E. H. Carr and political realism: vision and revision*

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With undue and perhaps false modesty, E. H. Carr described his brilliant contribution to what he called 'the infant science of international politics', *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, as 'already a period piece' in 1946 when a second edition appeared.[1] Teachers of the subject have not accepted Carr's 'period piece' characterization. For more than forty years it has been prescribed reading for many of their students and has had to be reprinted many times.

Four great virtues of Carr's writings on international politics are exemplified in this semi-classic. These virtues should be noted at the outset, especially since so much of what follows deals less with Carr's realist vision than with the apparent need for its revision. He relentlessly exposed the hollowness of the edifice of then prevailing Anglo-American 'utopian' international thinking. He had a sense of the sweep of modern European history and was well-equipped to identify the salient changes which marked the passing of the European age in world politics. He was a pioneer in bringing the insights of Karl Mannheim and the sociology of knowledge to bear on the relation between thought and action in world politics.[2] Finally, whether or not he always got the right answers, he asked very good questions.

The new age

Carr was by no means the first to sense that the old order of the European great powers and of Britain as the mistress of the ocean world was gone. A century before anyone thought to call the United States and Russia superpowers, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in *Democracy in America* that one day these two countries would each sway the destinies of half the world. Geoffrey Barraclough points out that for a generation thereafter there were repeated predictions of the decline of Europe and of the rise of Russia and the United States, and that Constantin Frantz in the late 1850s had seen federation as Europe's best hope for maintaining first rank status along with the two future superpowers.[3] An alternate method of building a continent-sized state in Europe to match Russia and the United States was to build it around the core of Germany's Second Reich (or its Third). After the great German victories of April, May, and June 1940 the banners of victory celebrations in Berlin's sports stadium read: 'Europe will win'! Ironically, the Common Market rather than the Third Reich has turned out to be the agent of European consolidation.

As for Britain, Sir John Seeley was already in the 1880s calling for some

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form of federal union with the self-governing colonies so that a 'Greater Britain' should have an assured place among the new class of world powers.[4] Joseph Chamberlain's famous plea in 1902 to the prime ministers of those colonies, 'Gentlemen, we do want your aid. . . The weary Titan staggers under the too vast orb of its fate. . .', was a British response to a sense that in the new age vast new forces were at work, that Britain was too small, that the strife of Europe was no longer a sure guarantee of Britain's security, and that to remain a world power Britain must find a way to draw on the strength of these vigorous and increasingly independent colonies.[5]

In the event, it took the Americans to prevent the consolidation of Europe by German victory in the 1914–18 war. John Maynard Keynes was quick to note that that war marked the passing of Europe's leadership in world politics.[6] The sense of breakdown and major transformation had deep and multiple historical roots. It was shared not only by those who saw that the future lay with aggregations of power bigger than those of Britain and the continental powers of central and western Europe but also by those who saw in the Russian Revolution an event as cataclysmic as the French Revolution and by those who thought that what was good about the old order could somehow be salvaged, if not by imperial federation then by 'hands across the sea' to North America, by a United States of Europe, or by a League of Nations. A generation later, as the struggle against Hitler was mounting in intensity, E. H. Carr in the Conditions of Peace, was writing scornfully of 'the backward looking view of the satisfied powers' and warning that the 'humpty dumpty of nineteenth-century private international capitalism' could never be put back together again.[7]

What distinguishes E. H. Carr and the Marxists from many of the others who were pronouncing the old Eurocentric world order dead beyond recall, was their emphasis on the mass-based forces for social change inside Europe that were not to be denied rather than on the growing power of the United States and the Soviet Union, who separately or together could intervene decisively to resolve Europe's conflicts. American isolationism and the demonstrated impotence of the League of Nations in the international crises of the 1930s did indeed raise doubts as to the overseas help a beleaguered France or Britain could expect.[8] Internationalist League advocates, such as Arnold Toynbee, Sir Alfred Zimmern, and 'the Wilsonians' were Carr's special white whales. It remained for Martin Wight to write in reference to The Twenty Years' Crisis: 'The new kingdom of the fairies that seduces the intelligence of man is not the Roman Church but the League of Nations, which is none other than the ghost of the Pax Britannica, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof, and the principal old wives who circulate its fables are President Wilson, Lord Cecil, professors Toynbee and Zimmern, and the Winston Churchill of Arms and the Covenant.'[9] To this I would add only that Wilson himself was not a very good example of a Wilsonian.

There is a wide gap between Wilson's declaratory policies and his action policies. At the Paris Peace Conference he stubbornly insisted on getting agreement on his precious Covenant first and only then talking about matters of greater interest to Clemenceau and Lloyd George. What is often forgotten is that he agreed to a tripartite guarantee of France's redrawn north-eastern border with Germany. 'Alliances and balances of power' may have been anathema to Woodrow Wilson the phrasemaker, but what he offered at Paris in 1919 was what anyone else would have called a defensive alliance.

Furthermore, the same Wilson who in 1916 had promised Americans a navy as big as that of any other power was in 1919 wholly prepared to resume the naval arms race with Britain.[10] Wilson the realist was as prepared to defend what he perceived to be the United States' national interests by naval arms and defensive alliances as by general international organization and commitments to oppose 'aggression', whoever the aggressor might turn out to be.

Carr was correct in his judgment that most Americans and many Britons who thought about the matter at all had the view that promoting good change in the world and preventing bad change were relatively easy and so clearly within the capabilities of the British and the French that failure reflected moral flabbiness. He stands as the most eloquent spokesman of his time to proclaim the irrelevance of moral consensus not backed by physical force and the poverty of status quo foreign policy goals as a counter to mass-based revolutionary social forces.

Three levels of failure

There was, however, failure at three levels. The events of the 1930s had indeed made clear the irrelevance of trying to prescribe for a world when there was not any world super-actor to listen and to reform the world system. The League, it was clear after the indignities to which it was exposed by the Ethiopian crisis, had failed; international government could not be substituted for international politics simply by constructing Europe's largest office building in Geneva. It was not, however, the Covenant of the League of Nations that had failed; that document was good enough to enable a general international organization to do whatever such organizations can do. To change the metaphor, it was not the engine but the engine-drivers that failed.

Their failure did not occur just at Geneva. The operators of the defensive alliance systems that had been meant to enforce the peace negotiated in 1919 failed in their national capitals. Adolf Hitler's discovery that on Saturdays in March the British and the French would be unable to make timely, effective, and co-ordinated responses permitted the 1936 remilitarization of the Rhineland, the 1938 take-over of Austria, and the final suppression in 1939 of Czechoslovakia's sovereignty. French cabinet crises and long British weekends seem always to have delayed counter-action until it could no longer have been effective. Opportunities for appeasement that might have appeased seem to have been missed in the 1920s; similarly, opportunities for enforcement that might have stopped Hitler in his tracks were missed in the 1930s.[11]

Perhaps the biggest failures were North American. The Canadians inside the League were as determined as the Americans outside the League to avoid entangling commitments. 'No prior commitment' was an ingrained feature of both countries' foreign policies.[12] The United States and the colonies out of which it was formed had participated in every round of general war in the western state system since the late seventeenth century, and so had Canada. Yet, as late as the Saturday night before his re-election for a third term in November 1940, President Franklin Roosevelt was telling the Irish-American voters of Boston that while he was president no American boy would be sent to fight in a foreign war.

There were failures in national defense policies too. The Maginot Line, however useful as a device for compelling a German aggressor in a new war with France to come through the Low Countries and thus involve Britain,

advertised France's inability to protect its European allies. The ten-year rule by which British war planners were instructed to plan on the assumption that there would be no major war for a decade assured the decay of arms industries and the dispersion of their skilled labor forces. The United States in the 1930s had by European standards a pitifully small army, and in the early 1930s had even been offering its commissioned officers bonuses to take early retirement.

The Toynbees and the Zimmerns no doubt merited the harsh judgment that the iconoclastic Aberystwyth professor pronounced upon them. Carr was, however, quicker to discover a mote in the eye of a utopian internationalist than a beam in the eye of a political realist whose policy judgments had somehow gone wrong.

Crucial revisions

Hedley Bull has cautioned us against the danger of interpreting Carr's 1939 work 'with the disadvantage of hindsight'.[13] Carr himself, however, substantially reduced this danger by making a very few but crucial revisions of the original text in the 1946 second edition, the only easily accessible edition for many years. He sought only, he said, 'to modify a few sentences which have invited misunderstanding, and to remove two or three passages relating to current controversies which have been eclipsed or put in a different perspective by the lapse of time.'[14]

When I discovered which were these two or three deleted passages, I was shocked. The one on which I and others of Carr's critics pounced was the following:

> If the power relations of Europe in 1938 made it inevitable that Czecho-Slovakia should lose part of her territory, and eventually her independence, it was preferable (quite apart from any question of justice or injustice) that this should come about as the result of discussion round a table in Munich rather than as the result either of a war between the Great Powers or of a local war between Germany and Czecho-Slovakia.[15]

My sense of indignation has given way to an understanding which makes it possible to discuss both Carr's original vision and his own partly unacknowledged revision. Deleting such statements helped *The Twenty Years' Crisis* shed its 'period piece' aspect and stand on its more enduring merits.

The chronology is significant. Carr wrote his famous book in 1938 and 1939. It was in page proof on 3 September 1939.[16] It would surely have been feasible for Carr to have made some prudential deletions at that point. It might even have been possible for him to have fudged things a little and to have altered the text to read: 'It was far better to have yielded at Munich in order that, if opposing Hitler in war should ultimately become necessary, His Majesty's Government could lead a united people into war.' For whatever reason, Carr chose not to tamper with his text at that time. The *Sitzkrieg* of the first months of World War II was not to give way to *Blitzkrieg* until April 1940, and it is tempting to speculate that in Carr's view the counsels of appeasement might still have been relevant to the task of avoiding pointless carnage. One cannot know that this was in Carr's mind, but neither can one be certain that it was not.

Nicholas Spykman, the Dutch-born Yale professor of international relations, had a problem similar to Carr's.[17] Spykman's influential book on

geopolitics, *America's Strategy in World Politics*, was in galley proof when Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor moved the United States from unneutral neutrality to full-scale participation in the Second World War.[18] To make his book more timely Spykman *did* make some changes, not in the central argument but in the topical references that gave point to that argument. Originally addressed to the inadequacy for a still neutral United States of an expanded isolationism in the form of western hemisphere defense, it was quickly redirected toward helping Americans understand the stakes in the war into which a naval disaster had catapulted them. Spykman's tightly reasoned central argument, that the security of North America rests upon the preservation of the independence of the Rimland states of Europe and Asia, was unchanged. It was brave of Spykman to continue to argue in a book published just after Pearl Harbor that the independent survival of *both* Britain and the other great island power, Japan, was in the American interest.

Carr had addressed himself to exposing what he saw as the false doctrines of internationalist advocates of intervention in the struggles of continental Europe. Spykman was concerned to expose the false doctrines of isolationism even in their western hemisphere guise and to counter the isolationists' wrong-headed advocacy of non-intervention in the struggle against Hitler and the Fascist *triplice*. There is a lesson here. A good big theory does give a handle on the long- and middle-run future, but it does not point directly and ineluctably to the big short-run decisions. Carr may or may not have been right about Munich, given the then state of French and British unpreparedness, but his rightness or wrongness cannot be deduced from his political realist theorems.

On the basis of Hitler's enormous successes in the Saar, the Rhineland, Austria, and Czechoslovakia and of Mussolini's demonstration of the impotence of the League of Nations during the Ethiopian crisis, what Carr euphemistically called 'peaceful change' had by October 1938 changed the face of Europe.[19] With some plausibility one might after Munich have called Hitler's Third Reich and Mussolini's Italy the new 'have' nations and Britain and France the new 'have-nots', as Carr would have been the first to admit.[20] Thus, a have versus have-not explanation of the rise and fall of first-ranking powers can in the short run be adduced to support either prudential yielding to Hitler-like temper tantrums or prudential firmness. More critical for the short run, that is, for determining the exact moment for abandoning appeasement and the precise issue on which to stand fast even if it means war, is the state of national unity and the forging of a national consensus that appeasement has been tried and failed and that military preparedness must be at least sufficient to avoid irretrievable defeat in a short war.

In the long term and in the abstract who can doubt that an international order which reflects a bygone power pattern will ultimately be replaced by one which reflects the prevailing power pattern? If a statesman *knows* how the power pattern has changed, is changing, or will change, then statesmanship is indeed a matter of causing the future to be born with the fewest possible broken heads.

Recognizing that the short-term policy implications of *The Twenty Years' Crisis* as originally written were overtaken by events even before the first edition was off the press, let us look at the already quoted deleted sentence in detail:

> *If the power relations of Europe in 1938 made it inevitable that Czecho-Slovakia should lose part of her territory* [query: was it in fact inevit-

able?], *and eventually her independence* [query: was there no qualitative difference between the transfer with British and French acquiescence of German-speaking Sudetenland to Germany, albeit under duress, and Hitler's seizure, in violation of his promises at Munich only six months earlier, of the unquestionably Czech and Slovak remainder of the country?], *it was preferable (quite apart from any question of justice or injustice)* [query: are questions of justice and injustice irrelevant unless one is dealing with the truly inevitable?] *that this should come about as the result of discussions round a table in Munich* [query: is this a euphemism for surrender in advance?] *rather than as a result either of a war between the Great Powers or of a local war between Germany and Czecho-Slovakia* [query: was it 'preferable' that the Prague government should in effect have been denied the opportunity to choose the latter?].

Three inferences may be fairly drawn from this defense of the 'peace in our time' purchased by the British and the French at Munich. (1) One cannot fight and win against inevitable change, and in such cases it is imprudent to fight at all. (2) No positive-sum outcomes are possible in most truly serious conflicts between states, but extreme negative-sum outcomes can be made less likely by prudent yielding in advance. (3) Prudent yielding poses no moral question whether it involves yielding one's own interest or that of another, and prudent yielding is what one means by peaceful change. Might makes right; or perhaps, since right and wrong hardly enter into the calculus of prudent statesmanship at all, might makes rights, until some other country's might destroys those rights. It is no surprise, therefore, that a recent reviewer of Carr's last book, *The Twilight of the Comintern*, concluded that 'Carr sought to demonstrate, tautologically, that those who were successful were right, as is proved by their success'.[21] If change is inevitable, mysteriously originating somewhere outside the political universe, the powerful are a little like Typhoid Mary. As a carrier though not a victim of *salmonella typhosa* that unfortunate woman working in a New York bakery had the 'power' to infect but not the power to choose whom to infect or whether to infect at all. This, I think, is Carr's view of power. Britain had it; Germany gained it and lost it; the Soviet Union succeeded where the Third Reich and Hitler failed. Those who want peace must *adapt* to changing circumstances. Forget about justice.

Another view of power, and one closer to my own, is as 'the ability to produce intended effects', that is, the ability 'to make things happen that would not have happened otherwise', or, in a world of inevitable change, to change change purposefully.[22] Perhaps the passing of the European age in world politics and of the age of Britain as the mistress of the ocean world was foreordained, but whether the new Europe was to be a Common Market Europe or one run by the barbarians was not. In this alternative view of power, as the ability deliberately to change change, one relates available means to choices within the estimated range of one's choices. The political actor is engaged in an unending calculus as to how much of what means is to be sacrificed to achieve how much of what ends. Finding one's way between the excessive voluntarism said to have been an American vice and the excessive involuntarism either of those who believe in appeasement at any cost or of those who believe in an unending struggle with the forces of darkness is difficult, but that is what gives the academic study of international relations its social utility.

Tract for different times

E. H. Carr, for all his bad guesses of 1939 about the years immediately ahead, seems to have understood better than most North Americans, including the author of this essay, that Britain was more the creature than the upholder of the balance in Europe. On the other hand, Carr underestimated the resilience of the West as a whole and Britain's capacity for eliciting overseas potential in particular, (*if* she could avoid irretrievable defeat in a short war).[23]

There is irony in the circumstances which made the vision of the Carr of the 1939 first edition of *The Twenty Years' Crisis* irrelevant and the revision of the 1946 second edition relevant. What his version of realist doctrine seemed to be teaching on the eve of World War II was that in a future of structurally determined unending struggle and shifting power patterns 'peace conferences' à la Munich in 1938 ought to be allowed to substitute for fighting unnecessary wars, unnecessary because their outcomes could be known in advance. In other words, 'for peace in our time find out Hitler's price and pay it'. Paying Hitler's price in September and October 1938 led to the unpleasant discovery in March 1939 that Hitler would not stay bought, that his appetite had in fact, as a result of the so-called peaceful changes of 1935 to 1939, improved with the eating and that in the end war had to be accepted under less advantageous circumstances than prevailed earlier. World War II took the shine off the idea that there was a price at which an aspirant for political hegemony could once and for all be bought off. That war was a powerful learning experience, and the West was not prepared to be as indulgent with Stalin as it had been with Hitler. As assistant editor of the London *Times* Carr himself was writing in ways that led Conservative critics to refer to it as 'the thrupenny *Daily Worker*'[24] and to Carr as 'the Red Professor of Printing House Square'.[25] Most realist writings, however, were by the early 1950s interpreted as providing a rationale for not appeasing the presumably unappeasable and therefore for cold war.

The Twenty Years' Crisis took on a life of its own. Its anti-utopian, anti-idealist image of world politics and its pessimistic strictures about the narrow range of choice in foreign policy carried not Carr's own message of appeasement of Stalin's Soviet Union but a message of the futility of any return by the superpower of the western world to what after World War I had been called 'normalcy' and non-involvement. Realism helped rationalize for reluctant Americans their unsought position of world leadership. Superimposed on the notion that Americans were conscripted by historical necessity to halt Soviet expansionism was, however, the voluntarist notion that there could be a 'New Deal' for the world in the 1940s as there had been for the United States in the 1930s.[26]

How was it possible for a tract for the times of 1939 to become with *almost* no change a tract for the very different times of 1946? The explanation may lie in a characteristic of the analysis which in other times might have been seen as a major defect: its inattention to the problem of providing a discriminating basis for identifying the margin of manipulable choice in foreign affairs and the values which could or should be promoted at the margin. It was all very well for Carr to leave his 1939 critics gasping in inarticulate rage with his bland assertion that 'Herr Hitler refuses to believe "that God has permitted some nations first to acquire a world by force and then to defend this robbery with moralising theories"'. Carr added, on the next page, that 'it would be a

mistake to dismiss such remarks as hypocritical'.[27] He left open, however, two questions. What demands by Hitler would have to be opposed by force? And what acts by him would signal the probability that further concessions would make war not less but more likely?

Historic entitlement, if it is historic enough, does confer some kind of legitimacy. No one expects the United States to give California and Texas back to Mexico, but Carr was on sound ground in suggesting that ancient aggression confers no more *moral* legitimacy than recent aggression. Still, unless one imputes a wholly epiphenomenal role to morality or perceives future change as essentially beyond the possibility of human guidance (or both), one need not accept the absolute moral equivalence of every attack on and every defense of the status quo.

One might, for example, in the 1930s have deplored the rude way in which Hitler shattered the Locarno Pact and broke the hinge of Anglo-French cooperation by his preemptive remilitarization of the Rhineland and by intimidating tactics employed at the time of the plebiscite by the Saarland. The occupation by the Nazis of German-speaking Austria and German-speaking Sudetenland contravened all kinds of international obligations. Yet, with respect to all these 'peaceful changes' Hitler could with some plausibility declare that he was applying in Germany's behalf the principle of national self-determination so one-sidedly applied at Germany's expense by the World War I victors in 1919. The extinction of Czechoslovak independence in March 1939, however, made plain that the quest of the Third Reich was for *Lebensraum* and not merely for national self-determination.

It is one thing to demand for one's nation—in a system which historically had come to recognize that 'one nation, one state' is widely shared both as a norm and as an expectation—that which if received does not deny the equally valid claims of other nations and other states based on that norm. It is another to claim for one's nation something which if grasped denies to others a comparable claim. The convergence of a moral consensus on national self-determination and a shift in the power pattern favoring the Third Reich permitted a drastic revision of the Versailles order, but as events were to demonstrate it did not permit an unlimited revision within the framework of peace.

Adolf Hitler helps us to see the limited but still real role which shared values play in international politics even in such dark days as those of the 1930s. It was not only by his *Lebensraum* doctrine, that East Europe was to be Germany's Africa, but by his repeated disregard of the principle that promises ought to be kept that he demonstrated the might of right in the hands of his enemies. Hitler had repeatedly promised that each *fait accompli* would be his last. A notable feature of *The Twenty Years' Crisis* is Carr's failure to assess the rather different practical implications of the September 1938 appeasement which, said Neville Chamberlain, was to bring 'peace in our time' and the March 1939 occupation of Prague which destroyed once and for all the illusion that Hitler was appeasable.

No hard choices

'Political theory', writes Charles Beitz in his tightly reasoned *Political Theory and International Relations*, 'arises from the perception of the possibility of choice'.[28] This may be only another way of saying that so long as the future is

perceived as only semi-determined, calculations of interest and intuitions of morality will to some extent change change. Because Carr perceived the scope for changing change to be small and because he viewed morality in an almost purely instrumental and epiphenomenal way, i.e., as the enunciation by the top dog of purportedly universal principles whose effect is to legitimize the top dog's top position, he was profoundly atheoretical, if one uses the word 'theory' to mean 'normative theory', as does Professor Beitz. Carr, however, was not alone in his inattentiveness to the normative debate as it related to world politics. During the middle third of the twentieth century utopians and realists alike were almost all insensitive to the need for illuminating the margin of manipulable choice.[29]

Get the procedures right, said the pro-League utopians of the 1930s and the outcome will take care of itself. Beneficent adversary processes, according to the pluralist dogma, lead to an appropriate reconciliation of seemingly divergent interests. The essence of a world constitutional order lies in the acceptance of the notion that maintaining the procedures and the moral consensus supporting the procedures for the settlement of conflict is more important than the outcome of any particular dispute. Hence, for the utopian no more than for the realist in the 1930s did there seem to be need for agonizing analyses of hard choices among disparate values. In a Hobbesian world, said the 'have versus have-not' realists, the biggest and meanest dog will get the meatiest bone whatever mere mortals managing the affairs of state may think they are doing. Hence, there is little need for subtle theorizing about hard choices and much need to avoid challenges to big changes that are coming willy-nilly, especially if one believed that a series of concessions would transform Hitler's Germany from a 'have-not' into a contented and peaceful 'have' nation.

Hitler's actions in March and September 1939 and his treacherous attack in June 1941 upon his erstwhile Soviet partner in the fourth partition of Poland resolved every ambiguity about the need to oppose Hitler. Again, no hard choices. The realist model of world politics—a world of states and an unending struggle for survival with no possibility of harmonizing contending interests—was as serviceable in the struggle against totalitarian evil, whether in its World War II Hitlerite or postwar Stalinist form, as it had been earlier in providing a rationale for appeasement. One had only to abandon the 'have versus have-not' presuppositions about aggressor state behavior.

Normative debate side-stepped

In the 1950s, for whatever reasons—the wished for or prospective waning of the cold war, the scholar's impulse to do more than pander to the preferences of those in government who at the moment were in charge of declaring what was in the national interest, concern to put new research technologies to work in broadening the basis of international relations scholarship, or perhaps an effort to be more science-like in an age in which 'hard' scientists have changed the face of world politics—the doctrinal realists of the 1950s and 1960s found themselves preaching salvation to the saved. Who could disagree with the proposition that each group actor in world politics, whether or not a nation-state actor, acts to maximize what those who make that actor's decisions perceive to be in its interest in the least costly ways? Who doubts that statesmen's wish-lists are so long that not every wish of every statesman can be

satisfied? And who, therefore, fails to recognize that world politics, like every other kind of politics, is a politics of scarcity, an allocating process that must go on and on and on?

World politics is not, however, like classical economics. It does no good to imagine a nation-state single-mindedly pursuing something called 'power' the way a Manchester School economic man is presumed to be single-mindedly pursuing something called 'wealth'. With only a single value such as wealth at stake, costs and benefits can indeed be weighed in the same scale. In multi-value world politics, with its bewildering variety of state and non-state actors, the rate of trade-offs between, say, national safety and individual self-respect, between a taxpayer's freedom from taxation and a nation's fear for its security, or between the short-term interest of an industry threatened by foreign competition and the long-term interest of the whole country in good relations with the country providing the competition, are not to be discovered by rational analysis or elaborate computer print-outs.

The student of world politics, we have said, cannot deduce what is right and what is wrong, or even what is prudent and what is imprudent, from a wholly value-neutral political science. Given specified value assumptions, including assumptions about the appropriate rate of trade-offs among partially incompatible values, he can, however, say something about a state's apparent range of choice. More emphasis on normative theory would seem to have been in order if the value assumptions were to be refined. The normative debate, which had been side-stepped both by realists like Carr and utopians like Toynbee and Zimmern and put aside altogether during the Second World War and the Cold War that followed, was not immediately resumed.

The 'post-realist' international relations literature instead mirrored the big changes of the post-World War II world, such as the apparent 'hypertrophy of general war' because of the nuclear and guided missile revolution in military technology,[30] the discovery that overseas empires could not peacefully or profitably be held together, recognition that the former European great powers were too small for many purposes and that Europe's classical multipolar balance of power system was gone beyond recall, and the demonstration that sovereign equality by itself solved very few Third World problems. Strategic studies, integration studies, systems theorizing, and *dependencia* theory all flourished. So did the search for hitherto unsuspected behavioral regularities in state and state sytem behavior made possible by the new technologies for information gathering, coding, and processing. This latter activity, as one might have predicted, has been much more widespread in North America than in Britain.[31]

Difficult choices

Martin Wight recorded the conventional wisdom of tough-minded international relations scholars when he wrote that 'international theory is the theory of survival'.[32] Yet, to be told that statesmen attach first priority to the state's 'survival' and beyond that to maximizing its power position is to be told very little. What minimum satisfaction, of what demands, for which of its citizens, is the test of state survival. The answer will not be the same for all states or even for all first-ranking states, and it will not be the same in all eras. Once 'survival' is assured, what further foreign policy purposes command support wide enough so that further sacrifice is readily accepted (or com-

pelled)? Here again it is not helpful simply to posit 'power' as a generalized foreign policy purpose characteristic of 'have not' countries.

Since 'have'-ness and 'have not'-ness do not appear to be objectively definable except after the fact, the proposition is not testable. Italy, a World War I victor, was a 'have not' country because *Il Duce* said it was. Italy, vanquished in World War II, is a 'have' nation because it has ranged itself on the side of the status quo West. Out of the ashes of total defeat has risen the phoenix of the Federal Republic of Germany, which has joined similarly defeated Japan as two of the greatest 'have' countries in the world politics of the 1980s. Status quo or 'have' powers, those powers whose leaders behave as if their respective countries have enough, are unlikely to arm beyond the level needed to discourage assaults on what they have. If there is a law of world politics, it is the law of least-cost sacrifice to overcome constraints on the enjoyment of whatever values the nation-state's rulers are trying to maintain or promote. Power to achieve outcomes a country's statesmen do not want, i.e., power without purpose, is quite simply not power at all, although, as the realists reiterate, purpose without power is irrelevant.[33]

When one asks what accumulations of power, to promote what foreign policy purposes, are worth sacrificing for, one finds solutions difficult, especially at the margins where the most perplexing choices are posed. They are difficult because plural values, plural estimates of future change, plural estimates of the changeability of future change, plural contingencies for which plans must be made with respect to choices not yet made by power competitors, plural classes of non-state actors intent on promoting their respective group interests, and plural time perspectives within which one's preferred policy goals are to be maximized, all complicate the statesman's task of deciding what actions best serve the interest of his particular nation-state. They are also difficult because some state purposes can be promoted only by sharing in the production of collective goods. Policies to control pollution, technological denudation, and terror, and for that matter all the norms of international law and practices of international diplomacy that give some measure of predictability and regularity to relations aong states, cannot ordinarily be promoted unilaterally, nor can their benefits be enjoyed one state at a time. Thus, the citizens of my state cannot enjoy freedom from trans-national terror without the citizens of your state enjoying the same freedom. Traffic control is as much a shared interest of major competitors in world politics as it is among business competitors on city streets.

Finally, setting the level of sacrifice in support of foreign policy objectives is difficult because the claims of international distributive justice and human compassion are beginning to be pressed with effect. When one reflects how short was the period between the stirring of social protest among Welsh coal miners and chapel radicals and the coming to power of a Labour government, one must ask how unrealistic is it to foresee a kind of trade union organization of the world in which the united power of the righteous weak extracts significant concessions from the irresolute legions of the guilt-ridden strong. In the halls of the United Nations today one already hears less talk of 'grants' and more talk of 'income transfers'. Carr's 'have' versus 'have not' theories may have been grounded in crypto-Marxist Typhoid Mary perceptions of power, but the outcome of emerging political competition in West-South relations, that is between the First World 'haves' and the Third World 'have nots', may not be as one-sided as the crude indicators of material power may suggest.

The ostensibly weak are developing ever greater skills in using the sounding board of First World public opinion at the United Nations and elsewhere, in playing off the superpowers against each other so as to win favors from both, in appealing to the Judaeo-Christian ethic, and in propounding *dependencia* and other neo-colonialist theories whose moral message is that 'our failures are your fault'.

Do these remarks imply prudent yielding in advance to Third World power, that in the decades ahead the plutocratic, constitutional democratic West—the trilateral of Western Europe, North America, and Japan—may again be called upon to avoid hard moral choices by prudential concession? It is not that simple. Who is going to concede how much of what to whom?

The cynic who has described foreign aid as a device for taking things away from the poor in rich countries and giving them to the rich in poor countries calls attention to a moral dilemma. In a world of 'have' states and 'have not' states, sharing of power would redistribute wealth among *states* with uncertain consequences for global distributive justice so far as it affects the poorest of the poor in a world of *people*. On the other hand, in a world of rich people and poor people effective controls by donor states to assure that the income transferred actually reached the truly needy would leave the presently powerful states as powerful as ever. Because we live both in a world of states and in a world of people, there are no easy answers.

What can be done?

It is time to ask how in the 1980s the sheep of realism are to be separated from the goats of non-realism. Two criteria suggest themselves: an understanding that in the world political process wants can be only imperfectly satisfied and an understanding that nation-states and groups other than one's own nation-state have interests which cannot be ignored if the intensity of international political struggle is to be moderated. So defined, some conscientious objectors in the realist-utopian great debate of a generation ago may turn out to be the real realists.

The Zimmerns and the Toynbees and the lay publics with naïve faith in simplistic prescriptions for an end to war and for the introduction of universal and perpetual harmony among persons of goodwill and among their respective nation-states are long gone. The deflation of unwarranted hopes and expectations is not an urgent task for the international relationists of the 1980s. They must of course remain vigilant against demagogic simplifiers, for a decent respect for the complexity of things international is their stock in trade, to say nothing of their livelihood.

Every reasonable person must agree that the future is semi- but only semi-determined. Carr and the other realists who couched their theories in absolute terms helped their generation to understand that some kinds of future are beyond reach. The need in the 1980s is to devote as much effort to determining what can be done as what cannot. An empirical realist may be better equipped to meet this need than a doctrinal realist. The distinction between the two kinds of realist is fundamental to understanding how changeable is future change. The doctrinal realist asserts the basically rapacious character of contending great powers in a Hobbesian world. Eternal conflict, he says, is structurally determined; there is, he maintains, no escape from the security dilemma; and the quest for national security foments all round insecurity in a

gigantic and unending negative-sum game. The doctrinal realist does not need to examine how nation-state actors really behave because he has already posited how they *must* behave by virtue of their nation-stateness in a multi-state world system. The empirical realist by contrast looks to see how they actually behave and perhaps beyond that to examining the possibilities for tolerable coexistence.[34]

What the empirical realist discovers is that most statesmen most of the time seek security rather than hegemony. Charles V, Louis XIV, Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleon III, Kaiser Wilhelm II, Adolf Hitler, and Joseph Stalin were exceptions in their respective efforts to achieve hegemony. What he further discovers is that the United States neither saw itself nor was perceived by others as a first-ranking power until several decades after every crude power indicator would have predicted its emergence as one of the world's great powers. He also discovers that, while the necessity for very great national sacrifice is accepted to overcome constraints regarded as intolerable, competing domestic demands block additional sacrifice. The international politics of burden-sharing among the western allies may therefore be as complex as the international politics of arms control among the Big Two.

One problem with doctrinal realism is that, while it is sufficient to explain why there is from time to time conflict and war in multi-state systems, it does not explain why conflicts are often settled peacefully or how to tell which conflicts will or will not lead to war. One line of retreat for those reluctant to abandon the view of a world of wholly egoistic states in which international morality, to the extent that it exists at all, is epiphenomenal is in a form of 'modified structuralism' called neo-realism.[35] Some neo-realists are busy identifying 'regimes' in which selfish actors in the world political process find themselves caught in a web of 'complex interdependence' that 'makes a game of pure conflict too costly'.[36] As a regime evolves, the behavior if not the morals of the self-regarding competitors is said to moderate. Such regimes, says Stephen B. Krasner, involve 'sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area' and presume behavior not based solely on short-term calculations of self-interest.[37] The shared norm expectation that allowed the balance of power to function relatively efficiently for three centuries would seem to fall within this definition. One is tempted to say that the wheel has been successfully re-invented.[38] The *grands frères*, the Soviet and American enemy brothers of Raymond Aron's *Peace and War*, who cannot make peace but also cannot make war, are the supreme illustration of constrained neo-realist selfishness, but 'regime' and 'neo-realism' had not yet become fashionable buzz-words when Aron wrote his great book.[39]

The moral skeptics who call themselves neo-realists belong in my broader category of empirical realists, for they are prepared to examine how states really behave and to what extent pure conflict situations are avoided. I also include, however, pragmatic meliorists, who have no doctrinal hang-up about acknowledging that there may be shared values whose existence permits national interests to be harmonized at least between some states some of the time. Large segments of opinion in the advanced industrial democracies will not be satisfied with 'national security' as the comprehensive and overriding description of the goals of foreign policy. Not all interests which a government may seek to promote on behalf of its citizens are 'national' and not all interests are simply to be secured.

Thus, the 'zone of peace' which in the 1980s embraces at least West Europe, North America, Japan and the Southwest Pacific envisions something more than 'national' security. On the other hand, the informal institutions for the integration of the North American economy and the formal institutions for the integration of Common Market Europe demonstrate the high priorities assigned to public and private international economic diplomacy in the non-Communist advanced industrial parts of the world.

The neo-realist of the 1980s may profess a concern with the political economy of international relations. In my view he may be rediscovering 'world politics' as opposed to international relations, the politics of a world not just of states but also of groups larger than or smaller than or different from nation-states, with interests in the support of which they may or may not be able to mobilize nation-states. In what Hedley Bull has called 'the new mediaevalism' the world political process is not properly seen as at best a gigantic zero-sum game among anthropomorphic monsters called states and at worst a gigantic negative-sum game which threatens to put a final end to the cosmic episode.[40] World politics in the empirical realist, pragmatic meliorist perspective, is envisioned not simply as a way of allocating scarce values but as a process which is capable of producing as well as distributing the values for the attainment of which the actors in the world system are variously contending and collaborating.

It would indeed be utopian to expect a statesman to declare that he is pursuing a policy which, though hurtful to the interest of his own country, is so good for the world as a whole or for the bloc of which his country is a part that he feels compelled to sacrifice his country's interest. Enlightened selfishness, on the other hand, exploits every opportunity to reconcile smaller national and larger international interests so as to promote all-round gains in security and welfare.

An unregenerate E. H. Carr may poke fun at Karl Popper for wanting 'to keep the dear old Model T on the road by dint of a little piecemeal engineering',[41] but if the choice is between a world of model Ts and a world of juggernauts, it may be Popper who is the real realist, the one who is illuminating the margin of manipulable choice. Cleaning the spark plugs, checking the level of the brake fluid, replacing burnt-out headlights, lubricating at prescribed intervals, and, above all, tightening the nut that holds the steering wheel are often very helpful. So are signalling when passing and staying on one's own side of the road.

Carr would have agreed with Martin Wight's 1966 dictum that 'international theory is the theory of survival', but Wight had already joined the camp of those realists I have called pragmatic meliorists. In 1946 he wrote, in what seems to me the most fundamental revision of the Carr vision of 1939:

> Powers will continue to seek security without reference to justice, and to pursue their vital interests irrespective of common interests, but *in the fraction that they may be deflected* lies the difference between the jungle and the traditions of Europe.[42]

Finding ways to enlarge that fraction is the urgent task of the truly serious student of international relations.

References and notes

1. First edition, London, 1939; second edition, 1946; reprinted with new preface to the second edition, 1981. The quoted phrase is from the 1981 new preface. The first edition is hereafter cited as 'Carr, 1939'.
2. Another student of world politics with a formidable grasp of the works of Marx, Weber, and Mannheim was Harold D. Lasswell. Carr does not refer to Lasswell's difficult but elegant *World Politics and Personal Insecurity* (New York and London, 1935), a work then better known in North America than in Britain.
3. *An Introduction to Contemporary History* (London, 1964), pp. 97 and 100.
4. Ibid. To at least three American observers writing in 1944, Carl Becker, Walter Lippmann, and myself, it appeared that the post-World War II world would be a world dominated by the 'Big Three', the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union. See William T. R. Fox, *The Super-Powers* (New York, 1944). As to why as late as 1944 it still seemed plausible to believe that the hopes of Seeley and Joseph Chamberlain had been realized at least to the extent that Britain could be perceived as one of the three truly world powers, see my article, 'The Super-Powers Then and Now', *International Journal*, XXXV, No. 3 (Summer, 1980), pp. 417–36.
5. In quoting Chamberlain, C. P. Stacey emphasizes the failure of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, along with the other colonial Prime Ministers, to respond affirmatively; *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, I, 1867–1921 (Toronto, 1977), p. 75.
6. *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (London, 1919).
7. London, 1942, p. xviii.
8. Where Carr parted company with the British and American voluntarists, who also saw that a new order world order was in the making, was in his skepticism that the big chance then under way could be significantly directed. On Anglo-American voluntarist thought generally, see Arnold Wolfers and Laurence Martin (eds), *The Anglo-American Tradition in Foreign Affairs* (New Haven, Conn., 1956). Carr's running debate with voluntarist social scientists and policy-oriented analysts about the extent to which the future can be deliberately shaped ('choice' versus 'chance' or 'necessity') is a different one from his debate with fellow historians ('chance' versus 'necessity'). On this latter debate see Ved Mehta, *Fly and the Fly-Bottle: Encounters with British Intellectuals* (London, 1962), pp. 106ff. Utopians of the grand design or 'international government' persuasion, who were Carr's particular objects of scorn, need to be distinguished from the utopians of science and reason about whom Carr was no doubt deeply but not truculently skeptical. On these utopians with their belief that a better mobilization of the world's intellectual resources will help point the way to a better world future, in which group I would include Lasswell and the so called 'Chicago school' of political science, see William T. R. Fox, 'Pluralism, the Science of Politics, and the World System', *World Politics*, XXVII, No. 4 (July, 1975), pp. 597–611.
9. 'Western Values in International Relations' in H. Butterfield and M. Wight (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations* (London, 1966), p. 121.
10. It is possible that more battleships were scuttled in the long diplomatic naval battle that began in Paris in 1919 and ended in Washington in 1922 than were sunk at Scapa Flow.
11. The sorry history of mal-coordination of British and French foreign policy-making is well told in both Arnold Wolfers, *Britain and France Between Two Wars* (New York, 1940) and W. M. Jordan, *Britain, France, and the German Problem* (London, 1944).
12. When Lord Hankey was sent to Canada in 1934 to discover the answer 'to the brutal question of whether Canada would come to our assistance in another war', he found important people whose 'considered view (was) that, if our cause was just, if every effort to maintain peace had been exhausted, and it was clear to the world that war had been forced upon us, Canada would come along' (Stacey, op. cit., II, Toronto, 1981, p. 165).
13. Hedley Bull, '*The Twenty Years' Crisis* Thirty Years On', *International Journal*, XXIV, No. 4 (Autumn, 1969), p. 627.
14. Carr, 1946, preface to second edition. Since the changes and deletions though few and small were not unimportant, Carr appears to have been somewhat disingenuous in concluding the preface to the second (1946) edition with the statement that he had left 'the present work substantially as it was completed in 1939'.
15. Carr, 1939, p. 278.
16. Carr, 1939, p. x.
17. Spykman, like Carr, was influenced by German sociology. Georg Simmel, the sociologist of conflict, was as important for Spykman as Karl Mannheim, the sociologist of knowledge, was for Carr. See Kenneth W. Thompson, *Political Realism and the Crisis of World Politics* (Princeton, NJ, 1960) for a discussion of political realism in terms of the works of these two

men and of two other main figures in realist thinking, Reinhold Niebuhr and Hans Morgenthau.

18. New York, 1942.
19. Carr, 1939, chapter 13.
20. See, e.g., Carr, 1939, p. 107.
21. William Pfaff, 'Grand Design for Futility', *New Yorker*, 21 November 1983, p. 218. Isaiah Berlin in a similar vein speaks of Carr's 'big battalion view of history' (Mehta, op. cit., p. 112).
22. The first quoted phrase is Bertrand Russell's in his *Power: A New Social Analysis* (London, 1938); the second is Karl Deutsch's in *Politics and Government: How People Decide Their Fate* (New York, 1970), p. 34. It is from Russell that Carr took his three-fold classification of the forms of power (Carr, 1939, p. 139, n. 2). Although Carr's 'power' seems to me vastly different from Russell's, Carr characterizes the Russell book as 'an able and stimulating analysis of power as the fundamental concept in social science'.
23. It was the 'power relations of *Europe* (emphasis supplied)' which presumably led E. H. Carr to write of the 'peaceful change' imposed on Czechoslovakia in terms of its inevitability (Carr, 1939, p. 278). Only if Nazi Germany could have been victorious in a short war would the power of the non-European parts of the world have been irrelevant in the matter of the so-called 'inevitable' change.
24. Kenneth W. Thompson, *Masters of International Thought* (Baton Rouge, La., 1980), p. 67.
25. Mehta, op. cit., p. 116.
26. The latter notion is labelled 'American imperialism' in Franz Schurmann's *The Logic of World Power* (New York, 1974).
27. Carr, 1939, pp. 106 and 107. These passages were also deleted from the second edition.
28. Princeton, NJ, 1979, pp. 4–5.
29. See, however, John Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism* (Chicago, 1951), which demonstrates the author's central concern to develop 'a sense of critical discrimination between what is possible and what is impossible'. (The book is so described on its dust jacket.)
30. The quoted phrase is that of Walter Millis in *The Martial Spirit* (Boston, 1951).
31. See Herbert Butterfield's and Martin Wight's joint preface to *Diplomatic Investigations*, in which the 'styles' of British and American scholarship in international relations are contrasted.
32. 'Why Is There No International Theory?' in Butterfield and Wight (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations*, p. 33.
33. Cf. Roger Morgan, 'E. H. Carr and the Study of International Relations', in C. Abramsky (ed.), *Essays in Honour of E. H. Carr* (London, 1974), p. 172, who comments that Carr's 'main concern is to destroy the illusion of the 1930s that moral consensus could achieve anything without effective power'.
34. Cf. Richard K. Ashley, 'Political Realism and Human Interests', *International Studies Quarterly*, XXV, No. 2 (June, 1981), pp. 204–36, in which Ashley asserts a distinction between 'practical realism' and 'technical realism'. At first sight his 'technical' and my 'empirical' realism may appear to be the same thing, but Ashley is referring to two assertedly incompatible strands of thinking in doctrinal realism.
35. I am indebted to Professor Debra Miller of Barnard College for the suggestion that neo-realism is best thought of as 'modified structuralism'.
36. Ernst Haas, 'Words can hurt you; or, who said what to whom about regimes', *International Organization*, symposium issue on 'International Regimes', Stephen B. Krasner (ed.), XXXVI, No. 2 (Spring, 1982), p. 207.
37. 'Structural causes and regime consequences: regimes as intervening variables', loc. cit., p. 185.
38. In making this half-serious comment I am not ranging myself alongside Richard Ashley in the debate over the alleged wrong-headedness of neo-realists provoked by his self-styled polemic, 'The Poverty of Neorealism', *International Organization*, XXXVIII, No. 2 (Spring, 1984), pp. 225–86, and the clarifying responses (pp. 287–328) by Robert Gilpin, Friedrich Kratochwil, and Bruce Andrews.
39. New York, 1966; originally published as *Paix et Guerre* (Paris, 1962).
40. *The Anarchical Society* (London, 1977), p. 264.
41. Quoted in Peter Scott, 'Revolution Without the Passion: Peter Scott talks to E. H. Carr', *Times Education Suppement*, 7 July 1978; cited by Thompson, *Masters of International Thought*, p. 78.
42. *Power Politics* (London, 1946), p. 68 (emphasis added).