
Holbraad, C. 13–14
Holland 37–38, 45–46, 62, 88, 117–118, 225, 233–234
Holland Rose, J. 45–46
Holy Roman Empire 79, 109–110, 139, 171, 182, 189–190
Homer 52–53
honour 152, 167
  see also interests, honour and prestige in statecraft
HQ Allied Forces Central Europe (AFCENT) 109 n.16
Hume, D. 53
Hungary 64, 214, 243–244

ideological conflict 123
ideological interests 14, 159–163
Imperial Conference (1911) 177–181
imperialism 6, 79, 96, 227, 236, 263–264, 267
  British 16, 266
  Stalinist 265
India 21, 43–44, 79, 185, 231
  balance of power and international order 75–78
  and Burma 186
  and China 186
  and Goa 94, 97–98
  and Korean War 39–40
  nationalism 16, 92, 93
  neutrality 8

and Pakistan 94, 99, 186–187, 218–219
power politics 89–90
and South Africa 200–201, 218–219, 225
United Nations: power struggles 236–237, 240–241
United Nations General Assembly 199–201, 210, 211, 216
Indo-China crisis 23, 244
Indo-Chinese armistice 39–40
Indonesia 92, 94, 100, 214, 225
industrial powers, end of decisive role of 111–112, 125–126
Innocent VIII 53–54
interests, choice of 164–167
interests, honour and prestige in statecraft 13–16, 169–174
Commonwealth as non-Hobbesian institution 15
honour 174
interests, honour and prestige 14
interests of states 14
Thornton, A.P.: *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power* (review) 16
interests of states 13–14, 149–167
choice of interests 164–167
moral and ideological interests 159–163
permanent interests 164
temporary interests 164
see also vital interests
Interim Committee on Peace and Security 21–22, 217 n.2, 237–238
international alignment - odd-and-even numbers system 55–56
international constitution (1944-5) 75
International Court of Justice 210
international history 87–89
internationalism 13, 17, 48–49, 102–103, 148
international law 2–3, 8, 30–32, 37, 48–49, 86–87, 93, 95, 99–100, 102–103, P110, 135–136, 222, 269
international order 3
community and neutrality 6–9
community of power 6–7
does peace take care of itself? 6
nationalism and world order 8–9
neutrality, idea of 8
see also balance of power and international order
international politics *see* has scientific advances and international politics; nuclear weapons and international politics; war and peace: nuclear weapons and change in international politics
International Refugee Organisation 198, 203
international security organisation 20, 191–193
Ireland 88, 98, 177–179, 186, 187–188
Irish Treaty (1921) 164, 173, 187
irregular war 127
Israel 75–77, 88
and Arab States 94–95, 99, 137
invasion of Egypt 126
Italy 82–83, 229, 269
and Abyssinia 140, 165–166, 194
aggrandizement in Africa 49–50
Ancient Rome 28–29, 58, 75, 78, 113
and Austria 155, 172–173
balance of power 31–32
balance of power and international order 53–57, 61, 64
Commonwealth as non-Hobbesian institution 182
Florence 53–55
League withdrawal 192
Milan 53–55
Naples 54–55
nationalism and world order 92–94, 96, 97
nuclear weapons and international politics 105–106, 109–110, 146
United Nations: power struggles 234–235
United Nations Security Council 221
Venice 39, 53–58

Jackson, H. 159
James II 64
Japan 140, 166–167, 174, 229, 251–252
balance of power 38, 41, 43–44, 75–77 n.87
nationalism and world order 96–97
nuclear weapons 105–106, 111, 113, 125
United Nations: power struggles 234–235, 243–244
United Nations Security Council 221, 224
Japan-DPRK Pyongyan Declaration (2002) 75–77 n.87
Japanese-American security treaty 243–244
Jefferson, T. 156, 173
Jerusalem 118
Joad, C.E.M.: *Conditions of Survival* (review) 250
Johnson, S. 131 n.25, 134 n.1
Jordan 147, 158
Joseph, F. 167
Julius II 56
just war doctrine 8, 86–87

Kahn, H. 75
Kant, I. 47, 73–74, 80
Kaplan, M. 64

Kardelj, E. 160
Kashmir 75–77
Katanga 75–77, 98, 99
Kautilya 26
Keith, B. 177–179
Kellog-Briand Pact (1928) 8, 18, 87, 183–184, 196–197
Kellogg, F.B. 18
Kennan, G.F. 116 n.30, 130
Kennedy, J.F. 78, 138 n.10, 141
Kennedy, R. 157
Kerr, M. 163
Khrushchev, N. 75–79, 114, 141, 157, 164
King-Hall, S. 116 n.30, 130
Kintner, R. 255–256
Koestler, A. 256
Korea 30, 75–77, 211–212, 231, 237–238, 253
Korean armistice 23, 239, 244
Korean War 83, 111, 237–238
Kuo-min-tang government 226
Kurile Islands 75–77 n.87, 211

Ladislas of Naples 53–54
La Guardia, F. 198
land power over sea power, final ascendancy of 112–115
Lansdowne, Lord 41–42, 153–154
Laos 94, 147
Latin America 105–106, 182–183, 203, 234–235, 238
Lauterpacht, H. 48–49
Law of Nations 64
League of Nations 2–3, 102–103, 269
  Assembly 223
  balance of power 35, 48–50
  balance of power and international order 64, 73–74, 77
  Committee of the Peace Conference (1919) 192
  Commonwealth as non-Hobbesian institution 175–177, 179–181
  does peace take care of itself? 81–82
  Executive Committee (Council) 223
  interests of states 152, 166–167
  international security organisation 191–193
  League of Nations Covenant
  nationalism and world order 96–97
  represented constitutional principle 222–224
  and United Nations 20, 194–197
  and United Nations comparison 20
  United Nations power struggle 237, 243
  United Nations Security Council 220–221, 224
League of Nations Covenant 8, 20, 74, 82–83, 251–252
  balance of power and international order 77
  Commonwealth as non-Hobbesian institution 183–184
  interests, honour and prestige 172
  interests of states 153, 166
  international security organisation 191–192
  neutrality 87
  scientific advances and international politics 112
  United Nations 194–195, 222, 237
League of Venice (1495) 58–59
Lebanon 147
Lee, R.E. 132
Legum, C. 1
Leibnitz, G.W. 62, 108, 120–121, 145, 269
Lenin, V.I. 96, 205–206, 263–265, 272
Leo X 57–58
Lewis, W.A. 1
Lippmann, W. 75–77, 256–257
Litvinov, M. 206
Lloyd George, D. 156, 173, 177–180, 184
Locarno 40
Locarno Treaties 30
Locke, J. 62
Lodge 238
London Conference of Users of the Suez Canal (1956) 100
Lorenzo the Magnificent 53–54, 61
Louis XI 57
Louis XII 56–57
Louis XIV 62–63, 73, 164
Lucas, Sir C. 189–190
Luxembourg 86–87

Mably 106
MacArthur, D. 157
Macaulay 189–190
Machiavelli, N. 29, 54–55, 57–58, 62, 176–177
Mackinder, Sir H.J. 113–114
Mackinnon Wood, H. 213
MacLaurin, J.: *The United Nations and Power Politics* 262
Macmillan, H. 110, 118–119, 124, 179
McNamara, R. 35
Maffey Committee/Report 165–166
Mahan, T. 234
Malan, D.F. 240–241
Malaysia 167
Malmesbury, Earl J.H. 102
Manchuria 253
Mander, Sir G. 210, 212
Manning, C.A.W. 210, 213, 214

Mansergh, P.N.S. 175–179, 182
Manuilsky, D. 209
Mao Tse-tung 189, 264, 265
Marlborough Wars 106
Marnix de Ste. Aldegonde 58
Marriott, Sir J. 177–179
Marshall, G./Marshall proposals 217–219, 230–231
Marshall Plan 237, 255–256
Marxism-Leninism 160
Marxist doctrine 96
Marx, K. 263–264
Mary, Regent of the Netherlands 39
Matthews, P. 212–213, 215
Mature Powers 173
Mauretania 94
Mazzini, G. 73–74
mechanization of war 13, 148
mediation 8
Medici, C. de 53–54
Medici, L. de 29, 58
Mehemet Ali, Pasha 64
Meinecke, F. 117–118
Menon, K. 39–40, 89
meta-Hobbesian situation of nuclear deadlock 140–141
Metternich, K. von 14, 126, 152
Middle East 43–44, 199
militarism 13, 17, 73, 148
military ascendancy 75
military capabilities 5
Military Staff Committee 221
military strength 88–89
Miller, Professor 175–176 n.1
Milner 180
Minor Powers *see* Smaller Powers
Mitrany, D.: *A Working Peace System, An Argument for the Functional Development of International Organization* (review) 248
mixed constitution theory 62
Mogul Empire 43–44
Molotov, V. 205–206, 214, 217, 230–231
Monroe Doctrine 14, 41, 153, 162, 171–172
Montesquieu 13148
moral interests 14, 159–163
moral protest 141–143
Morgenthau, H. 176–177
Morley, J. 100
Morocco 92, 94, 98
Mountbatten, L. 130–131
multilateral pacts 196
Munich Agreement 14, 174
Murry, J.M.: *Trust or Perish* (review) 247
Mussolini, B. 96, 105–106, 129, 155, 165–166, 172–173, 235, 237, 272
Mutiny Act 37–38, 63

Nagas 75–77
Namier, Sir L.B. 26, 55–56, 185–186
Naples, King of 53–54
Napoleon 41–42, 45–46, 53–54, 113, 117–118, 167
Napoleonic War 64, 148
Nasser, G.A. 97–98, 163, 236–237, 243–244
nationalism 13, 16, 75–77, 102–103, 110, 148, 199, 236–237, 271–272
nationalism and world order 8–9, 91–101
  contraction 93
  economic development 93
  frontier disputes 94
  majority view 100
  minority view 100–101
  nation (definition) 91–92
  neutrality 93
  new nations, character of 93–95
  new nations, international policy of 95–97
  new nations, number of 92–93
  re-expansion 93
  revisionism 97
  temperamenta 97–98
  uncertain frontiers 94
  uncertain regimes 93
  world order 99–101
National Security Council 166–167
nation (definition) 91–92
NATO 77–78, 109, 110, 121–122, 127, 131, 145, 146–147, 187–188
Near East 64, 199
Nehru, J. 39–40, 55–56, 89, 119, 137, 188–189, 199–200, 236–237, 266
Netherlands 37–38, 45–46, 62, 88, 117–118, 233–234
neutrality 8, 86–90, 93
  active 89
  collective responsibility doctrine 86–87
  domestic policy/affairs 88–89
  external policy/relations 88
  India and power politics 89–90
  international history 87–89
  neutralism 89
  nuclear weapons 10–11, 121
New Deal 258–259
new nations *see under* nationalism and world order
New Order (Hitler) 45
New Zealand 167, 185, 241–242
Nicholas II 206

Nigeria 92–93
Nkrumah, K. 94, 97–98
non-alignment 8, 77–78
non-Hobbesian institution 15, 175–190
non-nuclear wars 127
Non-Proliferation Treaty (1968) 61, 153, 172
North America 39–40, 43–44, 96, 183
North Atlantic Council (NAC) 109 n.16
North Korea 157
North, Lord F. 188
nuclear deadlock, meta-Hobbesian situation of 140–141
nuclear deterrence 77, 102, 128–129
nuclear diplomacy 152
nuclear disarmament 128, 140
nuclear Powers 110–111
nuclear stalemate 99
nuclear war 80, 111–112, 115, 117, 127
nuclear weapons 74–75, 83, 110–111
  see also political consequences of nuclear weapons
nuclear weapons and international politics 9–13
  arms races 13
  bipolarity 106
  Herz, J.H.: *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (review) 11
  political consequences of nuclear weapons 10–11
  war and peace: Hobbesian predicament 11–12
  war and peace: nuclear weapons and change in international politics 11–12
  see also scientfic advances and international politics

OEEC 187–188
offensive over the defensive, final ascendancy of 112
Okinawa 166–167
Oppenheimism 255–257
Oppenheim, L. 2–3, 48–49
Organisation of American States 176–177, 238
Orwell, G. 84
Ottoman Empire 43–44, 93
Overbury, Sir T. 29, 59, 64

Pacific Dominions 180, 185
pacifism 13, 17, 148
Paine, T. 73
Pakistan 75–77, 94, 186, 218–219, 231, 240–242
Palestine 217 n.1, 220, 230
Palmerston, H.T. 36, 40, 49–50, 64, 80–81
Panama 243–244
Pan-American Union 187
Pandit, V.L. 199–200
Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) (1963) 137 n.7
Peace of Augsburg 61
Peaceful Nuclear Explosion Treaty (1976) 137 n.7
peace movement 13
Peace Pledge Union 141
Peace settlement (1919) 92
Peace Societies 73–74
Peace Treaties 221
Peace of Westphalia 61
Pearson, L. 30
Perkins, F. 256–257
  The Roosevelt I Knew (review) 258–259
Permanent Court of Arbitration 152
Permanent Court of International Justice 152
Persia 28–29, 88, 92, 94, 147, 154–155, 231
Persian Gulf 153–154
Philip II of Spain 3, 45, 57–59, 62–64, 117–118 n.33, 164
Philippines 21, 166–167, 199, 201–202, 212, 214, 234–235
  and North Borneo 94
  'unequal treaty' 243–244
Pinheiro, H. de: *The World State or the New Order of Common Sense* (review) 246
Pishevari régime (Iran) 209–210
Pitt, W. 49–50, 64
Plato 62
Poland 33–34, 73, 92
  balance of power and international order 33, 59, 74–77 n.87
  United Nations General Assembly 213–214
Polish Succession, War of 31
political consequences of nuclear weapons 10–11, 120–132
  balance of power, end of 126–127
  Great Powers and Small Powers, end of distinction between 124–125
  industrial power, end of decisive role of 125–126
  territorial impermeability of the state, end of 120–124
  war as an instrument of policy, end of 128–132
political consolidation 122–124, 128
Political and Security Committee 199, 204, 205–206, 209–210, 213
politics, instruments of: transformation 160
Pollard, A.F. 48–49
Polybius 62, 118
Pope, A. 46
Portugal 75–77, 93, 233–234, 236–237

power
community of 6–7
see also balance of power
Power Politics 13–14
Powers
Big Three 196, 202–204, 230, 251–252
Big Two 43–44
Central 112
Colonial 239–240
Continental 41
Dominant 113
Five 215
Mature 173
Western 37–40, 64
see also Axis Powers; Bandung Powers; Communist Powers; Great Powers; have-not Powers; Smaller Powers, status quo Powers
power struggle within the United Nations 23, 233–245
power struggle within the United Nations
Axis Powers 233–235, 237
Bandung Powers 234–238, 241–244
Communist Powers 233–234, 237–238, 241–242, 244
have-not Powers 233–235, 238–244
status quo Powers 233–234, 237, 242–244
Preparatory Commission (1926-32) 206–207, 211–212
prestige *see* interests, honour and prestige in statecraft
preventive intentions/war 129–130
Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America Treaty (1967) 153, 172
proletarianism 96, 105–106
Prussia 36–38, 117–118, 153
Public Law (Europe) 64
public opinion
on foreign policy 148
see also disarmament and public opinion
Pufendorf, Baron S. von 14, 150–C11P–152, 159–160, 164
Pyrenees, Treaty of the 64

Quincy Wright, P. 81

Radhakrishnan, S. 189
raison d'état 17, 73
Ranke, L. 89
rationalist perspective 6, 11–12 n.26, 25
realism 6, 11–12 n.26, 17, 25
Reinsurance Treaty (1890) 34
Religious Wars 109–110, 159–160
Revolutionary War 64, 148
revolutionism 11–12 n.26, 17, 25
Rhodesia 99
Richelieu, Cardinal 60, 149
Ridley, J. 210, 214
Robinson, K. 175
Rohan, H., Due de 60–61, 149–150, 160
Rome-Berlin-Axis against League Powers 34
Romulo, C. 201
Roosevelt, E. 198, 200–201, 231–232, 259
Roosevelt, F.D. 198 n.2, 222, 255–259
Rostovtzeff, M. 43
Rostow, W.W.: *The American Diplomatic Revolution* (review) 253–254
Rousseau, J.-J. 42, 64, 80
rule of law 80, 84, 89–90
Rumania 94, 214
Russell, Lord J. 31, 64
Russia 17, 45, 247, 249, 253, 255–257, 260, 262–265, 269
and Azerbaijan 220
balance of power 31–32, 35, 36–40, 45–46
balance of power and international order 59, 64, 74–78
Bolshevism 264–265
and Crimea 33
and Czechoslovakia 161–162
and Finland Winter War 116, 129
as Great Power 229–232
Hobbesian predicament 137 n.6, 138 n.10, 140–141
interests, honour and prestige 171–172
interests of states 153, 155, 156–157, 159–160
International Security Organisation 192
League of Nations and United Nations 194
nationalism and world order 92, 97
neutrality 88
nuclear weapons 12, 106, 111–112, 114, 115, 117 n.31, 123–130, 131 n.24
and Persia 154–155
and Poland 110, 146–147
Port Arthur occupation 34
power and pursuit of peace 79, 83, 84
and Turkey 121–122
Two Blocs in One World (commentary) 229–232
United Nations 21–23
United Nations: power struggles 234, 237–240, 242, 243
United Nations General Assembly 198–199, 201–216, 218
United Nations Security Council 221–225, 227–228
Russo-Japanese War 114–115, 206

Russo-Prussian frontier and Poland 185–186
Rymer, T. 63

Sachs, S. 240–241
Salisbury, Lord R. 64, 171
Salter, Sir A. 179–180
San Francisco conference (1951) 75–77 n.87
San Francisco Declaration (1945) 24
Santayana, G. 266
Sarawak 187
Saudi Arabia 94, 243–244
Saxony 88
Scandinavia 176–177, 187
Scialoja, V. 192
scientific advances and international politics 9–10, 102–119
  Great Powers and Small Powers, end of distinction between 110–111
  industrial powers, end of decisive role of 111–112
  land power over sea power, final ascendancy of 112–115
  offensive over the defensive, final ascendancy of 112
  territorial impermeability of the state, end of 108–110
  war, end of, as instrument of policy 115–119
Scotland 61
Scott, M. 1, 240–242, 262
Second World War 39–40, 50–51, 74–77, 81, 88, 113, 140, 234
secret diplomacy 17, 73
Secret Treaty of London (1915) 73
Seeley 189–190
self-determination 73, 75–77, 92, 271–272
self-preservation doctrine 64
semi-official wars 127
Serbia 94
Seton-Watson, H. 4
  Neither War nor Peace: The Struggle for Power in the Post-War World (review) 273–274
  Pattern of Communist Revolution, The (review) 263–265
Seven Years' War 33, 88
Sforza, F., Duke of Milan 53–54, 57
Shawcross, Sir H. 200, 205–209, 214
Shigemitsu, M. 243–244
Singh, Sir M. 199
Sixtus IV 53–54
Smaller Powers 38–40, 58–59, 89, 93, 196, 269–270
  nuclear weapons 102–105, 115, 120–121, 129, 147
  United Nations General Assembly 199, 202–203, 206–207, 213, 214–215, 217–219
  United Nations Security Council 223–225
Smith, A. 100
Smuts, J.C. 49–50, 179–181, 199, 200, 210
Somalia 94
South Africa 16, 112, 114–115, 159, 210, 214
  Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland 186
  racialism 242
  United Nations: power struggles 240–241, 243
South America 229–230
South Slav states 182
Soviet-Yugoslav dispute (1948) 160
Spain 88, 139, 182, 195, 203
  balance of power 30–31, 73
  balance of power and international order 56–61, 64
Spanish Succession War 46
Speer, A. 10, 117–118
spheres of influence 153–155, 182
Stalingrad, battle of 45–46
Stalin, J. 31–32, 37–38, 79, 147, 154–155, 238–239, 255–257, 264–265
statecraft *see* interests, honour and prestige in statecraft
status quo Powers 97, 233–234, 237, 242–244
Stein 117–118
Stephen, Sir J. 182
Stockholm Peace Appeal (1950) 17
Strachey, J. 24, 141
Stresa Front 49–50
Stubbs, W. 43–44
submission 115–116
subterranean wars 127
Suez Canal 97–98, 100, 155–157, 164, 172–173, 180, 267
Suez War and Anglo-French intervention 77–78, 172–173, 180, 238, 243
Sukarno, President 96, 234–235
Sully 59–61, 64
Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) 109 n.16
Sweden 59–61, 88–89, 98, 115
Swift, J. 37, 47, 62
Switzerland 86–89, 115, 250
Syria 97–98

Taipei, Treaty of (1952) 75–77 n.87
Taylor, A.J.P. 4381, 129
Temple Sir W. 64
temporary interests 164

territorial frontiers 99, 185–186
territorial impermeability of the state 108–110, 120–124, 145–147, 269–270
Test Ban Treaty (1963) 152–153, 172
Theodoric 100–103
Thirty Years War 60, 170
Thornton, A.P.: *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power* (review) 16, 266–268
Threshold Test Ban Treaty (1974) 137 n.7
Tito, J.B. 160
Titus 118
Togoland 94
Toynbee, A.J. 43, 118–119
Triple Alliance (Austria-Hungary, Germany, Italy) 64
Trojan War 52–53
Trotsky, L. 102–103, 204, 205
Truman Doctrine 217, 237, 255–256
Truman, H. 166–167, 237–238
Trusteeship Agreements 211–212
Trusteeship Committee of the United Nations General Assembly 199, 239–240
Trusteeship Council 201, 211–212
Trusteeship system 211–212
Turkey 33, 39–40, 64, 88, 115, 128–129

Ukraine 155
United Arab Republic 98
United Kingdom *see* Britain
United Nations 19–24, 140, 230, 247, 262
  balance of power 47
  Commonwealth as non-Hobbesian institution 176–177, 187
  from the League to the UN 20, 194–197
  Hobbesian predicament 140
  interests of states 167
  international security organisation 20
  nationalism and world order 9, 91, 92, 97, 98, 100
  power struggle 23
  scientific advances and international politics 102–105
  secondary functions 23–24
United Nations Charter 8, 19, 20–22, 24, 212–213, 218
  balance of powers 50–51
  Brierly, J.L.: *The Covenant and the Charter* (review) 251–252
  Culbertson, E.: *Must We Fight Russia?* (review) 249
  from the League to the UN 196–197
  international security organisation 191–192
  loophole 227–228
  neutrality 87
  United Nations General Assembly 200–201
  United Nations power struggle 237–240
  United Nations Security Council 224–225
United Nations Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa (UNCORSUSA) 220, 240–241
United Nations Emergency Force in Egypt 244
United Nations General Assembly 19, 21–22, 104–105, 198–219, 223–224, 226, 230–232, 249
  power struggle 237–244
United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) 198, 203, 248
United Nations Security Council 19, 21–22, 24, 202, 211–214, 218, 220–228, 246, 251–252
  balance of power 50–51
  balance of power and international order 77
  Charter loophole 227–228
  historical background of founding of UN 221–222
  interests of states 166–167
  League of Nations represented constitutional principle 222–224
  power struggle 237–239, 241, 243
  practice of UN 225
  Russia's interest 225–227
  theory of new organization as set up 222
United Provinces 58–59
United States 15, 17, 246, 249, 256–257, 269
  American Revolutionary War 17, 30–31, 33, 37–38, 45–47, 73
  balance of power 35, 45, 49–51
  balance of power and international order 64, 74–78
  and British North America 185–186
  Commonwealth as non-Hobbesian institution 177, 182, 184–185, 188
  as Great Power 229–232
  Hobbesian predicament 137 n.6, 138 n.10, 138, 140, 141
  interests, honour and prestige 171–172
  interests of states 153, 156–157
  international security organisation 191–192
  isolationism 89
  and Korea 166–167
  and Latin America 110, 121–122, 146–147
  and Middle East 158
  nationalism and world order 96
  neutrality 86–87, 89
  nuclear weapons 12, 106, 109 n.16, 111–113, 117 n.32, 123–125, 131 n.24
  power and pursuit of peace 79, 83

United States (*Continued*)
and Santo Domingo 161–162
Two Blocs in One World (commentary) 229–232
United Nations 21–23
United Nations: power struggles 233–235, 237, 238, 240, 243–244
United Nations General Assembly 198, 200–201, 203, 210–211, 218
United Nations Security Council 221–222, 224, 226
United States Security Council (UNSC) 21–22
Utrecht, Treaty of 30–31, 62–64

Valois, House of 56–57, 106
Vattel, E. de 80
Versailles Settlement 73–74
Vickers, G. 192
Victoria, Queen 64
Vienna Settlement 59, 64
Vienna, Treaties of 100
Vietnam War 75–77
Visconti, G. 53–54
Visconti Milan 53–54
vital interests 14, 152–158, 164, 167, 171–174
Vitoria, F. de 106–107
Vyshinsky, A. 209, 213, 226–227, 231–232, 238–239

Wallace 256
Waller, E. 40
Walters, F.P. 191
war 115–116
as an instrument of policy, end of 115–119, 128–132
by accident 83
Ward, B. 4
Policy for the West (review) 260–261
war and peace: Hobbesian predicament 5, 11–12, 134–143
Hobbesian predicament 135–140
meta-Hobbesian situation of nuclear deadlock 140–141
moral protest 141–143
war and peace: nuclear weapons and change in international politics 11–12, 144–147
Warsaw Pact 109–110, 121–122, 131, 145–147
Waterloo, battle of 82–83
Webster, Sir C. 81
Wellington, Duke of 82–83
Western Powers 37–40, 64
see also status quo Powers
West Irian 94
Wheeler-Bennett, J.W. 204
White, F. 211–215
White, L. 158 n.23
Whitney, P. 208
Wilhelm II, Kaiser 41–42
William III 62–64, 73
William IV 36
Willkie, W. 217
Wilson, H. 167
Wilson, W. 6–7, 48–50, 102–103, 156, 173
Witt, J. de 55–56
Woodhouse, C.M. 81
Woodward, Professor 193
world order *see* nationalism and world order
World Peace Movement 17, 238–239, 264
Wyndham, J. 134

Young, W. 107
Yugoslavia 38, 89

Zeno, Emperor 100–103
Zimmern, Sir A. 191, 193