

## ***International Relations in a Post-Hegemonic Age***

Fred Halliday

[Valedictory lecture as Montague Burton Professor of International Relations, LSE, 30 January 2008]

### 1. Introduction: Twenty-five Years at LSE

It is a particular pleasure, and honour, to be speaking here this evening on what will be the last, of many, public lectures that I have given in this theatre, as Professor of International Relations at LSE, and going back to my inaugural lecture, in 1987, on a subject that is perhaps closer to my heart and intellectual commitment than any other, that of internationalism<sup>1</sup>. It is also an occasion to thank the many LSE students, staff and others who have over the years encouraged and helped me, as much by criticism as by endorsement, and to acknowledge, indeed salute, the very exceptional institution which is this LSE, a college unique in the world in the cosmopolitanism and intelligence of its student body, in the quality of its intellectual engagement, in the involvement of its staff in the affairs of the world, and in the free, liberal and secular, atmosphere of its teaching and research. To be able in any one week to meet students from thirty, or more, countries is in itself an enormous privilege. In many ways the secret of our job is very simple: you learn at least as much from students as they do from you, but are paid to do it. As I said in my lecture on the Middle East at the start of term, there is only one LSE, and I, and I hope you all, will never forget it.

---

<sup>1</sup> The text of my inaugural was published as 'Three Concepts of Internationalism', *International Affairs* April 1988. Subsequent articles and chapters on the theory and history of internationalism have included my 1998 Ernest Gellner lecture, 'The Perils of Community', published in *Nations and Nationalism*; Chapters 3 and 4 of my *Revolution and World Politics. The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power* Basingstoke: Palgrave/Macmillan 1999; 'Delusions of Difference' in my *The World at 2000*, Basingstoke: Palgrave/Macmillan; 'Revolutionary Internationalism and its Perils' in John Foran, David Lane and Andreja Zivkovic, *Revolution in the Making of the Modern World*, London: Routledge, 2008. On the basis of my work during a two year Senior Research Grant from the Leverhulme Trust in 2003-2005, I am now preparing two volumes essays exploring this topic in contemporary context. These articles of a more abstract or historical orientation have been accompanied by a series of case studies of revolutionary internationalism on the one side (*Revolution and Foreign Policy, the Case of South Yemen 1967-1987* Cambridge: CUP 1990; *Revolution and World Politics*), and of critiques of nationalist, religious and other ideologies on the other (*Islam and the Myth of Confrontation*, London: IB Tauris 1995; *Nation and Religion in the Middle East*, London: Saqi, 2000); *100 Myths About the Middle East* London: Saqi, 2005).

I would here welcome two special guests who are with us tonight and who represent different, but vital, parts of my academic history at the School: Professor James Barber of Cambridge University, one of the pioneers of Foreign Policy Analysis in this country and who served, along with Susan Strange, Meghnad Desai, I.G. Patel, Lawrence Freedman and David Boardman on the panel that appointed me to the Montague Burton chair in February 1985; and Mr. Khalid al-Yamani, the deputy ambassador of the Republic of Yemen, the country on which I wrote my first book, *Arabia without Sultans*, published in 1974 and later my PhD, *Revolution and Foreign Policy*, published in 1990, and one of the two countries in the Middle East, the other being Iran, with which I have had a particular, personal, political, academic, and in each domain not always easy, relationship.

It is a also particular pleasure to have as the chair of this meeting Professor Michael Cox, a friend, colleague and one time sparring partner: we were, as he has often reminded me, divided in the 1980s over the Cold War, but we were united on something much more important to both of us, the question of Ireland. Michael Cox taught for many years in Belfast, and made, and continues to make, a major contribution to the academic study of Ireland and its international relations, which, I may remind you, go back some fifteen hundred years. But he also, in collaboration with other clear minded and courageous intellectuals, maintained an independent and critical stand on the often engulfing affairs of that country. I for my part, owe much of what I know and feel about international relations to having been born and brought up in Ireland, not least my scepticism about nationalists, clergymen and merchants of identity, or what are today called ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’, of all stripes. I have never said that knowing about Ireland qualifies you to understand the affairs of the world, but it is a good, sceptical, place to start, a bit like having been brought up in eighteenth century Scotland or in the Austro-Hungarian empire before or after World War I. It is no accident that the first two directors of the LSE Human Rights Centre, Professor Conor Gearty and his predecessor, namely myself, are from Ireland: we are sceptical about power, and the abuses therefore, but also wary of those who proclaim themselves to be the agents of national and social emancipation, or why seek to evade universalist commitments by resort to national, or cultural, specificity. One of my sayings is that

‘Those who cannot think straight about Ireland cannot think straight about anything’. Quite a wide category, I would say, including not a few people in Ireland itself<sup>2</sup>.

In the course of my time at LSE, I have had the pleasure of many encounters and events. I would mention in particular perhaps my proudest moment, the day when I invited one of the twentieth century’s great men, Willy Brandt, at once a German democrat and patriot and a resolute opponent of fascism, to the School. During his visit he was presented, in an emotional and historic moment, to one of the great figures of LSE’s history, Dr. Anne Bohm, long the School secretary, and herself a refugee from Nazi Germany who came to the School in the 1930s. I recall too when during the Iraqi occupation of his country I invited the Kuwaiti sociology Professor Mohammad al Rumaihi to speak in the New Theatre. Among those I admire whom I have heard speak in the School, often in this room, have been President Bill Clinton, President Nelson Mandela, whom I saw dancing on stage in the Peacock Theatre, my own President, Dr. Mary Robinson, as well as Robin Cook, Kofi Annan and Presidents Fernando Enrique Cardoso and Lula of Brazil and President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica, whose meeting I had the honour of chairing. The late Benazir Bhutto was also amongst those whom I invited to speak at the School, in February 2000.

I could sum up my life by saying that I have, at one time or another, been a member of four cosmopolitan conspiracies – LSE, before that the left liberal US think-tank the Institute for Policy Studies, which employed me as a researcher from 1973 till I came to the School in 1983, the Marxist theoretical journal *New Left Review*, on whose editorial board I sat from 1969 to 1983, and, before all of these, but with an enduring intellectual and moral influence on me, the oldest such conspiracy of all, the Roman Catholic Church. In my time at LSE I have had many memorable experiences, and encounters, as a teacher, colleague and, as it were, member of a community with members from over 150 countries. One incident as a teacher I will never forget was when, in an office hour, an American student came to see me early on in the year to express some frustration with the formalities and bureaucratic procedures of the School, relating, I think, to registering for a particular option. ‘It sounds like Kafka’ I said, upon which the student asked me who Kafka was. I explained that Franz Kafka, a

---

<sup>2</sup> ‘Irish Questions in International Perspective’, *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, ed. Michael Cox 1994.

Czech writer who wrote in German, and died in 1924, had written two great novels about the uncertainties, complexities and multiple possible explanations of modern life, *The Trial* and *The Castle*. Next morning, when I arrived at my office around 9.30 I found the same student pacing up and down, unshaven, a look of some distraction on his face. 'I have just spent the night reading Kafka', he announced, 'I have not slept'. The impact of one's teaching is not usually so direct.

Another special memory concerns a student from Nepal who was funded by the Friedrich Neumann Stiftung, the official foundation of the German Free Democrats. He had been in jail in Kathmandu, but they had negotiated for him to leave jail provided he went to study abroad. So, some months later, Sher Bahadur Deuba, already in his 30s arrived, to do two years of research on democracy in South Asia. He was a very modest man, at that time single who lodged in *The Gurkha*, a Nepalese restaurant in Charlotte St. His period of research under my direction and that of Tom Nossiter in the Government Department concluded, Sher Bahadur returned to Nepal. Two or three years later when I met a lawyer from Nepal, I asked her if she had any news of Deuba. 'Oh yes', she said, 'he is well and two good things have happened to him. First, he is now happily married'. 'And the second thing?' I asked. 'Oh', she replied, 'he is now prime minister'. An official visit to LSE, where he addressed the Nepalese student body in the UK in the Shaw Library, duly followed.

In my time at LSE I have had the pleasure of working with five Directors, each someone with a distinct and inspiring relation to the School and, of great importance, someone who has supported the staff and School community in their work, and in times good and bad: Ralf Dahrendorf, I.G. Patel, John Ashworth, Tony Giddens and now Howard Davies. That LSE has Directors from, respectively, Britain's great enemy in the twentieth century, Germany, and its great colony, India, is itself an index of the international and inclusive policy of this institution. I.G. Patel it was, who in his own valedictory address to the School, and as a former Governor of the Bank of India and governor of the World Bank, drew attention to the importance of non-monetary, public, goods, of which education is one, and of the need not to measure all outputs or services in monetary terms. In regard to Tony Giddens, I had the honour and pleasure of serving on the committee that appointed him, one of the things of which I am most proud of all

my years here. I can well recall the occasion when, in 2000, I flew with him, accompanied by our distinguished and ever ebullient governor, alumnus and generous donor Victor Dahdaleh, to Kuwait. As the plane swung over Saudi Arabia on the approaches to Kuwait, to avoid any proximity to the then hostile territory of Iraq, we explained to the Director what to expect and do. In particular we stressed the need to give a general talk on globalisation, but, in deference to local concerns, to omit three parts of his conventional address: secularisation, the decline of the nuclear family, and the spread of transgressive gender identities. In the event, nearly all the questions, in the university, meetings with officials and on the morning TV show, concerned football, a subject on which he more than held his own, the one area of globalisation in which the USA does not lead, or ever seriously compete.

The conclusion I draw from these varied and rich experiences with Directors of the LSE is, however, constant and unwavering: that in modern institutions, and for all the pressures of structure, convention, budget, time, leadership, the character, vision and commitment, of the person at the top, is of great importance. It may be hard to define, but you quickly learn, whether you are a student, a porter, or a professor, if it is not there. And in that regard LSE has been, and remains, truly fortunate. So too has it been fortunate in its administrators, upon whom all of us have come to rely in moments good and bad. I would particularly wish here to thank the redoubtable Christine Challis, secretary for many years, and the current School secretary Adrian Hall, as well as the anchor person and vigilant supervisor of our department Hilary Parker. Not can I conclude any set of tributes to those who sustain this great institution would mention of our neighbours, Wright's Bar, scene of many a vibrant and unexpected encounter, and more deserving of a blue memorial plaque, for the number of presidents, prime ministers and philosophers who have eaten there, than all the 5 star restaurants, Ritz's and Hiltons in town.

I am, as many know, leaving LSE after twenty-five years of teaching in the International Relations at the end of March, to take up a Research Chair in Barcelona, funded by ICREA, the Catalan Institute for Research and Advanced Studies, with an attachment, more or less on the same lines as would be the case in a British university, to the postgraduate and research programme of the recently established Barcelona

Institute for International Studies<sup>3</sup>. IBEI, now in its fourth year, is a postgraduate centre for Master's students and postdoctoral fellows, with an active programme of research and visiting speakers, and operates under the aegis of a consortium of the three main Barcelona universities.

As an international professor based in the Catalan higher education system, it will be my job to promote links between Spanish centres of higher education and other colleges and institutes in Europe. As LSE is held in high regard there, and several students from Catalonia come each year to LSE for Master's and research degrees, I shall be doing in Barcelona much of what I have been doing here. One of my first duties on arriving in Barcelona on my first, supposedly short visit in 2004, when working on my Leverhulme Trust project on internationalism, was to address the Association of LSE Alumni at a meeting in La Pedrera, the famous house rebuilt by Antonio Gaudí, which is now the property of Caixa Catalunya, the bank which finances two MSc students a year at LSE. This occasion I took to venture out with some of my current thinking on internationalism. Indeed the head of the Caixa, and also the President of IBEI, Sr. Narcís Serra, is a himself former LSE visiting scholar, and now Honorary Fellow, having served as first democratic mayor of Barcelona after the transition to democracy, and later as the Minister of Defence who reformed the Spanish army and security services in the 1980s. I have indeed already had the pleasure of receiving several LSE colleagues in Barcelona and last July we had the first of what I hope will be many joint seminars between our IR students here and those of IBEI there. Among other things we organised what I believe to be the first ever LSE seminar in a *chiringuito*, or beach bar, where amidst chill-out music and plates of *jamon iberico*, we scaled the higher reaches of historical sociology, globalisation and intercultural relations.

This is all by way of saying that I hope to maintain and develop relations with colleagues and students at LSE, and, in this vein, my lecture tonight and that which I gave earlier in this the month, on the Middle East, are not so much farewells, or valedictories, as what one may call transitionals, or repositioning lectures, serving to offer some reflections on the quarter of a century I have most happily spent at LSE, but

---

<sup>3</sup> ICREA, *Institució Catalana de Recerca i Estudis Avançats*.

at the same time identifying contemporary research, teaching and funding challenges associated with my work, and which will, I hope, serve to develop in a new way my own association with LSE as well as that of other Catalan and Spanish colleagues and students working in these fields. Perhaps the most fitting term is the old ecclesiastical word 'recessional', implying that that which, for the moment, recedes may come back again.

Later this year, at the end of August, Barcelona will play host to the second international conference of postgraduate students, organised by the ECPR, of which this evening's host, Professor Michael Cox, is the president. He has kindly asked me to give the opening address, which I intend to devote to the question of how, from an experience of four years of working and living in a city like Barcelona, my view of the world as a whole, and of the subject of International Relations, have changed. I am not sure I know where to start, but the range of topics are many, and some of them I shall broach tonight.

## 2. IR as a Discipline

Let me here outline, in brief, what IR as a discipline is, and how it relates to the other disciplines taught at LSE, in all of our 24 departments and specialised centres or institutes. Of every discipline it can be asked, first, in the face of what problem, or crisis, was it established, under what conditions, historical and intellectual, it distinguished or split off from the broader field of human investigation and, secondly, what is its core concern, or investigative focus. Academic disciplines are, like countries, modern inventions, and artificial delimitations of territory, administration and personnel, the results not of destiny, abstract reason or planning, but of accident and power relations, where armies got tired of fighting, and where external forces imposed lines. Up to two centuries ago, human knowledge, or what we call social science, was one large, protean, intellectual mass, without clear distinctions or boundaries. Thus the reflections of Kant or Rousseau, Machiavelli or Marx, or, for that matter of Adam Smith cover economic, psychological, philosophic, historical, political and international issues in happy profusion.

In the case of IR, the answer as to its moment of historic birth or separation is initially simple enough: whereas in earlier times human reflections broadly encompassed issues of war and diplomacy, sovereignty and authority, international law, the first distinct island of IR as a separate discipline, became in the early part of the last century, above all under the impact of imperial conflict and World War I, a distinct, more systematic study of international affairs. This was so in the sense, first, of relations between states, be they conflictual or co-operated, and of the forces, economic, ideological and political, that governed such interaction. A century ago, while it did not yet have an IR Department, LSE played its part in producing some of the ideas that were to shape, and which still shape, intellectual and popular discussion of these issues: on the one side, the geopolitical reflections of Halford Mackinder, a supporter of empire, and indeed of the supremacy of the European races, mistakenly, in my view, celebrated in the name of one of the School's recently established research centre; on the other hand, an even more influential idea also issued from LSE, this time from a man who was never so promoted and was indeed denied tenure, the liberal political economist and opponent of the Boer War John A. Hobson: his 1902 study of imperialism was the origin of what has come to be, arguably, the most influential intellectual idea of modern times, the economic theory of imperialism. This came to be espoused by revolutionaries and economic nationalist politicians the world over, reformulated by Lenin in his famous pamphlet of 1916, reworked by Hannah Arendt in her 1951 *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and now, superficially recycled in Koranic garb, a mainstay of anti-western Islamist rhetoric, what Ayatollah Khomeini called *istikbar i jahani*, world arrogance. Not such a bad term as anyone familiar with the Beltway debate on US 'dominance' can confirm. That imperialism is truly, as Lenin argued, the 'highest stage' of capitalism we may doubt, since capitalism has taken the end of formal colonialism in its stride, but that for many, indeed, most people in the world of today, as much as a hundred years ago, the international system is indeed one of pillage, exploitation and injustice, remains as true today as it was a hundred years ago when Hobson wrote<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> For an unsurpassed critique, from with a broad Marxist framework, see the spirited work of one of my great teachers at SOAS, the economist Bill Warren, *Imperialism, Pioneer of Capitalism*, London: Verso, 1981.



With the establishment of academic departments and chairs in the UK and the USA after World War I, and with an initial focus on the understanding of the causes of war, and how to prevent it, IR acquired distinct intellectual and theoretical form. The chair of which I have had the honour to bear the name, Montague Burton, was endowed by the family of the clothes merchant and supporter of international peace in the 1930s. Like other disciplines, IR has, beyond delimiting its separate field of enquiry, also generated a set of theoretical debates. In broadest terms we have, first, theories that seek to explain the world in terms of the dominance, or exclusive salience, of states; secondly, those which stress the role of ‘non-state’ or, as they have come to be termed, ‘transnational’ factors, be; and, thirdly, theories that lay emphasis not on specific actors, state or ‘non-state’, but on ‘structures’ of global power, be they military, economic, geographic or, most recently and notoriously, culture. Part of the rich diversity of these analytic frameworks is that they do not correlate with fixed philosophical orientations: thus those who stress structure may include Marxists, with their analyses of global inequality and dependence with a capitalist world system, those concerned with global environmental trends and conservative proponents of power politics advocating ‘the new Middle Ages’; those who emphasis the ‘none-state’ may focus on benign factors such as law, public opinion or global civil society, or on the malign, such as criminality, terrorism and religious fanaticism; while proponents of state dominance range from proponents of world order to advocates of enhancing global governance.

We have today therefore a range of theorists and theories which seek to continue these classic debates and thinkers, on whose shoulders we necessarily stand and whose insights we neglect at our peril, while engaging with the whole range of new issues and ideas that have sprung up in recent decades, such as nuclear weapons, the environment, migration, or which, whilst always there, were not recognised in initial investigations, of which religion and culture, gender, and human rights are obvious examples.

The richness of IR as an academic discipline lines not only in the variety of explanations and research agenda generated by this three-part division, but also in the fact that, as is appropriate to any general explanation, each can provide a reasonably plausible explanation of major world events and trends. Thus, to take some recent examples, the end of the European empires in the 1950s and 1960s, the collapse of

Soviet communism at the end of the 1980s, the Iranian revolution of 1978-9, the break-up of Yugoslavia, the spread and limits of European integration, the rise of Islamist violence and the events of 9/11, can each be analysed in terms of these three approaches, as can, equally, major historic processes, such as the rise of the modern state system after 1500, the formation of the colonial system, and the World Wars, and Cold War, of the twentieth century.

Here, of course, IR abuts onto, even as it can be distinguished from, other, cognate disciplines. IR has always had, and should retain, respect for, and cognisance of, international law, even while recognising that international peace and order, and the working of international institutions, are determined by political and power factors, not by law or constitutions alone. While IR frequently, and rightly, engages with, and comments on, contemporary issues, what distinguishes IR as an academic discipline from international history is not the time frame of its analysis, the historical period it refers to, but the form of analytic framework it deploys, theoretical and comparative in the case of IR, narrative, documentary and particular in the case of international history. In recent times, we have seen the rise of an exciting new field of what are termed 'global' studies, ones that, by dint of theoretical inclination, tend to gravitate towards the liberal, if not revolutionary, sides of the argument: but IR, ever conscious of its origins as a study of state behaviour, would question how far everything that is presented as 'global' really is so, how far states have in reality been replaced by inter-societal relations, how far what are formally international, even 'supranational' institutions like the UN or the EU operate by combining and aggregating the interests of their members, and, indeed, how far supposedly transnational actors, be they multinational actors, satellite TV stations or what are seen as the agents of global civil society are really as independent of states, and of state controls and interests, as their often enthusiastic proponents would have us believe.

To take two obvious examples: the anti-globalisation movement originating from the World Social Forums in Porto Alegre presents itself as gathering, indeed carnival, of non-state actors, but as anyone familiar with operations knows there are states, bearers of international radicalism such as Cuba and Venezuela, which take a close interest in the proceedings at Porto Alegre; in another register, it is often stated that the Islamist armed group Al Qaida is a transnational or non-state actors, yet for much of its history,

going back to the Afghan war of the 1980s this group enjoyed the support and financing of states, be they Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the USA and, in the early 1990s Sudan, in the later 1990s the Taliban government in Afghanistan itself. It is a matter of some debate how far even today at least one of these states does not continue with such support, or at least protection.

In this regard, IR can, and does, serve not only as means of explaining and rendering more intelligible the complex world in which we live, but may also serve, in healthy engagement and interchange with cognate disciplines, to challenge, I might even on occasion suggest, some of the enthusiasms or solecisms that characterise the utterances of other disciplines upon matters international.

### 3. Post-Hegemony and US Dominance: I

Against this background let me turn to the specific topic of this lecture, ‘International Relations in a Post-Hegemonic World’. It is a broad one, and I intend to interpret it, and the term ‘post-hegemonic’, in three ways: first as a reflection upon US power and the difficulties into which US unilateralism has run in recent years; secondly as a reflection on the IR discipline itself, and the receding within it of the theoretical and disciplinary dominance of IR by one, intellectually hegemonic, paradigm, namely state-centred realism; thirdly, in a normative vein, and picking up on the theme of my inaugural two decades ago, the vertebral preoccupation of my whole work, namely internationalism. His third concern involves examining how each of the three aspirant conceptions of internationalism have, in their own way, lost credibility and coherence over the past twenty years, even as the world itself has become globalised and, this a great source of pleasure and encouragement to me, even as political theory, sociology, and IR themselves have in recent times produced much new work, of vision and intellectual coherence, on themes of internationalism, cosmopolitanism and world citizenship.

First, the decline or at least temporary difficulties of US power and global domination, namely the future of American power, or, as those who propagate it in Washington, perhaps too happily, choose to term it, of the American ‘empire’. There is at the moment great interest across the world in the USA, a result of the primary elections. Never since I was a schoolboy aged 14, when Kennedy and Nixon were vying for

office in early 1960s, do I recall such interest, enthusiasm, much of it well intentioned, about US politics, as if the world wants a friendlier and more open America. The debate on US power has a quite long pedigree. It was de Tocqueville who, in the early nineteenth century, anticipated a future dominated by the two continental states Russia and America, and the *Time* magazine editor Henry Luce who, in 1941, on the eve of America's decisive entry into both the Pacific and European wars, predicted 'the American century'. Since then, there have been no shortage of people who, from the rise of the USSR's space programme in the 1950s, through to the third world revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s in Vietnam, Iran and elsewhere, and to the emergence of Japan, Europe and now China as major economic powers, have predicted that US dominance, predominance, hegemony or, in more recent, post-Cold War terms, 'unipolarity', are ebbing away.

That one day the US's control of, and dominance over, the world will lessen is indisputable, but that another power will emerge in the foreseeable future that is equal to it, or able to rival it, on the world stage, as the USSR did for four decades, albeit from a position of overall weakness, is less clear. A world of one dominant, and several medium powers, seems more probable, what I have, in that necessary postulation of grand historical terms we are required to produce, called 'Contested Unipolarity'. America is, and will remain number one, but there are many who do not accept it. Paul Kennedy's famous 1988 book, *The Rise and Decline of the Great Powers*, in which he talks of 'imperial overstretch', of the mismatch of political and strategic goals with economic and, not least, fiscal, reality, set the scene for a whole range of such works, among which recent examples would include the work of the historical sociologist Michael Mann, *The Incoherent Empire* and *After Suez* by the veteran *Guardian* columnist Martin Woolcott, not to mention the more meta-Hegelian speculations of Tony Negri and Michael Hardt's *Empire* or the Islamist triumphalism of Al Qaida and its associates and imitators. Meanwhile the financial press has, in recent months, been replete with stories of the US mortgage crisis, of the long-term dangers of the current account deficit, of the dollar 'overhang'. In the Gulf states, major investors are leaving the dollar, as they did the UK pound sterling in 1967. In August 2007 total holdings of US long-term securities fell by \$69.3 billion, an historical record. More recently, Presidents Chavez and Ahmadinejad have been hailing the end of the dollar as a global currency.

On this matter I had the occasion of listening to a fascinating restatement of the case for envisaging an enduring US domination at a seminar in our department organised, indeed, by Michael Cox. At this seminar, Professor Robert Singh of Birkbeck College, London, and co-author of a forthcoming book, *After Bush*, explained why he is not persuaded of these arguments and, in a set of crisp summaries of the main points in dispute, he lays out the alternative view. First, historical perspective: we have been here before, not least in the late 1980s; yet in the 1990s, be it in military expenditure, international influence, pop culture or information technology, the USA ran further ahead of all its rivals. Secondly, hard power: the USA has by far the largest military budget and capability, and continues to have the strongest and most dynamic economy in the world, accounting even today for 20% of world output. It has a per capita income of around \$40,000, compared to a Chinese of \$2,300. Thirdly, international influence: the US has treaties with no less than 84 countries, and of the total of 200 in the world no more than five – Korea, Iran, Syria, Cuba, Venezuela – are outright enemies. Moreover, while US influence has certainly been battered in recent years, be it in the Middle East, Europe or Latin America, it remains ‘resilient’, and capable of recovering ground, as the initiatives of French president Nicholas Sarkozy indicate. Fifthly, the major rivals the USA faces are much weaker than they appear: Russian military power is exaggerated, while the economy and social fabric of China, not to mention its political system, face increased strain. Sixthly, for all the hostility to the USA over Iraq, or Guantanamo, people around the world continue to admire and desire aspects of the American way of life, and, not least, demonstrate in large numbers their desire to live there. Finally, and perhaps of greatest importance, there is no evident wish in the USA, either in the political elite in Washington, or in the Democratic Party, or in the nation as a whole, to abandon US primacy and exceptionalism. However welcome the new tone of US politics may be, the programmes of the main candidates continue to assume US dominance, and, this presumably mirroring the outlook of the voters, show scant interest in, or even awareness of, the need for diplomacy and working with international institutions<sup>5</sup>. The new President of 2009 will only in some degree alter existing policies. Washington will continue to want to run, if not control, the world.

---

<sup>5</sup> Anatol Lieven, ‘Relearning the Art of Diplomacy. Most candidates have no idea what it involves’, *The Nation* 19 November 2007.

McCain is old imperial thinking recycled, but we should not expect much change from Hillary Clinton or Barrack Obama.

At the same time, the back and forth of this debate may serve to obscure what, for any observer of US foreign policy, must remain other, perhaps more intractable, questions, and ones which, equally, call for a range of analytic skills: First, there is the question of the impact on the US economy, and on the world economy as a whole, of the US campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. In world where politics and economics are said to be closely intertwined, there seems remarkably little interconnection here, so far. Four decades ago, the Vietnam War was a major factor in the decline of the dollar, and the rise of interdependence. That the two contemporary wars consume vast amounts of money, and will continue to do so, and greatly reduce US credibility, is evident; yet, to date, the economic impact seems to be very small. The crisis in confidence in the US financial system is a result of mortgage and trade figures, not Iraq. The spread of inflation and in particular the rise in the price of oil reflect market conditions, not least Chinese demand and a shortage of refining capacity, not the reduction in Iraqi oil exports or the military and civilian costs.

Secondly, why has it taken the USA so long to recognise the crisis it is in Iraq? Those working with the US and British forces in Iraq knew from the spring of 2004 that the stabilisation of Iraq would not work, and from the latter part of 2005, two or more years ago, there were many in Congress, as I saw during a visit there at the time, including Republicans with close ties to the military such as Senator John Murtha, as well as combat personnel in Iraq, who were speaking out as the disaster in that country. Great powers are notorious unable to face up to realities, as the US failed in regard to the Iranian revolution in 1978-9, or the USSR to the erosion of its position in Eastern Europe in the latter part of the 1980s, but, after all the Hamilton-Baker and reports, Congressional debates, criticisms, 'surges' and so forth, the USA today is as bogged down, and as without any coherent strategy, political, diplomatic or military, as it was in 2004 or 2005.

Thirdly, there is the extraordinary phenomenon of a major power that has gone to war in two Middle Eastern states, Afghanistan and Iraq, and which is now contemplating a third, with Iran, but which is, at decision-making levels almost devoid of people with

expertise or experience in, and on, these countries. The evidence available suggests that those specialists on Iraq, and Iran, who work in Washington or across the USA have been systematically marginalised from policy discussions, their place taken by a motley gang of irresponsible and often corrupt political exiles, ‘terrorism’ experts, ‘security types’ and other mountebanks. Most of those who pontificate about Iran in the USA these days have never been there, and could not write a newspaper article, or academic essay, on the history, culture or politics of that country.

Finally, there is a question that goes to the heart not only of recent US policy in the Middle East, but of the very character and sources of US foreign policy and decision-making itself. It is a question so obvious, if not simple, that it is often overlooked in the welter of polemic and self-justification that besets the story, namely: *why did George Bush decide to invade Iraq in the first place?* The deception over ‘weapons of mass destruction’ and subsequent policy blunders have left this question unanswered and usually unasked, yet it is, the closer one gets to it, very unclear. The standard general theories, be they of the ‘Military-Industrial Complex’, ‘US imperialism’ or ‘War Against Terrorism’ variety do not explain what happened. Many writers have immediate, more specific and single-factor, analyses, from the Saudi Arabian influence, to ‘oil’, by way of the Evangelical Christians, the Israeli lobby, neo-conservative bellicosity after 9/11 and the simple desire of George Bush Junior to ‘finish the job’ of 1991 and to avenge a supposed assassination attempt on his father by Saddam Hussein in Kuwait, in 1993.. The best immediate answer may be some variant of ‘All of the Above’, but, if the full verdict of history is ever come in, it will involve an analysis that is theoretically and empirically grounded. Such a verdict will also be greatly affected by how this conflict ends, something the form, and timescale, of which, cannot now be anticipated. .

From this general discussion of what is a contemporary analytic issue, I would seek to draw one or two broader methodological and disciplinary lessons. First, with the mysteries of US empire, and the question of US decline, no decisive, or proximate, answer to these questions is ever likely to become available to us, this emphasising the uncertain, qualitative and necessarily indeterminate nature of much social science: the origins of World War I remain as much as ever a matter of academic dispute. At the same time, the issue of US hegemony suggests, and I hope illustrates, that in regard to

many questions of undoubted importance in the world today, academic study cannot, and should not, aspire to a rigid, positivist concept of what is scientific. Faced with the naive positivistic and quantitative drumbeat in social science, including IR, let us not forget that natural science itself does not follow this model, as those who know chemistry and other sciences from within, such as Karl Popper, Paul Feyerabend and Thomas Kuhn have shown so well<sup>6</sup>. All knowledge, whether natural or social science, proceeds by a combination of technical skills, precise information, comparison, hunch, and, this a very important word, good judgement. In this sense we must recall, for IR as for all social sciences, the argument of the great American sociologist C.Wright Mills in his class *The Sociological Imagination* that sociology, and by extension all social sciences, are in the end a 'craft': crafts require skill and training, but there is something more than. Although today's intellectual and professional conformism, and risk-averse intellectual culture, marginalise it, social science as much as any other field of investigation involves imagination and defiance of convention: it was Einstein who once observed that he was not any more intelligent than anyone else, just more curious.

#### 4. Post-Hegemony II: IR as a Discipline

In regard to the second rendering of the term 'post-hegemonic', I would like to turn to the academic discipline of IR. In one sense, my view of IR is resolutely loyal, even traditional, as far as what we have taught at LSE is concerned, and which we inherited from an earlier, eccentric but inspirational, generation of teachers. I retain great respect for the core curriculum as established some decades ago and would hope that, whatever fashions and new issues arise, no student will complete a BSc or an MSc in our

---

<sup>6</sup> Curiously, my first ever visit to the LSE Senior Common Room was in the early 1970s, when working for the publishing house Verso, to lunch with the philosophers of science Imre Lakatos and Paul Feyerabend. I had been assigned the manuscript of Feyerabend's book *Against Method* to edit: as it contained footnotes in Latin (these being related to his demonstration of how Galileo came to the right conclusions but faked his evidence), and because of my classical education, I was given the task of preparing the text for publication, an unforgettable educational experience in itself. Needless to say, I disclaim all responsibility for the anarchistic theory of knowledge Feyerabend proposes, or for the remarkable success this book later had. It was a matter of some distress to me that, late in life, my ever-bullient and unpredictable colleague Susan Strange 'discovered' Feyerabend. On a more positive note, my years as editor on Verso served me well as training in research supervision, and in the necessary leads, and even more so lags, of such a relationship.



department without familiarity with the core of the subject as we have long taught it, any more than a student of language should be ignorant of grammar, or a mathematician be ignorant of algebra and calculus. This core would include a knowledge of the history of the international system, acquaintance with the main theoretical schools, with concepts of strategy and security, as well as with what we term 'Foreign Policy Analysis', i.e. the study of those factors, domestic and external, that shape foreign policy itself. I would also hope that those students who graduate from LSE would recognise and explore a range of normative issues, relating to justice, human rights, the conduct of war, economic development, that form, parallel to the analytic issues we teach, the other core of the subject.

Much of the teaching in our department in past decades has been influenced by what is termed 'the English school', a form of state-centred approach that parallels what is, in North American orthodoxy, pure power politics, but which is, in the case of the 'English school', tempered by some recognition of the role of international law, international institutions and norms, and, of greatest importance, by some sense that the international system is not just a zone of unrelenting and unchangeable conflict, but is liable to change, reform and long term improvement. In other words a cautiously liberal view of international relations. I have major differences with the English School, not least their view of history, their rather benign view of the 'expansion' of international society and their concept of the 'state', but I recognise, and would warmly support, their definition of the field and of the issues, and concepts, we should be teaching and discussing, and their delimitation of the initial teaching agenda.

Realism, in its power political US sense, or in the 'English school' variant taught at LSE, was, for decades, the dominant, 'hegemonic', paradigm within the discipline. In some ways each has, in the harsher world of this century, enjoyed a comeback. Yet, while I find some of the alternatives to realism to be unconvincing and too vague, promissory notes without theoretical, historical or empirical purchase, I would argue for a commitment to an intellectual field that is no longer dominated, or hegemonised, by these realisms. In my own theoretical work at LSE I have tried to shift the debate in at least three major respects. First, influenced by what we can term international political sociology, I have argued that we need to replace the vision of history, and the concept of the state, espoused by realism with one broadly derived from Marx and Weber, even

while, in the face of alternative trends that deny the relevance of the state or claim that all is swept aside in the carnivals of globalisation, I would want to reiterate that the state cannot be marginalised or dispensed with as a category.

As for history, and taking as a major insight that of sociologists and historians such as Eric Hobsbawm in his work on the last two centuries, we must see the international system, and, included states, ideologies, conflicts, as radically distinct from those that preceded it. I am a strong supporter of what Karl Polanyi, in his work on the historicity of markets, termed 'The Great Transformation', or of what Ernest Gellner, in that theoretical vernacular that was his trademark, referred to as 'The Big Ditch'. Such an approach can have many applications, of which I shall briefly mention two: first, in our study of international institutions, such as the UN or the EU, we should cast aside a juridical or institutional approach, which looks only at the formal structures, and remain guarded about any claims as to the real world application of such concepts, desirable for sure, as 'supranationality'. Secondly, in looking at the spread of radical Islamist ideas, and of armed Islamist groups, we can, for sure, recognise how ideas, and movements, cross frontiers, but we should continue to see them in their modern, and state dominated, context: the ideas of radical Islam, be they the 'Islamic Government' of Ayatollah Khomeini, or the 'Jihad against Crusaders' of Osama bin Laden, are modern ideas, focussed on the attainment and retention of control over states, even as the activity of each, and the loyalty of most of their followers, remains concentrated on states. Even in regard to terrorism, while some is transnational in aspiration and recruitment, most is confined to a single state, 'Terrorism in One Country' as it were.

In this context, of an IR reconfigured by concerns and concepts of international historical sociology, I would register for ongoing research four areas of innovative, I would say, 'post-hegemonic' focus, research and teaching. The first is to recognise the central importance in all matters international and sociological of gender. IR was one of the last social sciences to address the issue of gender, and it is to the LSE's credit that the first taught option on this subject in the world, arising out of a conference held by the IRD in 1988, was taught in this School. In transferring to IR the perception of feminist writing in history, politics, economics, law or sociology, I have argued that

there is no process within international, or transnational, relations, not war, or trade, not diplomacy or human rights, not social movements, religion nor civil society, not international law or migration, not, for sure, globalisation in its manifold forms, that does not have a gendered dimension.

This, eminently falsifiable, indeed Popperian, insight may one day be refuted, but I have to tell you that it has stood, undefeated, for two decades now. One specific issue that, living in Spain with its large Latin American, Arab and Filipino immigrant communities, is the way in which women transmit their remittances back home: money is sent only to other women, an aspect of globalisation that merits much more attention as it shapes the transfer of billions of pounds from north to south every year. It is also high time that more attention was paid, and more protest registered, at the highly gendered, and discriminatory, import of two now prevalent if contrasted processes': the war on terror and the counterpoised jihad; and the spread of the internet. In stark terms, we can say that all that led up to 9/11, and even more all that has followed it, has involved a pervasive, violent and deeply conservative remasculinisation of public space, activity and imagery across the world, be it in the strutting conceit of George Bush. Donald Rumsfeld or Arnold Schwarzenegger, or in the menacing, ranting, rifle-toting culture of Osama Bin Laden, Moqtada al Sadr, Hamas, Hizbullah and all the other bearded and blood thirst patriarchs whom recent years have thrown up. Not only are there, on both sides, powerful forces that link their respective security policies to the resubordination and silencing of women, but the very nature of these conflicts, and the fear they install, has served to drive women out of public space and public view.

As for the internet, potentially emancipatory instrument as it is, its gendered consequences, like its consequences for correct writing, orthography, decency of address, have, given a complete lack of political or social authority in this field, led to a normative chaos, and a moral degeneration of striking proportions, one that politicians in far too few cases identify or oppose. In its brutalist portrayal of sexual and human relations, the internet has led to a debasement of human values, of genuine sensuality, of privacy, of respect for others, of decency unparalleled since the barbarian invasions of centuries ago, the gendered dimensions of which have yet to be recognised.

The second area I would draw attention to is the importance in the history and formation of the international system of social revolutions<sup>7</sup>. One of my central arguments in IR has been that, as much as war and security studies, to which IR has long paid attention, we need also to see the central importance of revolutions in shaping the modern system, not only in the twentieth century, but in the three centuries that preceded it. The evolution of the modern system has been punctuated by the incidence and spread of revolutions, and the reactions, or counter-revolution, they occasion, be this in 1648, 1789, 1848, 1917, or in the almost iterative recurrence of revolutions in the penultimate years of each decade of the twentieth century, be it China in 1949, Cuba in 1959, Libya in 1969, Iran and Nicaragua in 1979, and, this also as much a revolution as any which preceded it, the re-emergence of democracy in Eastern Europe in 1989. Coherent and repeated high and low as my argument has been, and proclaimed to the whole world, ‘tous azimuths’, if not ‘urbi et orbe’, however, it has, I can assure you, made little or no impact on the study of international relations, in Europe or the USA and the book I wrote on the subject, in, indeed 1999, one of the best I have written, passed serenely into oblivion. Indeed I note with interest, and a just mite of chagrin, that in his latest work, on the forces that shaped the twentieth century, Professor Niall Ferguson singles out three, among which social unrest or revolution demonstrably do not figure. Whether the academic study of world history in the twenty-first century will as easily neglect social upheaval and revolt, as it did in the twentieth century, is, however, another matter: news from Baghdad, Kabul, Islamabad and quite a few other places suggests otherwise. .

Third area of special concern is that of culture and language. On this matter, we in IR have failed to do our job: we have left the field open to simplifiers, pernicious in consequence if not in intent, like Samuel Huntington. Too often work on culture, and on the alleged incidence of cultural differences, is monopolised by theorists – theologians, philosophers, political theorists – whose intentions are generous, often tolerant, but who actually know every little about the countries or issues they are talking about. We need a study of culture, in its effects on foreign policy, international institutions, globalisation, that is grounded in knowledge of particular societies, religions and political contexts,

---

<sup>7</sup> This section summarises my *Revolution and World Politics* and a set of related case studies.

and which, drawing precisely from the insights of political sociology, gets away from the abstractions that so many deploy in regard to this field.

Here, and in the context of some retrospection over the past twenty-five years, I would introduce my one major critical retrospective note on developments at LSE in general, namely the closing of the department concerned with, and the intellectual disappearance, of what is, arguably, the most important of all social sciences, the one that studies a form of human, individual and social, interaction more primary, and more pervasive, than economics or politics, law or, even, international relations, namely language. The School has a vibrant and most ably and imaginatively directed centre for teaching language itself, but the theoretical and comparative study of language, and in its social and, may I stress, international and globalised context, is neglected. This is, in part, I would suggest, because of the theoretical biases emanating from the mistakenly hegemonic field of economics, but it also reflects the very blindness and deafness which those in the supposedly monolingual Anglo-Saxon universe betray towards the rest of humanity. To study social behaviour within a country, not least in regard to social change or migration, to study globalisation without taking into account the manifold schisms, interactions and sociolinguistics that accompany this process, is a major, and I repeat solipsist, failing of the university system in the western world. We have indeed got our fine language centre, and all power to it, but teaching language itself, without an associated theoretical commitment, is like teaching shopping without teaching economics, or balloting techniques without democratic theory. This is, I would again submit, the greatest single intellectual failing in the otherwise comprehensive offerings of the LSE and one that will in time, I hope, be remedied. Nowhere indeed is the naivety and narrow-mindedness of imperial hegemony, in its cultural dimension, more evident.

Here, and in tribute to the special intellectual qualities of the nation in whose midst we work, the English, I would put in a plea for the restoration, at the heart of the social sciences, of the study of this, to repeat, primary field of human activity. I would also draw your attention to the fact that if we are searching for suitable local roots, not to mention naming opportunities, LSE is located less than a quarter of a mile from the former home, in Gough Square and the present statue, opposite the Law Courts, of one

of the greatest of all English writers, and, arguably its greatest social scientists, the eighteenth century lexicographer Dr. Samuel Johnson, whose dictionary of the English language, not the first, but certainly the most influential, was published in 1755. Dr. Johnson himself did not work in a university, he was, in the condescending term, as I have been myself, ‘a lone scholar’. But the lone scholar, and not least those working outside the university itself, be they Dr. Johnson, Isaac Deutscher or George Steiner, can often see, and say, more than an army of over endowed methodological dinosaurs whose collective findings amount to little more than the restatement of the obvious and the banal.

Finally, and on a much more pessimistic and, in an old IR sense, ‘realist’ note I would urge IR to pay attention, much more attention than it does, to the dark side, the hidden, illegal, dimension of globalisation: there are times when looking at the literature on global civil society, international institutions, mechanisms of regulation, I feel as if we are looking only at one side of the story, at what, by analogy, would be the bright side of the moon<sup>8</sup>.

It is a commonplace of journalistic reporting that, in the world of today, criminals, of all classes and nations, do not need to pay heed to frontiers. The modern state, even when it is not itself permeated with corruption and falsification, and this is true of around three quarters of the states in the world, has to an alarming degree lost control of movements of money, people and goods across its borders. No one knows how much of the money, goods, arms, people moving across the world is undocumented, illegal, derived from, and used to promote, corruption and illegal practices. My guess is that it is very high, and, in many cases, growing, most obviously in regard to the drugs trade. And here we need to recognise, loudly and with full responsibility, that none of this narcotrafficking, money laundering, exploitation of women and the rest would exist if it were not for the demand which the rich countries, ‘our’ supposedly superior west, exhibits for such goods and services. I would, moreover, suggest that such activity is not separate from, or marginal to, the workings of our societies and economies, it is integral to it, to repeat,

---

<sup>8</sup> My own sense of concern, when not alarm, about this comes, in particular, from a PhD I supervised by Dr. Padideh Tosti here at LSE on the international dimensions of the drugs trade, and I would like to express my gratitude to her here on this matter.

as much as is the dark to the bright side of the moon: we are looking, in some inchoate and only episodically visible way, at the modern equivalent of the slave trade in the Atlantic economies of the eighteenth century, something that is essential to the circulation of goods, services and people, and which underpins, to an alarming degree, the prosperity of the richer countries<sup>9</sup>.

## 5. Cosmopolis Postponed

The third dimension of my ‘post-hegemonic’ agenda comprises the issue on which I have been working in recent years, in a series of exploratory essays, and which formed the subject of my inaugural here two decades ago, namely internationalism. By ‘internationalism’ I mean to denote a loose set of ideas, as inchoate as their converse, nationalism, which have nonetheless formed much thinking on international matters these two or three centuries past, and which are much in evidence in the world of today<sup>10</sup>: a belief that the world is becoming more and more integrated and united, a belief that this, objective, process is accompanied by a growing sense of international belonging, identity, responsibility, even citizenship; and, most important, that these two processes, and their interaction, are broadly speaking to be desired, ‘a good thing’.

Here, however, we come to the link with ‘hegemony’ and ‘post-hegemony’, for in my 1987 lecture I distinguished three kinds of internationalism, each exhibiting the modular themes mentioned above: liberal internationalism, a vision broadly derived from Kant, which stresses international institutions and law, and which seeks, over time, to improve the world by the actions of states, civil society and individuals; a revolutionary

---

<sup>9</sup> Here once again I would cite the particular, globally unique, qualities of the LSE as a research centre, recalling a student from a Central Asian state who came to see me one day and then produced from his inner pocket a list of what it cost, in his country, to buy each of the main ministries in the government, all denominated in US dollars.

<sup>10</sup> Here Wittgenstein’s term ‘cluster-concept’ may be apposite. A similar usage, with recently enriching consequences in the work of our colleague Richard Layard, may be applied to the term ‘Happiness’.

internationalism, derived from Marx and Lenin, that seeks to unite the world, and abolish capitalism and war, through social upheaval and transformation; and what I then termed ‘hegemonic’ internationalism, or can also be called imperialism, or ‘empire’, the unification and homogenisation of the world through the domination of one state, economy and culture.

Twenty years on, I would broadly repeat and claim validity for this analytic or at least organising idea, loose as it is. My own sketchy suggestions and insights of 1988 have, moreover, been developed and reinforced, to a degree I could never have imagined, by a range of work in political theory, sociology, globalisation, by such authors as Andrew Linklater, Kimberley Hutchings, Chris Brown, Mervyn Frost, Martin Shaw in IR, more broadly by, among others, Tony Giddens, Mary Kaldor, David Held, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Pico Ayer, Stephen Toulmin, Ulrich Beck, Arjun Appadurai, Brian Barry. As for the three variants of internationalism, the balance sheet is a mixed one. Of hegemonic internationalism, incarnated these two decades past in the US aspiration to unipolarity and global dominance since the end of the Cold War, little needs to be added to what has been said above: it has inevitably overreached itself, and provoked a backlash, one that, however, comes as much from other, state-centric, aspirants to regional hegemony (Russia, China, Iran, Venezuela, Brazil) as from the spread of other non-state alternatives.

For its part, liberal internationalism has advanced in the expansion and formalisation of the European Union, by all accounts, even the most modest, an extraordinary achievement, which has, with the incorporation of ten new members in 2005, brought most of Europe to peace for the first time in a thousand years. Some advances in international law, notably the waiving of immunity for former heads of state<sup>11</sup>, the establishment of the International Criminal Court, and the extension of international law to cover gender crimes in war, reinforce this. In some respects too, technological advance, above all the opportunities for international communication, in an instant manner and with no costs, offered by the internet, be it in blogging, opposition websites

---

<sup>11</sup> The most unforgettable moment in my LSE lecturing career was on a Monday morning in October 1998 when I informed the students on IR410, the MSc core course, gathered in the Hong Kong theatre, most of whom evidently paid to heed to news over the weekend, of the arrest in London on the previous Saturday of former Chilean dictator General Pinochet. This announcement was greeted with cheers, waving of notepads and, in the person of one Caribbean woman student in the front row, a spontaneous outburst of dancing.



and chat rooms, and the construction of virtual communities and networks, have broadened the potential of global community and construction of shared values. The growth of multiethnic cities, such as London, Berlin, Los Angeles and, for sure, Barcelona can also be viewed through a liberal internationalist, and multicultural lens.

Liberal internationalism has, however, encountered many problems even as globalisation has proceeded: many, indeed most, influential states have not ratified the ICC, and many, indeed most, do not permit free exchange of information. The diminished political authority, and resistance to democratic and managerial reform, of institutions such as the UN and the EU, the failure of radical and imaginative changes, and the wilting of other institutions, such as the OSCE, suggests that state, national, interests have become stronger. Equally, the rise of nationalism, of identity politics of the 'securitisation' of issues of rights, free speech, migration, travel, even taking cash out of the bank or buying a house, mark an erosion of the liberal internationalist vision. Above all, and brutally and dangerously unresolved even as we speak, is the fate of the most important, and earlier vaunted, form of liberal internationalist action, in promotion of human rights and of peace, namely humanitarian intervention: what was a dominant hope of the 1990s has now become the nightmare of Iraq and of Afghanistan. The 'war on terror' that exploded after 2001 has also driven a commitment to liberal internationalism, to international law, to respect for the rules and norms of war, to global community, to diplomacy backwards, even as Al Qaida and its imitators and supporters preach, to a degree rarely seen in modern times, forms of particularism, rejection of universal norms, and hatred of the 'other'. Here we encounter, and not for the first time, the problem which Hegel termed that of 'Minerva's Owl', the bird of wisdom that takes flight only at the setting of the sun: for while academic colleagues, myself in a minor vein included, have continued to posit, argue for, imagine forms of international collaboration, citizenship, commitment, not least through the reform of existing institutions, the course of world events has turned strongly in the other direction, as particularist interests, be they those of states, old hegemons and aspirant new ones, have reasserted their dominance, and exclusive prerogatives, not only in regard to new instruments of international law, such as the ICC, but in regard to the flow of investments and property rights in the world economy, and, of supreme concern to us all, in the world of values.

It would, however, be mistaken to assume that the third form of internationalism, the revolutionary, has had a better record. For sure, we have seen, after a dormant few years in the 1990s, the re-emergence, which can be dated to the election of President Chavez in Venezuela in 1998 and the Seattle protests against the WTO in 1999, of new, radical and, in most cases, familiar forms of radical internationalism, be this in the Global Justice Movement originating in Porto Alegre, or in the collaboration, in policy and in symbolism, of a new coalition of radical states, including Venezuela, Bolivia and Iran, with Cuba in a supporting role. Enthusiastic, clamorous and global as this movement is, it, nonetheless, exhibits major problems, some of them all too familiar from earlier chapters in the history of revolutionary internationalism, above all that of the communist movement: a preference for rhetoric, and rhetorical policies, over considered action or preparation; an elision of what are undoubtedly the enthusiasms of non-state and social actors with the agenda, and manipulations, of states; a presentation, under the new term 'resistance', a catchall that too often tends to confuse trends that are emancipatory with those of an authoritarian social agenda. Recent developments in the field of organised transnational violence, above all the spread of Al Qaida and its apparently non-state, revolutionary, militancy show that not all that is revolutionary and internationalist is desirable, or contributes to the goals of peace and equality in the contemporary world.

The paradoxical conclusion of these developments, as of the spread of new and zero cost forms of communication through the internet is that while new forms of international cooperation and community may be emerging, the very forces that shape them are also yielding a different outcome. Once again, the internationalist, cosmopolitan vision that has repeatedly come into view over the past two centuries has been blocked, countered and in a considerable degree superseded by contrary, particularist, trends. A truly internationalist order, in which diversity of cultures, and plurality of political communities, are inserted within a global ethical, institutional and social order, remains on the agenda, a project that may one day be realised, but there is little in the contemporary world to lead us to believe that this is, in any continent, a proximate possibility. There are islands of progress, but this is not sufficient: cosmopolis in one country is not an option.

## 6. Conclusion

I have, in this lecture, had some observations to make about the state of social science, the state of the world, as well as of IR, taking as an initial ordering question the nature of ‘post-hegemonic situation in which, in regard to each we find ourselves. In so doing, I have referred back to 1988 and my inaugural on internationalism. There are, however, two other, earlier, ‘8’ dates whose anniversaries may be deemed to fall this year, to which I would refer and whose legacy, broadly and critically interpreted and recuperated, I would also wish to invoke.

One is 1968, the year of youth and student revolt the world over, and a year in which I was an active, enthusiastic, and rather optimistic participant<sup>12</sup>. It has become fashionable to denounce, as it were ‘slag off’ 1968, be in the speeches of Tony Blair and Nicholas Sarkozy, and, with some rhetorical stretch, to see it as the origin of many contemporary evils.

There was, as in any period of upheaval and rapid cultural and intellectual change, a lot of nonsense talked in 1968 and, within the general outburst of cultural and political energy, epitomised as much by The Beatles as by radical ideas as such, there was a dangerous, nihilist and at time philistine undertow, one that was later to find expression in violent action by small ultra-left groups in Germany, Italy, Spain and the USA. In terms of hard political impact, in marking the start of major new phases in the life of their countries, there were only two countries in Europe where this was the case: Czechoslovakia, where the great opening of the Prague Spring was crushed in August 1968 by Warsaw Pact tanks, and Northern Ireland, where what was initially a peaceful and democratic movement in favour of civil rights for the Catholic population, modelled closely on the US civil rights movement, tipped into sectarian violence, the entry of British troops and thirty years of terrible, and totally unnecessary, inter-communal violence. Yet the consequences of 1968 were, broader, than that: the Czech events themselves served, in longer perspective, to destroy what remained of the confidence of the communist elite in eastern Europe and the USSR, and paved the way for 1989 and

---

<sup>12</sup> See my chapter in the 1969 Penguin Special, *Student Power*, written while still an undergraduate, and with the no doubt precipitate, but consistent, title ‘Students of the World Unite!’.

1991; the Irish civil rights movement achieved, after its grotesque, wholly unnecessary and bloody detour, in effect the second Irish civil war of the twentieth century, the result it set out to achieve, in the Belfast power-sharing agreement of 2005<sup>13</sup>.

For those of us who participated in those events, and shared their hopes, there also remained an intellectual legacy that has, in time, proven itself to have practical and broadly beneficial consequences. First, evident in the campaigns and slogans of the time, an interest in, and commitment to, a worldwide campaign of emancipation and freedom, be it from colonial rule, imperialism, authoritarian communist dictatorship, an internationalist vision, of politics, culture, language, reference that has, in my case at least, been a central theme of my later work, including as a professor at LSE. Secondly, 1968 was a time of great intellectual fervour, of exploring alternative ideas of social organisation, of psychoanalysis, of literary and musical experimentation, of envisioning an alternative world: the core of any academic institution, and of its inner life, is exactly that intellectual excitement and curiosity, light years away from the tedious wastelands of the managerial and supposedly ‘scientific’ social science that besets us today. This was a time when we read as widely as we could, when artists talked of ideas not saleroom prices, a time before public discourse was dominated by footballers, chat show hosts, crown princes, architects and others, the cascade of airheads, mopheads and mountebanks, who now deem to determine public discourse.

Finally, 1968 was, if it was anything, a challenge to the acceptance of the given, of the traditional, the established, revolt in political and social terms, and, in intellectual terms, a challenging of the fixity, essentialism, of categories, be they those of state or class, of authority or religion, or, albeit in an inchoate form, of conventional and supposedly fixed categories of family, identity, gender, location. What later became known as ‘feminism’ or ‘women’s liberation’ was not evident in 1968, to the latter’s detriment, but the emergence of these currents in 1969 and 1970, epitomised in the writings of such figures as Juliet Mitchell, Kate Millett, Shulemith Firestone, Germaine Greer, Sheila Rowbotham and other was a direct outcome of, indeed in the best sense an antagonistic transformation and transcendence, of 1968. Such an insight, indeed the commitment,

---

<sup>13</sup> The aims of Sinn Féin, the nationalist party that opportunistically too advantage of the 1968-9 crisis to promote its own agenda, namely to unite Ireland by force, have not been achieved. If Ireland is ever to be united, it will be by democratic means, but such unity is hardly one of the most pressing issues in the world of today. On 1968 in general see the oral history by Ronald Fraser, *1968*.

intellectual, academic and active, to the challenging of fixed categories, and the use of comparative, historic and imaginative material to offer plausible alternatives, should be the core of any engagement, political or intellectual, with the contemporary world. We have a duty, as academics, citizens, members of communities that stretch from the family and neighbourhood to the whole world, to be realistic, responsible and self-critical in what we propose. Equally we have an obligation to improve that world, and, as part of this improvement to envision other ways of living.<sup>14</sup> In word, we have a commitment to an ‘anti-’ or at least ‘post-’ hegemonic stance in each area of our life, above all to challenge the idols, or fetishes, of our age wealth, markets, nations and power.

In this vein, I would in particular mention those social scientists who have made it their business to identify and critique the inevitability, the givenness, the fated necessity of social and political forms, and single them out for special praise: the critics of the economy, of political institutions, of gender and the family, of international relations, above all, and please let us not be swayed on this, of superstition, religion and all associated forms of fiction and mumbo-jumbo masquerading as destiny. In particular let me mention six people whom we should honour: Socrates, Ibn Khaldun, Antonio Gramsci, Karl Polanyi, Simone de Beauvoir and our own late colleague Ernest Gellner, the finest intellectual leader to teach at LSE in my time at the School.

I have mentioned, so far, 1988 and 1968, but without stretching the temporal pattern too much, wish to end with a short invocation of another ‘8’, 1848, the year when revolt and intellectual upsurge spread across Europe. Of all the works published in that year none has had greater influence than *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* of Marx and Engels, to give it its correct title, a work that certainly posited an alternative world, as it turned out an unattainable and in many ways undesirable one, but which also contained, in its vivid passages on the spread of capitalism worldwide, knocking down all Chinese walls in its way, that sound like publicity for contemporary globalisation. Here I would only draw attention to the final words of the *Manifesto*, and to a curious, but revelatory, mistranslation which occurred in the first, Mandarin Chinese, version of 1910, carried

---

<sup>14</sup> Here I find particularly apposite the distinction made by the sociologist W.G. Runciman in *The Social Animal* Chapter 9 ‘Possible and Impossible Worlds’ (London: HarperCollins, 1998). between the ‘probably impossible’ and the ‘improbably possible’.

out by Chinese students studying in Japan. Instead of the famous, and often misunderstood, words ‘Workers of the World Unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains’, this Chinese version read ‘Scholars of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your shame’<sup>15</sup>. As in a previous lecture in this theatre, a decade or so ago, I can think of no better words with which to conclude this lecture tonight. Thank you.

*Musical coda, illustrating contemporary adaptation of, combined with fidelity to, classical themes, the Brazilian samba ‘Como dizia o poeta’, composers Tomaso Albinoni, Vinicius de Moraes, Toquinho.*

Ends

---

<sup>15</sup> This from a lecture I attended in my third year as an undergraduate at Oxford during the academic year 1966-1967 by Professor Conrad Brandt, an American specialist on Chinese politics and author of *Stalin’s Failure in China*. So far as I know, Professor Brandt never published this lecture, or the source of his story.